LIVING WITH LOSS: MAPPING DERECHOS HUMANOS ON THE LANDSCAPE OF PUBLIC REMEMBRANCE OF THE 1976-1983 DICTATORSHIP IN ARGENTINA

by

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Abstract

The Argentine landscape is marked by countless sites of remembrance of the 1976-1983 dictatorship drawn by human rights groups in Argentina, producing a seemingly infinite command to remember the violence of this period and the 30,000 who were disappeared. Though this landscape can seem chaotic, this impression discounts the context of loss on which it is constructed as well as the deeply affective and contested political issues that motivate its construction. This study thus maps the ways demands for human rights mobilized through public remembrance of the dictatorship articulate a continual learning to live with loss. Investigating the specificities of loss in Argentina, I explore how human rights claims are made in the name of the disappeared who, neither dead nor alive, are at once everywhere and nowhere. I draw largely from my conversations with members of human rights groups to illuminate how the demand for derechos humanos is articulated in particular ways to address present-day social injustices and to affirm the living’s relationship with the disappeared. The study aims to contribute to an understanding of public remembrance as a continual process of teaching and learning about the past that is intended to motivate the formation of a public committed to constructing a better present and future.
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Chapter 1
TRAUMA, PUBLIC REMEMBRANCE OF DICTATORIAL VIOLENCE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA: AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Drawing a Landscape of Public Remembrance of the 1976-1983 Dictatorship in Argentina: Mapping Loss and Derechos Humanos

When I first visited Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2006, my initial sense was that the memory of the 1976-1983 dictatorship was “everywhere”. It seemed that every time I rode the bus I passed by countless buildings marked with graffiti imploring me to remember the 30,000 that were disappeared during the military coup. Waiting to meet a friend in the cafeteria of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Buenos Aires I noticed a wall covered with the iconic black and white photographs of the disappeared. Almost every day, events in remembrance of the dictatorship organized by human rights groups were publicized in the national daily Página 12. Considering that 2006 marked the 30th anniversary of the dictatorship, I first thought that perhaps this proliferation of the memory of the dictatorship was informed by this particular moment. However, as I reflected on the history of this landscape of memory I realized that, in fact, in Argentina public remembrance of the dictatorship has for many years been a prominent aspect of the everyday. When I returned to Argentina in 2007 to collect data for this study, my experiences in Buenos Aires, as well as in other major cities across the country, once again highlighted the prevalence of the memory of the dictatorship, confirming that the proliferation of public remembrance continues. This distinct landscape of memory in Argentina seemed to me to be made up of pieces of a puzzle that I could not construct. I was constantly disoriented by the endless calls to remember the dictatorship made by the innumerable human rights groups that
have emerged throughout the last 34 years in response to political moments that appear to threaten to erase this memory from the present and future. However, simply resigning myself to a description of this memory landscape as “messy” discounted the deeply affective and passionately contested political motivations for public remembrance. The primary question driving my study of public remembrance of the dictatorship has thus been: Why do human rights groups in Argentina continue to insist that public remembrance of the dictatorship is important?

Importantly, this is not a simple question that seeks to outline a descriptive account of the varying justifications provided by human rights groups about the significance and necessity of public remembrance. Rather, this question frames my aim to draw a map of the ways in which public remembrance of the dictatorship articulates a continual learning to “live with loss” (Simon, Rosenberg, & Eppert, 2000). Here living with loss is understood as a task to “bring forth” the disappeared into the present “in order to honour” their lives and affirm their significance to the living (p. 4). Coming to live with loss on these terms is an interminable engagement with questions regarding how “we” live with others (past and present) and how “we” conceptualize and carry out “our” responsibilities to others. Within the context of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship these questions structure remembrance as an inheritance of knowledge about the past and of assignments on how to respond to and account for this knowledge in the present. Learning is thus here “situated in that series of interlinked performances through which members of a community ‘pass on’ and revisit something of the substance and significance of past events” (p. 2). In Argentina, this learning cannot be understood outside of the specificities of the loss of a disappeared person whom, neither alive nor dead, is at once present and absent. Disappearance – the “kidnapping and elimination of an individual by the [military] state” (Scruggs, 2004, p. 269) – tore at the social fabric of Argentine civil society, leaving gaping holes that could never be filled nor erased. Attempts to grapple with
the rupture initiated by the present absence of the disappeared is thus also a learning to live with
the loss of a “we”.

On the landscape of memory, this learning is often mobilized by human rights groups through a discourse of human rights that seeks to forge a public committed to attending to the markings of the past on the present. The call for this public formation distinctly defines human rights within a particular remembrance of who the disappeared were and why they were disappeared. Human rights in Argentina is inextricably linked to the memory of the disappeared as people who struggled for a more socially just and equitable Argentina – a struggle for which they were disappeared by the military coup. Demands for human rights are thus demands made of the state for legal redress for crimes committed by the military as well as demands made of civil society to carry on the work for social justice for which the disappeared were disappeared. In other words, human rights claims articulated by human rights groups through public remembrance of the dictatorship are made in the name of the disappeared and thus engage one in the work of accounting for those no longer present. In order to signify the specificities of human rights in Argentina and within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship, throughout much of this study I employ the Spanish translation of the English term “human rights” – “derechos humanos”. However, this decision is not intended to highlight an issue of the inadequacy of translation – that is, it is not a question of how to most accurately define human rights in Argentina. Rather, the use of the term derechos humanos throughout the work speaks to a discussion about the interrelated task of participating in a particular political project for the (re)construction of an Argentine public and the collective and individual task of learning to live with loss.
I realize that my discussion concerning the ways in which public remembrance of the dictatorship speaks to the problem of living with loss risks pathologizing remembrance of violence as an “inability to let go of the past”. This is a risk that I am willing to take, however, considering that not doing so subsequently risks denying the reality of loss in which this study is situated. That said, I recognize that a discussion of loss – of the particularities of the experiences of and responses to loss – in Argentina cannot be privileged over a consideration of the political significance of public remembrance of state violence. My aim to unravel the seemingly “messy” landscape of public remembrance of the dictatorship as a narrative of how people come to learn to live with loss thus acknowledges this learning as an inherently political task (concerned with social and political issues in present-day Argentina). However, in structuring my analysis as such, I do not intend to write a tidy narrative that provides prescriptions for how to redeem the past (and past and present lives) and make easy unsettling memories (and remembrance). In my endeavour to draw a landscape of public remembrance of the dictatorship I aim to map the complexities, possibilities, and limits that constitute this landscape and that have contributed to my understanding of how the living live with the “dead”.

To begin to draw this map, in Chapter One I examine how public remembrance of the dictatorship has been framed by human rights groups throughout the years as a response to the violence of the dictatorial state and the “absence” of post-dictatorship states who “failed” (Humphrey, 2005; Humphrey & Valverde, 2007; 2008) to account for the “death” – the disappearance – of its citizens. This analysis includes a discussion of the emergence of human rights groups within the landscape of memory and a historical account of repression during the dictatorship and of the culture of impunity present in post-dictatorship Argentina. Chapter Two focuses on the specificities of derechos humanos in Argentina in relation to theories of human rights (what it is and what it is for) and to an analysis of its conditions of existence. More
specifically, in this chapter I examine the privileged position of *derechos humanos* within the
landscape of memory and within the larger context of Argentine political resistance.

Considering the significance of human rights groups to the construction and reproduction of
both the landscape of memory and *derechos humanos*, I traveled to Argentina in 2007 to have
conversations with members of these groups about the significance and purpose of remembrance
of the dictatorship. In Chapter Three I explain how and why I came to have conversations with
members of Argentine human rights groups as well as how these conversations informed my
understanding of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. Specifically, I explain how I
came to “learn from” (Britzman, 1998) these conversations, negotiating both the risk of asking
people to share with me “difficult knowledges” (ibid) and of writing about the problem of living
with loss. In Chapters Four and Five I draw from these conversations to illuminate the ways in
which *derechos humanos* is articulated in particular ways to address present-day social injustices
and to affirm the living’s relationship with the disappeared. Specifically, in Chapter Four I
contextualize the diverse aims of public remembrance within a stated concern for accounting for
“the truth” of who the disappeared were as political activists struggling to construct a “better
Argentina” and for the presentness of the past. In this chapter I begin to unravel the political
motivations that ground the constructions of this truth and understandings of how the
dictatorship has affected the present as well as how these motivations speak to the work of
learning to live with loss. In Chapter Five I continue this discussion, focusing on the varied aims
of remembrance of the dictatorship articulated in my conversations with members of human
rights groups. I begin Chapter Five explicitly framing this remembrance as a process of
inheritance that seeks to convene a public committed to a struggle for social change, demanding
that the state account for the crimes committed during the dictatorship and thus for the victims of
this violence, and acknowledging the suffering of others. With respect to the latter, here I also
draw from particular conversations that address issues of “working through” loss (and thus
express a desire to mourn) and derechos humanos.

To close the study, in Chapter Six I explore further questions evoked by the landscape of the
memory of the dictatorship regarding public remembrance as a call to witness as well as how this
landscape exists in relation to a larger landscape of memories of contemporary violence and
rights struggles mobilized by other rights groups in Argentina. Specifically, I examine the limits
and possibilities offered within the landscape with regards to these issues with the aim of leaving
questions open for thought.

1.2 Tracing Public Remembrance of the 1976-1983 Dictatorship:
Trauma, Mourning, and Human Rights

murdered
my brother her son his grandson
her mother his girlfriend her aunt
her grandfather his friend his cousin her neighbor (sic)
ours yours us
all of us
injected with emptiness.
We lost a version of who we were
and rewrite ourselves in order to survive.

- Strejilevich, 2002, p. 171

Strejilevich (2002) ends her semi-autobiographical account of the 1976-1983 dictatorship in
her book, “A Single Numberless Death”, with the above poem in which she names her
disappeared (or, as she writes, “murdered”) brother both as “her” brother and “our” brother.
Throughout the book Strejilevich combines autobiography, documentary journalism, poetry, and
published testimonies of others who have written of their experiences during the coup to narrate
the “chorus of voices” of the 30,000 (p. 171). Her concern over the erasure of the multiplicity of
voices into “a single numberless death” is threaded throughout her book as she continuously
switches from first person to third person, from past to present, and from stories of the everyday to stories of torture and unimaginable fear. However, as with the poem, her stories of individuals lost and individual loss are contained as the single story of a collective experience. As she writes, disappearance did not only leave an emptiness in “her”, “him”, or “me”, but also in “us”. Thus “we” are fractured and “we” must “rewrite ourselves”. Strejilevich “rewrites” in the sense that she writes again words that have already been “pronounced” (p. 171). The last sentence of her poem might then be understood as a command to endlessly write, or speak in some form, the stories and the story of the state terrorism of 1976-1983 so that “we” can “survive”. However, as this survival is not framed as an urge to return to the now “lost…version of who were”, I read the last sentence of her poem as a command to “rewrite” a new. In other words, her poem asks “us” to construct (rather than reconstruct) so that “we” may once again exist as a “we” (rather than continue as “we were”). Her command is then not only to tell the stories and the story of disappearance and terror, but also to tell them and hear them in a new light that considers how “we” are forever changed.

Indeed, traumatic experiences such as the disappearance of 30,000 people irrevocably alter a collective’s identity (Alexander, 2004). In her poem Strejilevich explains that this change within Argentine collective identity is a result of the “we” having been “emptied” of certain individuals. Though she does not say what version of “ourselves” has been lost as a consequence of this emptying, Evangelista (1998) maintains that what is now missing after the dictatorship is a community united in a struggle for “revolutionary change” (p. xxi). According to Evangelista, because those who were disappeared were people who collectively defined themselves by the “ideals” of “revolutionary change”, “we” are today unable to imagine the possibility of such change and thus of existing as a collective bound by a common struggle (ibid). Thus, both Strejilevich and Evangelista argue that “we” no longer exist because the majority of those who
constituted (a particular) “us” are no longer present. Quite differently, in many public remembrance events organized by human rights groups today it is common to hear cries affirming the presence of the disappeared – “¡30,000 Desaparecidos Presentes! ¡Ahora! ¡Y Siempre!” (“30,000 Disappeared Persons Present! Today! And Forever!”). Further, contrary to Strejilevich whose poem asserts the death of her brother, “her son” and “his grandson”, in reference to the disappeared the President of the widely known human rights group Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Association of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo)¹ has stated that, in Argentina, “‘la muerte no existe’” (“‘death does not exist’”) (Hebe de Bonafini, cited in Bevernage & Aerts, 2009, p. 391). Though it may seem strange that these disparate images of the disappeared exist simultaneously, it is in fact not surprising understood within the context of how human rights groups and the state have accounted for (and have not accounted for in the case of the state) the disappeared and for the continuing legacy of state violence.

In this first chapter I track the proliferation of public remembrance of the dictatorship as it has been structured by human rights groups in Argentina throughout the dictatorship and post-dictatorship years. Thus, I also provide an historical account of the repression during the 1976-1983 dictatorship, the state violence preceding and following this dictatorship, the post-dictatorship state’s responses to calls to remember made by human rights groups, and the formation of human rights groups with reference to various political moments in dictatorial and post-dictatorship Argentina. My aim is to draw out the varied reasons for and significance of

¹ This group is composed of mothers of disappeared persons. They refer to themselves as “of the Plaza de Mayo” because of their infamous protests in the Plaza de Mayo – the political hub of the capital city of Buenos Aires – both today and during the dictatorship. The Asociación Madres is one of two groups of mothers of disappeared persons that currently exists in Argentina. The original group of mothers, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, split into two groups in 1986 with some members forming the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo and others forming the Madres de Plaza de Mayo – Línea Fundadora (Mothers of Plaza de Mayo – Founding Line). More detail on the history of this split is provided in a following section of this chapter.
public remembrance of the dictatorship as a response to trauma and loss and to the “failures” of an “absent state” (Humphrey, 2005; Humphrey & Valverde, 2007; 2008). My discussion of the reasons for and significance of public remembrance of the dictatorship as such is informed by psychoanalytic theories of trauma, sociological theories of “trauma creation” (Alexander, 2004), and the understanding that the mobilization of demands for human rights through remembrance of the dictatorship functions to produce political subjects whose pain and suffering is legitimized on legal and moral terms (Humphrey, 2005; Humphrey & Valverde, 2007; 2008).

1.2.1 Absent Bodies, Terror, and Suspended Mourning

The dictatorship began on March 24th, 1976, led by General Jorge Rafael Videla of the Armed Forces, Admiral Emilio Massera of the Navy, and Brigadier General Orlando Ramón Agosti of the Air Force. Titled by the military junta as a “Proceso de Reorganización” (“Process of Reorganization”), the stated aim of the dictatorship was to “restore” Argentine identity which the junta claimed was under “attack” by an internal “enemy”. The nation was “ill” and needed to be “cleansed” of this harmful substance (Feitlowitz, 1998; Guzman Bouvard, 1994). Between 1976 and 1983 the junta’s chosen “cleansing” method was “disappearance”.

In Argentina, and in many countries in Latin America, the term “disappeared” is a verb, a noun, and a condition of existence. As a verb, “to be disappeared” is translated from the Spanish “ser desaparecido/a” and refers to an act that one does to another. Specifically it is the

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2 Feitlowitz (1998) provides a detailed account of how the military mobilized a discourse of illness in its justifications for overthrowing the democratically elected government and mounting a coup. As an example, she cites a speech given by Rear Admiral César A. Guzzetti in October 1976: “‘The social body of the country is contaminated by an illness that in corroding its entrails produces antibodies. These antibodies must not be considered in the same way as [the original] microbe. As the government controls and destroys the guerrilla, the action of the antibody will disappear….This is just the natural reaction of a sick body’” (pg. 33).

3 Rather than writing out “desaparecido” to designate the masculine conjugation of the word, and “desaparecida” to designate the feminine conjugation, I have written “/a” at the end of the word. In English, as a verb this distinction
“kidnapping and elimination of an individual by the state or allied apparatus” (Scruggs, 2004, p. 269) – in the case of Argentina, by the military state or collaborators such as the police. Many people during the dictatorship used the term “chupar” (“to suck”) to describe the act of disappearing. This term “comes from the expression: ‘es como si se lo hubiera chupado la tierra,’ which in...[English] means literally: ‘it is as if he had been sucked by the earth’. The expression means that the disappearance has been total and immediate: the person has left no traces” (Perelli, 1992, p. 421). As a noun “disappeared” is the translation of the Spanish “desaparecido/a”. “It was coined by the Argentine military as a way of denying the kidnap, torture, and murder of thousands of citizens” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 49). Today, the term “los desaparecidos”⁴ is commonly known to refer to the 30,000 who were disappeared between 1976 and 1983⁵. Importantly, because there is no body to verify the death of a person who was disappeared, “death can never be interchanged with the word disappeared; nor can ‘the disappeared’ ever be equivalent to the word death” (DiPaolantonio 2000, p. 155). Following these two definitions, we can then understand the notion of “to be disappeared” as a condition of existence, for as neither dead nor alive the disappeared in Argentina exist as an in-between and in the in-between of present absence (DiPaolantonio, 2000; Huyssen, 2003a).

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⁴ As in French, in Spanish plural nouns are conjugated in the masculine when the group being referred to includes men and women. For this reason people use the masculine term *los desaparecidos* to refer to the group of 30,000 people (men and women) who were disappeared.

⁵ Equally, the singular “desaparecido/a” is commonly known to refer to an individual who was disappeared between 1976 and 1983.
During the 1976-1983 dictatorship disappearance was a mechanism of state terrorism used to instill widespread fear within society so as to guarantee compliance with the military state (Feitlowitz, 1998; Gordon, 1997; Hollander, 1992; Marchak, 1999). The physical act of disappearance began with violent abductions. “Nearly two thirds of the disappeared were abducted [from their] homes” in the middle of the night by a gang of military and/or police personnel dressed in civilian clothing (Robben, 2007, p. 253). A national underground network of torture centres was established where those that were kidnapped were detained, tortured, and subsequently disappeared – their bodies dumped into mass graves or hurled out of airplanes into the river Rio de la Plata. In these centres pregnant women who were detained were kept alive until they gave birth (often in inhumane and unsanitary conditions) at which point they would be “permanently” disappeared and the child given to a member of the military or to a military supporter. Specifically, disappearance functioned to instill terror – to create a culture of fear – within civil society in two ways (Femenía, 1987). First, while the military kidnappings were staged as clandestine operations, they were in fact “planned…and implemented to make sure others knew what was happening” (Gordon, 1997, p. 75). Second, these kidnappings – the disappearances – stood as a “public secret” (ibid) as the military denied what people saw (and were intended to see) with their own eyes (Gordon, 1997; Marchak, 1999; Taylor; 1998). This “public secret” was most explicitly enacted through the military’s simultaneous denial of the disappearances and torture centres and affirmation of this horrific truth through the release – “the

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6 The Rio de La Plata is a river that shares borders with Argentina and Uruguay. There have been accounts recorded both during and after the dictatorship of visibly tortured and mutilated bodies washing up on the riverbanks of the Rio de La Plata in Argentina and in Uruguay (Marchak, 1999).

7 According to the military “the baby’s biological ties and family identity had to be erased, lest it fulfill its genetic destiny and become a guerrilla” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 67). Human rights groups estimate that there were 500 children “appropriated” by the military between 1976 and 1983. Most of these children whom today range in age from mid 20s to mid 30s, are thought to be living unknowingly under a false identity – believing that the people who raised them are their biological parents and thus not knowing that in fact their parents are disappeared persons.
reappearance” – of some individuals. From their position as survivors – as first-hand witnesses – the reappeared could corroborate stories of kidnap and torture and thus, as the military had intended, served as a warning that anyone and everyone could be a target for disappearance (Feitlowitz, 1998; Femenía, 1987; Marchak, 1999; Taylor, 1998).

Afraid of being persecuted by the military, most Argentines responded to such stories with the then widely used phrase “‘estaria metido en algo’ (sic) (he/she must have been involved in something; that is, in some subversive activities”) (Suárez-Orozco, 1990, p. 368)⁸. Many Argentines rationalized reports of disappearances and torture maintaining that “these people must have moved, they must be some place, any place except in that no-place in which they were being brutalized and assassinated” (Taylor, 1998, p. 130). Indeed, the military established the conditions for such responses by telling those who inquired about the fate of disappeared persons that they had abandoned their homes to live in Europe (Feitlowitz, 1998; Marchak, 1999). Similarly, as the “bodies of the disappeared…showed up all over the country…on sidewalks, in trash cans” (Taylor, 1998, p. 98), and on the shores of the Rio de la Plata, the military continued to deny that there were disappeared persons in Argentina. In some cases, the military state published reports in the mainstream media of “confrontations” with “armed guerrillas” to justify the appearance of mutilated bodies in public places. Thus, Argentines continued to disavow disappearances and the disappeared. As a result, when a person was disappeared their family and friends were hurled into a surreal world in which they could claim knowledge of the horror they had witnessed, but in which they could not verify this knowledge as truth. As Guzman Bouvard (1994) writes, when people experienced the disappearance of a loved one, they were

⁸ As Suárez-Orozco (1990) explains, this response was clearly illogical as the denial produced the rationale that there were no victims but rather guilty persons who deserved to be punished, yet was at the same time used as a mechanism to legitimize the silence that was necessary to avoid becoming a victim.
“propelled into a netherworld where there were no rules, no institutions to which one could direct one’s concern, and no death to mourn. [People]…lived in a surreal limbo; deprived of all information and recourse and stripped of social support and comprehension” (p. 35-36).

Drawing from Laub (1992), such an experience can be understood as a traumatic event in that it was an event which “although real, took place outside the parameters of ‘normal’ reality, such as causality, sequence, place, and time” (p. 69). The characteristic incomprehensibility of the traumatic event makes it difficult to articulate in the present as one cannot apply the familiar frames of reference one uses to recall past events. At the same time the characteristic incomprehensibility of the traumatic event makes it difficult to forget as it stands out in one’s consciousness as unique from all other events one has experienced (Laub, 1992; Robben, 2005). Indeed, as Jelin and Kaufman (2000) explain, initially friends and relatives of disappeared persons could “say that something had happened, but could not clearly say what” (p. 90). Today human rights groups have a clear articulation of what occurred during the dictatorship and why.

Briefly stated, in many of the remembrance events organized by human rights groups the dictatorship is narrated as a systematic plan to eradicate social and political activists who opposed the implementation of a particular economic project that benefited the rich. In fact, this narrative is widely known throughout the Southern Cone countries in Latin America as “Operation Condor” – “a systematic plan to coordinate repression between the armed forces of” 6 countries (Jelin, 2003, p. 144) in the 1970s and 1980s that was aimed at eliminating “leftist politics” (Calloni, 2006; Taylor, 2003). Within this context, as the words inscribed on the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism in Buenos Aires tell us, the disappeared are often remembered as “los que murieron combatiendo por los…ideales de justicia y equidad” (“those
who died struggling for the…ideals of justice and equality”)\(^9\). However, though human rights groups in Argentina have been able to disseminate this memory of the dictatorship and the disappeared into the mainstream (Perea, 2007) (albeit, not without continuing opposition), disappearance itself remains something that is very difficult to articulate in a coherent way. That death occurred remains untold. Thus, there remains “no death to mourn”.

With the return to democracy on December 10\(^{th}\) 1983, newly elected President Raul Alfonsin (1983-1989) attempted to account for the lack of verification of death by promising to exhume mass graves, “identify the physical remains of the disappeared and return them to their families” (Femenía, 1987, p. 17). His administration also responded to human rights groups’ demands “to know, with some certainty, what had happened in each case” of disappearance (Jelin & Kaufman, 2000, p. 90) by establishing the Comisión Nacional Sobre la Desaparición de Personas (CONADEP) (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons) in 1984. The primary aim of the CONADEP was to take testimony from survivors, witnesses, and relatives of disappeared persons and publish a report detailing an account of the repression during the dictatorship (Feitlowitz, 1998). The following year, he proposed “to bring to trial those actors considered responsible for the Argentine social and political violence” (Perelli, 1992, p. 430)\(^10\). However, those who could uncover the truth about what happened to each disappeared person –

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\(^9\) The articulation of the dictatorship and the disappeared as such is further explained in Chapter Four drawing from analysis of the conversations I had with members of human rights groups.

\(^10\) Raúl Alfonsin was a lawyer and a co-founder of the human rights group Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos (Permanent Assembly for Human Rights) that was formed in response to the escalating state violence in the years prior to the beginning of the 1976-1983 dictatorship. This, plus the fact that he ran his campaign on a promise to “commit to human rights” made him a popular candidate for many of those who belonged to human rights groups and those who supported them (Guzman Bouvard, 1994). His popularity within the human rights movement faltered however because of certain decisions he made pertaining to the prosecution of the junta and other decisions he made that, according to many human rights groups, seemed to promote reconciliation over justice (including, for some human rights groups, the decision to exhume mass graves). This latter point is discussed further throughout the chapter.
the military junta – continued to deny disappearances and, in the end, both the Alfonsín government and those that followed did little to account for the “death” and “murder” of its citizens. Today, despite current trials in the federal courts of those who disappeared between 1976 and 1983, who murdered whom, when, where and how and where remains are buried is still largely unknown. Thus, in Argentina, “there is literally no body to confirm death – for there is no physical body or any body of the state to verify the death” (Di Paolantonio, 2000, p. 162). Drawing from Derrida (1994), who posits that “nothing could be worse, for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt [about]…who is buried where” (p. 9), Di Paolantonio (2000) explains that, “in post-dictatorship Argentina, mourners-in-waiting are still waiting” (p. 162).

Writing about disappearances and psychoanalysis in Argentina, Hollander (1992) explains that not knowing the fate of a disappeared person manifests in a compulsive “acting out” which “includes fantasies of the possible torments to the disappeared person’s mind and body” (p. 283). As Freud (1917/2006) initially observed, traumatic experiences of loss often produce a “compulsive” “acting out” in which the event is continuously repeated in an attempt to understand it and make it familiar. Freud identified this response as melancholia – the

11 As I explain below, the perception that Alfonsín did little to account for the death and murder of its citizens is often grounded in a disapproval of his decision to enact two amnesty laws that halted the possibility of further trials after 1985. However, as Di Paolantonio (2000; 2003) explains, there were also inherent limits to Alfonsín’s chosen measures to account for dictatorial repression through the CONADEP and the 1985 trial. For example, as he explains, being only given nine months to collect testimonies on disappearances, the CONADEP was only able to collect information on approximately 30 percent of those cases, most of which accounted for disappearances in urban areas but not in rural areas of the country. Considering that today it is widely accepted that the repression was worse in the Northern provinces of Argentina, which had (and have) much less urban development and much more poverty, the CONADEP thus failed to contribute to an account and an analysis of how repression was enacted by the state on particular people. Additionally, the report published at the completion of its investigation, titled “Nunca Más” (“Never Again”), served to reinforce discourses of healing, reconciliation, and redemption of the nation by constructing the dictatorship as “an aberration from the ‘national character’ that needed only to ‘deal’ with these ‘criminals’ and reclaim itself” (Di Paolantonio, 2000, p. 166).

12 Though some remains have been identified from the exhumation of mass graves and a small number of former military officers have confessed to kidnap and torture, the majority of the disappeared are still disappeared.
“abnormal” reaction to loss. In contrast he maintained that, mourning is the “normal” “reaction to the loss of a beloved person or an abstraction taking the place of the person such as the fatherland, freedom, an ideal and so on” (p. 310). Through his work with his patients he observed that “the work that mourning performs” is the recognition that the “beloved object no longer exists” and a consequent ability to “detach” from the lost object and move on to form new bonds (p. 311). Mourning is thus “a crucial mode of working through” (ibid) loss and trauma that renders the traumatic event – the dictatorship – and the experience of loss – the loss of a person who has been disappeared – knowable and speakable. Mourning mitigates trauma by rectifying the endless confusion and uncertainty it produces – “it mediates between past and future and participates in the social production of meaning” (Humphrey & Valverde, 2007, p. 180). That said, La Capra (1997) notes that the process of mourning need not be one of denying “the force of the trauma” – of normalizing disappearances and rationalizing the violence.

Similarly, drawing from Freud’s later work on mourning (in a paper titled “The Ego and the Id”), Butler (2004) notes that the inability to detach from the lost object characteristic of melancholia is perhaps necessary to mourning. The process of detaching, or “gradually decathecting” (Hollander, 1992) – mourning – might then be best understood as the transformation of the attachment one had to the individual when she or he was alive, rather than a complete detachment. This transformed attachment implies that the mourner is able to acknowledge the break of familiarity that has resulted from the loss and is willing first, to resist the desire to bring “back as unchanged and familiar what can no longer exist” and second, attend to the force the unfamiliar exerts on the present to form new attachments and new ways of understanding the present and one’s self (Britzman, 2000, p. 34). This transformed attachment is a learning to “live with loss” (Simon, et. al., 2000).
Nonetheless, this transformed attachment and the ability to live with “the force of trauma” rather than be consumed by it still necessitates “an acknowledgement of reality [that] the individual no longer exists” (Hollander, 1992, p. 283). Attempts to participate in this process of transformation “with no body to confirm death” are often met with feelings of “intense guilt, for without proof of death to go on with one’s life [– to form new attachments –] is tantamount to a kind of murder of the disappeared loved one” (ibid). Consequently, mourning requires rituals that “mediate the transition of the deceased from life to death, and [that] mediate the transition of the bereaved from one social status to another” (Romanoff & Terrenzio, 1998, p. 698). Rituals such as funerals, which include the burial of the dead, “provide opportunities for the public display of grief, structures for the delimitation of grief, vehicles for affirming the relationship of the deceased to the community, and the continuity of the community in his or her absence” (Romanoff & Terrenzio, 1998, p. 699). In other words, mourning requires the ability to participate in rituals such as burials and funerals that: a) allow the living to name the dead as dead and to physically mark the confirmation of death – the burial site; b) allow the living to name themselves as mourners and to localize their grief in the place that marks and confirms the death of the individual – the burial site; and c) allow the living to “take care” of the dead and confirm the significance of the deceased within the community (Romanoff & Terrenzio, 1998; Sturken, 2004).

Often, in cases where it is not possible to recover the bodies of the deceased, the living attempt to materialize the loss in order to participate in some of these rituals (Sturken, 2004)\(^\text{13}\).

\(^{13}\) Outside of Argentina, one of the most recent examples of such a materialization is the “five-inch urn of dust with ‘9-11-01’ engraved on it” received by relatives of the victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre (Sturken, 2004, p. 313). Here the dust was transformed from waste into the “remains of life” – no longer simply dust, this material made tangible the absence of individuals and helped to mediate grief (ibid). Another example is the well known Memorial for the Disappeared in Chile – a marble wall that bears the names of the
In Buenos Aires the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism serves this function in part by naming the disappeared as dead (as I noted above). Specifically the Monument is a series of four non-continuous walls jutting out from the ground in zigzag formation with the names of the “victims of state terrorism” sequenced alphabetically and by year. As visitors follow the path alongside the walls they walk upwards toward the Rio de La Plata where the last wall ends. As a Monument to all victims of state terrorism in the country, engraved on the walls are the names of people killed and disappeared between 1969 and 1983. However, as it is located near the place of “death” of many of the disappeared and the majority of the engraved names are of those persons disappeared between 1976 and 1983, the Monument is widely referenced to as a monument in remembrance of los desaparecidos.

Thousands that were disappeared during the 1973-1990 dictatorship and stands at the entrance of the most important cemetery in the capital city of Santiago. Located in a cemetery it allows visitors to, for a moment, place the disappeared in the world of the dead and gives the disappeared the same respect and care as other Chilean citizens who have died (Meade, 2001). The Remembrance Garden in Freedom Park in South Africa also serves a similar purpose as it is a specific place “where people from all over the country are invited to symbolically bury and mourn for freedom fighters whose bodies were never recovered. This officially sanctioned space for mourning makes it possible for the deceased to be named and for freedom fighters to in effect become ancestral figures of the New South Africa” (Jewsiewicki & White, 2005, p. 3).

The Monument contains approximately 8,700 names. It also includes blank spaces to signify the names that are missing and the word “embarazada” (“pregnant”) to identify the disappeared women who were pregnant when they were disappeared and thus to identify the missing children. The Monument is located in Parque de la Memoria (Park of Memory) in Buenos Aires. In 1997 a number of human rights groups and architects put forth a proposal to the municipal government of Buenos Aires to construct a space in memory of state violence overlooking the Rio de la Plata. In 1998 the city legislature passed a law that created the Comisión Pro Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado (Commission Pro Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism) comprised of human rights groups and city government officials to begin working on the construction of this space. In November of 2007 the opening of the Park and the unveiling of the Monument was inaugurated. Today the park which sits on 31 acres of land on the shores of the Rio de la Plata, contains a series of “commemorative sculptures” created by different artists chosen by the Commission, the Monument, and an “activity room” designated for “cultural activities” (“Parque de la Memoria” [“Park of Memory”] n.d.). During my visit in 2009 parts of the park were still under construction and the activity room was not yet open to the public.

It is unclear why 1969 was chosen as a starting point considering that there have been a number of dictatorship in Argentina in the 20th century (1930-1938, 1943-1946, 1955-1958, 1962-1963, 1966-1973, 1976-1983). Perhaps it is because “state terrorism” denotes a particular kind of violence that involves actions by the state intended to instill terror within the very fabric of society that was, albeit arguably, not witnessed before the late 1960s.
As Huyssen (2003a) has written of the Monument, “these walls with their inscribed names…document the extent of state terror and provide a site [to engage in] mourning” rituals (p. 103-104). Indeed, the flowers that people place beside the names (of los desaparecidos) on the Monument walls are an example of how people use the space for such purposes. During my visit to the Monument in June of 2009 these flowers, some fresh and others completely dried out, reminded me that for some people this place was akin to a cemetery. My initial shock at the emptiness of the site of the Monument and the endless lists of names engraved on enormous slabs of black stone was subdued by the flowers – evidence that someone had been there and that these were not merely names, but markings of loss and absence and, therefore, of life. This confirmation of life was a particularly significant statement in relation to the act of disappearance which was a method used by the military to erase all traces of a person’s existence – in the words of General Roberto Viola, the disappeared are “‘those forever absent’”, neither existing now nor ever (cited in Bevernage & Aerts, 2009, p. 396). If we assume that these flowers were placed by family and friends over the engraved name of their loved one (rather than by a passerby who arbitrarily chose a name beside which to place a flower), we can understand such a mourning ritual as an example of people attempting to work through their individual loss by designating a contained place for grief and publicly caring for their loved one. As mourners-in-waiting, their attempts to work through loss might also be understood as a desire to mourn.

1.2.2 Present Absence, Working Through, and Demands for Memory, Truth, and Justice

Not everyone in Argentina agrees with the construction of the Monument or with the notion that remembrance practices of the disappeared should speak to a desire to mourn. The human rights group Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, has stated that “if necessary we [the Asociación Madres] will use pickaxes, hammers, and steel chisels to erase the names engraved
on that monument” (Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, 1999, my translation). The group’s response to the Monument was not surprising considering its members’ longstanding rejection of all “plaques and monuments because they signify the burial of the dead” and, according to them, their children “are not dead” (Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, n.d., my translation). Their refusal to name the disappeared dead and to participate in any kind of mourning ritual is also not surprising within the context of a history of post-dictatorship governments that have implemented policies and practices that champion forgetting over remembering and reconciliation over justice (Bevernage & Aerts, 2009). In fact, one of the opponents to the Monument, Congressman Ricardo Bussaca, maintained that “converting the city into a museum” was unnecessary and would only prohibit Argentines from moving on and looking towards the future (Bussaca 2004, cited in Bonet, 2010, p. 28). To justify his argument he approvingly referenced past government rulings which had impeded the construction of other commemorative sites. An example of one such ruling is that of former President Carlos Menem (1989-1999) who in 1998 responded to (some) human rights groups’ demands for a museum of memory to be housed in the former torture centre ESMA (Escuela Mecánica de la Armada – Navy School of Mechanics) with a proposal to demolish the site and build in its place a “‘monument to national unity’” (Menem, 1998, cited in Di Paolantonio, 2008, p. 30).

Menem’s proposed project for “what to do with ESMA” (Di Paolantonio, 2008, p. 29) – what to do with the traces of the horror of the dictatorship – occurred against the backdrop of a legacy of impunity that had in fact begun during the dictatorship. Once the military realized that disappearance left behind a “legion of ghosts that could potentially haunt the country for a very long time”, it established measures to reduce this danger (Bevernage & Aerts, 2009, p. 396). In
1979 the military government passed a series of laws that declared anyone who had been missing for longer than six months dead\textsuperscript{16}. Later, in its final report issued before leaving the national seat of power in 1983, the military granted itself amnesty through the \textit{Ley de Pacificación Nacional} (Law of National Pacification) (Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Osiel, 1986; Perelli, 1992). With reference to “disappeared persons”, the military claimed that “they were either ‘living in exile’, ‘residing in Argentina with false identities’, or should be considered dead, even in cases when it is not possible to determine the date, place, or cause of death, nor the burial of the remains”\textsuperscript{16} (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 12-13). It admitted to excesses of violence, but deemed it the work of a “few bad apples” that did not characterize the military and “considered the most unsavoury aspects of the dirty war an unwelcome albeit necessary consequence of the major crusade against subversion” (Perelli, 1992, p. 434)\textsuperscript{17}. The consequent protest voiced by human rights groups was initially made “in terms of a right to truth” (Bevernage & Aerts, 2009, p. 394). Within this context the \textit{Asociación Madres}’ demands to “bring the disappeared back alive” (“¡Aparición con Vida!”) was a refusal to accept the death of the disappeared without a confession of murder as

\textsuperscript{16} An example of one of these laws “authorized the families of the disappeared to exercise the right which laws regarding pensions and retirements would grant after deaths of those were proved. This law established [that]…a pension…could be paid the day after six months of absence. After three years it was necessary to decree legally the death to continue collecting the pension, and anyone registered as missing between November 6, 1974 and September 12, 1979 could be declared dead by the state” (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 139).

\textsuperscript{17} Here we see also how the military employed religious discourses and discourses of war to justify the state terrorism. The military presented itself as the “saviours” of the nation participating in a war fought between two equally armed groups (Feitlowitz, 1998). As I detail below, the military stated that it sought to save the true Argentine identity which was grounded in Western and Christian values. This religious ideology underlying the dictatorship manifest in particular ways in the torture centres with respect to the treatment of Jewish disappeared persons. The “especially vicious…treatment of Jewish prisoners” in the torture centres has been widely documented by former disappeared persons who experienced it themselves or witnessed it happening to others. As Marchak (1999) explains, drawing from her interviews with leaders of the Jewish community in Buenos Aires and former disappeared persons who identified as Jewish, Argentine Jewish citizens were “‘probably not’” specifically targeted during the repression of 1976-1983 (p. 14). However, “if Jews were caught and identified as Jews, they were subjected to particularly harsh treatment” (ibid). Additionally, “the proportion of Jews who disappeared exceeded their proportion of the population” (ibid). Importantly, the anti-Semitism that characterized the military was not an anomaly – it was deeply entrenched in a history of anti-Semitism in Argentina (further discussed in the following chapter).
well as, in some cases, the belief or perhaps hope that the disappeared were still alive. Horrified by the military violence which could no longer be denied and also believing that the disappeared were alive, in the later years of the dictatorship many Argentines supported human rights groups’ demands for truth and justice (Femenía, 1987; Jelin, 1995). However, once it became clear with the return to democracy that the disappeared would remain disappeared, many within civil society became increasingly uneasy with the Asociación Madres’ persistent denial of death and refusal to mourn (Bevernage & Aerts, 2009). A large portion of Argentines supported Alfonsín’s proposal to exhume mass graves, “identify the physical remains of the disappeared and return them to their families” (Femenía, 1987, p. 17). In response to what they read as an urge to “move on” promoted by the Alfonsín government and a majority of Argentines, President of the Asociación Madres Hebe de Bonafini declared that, in Argentina, “la muerte no existe” (“death does not exist”) (cited in Bevernage & Aerts, 2009, p. 395).

The Asociación Madres’ resistance to any political decision that implied the death of the disappeared continued throughout Alfonsín’s presidency (and, as I stated above, it continues today). However, this group’s struggle over the public representation of the disappeared was (and is) also one of defying state attempts to construct the disappeared as “armed guerrillas”, “subversives”, or “terrorists”. As they had done during the dictatorship alongside many other human rights groups, the Asociación Madres continued to persistently struggle against what has become known as “la teoría de los dos demonios” (“the theory of two evils”). Initially put forth by the military who claimed that the dictatorship was necessary to combat “subversives” who were attacking the nation, the theory of two evils narrates the dictatorship as a war fought between two equally armed groups. Initially, it seemed that Alfonsín would dispel this myth when he declared that he would try those responsible for the violence between 1976 and 1983. However, in 1985 he decided to try both the military juntas and leaders of guerrilla organizations.
in the federal courts. In doing this, human rights groups argued that Alfonsín only reinforced the theory of two evils (Feitlowitz, 1998; Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Marchak, 1999; Osiel, 1986; Perelli, 1992). Though five members of the junta tried were found guilty and sentenced, over the following two years the Alfonsín government passed two laws that protected all other members of the military from prosecution – the Ley de Punto Final (Law of Full Stop) in 1986 which established a deadline of 60 days for processing future charges and the Ley de Obediencia Debida (Law of Due Obedience) in 1987 which stated that middle rank officers could not be tried on the basis that they were following orders. These laws were later followed by the Presidential pardons given in 1990 by President Menem to those who had been sentenced in 1985 (Feitlowitz, 1998; Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Marchak, 1999; Perelli, 1992).

Against the backdrop of this volatile political terrain and such clear attempts by the state to replace justice with reconciliation, the Asociación Madres’ condemnation of remembrance events that represent the disappeared as dead, or even as absent in some form, is an important political statement. Their call “¡Aparición con Vida!” and insistence that the disappeared are not dead, refuses the urge to reconcile and “move on” – to “heal” the “wounds” of the nation (Di Paolantonio, 2000). “Different from any simple ‘denial’ or ‘melancholic pathos’” these actions tear through the “we”, disrupting any coherency in a national narrative that binds “us” through a common triumph in overcoming a difficult past (Di Paolantonio, 2000, p. 175). Their actions –

18 This decision was preceded by a failed attempt at trying the junta within the military courts. Worried by the possibility of further authoritarian violence Alfonsín proposed a trial in the military courts that would give the military the opportunity to “‘cleanse its own house’” of “antidemocratic elements” and thus recover its status as a democratic institution (Perelli, 1992, p. 430-431). In 1984 the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces declared that it could not judge the supposed crimes because, in its opinion, there were no crimes but rather necessary acts committed in defense of the nation during a “war against subversion”. In response, because of a law passed earlier that year that allowed the state to appeal the outcome of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in the civilian courts, the Alfonsin government was able to try former members of the military juntas in the federal courts in 1985.

19 Importantly, because these laws did not include the crime of the kidnapping and appropriation of children, a number of former military and police officers have been tried for committing such crimes.
their insistence to keep their wounds open – thus serve to continuously remind Argentines that the state has not accounted for its citizens and, consequently, function to reiterate the demand for memory, truth and justice (Di Paolantonio, 2000). However, in contrast to their refusal to name the disappeared dead, their assertion that “the disappeared are alive” holds another set of implications for the nation building project promoted by the state. With reference to the disappeared Hebe de Bonafini has said, “‘¡Están aquí más vivos que nunca!’” (“‘They are here more alive than ever’” (cited, Abrevaya, 2008). Addressing those who attended the groups’ first event marking its efforts to transform the former ESMA into a space for social and cultural events20 she stated, “‘¡Nuestros hijos no son huesos, son vida que nace...como semilla en cada uno de ustedes!’” (“‘Our children are not bones, they are life that grows like a seed in each of you!’”) (ibid). Certainly, de Bonafini and the Asociación Madres understand that the disappeared are not alive in a physical sense. Here, de Bonafini is speaking about the presence of the disappeared – or rather, the presence of their ideals for social change – in those who are today involved in the struggle for social justice. In that their claim that the disappeared are alive affirms the existence of a struggle for social justice, it functions both to oppose the theory of two evils by identifying the disappeared as victims of a repressive state that considered their social justice work a threat, and to oppose the denial of their children as they continue to know them – as social and political activists.

20 The former ESMA was renamed (or, reconstructed) as the “Espacio para la Memoria y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos” (“Space for Memory and the Promotion of Human Rights”) in 2004 as a consequence of an agreement signed between the Federal Government, then represented by President Néstor Kirchner, and the City Government of Buenos Aires, then represented by Mayor Aníbal Ibarra. The site was not completely vacated by the Navy until September of 2007. The Asociación Madres took possession of the space designated to them in the ex-ESMA on January 31st of 2008. There, they constructed the “Espacio Cultural Nuestros Hijos” or, as it is known by its acronym, “ECuNHi” (“Cultural Space Our Children”). There the Asociación Madres hold workshops, art classes, and cultural events such as music concerts open to the public. For example, one of the most recent and infamous workshops they have run in ECuNHi is a cooking class for “cooking on a budget” led by de Bonafini.
Though today members of both groups of *Madres* publicly remember the disappeared as people who struggled for social change, many mothers have stated that during the dictatorship they did not know about their children’s activism and sometimes in cases where they did, they disapproved of it (Guzman Bouvard, 1994). In this regard, though the Asociación Madres would disagree with my analysis, their claims that the disappeared live might be understood as an attempt to redefine their relationship to their (now disappeared) children. In other words, such claims can be read as attempts to “work through” the traumatic loss – to transform their attachment to “the lost object” and consider how their understanding of the present is informed by the loss, and to produce a coherent narrative of the dictatorship. Indeed, many mothers whose children are disappeared have said that their children have “birthed” their current struggle. Certainly, the mothers who have said this mean that it was because their children were kidnapped that they took to the streets to protest, and as such, learned how to resist repressive states. That said, when mothers of disappeared persons make this statement they also mean that through coming to know their children as social and political activists they have come to know themselves as social and political activists (Guzman Bouvard, 1994).

Similarly, Taylor (2003) observes that the human rights group *H.I.J.O.S*, which is largely constituted by children whose parents were disappeared21, also identify with the disappeared’s “fight for justice and human rights” (p. 183). However, *H.I.J.O.S*’ particular mode of protest “helps… [them] cope with individual and collective trauma” (p. 165) quite differently than what

21 *H.I.J.O.S* stands for *Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y Justicia Contra el Olvido y Silencio* (Children for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence). Though the majority of its members are children (now adults in their late twenties to mid thirties) whose parents (or parent) were disappeared during the 1976-1983 dictatorship, some members are children of persons who were murdered as political prisoners (which is distinct from disappearance both because death is verifiable and because the family knew where their loved one was being detained), while other members are children of persons who lived in exile during the coup. Nonetheless, unlike the 500 missing children, the “children” in *H.I.J.O.S* know that their biological parents were disappeared.
I have described above. Through their signature form of protest known as *escrache* members of *H.I.J.O.S* “use their personal trauma to mobilize collective acts of condemnation” (Taylor, 2006, p. 1675). Specifically, *escrache* is a kind of “performance protest” that functions as an “act of public shaming” (Taylor, 2003, p. 164). It includes loud and festive music, giant puppets, huge placards with photographs of the disappeared, and is mobile, leading “participants directly to a perpetrator’s home or office or to a clandestine torture centre” (ibid). In the 1990s when *H.I.J.O.S* began performing *escraches*, this particular form of political protest was meant to stand in place of a trial as it allowed for public participation of civil society in condemning the person for her or his crimes. As such, *H.I.J.O.S* aimed to prohibit those who disappeared and tortured people during the dictatorship from carrying out their everyday lives in comfort (which they were able to do because of the amnesty laws and pardons). The group also aimed to disseminate to an Argentine public the truth about the atrocities of the dictatorship and about who the torturers and disappearers were. In this regard, the *escraches* also functioned to call on a public to take on a collective responsibility for the individuals lost by participating in the *H.I.J.O.S*’ expression of pain and suffering and in their demands to the right to truth and justice (Taylor, 2003). Despite the current trials of those who committed crimes during the dictatorship, *H.I.J.O.S* continues the *escraches* because the truth about what happened to every disappeared person is still unknown, because with so much time passing since the dictatorship some of the perpetrators will die without trial, and because the consequences of trauma have not ceased.

Thus, Taylor (2006) explains that through this “political acting up” framed as a right to truth and justice, *H.I.J.O.S* simultaneously engages in an “acting out” of their trauma that, in turn, “mitigates the personal and collective effects of trauma” – that of incomprehensible loss – by containing the horrific experience and knowledge of the circumstance of their parents’ absence (Taylor, 2006, p. 1676).
1.2.3  “Cultural Trauma” and Demands for Human Rights

Underlying the differences I have outlined between how human rights groups cope with the present absence of the disappeared and with an “absent state” (Humphrey, 2005; Humphrey & Valverde, 2007; 2008) are different objectives driving each group’s call to remember. For example, the human rights group *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo), constituted by women searching for their missing grandchildren, holds finding those children and prosecuting the kidnappers as the primary aim of public remembrance of the dictatorship. Differently than *H.I.J.O.S* and the *Asociación Madres*, the *Abuelas* frame their demands for truth and justice as a “derecho a la identidad” (“right to identity”). The right to identity can specifically be understood as the right of appropriated children to recover knowledge of who their biological parents were and to reunite with their surviving biological family. The right to identity expresses a demand (and desire) to reunite families who have been broken as the result of an appropriated child as a right. The notion of identity as a right deserving of state protection was legitimized in 1992 “when the National Executive Power of [the Argentine]…government created…the National Committee for the Right to Identity” (sic) whose main objective is to “assist young adults who doubt their identities by investigating all existing documents and referring them to blood analysis” (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, n.d.)22. Claims made by the *Abuelas* for the right to identity manifest in a number of remembrance practices. Of note is the *Teatro por la Identidad* (Theatre for Identity). Through the Theatre for Identity the *Abuelas* work with local actors to stage performances that are intended to encourage those who doubt their identity to approach the *Abuelas* for an investigation. Through this particular (and literal) staging of trauma, distinct demands for human rights are made.

22 “Blood analyses are conducted by the National Bank of Genetic Data (sic), which has the power to perform such analyses without legal intervention” (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, n.d.).
Within the many differences among groups, however, there are similarities. Public remembrance of the dictatorship addresses and is concerned with a collective – a “we”. As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, this is because traumatic experiences disrupt the collective; collective trauma “is more than the sum total of individual suffering because it ruptures social bonds, destroys group identities, [and] undermines the sense of community” (Robben, 2005, p. 125). In part, this was what the dictatorship was orchestrated to do – to “reorganize” the nation and preserve “true” Argentine identity (recall that the juntas titled the dictatorship, “El Proceso de Reorganización” - “The Process of Reorganization”). The military maintained that Argentine identity, which had always been premised on Western Christian values and morals, was at risk of destruction by “‘a minority’” not considered Argentine for their ideas were “‘contrary to our Western, Christian civilization’” (unidentified military officer, cited in Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 41). These “non-Argentines” were identified by the military as “communists”, “subversives”, “guerrillas”, and “terrorists” that were part of “‘organizations that wanted to take power through armed struggle’” (General Falcón, cited in Marchak, 1999, p. 285). To “reorganize” meant to eradicate this “enemy” of the nation.

In order to qualify as a true Argentine and be distinguished from “the enemy”, people needed to be seen by the military “performing” their Argentine-ness. This performance involved “dressing the part”, for the military had visibly identified “the enemy” as men with long hair and facial hair and women who wore pants (rather than skirts). It also involved actively not looking and not knowing in order to protect one’s self from becoming the enemy – from being disappeared. The visible invisibilities of state terrorism functioned as a system of surveillance over civil society that was internalized. Public spaces such as plazas and cafés were emptied of public debates and encounters. When in public, people regulated the clothes they wore and the language they used, and strangers avoided eye contact and speaking to each other about political
issues (Taylor, 1998). Perelli (1992) writes that during the dictatorship people detached themselves from any “impulse to provide assistance and comfort to one’s neighbour, co-workers, or fellow students… [they abandoned] caring and sharing for the sake of staying alive” (Perelli, 1992, p. 424-425). Thus, drawing from Anderson (1983) who posits that the “we” exists because the people who constitute it “imagine” themselves as connected, this isolation shattered the Argentine collective by breaking the possibility of imagining a unity between people characterized by a certain camaraderie and solidarity. However, Perelli (1992) also notes that it is the public memory of the dictatorship that has altered the “we” by disrupting a particular sense of Argentine identity. Specifically she maintains that the public memory of the dictatorship has become a “memoria de sangre” (“blood memory”) – “the salient fact of the past” against which all other events are now judged. Testimonies of kidnapping and torture published almost daily in national newspapers and the many events staged in remembrance of the disappeared across the country make it impossible for Argentines to continue to define themselves as “civilized citizens” belonging to a “first-world country” that does not act “with the same savagery” as that seen in the “third-world countries” of the region (Perelli, 1992, p. 416). Memoria de sangre has split Argentine identity into before and after. In the after, Argentines are left with the task of resolving the question “who are we?”

Much like Jeffrey Alexander’s (2004) study of how the “representation” of events as “traumatic” structures the “we”, Perelli’s (1992) analysis of the function of memoria de sangre

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23 Here, Taylor (1998) draws from Foucault’s analysis of Bentham’s Panopticon as well as his notion of “lateral invisibility” of which he speaks in Discipline and Punish. She writes, “as in Bentham’s Panopticon power was ‘visible and unverifiable’ – visible because the population could not get away from the military presence, unverifiable because people never knew when they were being watched” (p. 96). Taylor (1998) observes that this produced a “lateral invisibility” where “no one dared to look to the side for fear that the person standing nearby was a terrorist or military infiltrator” (p. 125). Thus, the dictatorship instituted systems of surveillance that led to the “internalization of surveillance” and hence people’s constant self regulation. It was in this way that people attempted to secure their own safety from persecution. And it was in this way that the military was able to continue with the disappearances.
examines how the “representation” of the dictatorship frames attempts to (re)construct the Argentine collectivity. However, quite differently from Perelli and from the discussion thus far about how the dictatorship as a traumatic event might function to inform how and why human rights groups insist on remembering the dictatorship, Alexander maintains that “trauma is not naturally existing; it is something constructed by society” (p. 2). Further, he takes issue with psychoanalytic theory, arguing that conceptualizing an event as intrinsically traumatic incorrectly understands responses to the trauma (such as public and collective remembrance) as “natural” attempts to rescue the events “from the unconscious distortions of memory” and to “restore the objective reality of the brutal events” (p. 8). He outlines an argument of what he calls the “naturalistic fallacy” of the psychoanalytic perspective that he maintains undermines both “efforts to accurately attribute responsibility for the event and the progressive effort to develop an ameliorating response” as a result of displaced, unconscious memory (p. 5). Thus, though it may seem contradictory to draw from his work at this point in the analysis, it is important to turn to as it complements the preceding discussion regarding trauma, mourning, and the task of living with loss. Specifically, Alexander’s analysis of “cultural trauma” opens an avenue through which to begin to unravel how claims of collective suffering resulting from the dictatorship are made by human rights groups through remembrance practices that not only call for some form of reparation from the state, but also on a particular Argentine public to reconstruct itself.

By examining “cultural traumas”, and thus events that are “represented” as “cultural crises” that have shifted the “core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identities” (p. 10), Alexander highlights how groups “take on board” responsibility for human suffering and define themselves through the act of sharing in others’ (each others’) suffering and of taking steps to repair the injury. He observes that groups participate in a “a process of trauma creation” in which
“collective actors decide to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from and where they want to go” (p. 10, my emphasis). Such representations are in fact “claims” made by “carrier groups” who produce a “master narrative” (a “compelling account”) about “the nature of the pain”, “the nature of the victim” (i.e., who is the victim?), the relationship of the victim to the “wider audience” (the audience that does not necessarily constitute the carrier group) and the nature of the perpetrator (i.e., who is responsible for committing the violence?) 24. “Experiencing trauma’ can be understood as a sociological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences” (p.22). In so far as the “wider audience” is convinced that they have been traumatized, the process of trauma creation invites people to participate in others’ suffering. Collective identity is revised through this process which engages “the traumatized’ in a “searching re-remembering of the collective past’ (ibid) – a reconstructing of the past – in which the traumatized collective is now unified not only through the experience of trauma but also through the responsibility it assumes to account for an other’s pain. The “lessons of the trauma become objectified in monuments, museums, and collections of historical artifacts” (p. 23) that also stand as markers of the new collective identity. “By allowing members of wider publics to participate in the pain of others, cultural traumas broaden the realm of social understanding and sympathy, and they provide powerful avenues for new forms of social incorporation” (p. 24).

24 More specifically, Alexander writes that “carrier groups have both ideal and material interests, they are situated in particular places in the social structure, and they have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims – for what might be called ‘meaning making’ – in the public sphere” (p. 11). Carrier groups may belong to the elite or marginalized classes, they may be chosen by the masses, they can be generational, national, and/or institutional. As the task of the carrier group is to “project the trauma claim”, they need an “audience”. The process of trauma creation therefore also requires a public. Lastly, this process is not devoid of the institutional context in which it takes shape (e.g., legal context, media context).
In post-dictatorship Argentina, the (collective and individual) pain and suffering that resulted from the 1976-1983 dictatorship has been translated by human rights groups into demands for human rights – “a demand to have human dignity recognized” (Humphrey & Valverde, 2008, p. 83). One of the most illustrative examples of this is the human rights group CELS’ demand for the “‘right to mourn’”, articulated in its 1995 appeal to the Argentine courts to continue to investigate the disappearances that occurred during the dictatorship despite the impunity laws (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 242). Today, demands for human rights made by human rights groups in the country have expanded to also “include social and economic rights” (“social justice”) (Humphrey & Valverde, 2008, p. 86). Through varied practices of remembrance of the dictatorship, human rights groups animate a collective suffering produced by the state. This is expressed as a demand for human rights that includes the “right to truth”, legal punishment for the disappearances as well as a transformation of the neoliberal policies characteristic of post-dictatorship states (Humphrey & Valverde, 2008). As I have stated above, events in remembrance of the dictatorship organized by human rights groups can be read as both attempts to cope with trauma and to draw public (the public’s) attention to the state’s lack of

CELS is the acronym for Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (Centre for Legal and Social Studies). The 1995 appeal was led primarily by CELS co-founder Emilio Mignone whose daughter Mónica María Calendaria Mignone was disappeared in 1977. As Feitlowitz (1998) has explained, “the case was based on purely humanitarian grounds: ‘the inalienable right to truth, the obligation to respect the body, and the right to mourn the dead’” (p. 242). Though human rights groups had previously made legal arguments for the right to truth, the CELS’ demand to the right to mourn reframed the right to truth. That is, it reframed the significance of the right to truth – of why truth about what happened to every disappeared person and where the remains are buried is important. The 1995 appeal was made possible by the constitutional reform led by President Menem in 1994 which essentially established the conditions for international law to supersede domestic law (this is further explained in Chapter Two). As a consequence CELS was able to construct a case that structured a demand of the state to investigate the disappearances committed between 1976 and 1983 based on international law. The case was also mounted on the heels of former Navy Captain Alfredo Scilingo’s confession that he had tortured and murdered people in the ESMA, thus confirming that the disappeared had been murdered and that the Navy (and possibly the rest of the military) very likely had information on who was murdered when, where, and how. The Federal Judges ruled in Mignone’s favour ordering “the president, as commander in chief, to require the navy to solicit the information from its members” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 243). The navy responded that they had no such information. In the end, though CELS appealed this in the Federal Courts the courts “froze all investigations into the disappeared” citing the amnesty laws which prohibited “the courts from ordering the military to testify” (ibid).
accountability for its citizens and for its role in committing violence against civil society. In this regard, human rights groups call on an Argentine public (as it is defined by the particular remembrance event) to assume their suffering. In so far as such remembrance events “represent” the effects of the dictatorship as a fracture of the “we”, human rights groups also call on an Argentine public to conceive of itself as having “experienced trauma”. That said, considering that through public remembrance of the dictatorship human rights groups also make demands for human rights that address current social justice issues such as poverty, unemployment, and police violence, they also call on an Argentine public to “participate in the pain of others” – the poor, the unemployed, and the victims of police violence.

Through public remembrance of the dictatorship human rights group invite an Argentine public to engage in collective grief. Certainly the Asociación Madres’ call to keep the wounds open can be read as such because, even though they do not participate in remembrance events that seem to mimic mourning rituals, they do grieve for their disappeared children. They argue, “let them [the wounds] remain open. Because if the wounds still bleed, there will be no forgetting” (cited in Bouvard, 1994, p. 152). As Humphrey and Valverde (2007; 2008) have noted and as I have described above, within the last decade this call has expanded to include the wounds left behind by those who have died as a result of present-day state violence – both economic violence and police violence. As such, through public remembrance of the dictatorship human rights groups declare that a “‘culture of impunity’” persists. For example, the graffiti painted on the building beside the courthouse where Catholic Priest Christian Von
Wernich was being tried for torture and murder in 2007 read, “30,000 desaparecidos, Maxi, Darío, Fuentealba y López = La Misma Impunidad (“30,000 disappeared, Maxi, Darío, Fuentealba, and López = The Same Impunity”). By placing the disappeared in a chronology of victims of state violence who have not been accounted for – Maxi and Dario who were murdered by the police in 2002, Carlos Fuentealba who was murdered by the police in 2007, and López who was disappeared in 2006 – such statements declare that the lack of state accountability continues not just for past crimes but also for present ones.

Public remembrance of the dictatorship, as it is structured by human rights groups in Argentina, provides “a powerful script to critique the failings of the successor democratic governments” through demands for human rights (Humphrey & Valverde, 2007, p. 180). The human rights claims mobilized through public remembrance of the dictatorship allow human rights groups to articulate personal grief as collective grief. Grief is articulated as collective not only through practices that construct military and post-dictatorship state violence as having affected the “we”, but also by the participation of an Argentine public in these practices who thus choose to assume responsibility for others’ suffering. Demands for human rights also function to legitimize pain and suffering as a political issue and thus to produce victims – individual and the collective victims – as a political subject that bears rights which the state is responsible for.

26 Since 2006 trials in the federal courts of those who kidnapped, tortured, and murdered during the dictatorship have been ongoing. The conditions for these trials were established in 2003 when the two amnesty laws enacted by the Alfonsin government were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

27 Jorge Julio López was a witness in the first of the current trials of those who committed crimes of torture, kidnapping, and murder (where it could be proved because remains were found) during the 1976-1983 dictatorship. López was initially disappeared during the dictatorship in 1976 and released from detention in 1979. One day before the last day of the trial López was disappeared. He remains disappeared to date and human rights groups maintain that he was disappeared by members of the Argentine Federal Police.

28 As I explain further in Chapter Two, this present-day lack of accountability is complicated by a current government that has committed itself (in some respects) to sustaining human rights in Argentina by, for example, establishing the legal conditions to try the perpetrators of the dictatorship in the federal courts.
securing and protecting. Importantly however, “human rights…claims…position victims above particular political communities on the basis of universal standards” (Humphrey & Valverde, 2008, p. 90). Anchored in universal moral imperatives, demands for human rights in Argentina (and globally) garner national and international attention that serve to legitimize demands for memory, truth, and justice in the legal realm (Humphrey & Valverde, 2008). In the same vein, the moral imperative grounding human rights claims in Argentina functions to command civil society to adopt human rights as the normative standards through which to govern its own actions. In this sense, the human rights claims are mobilized to construct a new the “we” – a “we” committed to human rights that “performs” this commitment by participating in others’ suffering and making public demands of the state in the name of that suffering translated as a human rights claim29. Considering Brown’s (2004) criticism of the way a moral discourse of human rights constructs “human rights activism…[as] an antipolitical politics of suffering reduction” (p. 460) it is important to note that I am not suggesting that human rights claims in Argentina function to convene a public that is not political (that is not bound by certain social and political concerns). My argument is that human rights activism in Argentina as it is structured through public remembrance of the dictatorship by human rights groups is grounded in a moral imperative, as well as in a “political project…aimed at producing justice” (Brown, 2004, p. 453).

29 As Humphrey and Valverde (2008) have implied, demands for human rights articulated as such can be exclusionary. That it “positions victims above particular political communities” sometimes serves “victims” in that they are able to evoke the attention and action necessary to rectify the wrongs they have experienced. However, this does not mean that all “victims” are treated equally – the suffering of some is considered more legitimate as a human rights claim and deserving of legal and national attention than the suffering of others. Though I do not take up these issues any further here, this is a central discussion in Chapter Six.
1.3 The Human Rights Movement: Tracing the Emergence of Human Rights Groups within the Landscape of Memory

Public and collective memories of state violence are simultaneously individual and social, both about personal and collective loss, and at once articulate endeavours to work through that loss and to stage actions of political resistance as demands of the state to account for injustice and for its citizens. Public and collective memories of state violence are thus inherently conflictual as different collective actors struggle to legitimize their narrative of historical state violence, their form of remembrance, and their particular reasons for remembering over, and at times, against other specific justifications. The struggle over memory involves many collective actors including:

Entrepreneurial interests that are motivated by a mix of criteria...The political Right (the Pinochet Foundation in Chile is probably the emblematic case [in Latin America]), as well as other political groups of diverse ideological stands, also play their role and push for their interpretation [and justifications for remembering a certain construction] of the past. Academic debates and the art world offer additional channels for expression, making available innovative interpretive frameworks and performance opportunities (Jelin, 2003, p. 34).

In Argentina, the human rights movement has been integral to the shaping of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. The human rights movement’s distinct position within the landscape of memory is a result of a number of interrelated factors. For example, Jelin (1995) explains that though the five military dictatorships between 1930 and 1976 (1930-1938, 1943-1946, 1955-1958, 1962-1963 and 1966-1973) had instituted a tradition of state repression in Argentina, the period marked by the 1976-1983 military dictatorship saw the emergence of the naming of this repression as an issue of human rights. Thus, she maintains that the movement’s unique position within the landscape of memory is a result of its role in establishing a historically specific definition of human rights in Argentina. Importantly, for the same reasons the human rights movement also holds a privileged position within the larger context of Argentine political
resistance. However, drawing from the discussion above on the ways in which the experience of pain and suffering legitimizes human rights claims, we must also consider how the widely accepted subject position of “directly affected” victims of the dictatorship that many of the movement’s members occupy has functioned to legitimize this definition and, in turn, the movement’s particular significance within the landscape of memory (and of Argentine political resistance).

During the dictatorship the concern for the state perpetrated abuse of human rights was initially expressed as a search for truth by individuals whose loved ones had seemingly vanished. As these individuals began to gather in groups, this private struggle for truth quickly became defined as a public struggle for human rights (for truth and justice) (Jelin, 1995; Marchak, 1999). This shared struggle for human rights set the conditions for naming the collective of groups mobilizing this very struggle as “el movimiento de derechos humanos” (“the human rights movement”). Consequently, the groups constituting the movement became known as “organismos de derechos humanos” (“human rights groups”). The human rights movement was distinguished from other existing rights movements (e.g., the labour movement) in their defense of the rights of all persons regardless of group affiliation or ability to claim a particular subject position (e.g., worker, Indigenous) – a distinction that has contributed to the construction of their privileged position within mobilizations for political resistance (Sutton, 2008). Some of the first groups to garner national and international attention for their demands for human rights were those groups constituted by individuals who were understood to be “directly affected” by the...
dictatorship – in other words, by individuals who had had a family member disappeared\textsuperscript{31}. The pain and suffering of the relatives of disappeared persons could not easily be dismissed or denied and, consequently, neither could their claims that human rights were being violated by the state in Argentina\textsuperscript{32}. As I explained above, this was (and is) largely because their public display of pain structured demands to attend to the state repression as human rights violations as a moral obligation\textsuperscript{33}. Thus, the distinct position of the human rights movement within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship is a consequence of the interrelationship between its success in instituting a (particular) definition of human rights in Argentina and the commonly accepted understanding that it is largely constituted by the “direct” victims of the dictatorship\textsuperscript{34}. In part, this position continues to be legitimized on the basis of this identity of those directly affected.

\textsuperscript{31} In particular, many scholars have written about the unique role of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (constituted by women whose children had been disappeared) within the human rights movement and its ability to garner national and international recognition of the state repression because of their distinct position as mothers (rather than the more general position of relatives). For example, Guzman Bouvard (1994) notes that because (a traditional notion) motherhood was so highly revered in Argentina (as in other parts of the world) claims for human rights made by mothers could not simply be dismissed.

\textsuperscript{32} However, this does not mean that efforts to delegitimize this pain and suffering did not exist. For example, the military state (as well as post-dictatorship states) branded the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, a group constituted by mothers of disappeared persons, as “las locas de la Plaza” (“the crazy ones of the Plaza”) and as “emotional terrorists”. Both were intended to undermine their credibility in the public’s eyes. Specifically, naming them las locas worked to do so by simply dismissing the rationality and sanity of their demands while naming them emotional terrorists both dismissed their pain and also identified them as part of the “subversive problem” (Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Taylor, 1998). Currently, those who continue to claim that those being tried in the trials were defending the nation attempt to delegitimize the pain and suffering of relatives of disappeared persons by naming those who were disappeared “terrorists” and “guerrillas”. Such claims function to delegitimize relatives’ pain and suffering (and in turn, their demands for justice) by eradicating the conditions that structure the demand made of the state and civil society to attend to the injustices committed during the dictatorship as a moral obligation based on sympathizing with the pain of those “directly affected”.

\textsuperscript{33} Importantly, I am not suggesting that relatives of disappeared persons who gathered within human rights groups were exploiting their pain and suffering or the disappearance of their relatives. Rather I am structuring an analysis of the ways in which their pain and suffering, which became public once they were able to gain momentum as a collective mobilization (rather than a set of individuals with individual concerns), functioned to establish the terms on which their demands for human rights were considered legitimate by the Argentine public (and an international community).

\textsuperscript{34} The latter is a consequence of the fact that the first human rights groups to emerge during the dictatorship were made up of relatives of disappeared persons, as well as a consequence of the legitimacy they were afforded by many in civil society because of their direct experience with disappearance.
However, its successes in informing institutional change in the country, such as the Supreme Court’s decision to annul the amnesty laws of the 1980s, has also contributed to the legitimization of its status as integral to the formation of the memory landscape. As I explain in the following chapter, these achievements have also functioned to legitimize its unique position, as well as that of the distinct definition and mobilization of human rights claims, within the larger context of Argentine political resistance.

Today, the human rights movement is still distinguished from other rights movements based on its claims for the rights of all Argentines. However, it is also distinguished from other rights movements through its articulation of public remembrance of the dictatorship as a “script” through which it critiques “the failings” of the current government with respect to issues of past and present state violence. Within the movement itself, distinctions between groups continue to be made on the basis of the degree to which its members were affected by the dictatorship as well as the particular political moment within which each group emerged and to which each group aimed to respond. As I have briefly explained above, historically the movement has self-identified its constitutive groups within two categories: 1) the “affected” – those groups in which

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35 In 2001 “Federal Judge Gabriel Cavallo revoked as unconstitutional the two amnesty laws...arguing that the violations committed under the dictatorship were of sufficient gravity and scale to be exempt from the statute of limitations”. In August of 2003, with support from President Néstor Kirchner, “the lower hose of Deputies and the Senate voted to abolish the amnesty laws”. Though the Supreme Court eventually declared the laws unconstitutional in 2005 thus allowing for the current trials to take place, it was at first hesitant to do so and had “deferred its ruling...to a lower appellate court” (Di Paolantonio, 2004, p. 353). Because the Argentine Constitution “deems international treaties superior to domestic law” (Levit, 2010, p. 275), those being tried in the current trials are being tried on terms established by international law (e.g., some are being tried for crimes against humanity) rather than national law. The Argentine Constitution was not always structured in this way however. In 1994 President Menem proposed Constitutional reform with the primary aim of removing barriers to Argentina’s participation in “free-trade” across international borders as well as extending his presidential term. In the process he endowed a number of “international treaties with constitutional standing” including “nine international treaties” (p. 278). Thus, “domestic law cannot trump an international norm and certain international human rights norms, to be interpreted in harmony with the rest of the 1994 Constitution, stand on par with the Constitution itself” (ibid). It is because of the status of international law within the Argentine Constitution that the two amnesty laws (and eventually the 1990 pardons granted by Menem to those who had been convicted in 1985) could be declared unconstitutional and that the perpetrators of the dictatorship can be tried by the Argentine federal courts for committing crimes against humanity.
group membership is based on the ability to claim to have been “directly affected” by the dictatorship because their members were themselves temporarily disappeared or because they have a disappeared relative; and 2) the “non-affected” – in contrast, those groups in which group membership is not dependent on the ability to identify as “directly affected” though “directly affected” persons are free to choose to join the group (Jelin, 1995)36. Perelli (1992) distinguishes between two types of groups within the category of non-affected; a) “those groups that try to provide assistance to survivors, usually linked to Church groups” and b) “those destined to provide legal services to the victims or collect information” about the disappeared (p. 426). Additionally, sometimes human rights groups use a third category to differentiate groups within the movement (though to a lesser degree than the two categories described above) – that of “grupos históricos” (“historic groups”). Unlike the identity of “affected” and “non-affected” the identity of “historic groups” does not have a counterpart constructed as such by human rights groups. Thus, when human rights groups use this term to refer to those groups within the movement that formed before or during the 1976-1983 dictatorship, it automatically places those groups that formed after the collapse of the military state as “non-historic groups” or “recent groups”.

36 There is a clear contradiction with the analysis I traced in the previous sections in which I maintained that public remembrance of the dictatorship (sometimes) functions to invite an Argentine public to participate in the pain of others. This contradiction stands namely when we consider those others to be the relatives of the disappeared. Such practices of remembrance arguably imply that the Argentine public being addressed is being asked to conceive itself as affected. Alexander (2004) has noted that this is indeed the case if we understand public remembrance as a process of “trauma creation”. However, the divisions of affected and non-affected within the human rights movement (that are widely known outside of the movement) inherently function to continuously mark a difference based on the degree to which one was affected by the dictatorship (by disappearance), thus countering calls to imagine one’s self as belonging to a collective of persons affected by the dictatorship. This distinction within the human rights movement inevitably structures similar differences within the Argentine public being called on to forge on the grounds of an identity position of having been affected. In other words, this distinction within the human rights movement assigns particular boundaries to this public formation – the implications of which I discuss further in Chapter Six.
Below I trace the development of the human rights movement according to the categories of “affected”, “non-affected” and the subcategories of “groups that provide services for victims”, and “groups that provide legal aid”. In reference to my use of the two subcategories constructed by Perelli (1992), I do not mean to say that those groups that fit into the category of “providing legal aid” do not “provide services for victims” or vice versa, as this is not the case. Similarly, the use of these subcategories of the larger category of non-affected is not to say that those groups that are considered “affected” do not engage in this kind of work as well. Identities are fluid and people move in and out of them according to particular moments (that is, in response to a particular moment) and to how others position them in particular moments. I use these categories to frame the trajectory of the formation of the human rights movement in Argentina both because it provides coherency for the reader and because they are general identity markers that the human rights groups use themselves, but not to erase the complexity of the human rights movement, of public formation, and of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. Further, I follow the formation of each human rights group within the movement as a response to particular political moments in Argentina. The following discussion is not a comprehensive account of the formation and continuing existence of every human rights group in Argentina but rather a historical trajectory of (some) groups’ emergence within a continuously developing landscape of memory. In this regard, I present small vignettes of different human rights groups.

37 I say some groups because I focus only on those groups whose members I was able to speak with for this study (most of whom were from the city of Buenos Aires). A comprehensive account of every human rights group within the human rights movement in all of Argentina is beyond the scope of this project. I do not know of any one source that presents a detailed description of all of the groups that constitute the movement. Indeed, an updated source of this kind would be difficult to write (and thus find) because new human rights groups are continuously emerging in response to the shifting political terrain in Argentina. For further detail on the different groups within the movement see Jelin (1995) and Brysk (1994). Though Guzman Bouvard (1994) and Bonner (2007) focus primarily on the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, they too provide some historical detail on other groups.
to provide the reader with a more detailed understanding of the specificities that have established the human rights movement as integral to the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship.

1.3.1 The 1970s: Escalating State Violence

The non-affected groups that formed during the first half of the 1970s were *Fundación Servicio Paz y Justicia* (SERPAJ) (Foundation for Peace and Justice), *Asamblea Permanente por Derechos Humanos* (APDH) (Permanent Assembly for Human Rights), and *Movimiento Ecuménico por los Derechos Humanos* (MEDH) (Ecumenical Movement for the Rights of Man). These groups emerged in response to the escalation of state violence in the early to mid 1970s. Like the 1976-1983 military state that followed, this period was also marked by “disappearances” that, while not called this at the time, shared the same characteristics of those disappearances that occurred during the era of the dictatorship. Further, the late 1960s and 1970s was also marked by the emergence of guerrilla groups such as the *Montoneros* and the *Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo* (ERP) (People’s Revolutionary Army). Within this context, SERPAJ emerged in 1974, APDH in 1975, and MEDH in February of 1976 shortly before the beginning of the dictatorship. APDH can be understood as a group that provided legal aid to the victims of the repression as this was its primary purpose both when it formed before the dictatorship and as it further developed during the dictatorship period (Alicia Herbón, Personal Conversation, July 16, 2007). Today some of the APDH's primary work centers on working

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38 For example, after President Juan Domingo Perón’s death in 1974, the following President, Isabel Perón, approved of the clandestine organization *Alianza Anticomunista Argentina* (Argentine Anticomunist Alliance) which, consisting of some police and some army personnel, targeted known or suspected “left-wing” supporters (Marchak, 1999).

39 “There is no translation for the Montoneros…The name has historical meaning, referring to the frontier cowboys (gauchos) who, according to legend, defended Argentina in its infancy” (Marchak, 1999, p. 18).

40 As I further explain in Chapter Three, I use the real names of the persons with whom I spoke rather than pseudonyms because they gave me permission to do so. Also, for the purpose of readability, throughout the work I
with educators interested in teaching about the dictatorship in the classroom and with lawyers working on the current trials of those who committed crimes during the dictatorship\(^\text{41}\).

Both SERPAJ and MEDH on the other hand can be understood as groups whose initial purpose was to provide emotional and psychological support for survivors of the violence. SERPAJ, founded by Adolfo Pérez Esquivel in Buenos Aires, today has chapters across Latin America and is grounded in its defining characteristic of confronting violence through a “filosofía de no-violencia activa” (“philosophy of active non-violent action”). As such, it is the only group within the human rights movement that is international. SERPAJ focuses most of its current efforts on community projects centered on fighting for and maintaining “derechos elementales” (“basic rights”), on the premise that “sobre la impunidad no es possible construir una democracia” (“it is not possible to construct a democracy within the context of impunity”) (Instituto Espacio para la Memoria, 2006a, p. 52). MEDH differs from SERPAJ in its religious basis. In fact, MEDH is a unique group within the human rights movement because of its religious affiliations to the Catholic Church. It was formed by (self-identified) Catholics and members of the Catholic Church in response to the repression of the dictatorship and the Catholic Church’s participation in this repression\(^\text{42}\) (Instituto Espacio para la Memoria, 2006a).

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\(^\text{41}\) It does so primarily in its role as querellante in some of the current trials. This “plaintiff-prosecutor” system allows the victims or the representatives of the victims to initiate and prosecute criminal complaints. In the current trials human rights groups who serve as querellantes most often are the representatives of the victims (e.g., relatives of disappeared persons), rather than the victims themselves.

\(^\text{42}\) The report published by the CONADEP (the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons) in 1984 revealed that “priests of the church cooperated with the military to the point of inviting prisoners to confess everything in order to serve their nation. Numerous survivors tell of fruitless searches for their loved ones, in which officers of the church refused help but passed on information given in confidence. When the Mothers of Plaza de
Today MEDH also works with educators in schools looking for resources to teach about the dictatorship and organizes public events in remembrance of priests and other religious leaders who were disappeared during the dictatorship because of their refusal to participate in the perpetration of violence.

Within this context of escalating violence and groups emerging in response to this violence La Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre (The Argentine League for the Rights of Man) was also providing legal aid to survivors. However, La Liga was formed much before the beginning of the 1976-1983 dictatorship. The group was established in 1937 in Buenos Aires during the 1930-1938 dictatorship by a group of lawyers who saw a need to continue the workers’ rights struggle which in the early 1900s the Argentine state had attempted to abolish through violent repression. Within the context of the increasing state repression and the consequent mass demonstrations of the 1930s, La Liga’s objective was to provide legal representation for political prisoners of the dictatorship (many of them from the working-class). Throughout its history La Liga has identified its activism as a response to the need for citizen’s protection from the state (La Liga por los Derechos del Hombre, 2008). Today La Liga continues to provide legal counsel for those whose human rights have been abused by the state. It also works with the lawyers involved in the current trials of those who committed crimes during the dictatorship (similar to the APDH).

With the beginning of the 1976-1983 dictatorship there emerged a number of affected groups. During this time the primary initial task of these groups was to find the disappeared. Within this

Mayo sought support and a place to meet, the churches in the centre of the city were unable or unwilling to accommodate them” (Marchak, 1999, p. 236).
context, *Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas* (Relatives of Disappeared and Detained Persons for Political Reasons) first appeared on the Argentine political scene. This occurred in 1976 in the province of Córdoba in response to the *en masse* disappearance of 24 young men and women. As was the case of the mothers of disappeared persons, their political action began with the solitary search for their disappeared relatives in police stations, prisons, and military barracks. While these places served as informal meeting places for relatives of disappeared persons, the escalation of widespread disappearances sparked an urgent need for relatives of disappeared persons to formally organize – to group themselves under a single name through which they could represent their individual demands for truth about what had happened to the disappeared.

Later, in 1977, the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (Mothers of Plaza de Mayo) and the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo) emerged onto the Argentine political scene in response to the disappearance of their children and the military state’s refusal to provide answers as to their whereabouts. Saturday April 30th 1977 has been stamped by the *Madres* as the official date on which the group was established as a human rights group. It was on this Saturday that they first marched at Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, which, “flanked not only by the presidential palace but also by the cathedral and the most important banks”, has stood as the hub of political activity in the country (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 2). Eventually they changed their weekly marches at Plaza de Mayo to Thursdays, which would become their day at the Plaza for the next 34 years (Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, 2003; Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Padilla, 2006). On November 21st 1977, during the march at Plaza San Martín in Buenos Aires where the *Madres* submitted written testimonies of the disappearance of their children to the then U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, a group of women who were searching for their children and unborn and/or very young grandchildren decided to start meeting separately to strategize this
dual search. This group of women later came to be known as *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (Padilla, 2006).

Lastly, in 1979 another non-affected group emerged. Composed primarily of lawyers, the *Centro por Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)* (Centre for Legal and Social Studies) formed with the aim of providing Argentines with a place to report the kidnappings they had witnessed and of providing legal advice where possible. Today their law related work is structured through seven “themes”: “memory and the struggle against impunity”; “institutional violence and the security of citizens”; “economic, cultural, and social rights”; “democracy and justice”; “prisons and penal justice”; “mental health”; and “civil control of the armed forces” (Centro por Estudios Legales y Sociales, n.d., my translation).

1.3.2 The 1980s: Shattered Hope

Though during the early years of the dictatorship many Argentines did not support human rights groups in their demands for truth, by the 1980s Argentines had begun joining human rights groups in public protest in defiance of the dictatorship (Femenía, 1987; Jelin, 1995). Within this context, “in April 1982, in a desperate attempt to distract the population and rescue its image, the junta went to war against the British for the tiny Falkland Islands (*Las Malvinas*) in the South Atlantic” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 12). By the end of May the British had surrounded the Islands and launched a major assault to which the ill equipped and unprepared Argentine soldiers immediately surrendered. In June, General Benjamin Menéndez officially agreed to an “‘unneogitated cease-fire’” (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 121). “The [Argentine] invasion [of the Falklands] was in every way a fiasco, and the defeat in every way humiliating” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 121). 

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43 CELS is an example of a non-affected group that included (and includes) persons considered directly affected as one of its co-founders, Emilio Mignone, had a disappeared daughter.
p. 12), ultimately resulting in the 1983 collapse of the dictatorship (Feitlowitz, 1998; Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Marchak, 199).

The end of the dictatorship brought a sense of hope that perhaps those that were kidnapped would be released from detention. Further, in 1983 the democratic election of Raúl Alfonsín, who had focused his campaign on punishing the human rights violations committed during the dictatorship, offered hope for truth and justice. As time went on, however, it was clear that the disappeared would remain disappeared and, “once installed in the [Federal Government House], Alfonsín governed with two faces” (as I described above) (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 132). Within this context the Asociación Ex-Detenidos Desaparecidos (AEDD) (Association of Ex-Detained Disappeared Persons) was formed in Buenos Aires in 1984 by a group of former disappeared persons – “the reappeared” – who had come together to provide testimony for the CONADEP. This group holds a particularly unique position within the human rights movement because its members are the only people who can speak from a place of “knowing” what it means to exist as disappeared. As such, they are the only ones (other than those who participated in the repression during the dictatorship) who can provide information to both relatives of disappeared persons and to the justice system about what happened to (some of) those that remain disappeared. This includes information about who tortured whom, when, where, and how (and, in some cases, information about the circumstances and thus verification of death).

Throughout the 1980s the military demonstrated its continuing hold on power, threatening the democratic government and civil society by exploding bombs in courthouses, threatening the prosecution witnesses (most of whom were former disappeared persons and relatives of
disappeared persons), and renewed attempts to overthrow the government\textsuperscript{44}. Despite this, the
military juntas were (eventually) tried in the federal courts. During the trial (and much of the
early years of Alfonsín’s presidency) “what had been previously denied and forbidden
[suddenly] returned in the form of an almost exaggerated need to read and talk about the
atrocities committed. In post-‘dirty war’ Argentine folk speech this became known as ‘the
horror show’ period’ (Suárez-Orozco, 1990, p. 369). Daily, both victims and torturers appeared
on popular television and radio programs openly speaking about systematic torture and
disappearances – that which had been unspeakable during the dictatorship. Books such as “Yo
Secuestré, Mate y Vi Torturar en la Escuela Mecánica de la Armada” (“I Kidnapped, Murdered,
and Witnessed Torture in the Navy School of Mechanics”) (1984) written by ex-military
Corporeal Raul Vilarino were published alongside both the CONADEP report titled “Nunca
Más” (“Never Again”) (1984) and the daily “Diario del Juicio” (“Newspaper of the Trial”) that
publicized the testimonies provided during the 1985 trial. To compound the horror, shortly after
the collapse of the dictatorship mass graves began to be excavated, publicly displaying “piles of
bones and bullet-ridden skulls” – the remains of the state terror (Robben, 2007, p. 263). On the
one hand this flood of “truth-telling” shattered hopes that those who had been disappeared might
return by confirming that, indeed, those who had been disappeared had been murdered. On the
other hand, it instilled hope that the truth about the fate of individual disappeared persons would
finally be revealed and that remains could be recovered for proper burials (Femenía, 1987;

\textsuperscript{44} There were three major military revolts during this time. The first occurred one week before Easter in 1987 by the
“airborne infantry regiment in Córdoba” (Guzman Bouvard, 1994). A week later a more serious revolt now known
as the “Easter Rebellion” began when a group of members of the military who called themselves \textit{carapintadas}
(painted faces) held a military training camp (\textit{Campo de Mayo}) hostage. Later, in December of 1987, the
\textit{carapintadas} once again took \textit{Campo de Mayo} hostage continuing their demands for “full amnesty” and thus
insisting that the government recognize the dictatorship as a successful battle against subversion. In response, “a
small group of leftists called the Movement for the Whole Country” took over the military barracks of \textit{La Tablada}
“to prevent what they perceived an imminent coup from the right” (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 203).
Robben, 2004). However, all hope was shattered with the amnesty laws that followed the 1985 trial.

Though human rights groups (and others within civil society) shared a sense of hopelessness and inconsolable grief, the turn to democracy was nonetheless a divisive moment for groups within the human rights movement. The most notable point of dissension occurred within the group *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* who in 1986 split into two groups – *Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Línea Fundadora* (Mothers of Plaza de Mayo-Founding Line) and *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (Association Mothers of Plaza de Mayo). Generally, the members of the groups were in disagreement about the exhumation of graves. Those mothers who formed *Asociación Madres* stated “we need to know who the murderers were, not the murdered” (cited in Femenía, 1987, p. 17). As such the members of this group opposed the exhumation of mass graves arguing that the state was attempting to replace justice with bodies. In contrast, those mothers who formed *Madres-Línea Fundadora* disagreed with the other mothers’ “stand against exhumations and applauded the work of Clyde Snow [the American forensic anthropologist who lead the team conducting the exhumations] as providing proof that the exhumed were indeed tortured and assassinated” (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 163). 45 Within this context, the group *Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina* (Foundation for Historical and Social Memory) was

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45 The *Asociación Madres* also differs distinctly from the *Madres-Linea Fundadora* in the particular notion of memory that informs their activism. As I explained above, the *Asociación Madres* maintain that the disappeared are “not dead” and thus refuse to participate in remembrance practices that refer to the disappeared as such (e.g., plaques, monuments). This group has focused primarily (if not entirely) on remembering the disappeared through continuing their struggle for social change for which they were disappeared (a concept that I further focus on in Chapters Two, Four, and Five). Though the *Madres-Linea Fundadora* also argue that remembrance of the disappeared involves participation in that struggle for which they were disappeared, they do not reject remembrance practices such as monuments and plaques. Specifically, there are many ways in which the *Asociación Madres* participate in such a struggle. For example, they have established a university, “*Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo*” (“Popular University Madres de Plaza de Mayo”) that aims to offer courses to “foster the [socio-] political development of youth in Argentina” (Evel Petrini, Conversation, June 20, 2007, *Asociación Madres*, Buenos Aires, my translation) (the university is not accredited by the Ministry of Education). They also have a public radio program “*La Voz de las Madres*” (“The Madres’ Voices), and house a book store and a video library where people can find resources on memory, the dictatorship, the history of Argentina, political theory, etcetera.
founded in 1987 by a group of directly affected persons who felt that among these debates there were not enough people forefronting the call to remember (Vera Jarach, Conversation July 28, 2007, Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina, Buenos Aires).

1.3.3 The 1990s: Continuing the Legacy of Impunity

In 1990, in response to another revolt mounted by the military46, then President Carlos Menem pardoned all of those who had been convicted in 1985. Menem, who won against Alfonsín in the 1989 elections, was particularly known for his “forgive and forget” policies throughout his presidency. In this regard he is best known for the pardons he granted, and the decree he signed in 1998 that would allow for the ESMA to be demolished (which I described above). However, not only did Menem support the notion that amnesty for the military was necessary in order for the rebuilding of the nation, he also supported “the attitudes and beliefs that allowed [the dictatorship] to happen. In July 1993, a massive campaign of ‘ideological spying’ was unleashed by the Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Police. Journalists, intellectuals, theater artists, human rights workers, and other predictable targets received death threats, and some were physically attacked” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 15). Also during this time, some student councils were placed under military surveillance and peaceful demonstrations staged by senior citizens protesting the inequitable state pension were filmed by the Federal Police.

It was within this culture of impunity and still existing threads of the ideology that drove the dictatorship, that the group Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra el Olvido y el Silencio (H.I.J.O.S) (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence)

46 Once again the carapintadas had occupied a number of military buildings, including one of its headquarters in the city of Buenos Aires two blocks away from the Presidential Palace, demanding higher wages and more advanced weaponry (Guzman Bouvard, 1994).
was born in 1994. As I have briefly described, H.I.J.O.S is a human rights group composed primarily of children who have either both or one of their parents disappeared. These are children who were too old at the time of their parents’ disappearance to simply be given to another family to be raised as their own biological child or whom, for reasons unknown, were not appropriated by the military. They are primarily characterized by their unique mode of public demonstration known as *escraches* which, as I explained above, act as a symbolic trial. Consequently, through the practice of *escraches* H.I.J.O.S has attempted to remedy the state’s failure to deliver the promise of the rule of law to punish the guilty.

The *escraches* became particularly significant both within the context of retired Navy Captain Adolfo Scilingo’s 1995 confession and the *Juicios por la Verdad* (Truth Trials) that began in 1998. Scilingo’s confession to having participated in “*vuelos de la muerte*” (“death flights”) confirmed reports from former disappeared persons that many of the persons who were detained were heavily sedated and thrown from airplanes into the Atlantic Ocean and the Rio de la Plata. In a set of interviews with the co-founder of the CELS, Horacio Verbitsky (whom Scilingo himself approached for an interview), Scilingo declared that nearly every officer in ESMA participated in these death flights. Thus, his confession also verified that indeed the dictatorship had been a systematic “process” of elimination. Further, his confession forced anyone who continued to doubt the means of repression used by the dictatorship “to confront [their] own denial, and [their] tacit approval during those years of clandestine crimes” (cited in Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 195)\(^47\). Scilingo’s testimony also led to a number of other confessions by

\(^47\) Importantly, Di Paolantonio (2003) reminds us that confessions such as that of Scilingo “also reveal a rather macabre episode, since a vast amount of ‘difficult knowledge’ was suddenly unleashed to the public by violators with varying agendas. While the public desired to know the details that were denied throughout the years, it inadvertently entered an exchange relation with perpetrators who peddled information that was often self-serving and therefore self-censoring” (p. 256).
“other ex-military men directly involved in kidnapping, torture, and murder in the secret camps [who]…came forward and were featured, day after day, on radio and television, in newspapers and magazines” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 193) – confessions that were made possible by the amnesty laws of the 1980s that guaranteed the ability to reveal the truth about what happened to the disappeared without consequences. Similarly, although the “Truth Trials” provided victims and survivors the opportunity to testify about the violence they experienced during the dictatorship, it also allowed the perpetrators of that violence to give testimony of the truth without legal punishment⁴⁸. Nonetheless, because the appropriation of children fell outside of the purview of the amnesty laws, in 1998 former General Videla was arrested for kidnapping and appropriating children during the dictatorship.

This culture of impunity in the 1990s not only established the conditions for those who kidnapped, tortured, and murdered to live freely and boast about their participation in the dictatorship without consequences, it also set the grounds for a society where victims and perpetrators lived side by side. As Feitlowitz (1998) reported, many Argentines told her that “they get an odd feeling sometimes on a bus or subway” because “you never know who you’re sitting next to’…that normal-looking man, well, God only knows what he might have done’” (p. 171). Within this context, human rights groups were united against widespread efforts by the state to reconstruct a nation where the dictatorial past was absent, disappeared as if it had never existed. Additionally, Menem’s economic policies also brought groups together in resistance to the massive cutbacks in public spending and the privatization of “major services and institutions (including telephones, transport, some research establishments) that had been traditionally

⁴⁸ These “Truth Trials” are not the same as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions because the trials themselves were not structured with the guarantee of amnesty in exchange for truth – rather amnesty was guaranteed by the laws that came before the trials began.
subsidized” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 171). Nonetheless, divisions between groups continued to occur. In 1996 the Abuelas split into two groups due to internal differences over the role of the lawyers who worked with the group (Padilla, 2006). Thus today both Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and Asociación Anahí exist. Around the same time H.I.J.O.S also split into H.I.J.O.S con puntitos (with little dots) and HIJOS sin puntitos (without little dots) due to internal conflicts; “un tema de compañeros que habían desconocido acuerdos” (“an issue of compañeros who had broken agreements”) (Agustín Cetrángolo, Conversations, July 13, 2007, H.I.J.O.S, Buenos Aires).

1.3.4 The 2000s: Government Attempts to Settle Accounts with the Dictatorial Past

Self-titled as the “gobierno de derechos humanos” (“the government of human rights”), one of President Néstor Kirchner’s government’s (2003-2007) first actions was to repeal the two amnesty laws of the 1980s. As I stated previously, these laws were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2005 instituting the conditions necessary for the current trials of those who committed crimes during the dictatorship. The first of these trials took place in 2006 when former Buenos Aires Provincial Police officer Miguel Etchecolatz was tried for kidnapping, torture, and murder between 1976 and 1983. One day before the last day of the trial Jorge Julio López, a witness who had testified against Etchecolatz, was disappeared. Later, in December of 2006, Luis Gerez – also a former disappeared person who testified in the National Congress to having been tortured during the dictatorship by then Deputy Luis Patti – was kidnapped and released after two days. Human rights groups believe that both of these men were kidnapped by

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49 In the context of this study, “the term compañero/a has no English equivalent. It is inadequately rendered as ‘companion’, ‘friend’, ‘co-worker’, or ‘colleague’ but it implies a stronger bond between equals than any of those terms does” (Marchak, 1999, p. 17). Rather this term “indicates solidarity, camaraderie, and equality” (Dixon, 1998, p. 3). In this quote Cetrángolo is referring specifically to former members of H.I.J.O.S (Buenos Aires).
members of the Argentine Federal Police because of their testimonies. These kidnappings sent a wave of fear across the human rights movement and all of those involved in the trials of those who had committed crimes during the dictatorship (e.g., witnesses, judges, lawyers). However, the permanent disappearance of Julio López was of particular concern to human rights groups because it confirmed that the possibility of disappearance in present-day Argentina was a reality.

Within this context, two groups considered non-affected and one group considered directly affected emerged. Of the two non-affected groups Barrios por la Memoria (Neighbourhoods for Memory) was formed to organize remembrance events specifically intended to mark the 2006 30th anniversary of the beginning of the dictatorship. Specifically, Barrios is a network of groups existing in different neighbourhoods across the city of Buenos Aires. These groups emerged out of the “asambleas populares” (“popular assemblies”) of December 2001. “Asamblea popular’ (sic) refers to gatherings of ordinary people who started to meet during the December 2001 economic collapse and political crisis…Neighbours gathered to analyze social and political developments and to respond with street protests” (Sutton, 2007 p. 156). In 2006, with the upcoming anniversary date of the beginning of the coup, many of those that participated in the asambleas gathered to form Barrios por la Memoria. Each group within the larger collective of Barrios aims to remember individual disappeared persons within the neighbourhood in which they resided, attended school, or worked. Individual groups are differentiated by a variation in their name which includes the name of the specific neighbourhood in which they organized (e.g. Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro – Commission for

50 The economic collapse of 2001 is further addressed in Chapter Two.
Memory Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro and Vecinos de San Cristobal Contra la Impunidad – Neighbours of San Cristobal Against Impunity)\textsuperscript{51}.

Quite differently from any other group, the Instituto Espacio para la Memoria (IEM) – the second non-affected group to emerge at this time – is a group in Buenos Aires composed of representatives from a number of human rights groups\textsuperscript{52}, state representatives\textsuperscript{53}, and “personalidades con reconocido compromiso en la defensa de los derechos humanos” (“persons with known commitment to the defense of human rights”)\textsuperscript{54} (Instituto Espacio para la Memoria, 2006a, p. 26). More specifically, these persons constitute the “Governing Council” of the IEM. The IEM was created by a law (Law 961) that mandated the creation of a body constituted by human rights groups and state representatives to “safeguard and transmit the memory and history of that which occurred during the State Terrorism of the 1970s and beginnings of the 1980s as well as the antecedents…and consequences, with the objective of deepening the democratic

\textsuperscript{51} I spoke with members of four groups belonging to Barrios por la Memoria: Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro, Vecinos de San Cristobal Contra la Impunidad, Comisión por la Memoria Chacaritas-Colegiales (Commission for Memory Chacaritas-Colegiales), and Barrios por la Memoria y Justicia Almagro-Balvanera (Neighbourhoods for Memory Almagro-Balvanera). Of these four only the latter two emerged from the asambleas of 2001. Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro and Vecinos de San Cristobal Contra la Impunidad emerged in the early 1990s and in the mid 1990s respectively. Situated within three neighbourhoods that are far travelling distance from downtown and are therefore quite isolated, Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro emerged in response to the need for a more accessible place for the residents of these neighbourhoods to remember the dictatorship and the disappeared. In contrast, the Vecinos de San Cristobal Contra la Impunidad emerged in response to the need to denounce a former torture centre they knew existed in the neighbourhood. In 2006 these groups became part of Barrios por la Memoria.

\textsuperscript{52} Abuelas, APDH, Asociación Civil Buena Memoria, CELS, Familiares, Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina, Herman@s de Desaparecidos por la Verdad y la Justicia (Siblings of Disappeared Persons for Truth and Justice), H.I.J.O.S., La Liga, Madres–Línea Fundadora, MEDH and SERPAJ.

\textsuperscript{53} Ministry of Human and Social Rights, Ministry of Public Space, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Secretary of Media and Communication, and the political parties Bloque Frente para la Victoria (Front for Victory), Bloque ARI (ARI Block), Bloque Autodeterminación y Libertad (Autodetermination and Liberty Block), Bloque Frente Compromiso para el Cambio (Committed Front for Change Block).

\textsuperscript{54} Alcira Argumedo (Argentine sociologist), Victor Basterra (artist and former disappeared person), Stella Calloni (Argentine journalist and writer), Ricardo Peidró (Secretary of Human Rights of the Center of Argentine Workers), Hilda Sábado (History Professor at the Universidad de Buenos Aires), Lita Stantic (Argentine screenplay writer, director, and producer).
system and strengthening human rights” (Instituto Espacio para la Memoria, 2006a, p. 15, my translation). This law was passed in response to human rights groups’ demands that the city assume responsibility for the “preservation” of the memory of the dictatorship. Grounded within a specific concern for how former centres of torture could be reconstructed into “sitios de memoria” (“sites of memory”), these were demands for the state to provide funding for projects aimed at establishing a national memory of the disappeared and the dictatorship, but to allow human rights groups to have control over the organization and execution of such projects. Thus the law dictates that the government of the city of Buenos Aires will provide funding to the IEM to fulfill its mandate but that decisions about how the funding will be used will be made by members of the IEM, most of which are members of human rights groups. The director of the IEM, Ana María Careaga, was elected by the Governing Council whose members were in turn chosen by the respective human rights groups they represent within the Council. Importantly, the IEM is the only group within the Argentine human rights movement that includes as its members state officials, that is state funded, and whose formation was mandated by law.

Lastly, the group Herman@š de Desaparecidos por la Verdad y la Justicia (Siblings of Disappeared Persons for Truth and Justice) constituted by siblings of disappeared persons is the last directly affected human rights group to have formed to date. The creation of this group stands as evidence of a continuing need to remember and to gather with a community who can share in the specifics of one’s pain – in their case the pain of losing a sibling⁵⁵.

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⁵⁵ In Appendix A I have provided a list of human rights groups (and acronyms) discussed in this section of this first chapter as well as a short description of each of the groups for referral for the reader. I list the groups by their acronyms or a shorter version of the name such as Madres for Madres de Plaza de Mayo throughout the work. Also, the groups listed in this appendix are those groups whose members I had conversations with as part of this study.
1.4 A Problem Worth Studying

The diversity of groups and demands characteristic of the landscape of public remembrance of the dictatorship in Argentina produces an image of this landscape as messy and disorienting. However, situated within the context of a volatile political terrain in which disappearances continue, the perpetrators of the dictatorship are tried and punished, and the disappeared remain literally disappeared, the landscape of memory no longer seems chaotic and puzzling. Rather a readable map emerges that clearly traces the affective dimensions of human rights claims mobilized through public remembrance of state violence. In this regard, we can begin to disentangle the various demands for rights – the right to mourn, the right to identity, the right to truth, the right to life, and social and economic rights – that are mobilized through demands for human rights as demands that are made in the name of the memory of the disappeared. The trajectory of the development of the landscape of memory in Argentina thus speaks to the different ways in which public remembrance of the dictatorship articulates a continual learning to live with loss. In Argentina, human rights groups engage in this learning through practices that highlight a call to do justice to the memory of the disappeared by participating in the very struggle for social justice for which they were disappeared, by demanding legal redress for the crimes of the dictatorship, and by both acknowledging the painful experience of loss and identifying loss as a socio-political concern. It is on these terms which the work of living with loss is forged as the work of honouring the disappeared through the formation of a public that recognizes their significance as people who loved and who are loved and missed, and as people who committed themselves to the social and political transformation of the country. As I have outlined above, human rights – what it is and what it is for – as it has been distinctly constructed and mobilized by human rights groups is integral to understanding public remembrance of the dictatorship as the work of coming to learn to live with loss as such. In the next chapter I
examine in detail how human rights is defined by human rights groups in Argentina, how the
discourse of human rights functions as hegemonic within the larger context of Argentine political
resistance, and the conditions of existence that have established this definition and the function
of this discourse as such.
Chapter 2
THE HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE IN ARGENTINA:
DERECHOS HUMANOS AND A HISTORY OF RIGHTS CLAIMS
IN ARGENTINE POLITICAL RESISTANCE

2.1 An Introduction to Derechos Humanos

As I have argued in the previous chapter, in Argentina the human rights movement has played a central role in the development of a political resistance based on the memory of the abuses of the period of the dictatorship (Jelin, 1995). As Roniger and Sznajder (1998) have written, though there existed a culture of political resistance and rights movements in Argentina long before the 1970s, “human rights…was an innovation in…[Argentina’s] political culture” in the late 1970s. In other words, the human rights movement that emerged as a result of the dictatorship concretized the meaning and significance of “derechos humanos” (“human rights”) in the country. Though for many years derechos humanos was a phrase, a set of rights, and a discourse commonly associated with the disappearance of persons between 1976 and 1983, it is today also associated with economic and cultural rights and, more concretely, issues of poverty, unemployment, and police violence. Further, today the discourse of derechos humanos has been established as hegemonic within Argentine political resistance and is mobilized in distinct ways by different rights groups to make demands of the state and to constitute their pain and suffering as political issues.

Derechos humanos has a particular meaning in Argentina, conjures particular images, and is meant to evoke particular actions and affects. It is because of the particularities of derechos humanos within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship, that throughout this dissertation I use the term derechos humanos in reference to the distinct ways that human rights is mobilized.
and defined. Similarly, I employ the Spanish terms “organismos de derechos humanos” and “movimiento de derechos humanos”, instead of “human rights groups” and “human rights movement” respectively, because of the specific people, political resistance acts, and history with which these groups (and the movement) are associated. Through the use of these terms in Spanish I intend not only to acknowledge the specificities of human rights and the human rights movement (and groups within it), but also to structure a difference between the conceptualizations of derechos humanos and of varying notions of human rights (that exist within a larger global and theoretical context). Considering the significance of derechos humanos to public remembrance of the dictatorship, it is necessary to examine in detail how it is defined in Argentina in relation to theories of human rights (what it is and what it is for), how it functions as hegemonic, and the historical conditions of existence that have established it as such.

2.2 Human Rights, Derechos Humanos, and Hegemony

In the wake of World War II and the Nuremberg Trials that followed, the concept of human rights was developed within international law, initiating an agreed upon standard for the international responsibility to protect human rights. In conjunction with the indictment of crimes against humanity in the Nuremberg Trials, the 1948 drafting of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) functioned to legitimize a discourse of human rights within the global community (Clapham, 2007; Massoud, 2006; Schaffer & Smith, 2004). Together, the definition of crimes against humanity (which became internationally known after the Nuremberg Trials)

56 The “concept of crimes against humanity in international law can be traced back to a 1915 Declaration by France” (Clapham, 2007, p. 34). However it was not until after the Nuremberg Trials that this concept became widely
along with the CPPCG and the UDHR affirmed the responsibility of states both to protect human rights within their own jurisdictions and to monitor the actions of other states to do the same (at least those states who have signed the UDHR and the CPPCG). In this regard, the internationalization of the discourse of human rights redefined the relationship between the state and civil society providing groups within civil society with an official stage from which to voice their demands made in defense of rights (Eide, 1986; Schaffer & Smith, 2004; Massoud, 2006).

As they are defined through the UDHR “human rights refers to norms concerning the relationship between individuals (sometimes groups of individuals) and the state” (Massoud, p. 369). “Before the Second World War, only states had rights in international law. With the [UDHR]…the rights of individuals received international legal recognition” (Ignatieff, 2001, p. 5). In signing the UDHR states agreed to the definition of human rights and to a “standard of achievement” for “promoting” those rights within civil society. Signing the UDHR committed states to “securing their [human rights] universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction” (cited in the Preamble to the UDHR, Clapham, 2007, p. 183). Consequently, because of the officialized nature of the Declaration, in that it was created by an institution to which member states were “legally” bound (the UN)\(^57\), individuals and groups within civil society could reasonably expect states to adhere to these agreements. Thus the signing of the

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\(^57\) As a treaty, the UN Charter that effectively created the UN, is a legally binding document. Member States of the United Nations that have signed the Charter agree to uphold its articles. In the case where a signing party (a Member State) fails to do so, it can be held accountable under international law. This is quite different than the UDHR which, as a declaration, does not hold states accountable under international law.
UDHR was of particular importance to creating an internationally recognized and supervised stage on which demands made in the defense of rights became legitimized as demands requiring state recognition. As such we begin to see the language of human rights being mobilized by states and members of civil society. Globally, “movements of national liberation from colonial rule” and other movements defined by their struggle for the defense of particular rights start to become more visible, particularly after the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights were created in 1966 (Schaffer & Smith, 2004, p. 15). Both because of its association with the genocide of World War II and the way it has since been mobilized by groups within civil society in response to state violence, in the last decade the discourse of human rights has become the privileged mode of addressing and narrating human suffering (Ignatieff, 2001; Schaffer & Smith, 2004).

The legitimization of the discourse of human rights on an international stage as such has certainly played an important role in the legitimization of the discourse of derechos humanos in Argentina and establishing it as hegemonic within Argentine political resistance. However, this is not the only condition of existence that has served to establish the discourse of derechos humanos as such. As I detail below, contextualizing derechos humanos within theories of what human rights is (and should be) and what human rights is for (and should be for) serves to develop a clearer understanding of the distinctiveness of this term. In the same vein, examining

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58 Importantly, the UDHR is not and was not legally binding. Though certain articles of the Declaration concretized the right to legal protection, no where in the Declaration does it stipulate that by signing a state or a person will be held legally accountable for the violation of these rights. Thus, in signing the Declaration states do not agree to “take action” against states who fail to “promote”, or who violate, human rights. While this is a discussion that goes beyond the scope of this study, it is suffice to say that the Declaration’s inability to stand as a mechanism for the judicial punishment of violations of human rights has been a source of much criticism with respect to the usefulness of the Declaration within international law (see Clapham, 2007; Eide, 1986).
theories of hegemony furthers an understanding of the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic.

2.2.1 Examining Some of the Varied Definitions of Human Rights

Since the signing of the UDHR there have been endless debates among academics, politicians, and activists about how human rights should be defined and how the aims of human rights claims should be understood. These debates have illuminated varying philosophical and theoretical concerns and questions about the practice of human rights that have had important implications for the mobilization of human rights today. Indeed, the development of derechos humanos in Argentina within the landscape of memory has functioned to call attention to contemporary state perpetrated injustices, serving to legitimize political resistance staged by other rights groups (as I illustrate in the proceeding sections of this chapter). Both in the Argentine context and the international context these debates cannot be simply traced back to one political moment or reduced to a concretely defined set of distinct ideological and philosophical beliefs. In the discussion below I briefly examine a small portion of these debates. I do not aim to provide a comprehensive study of the historical unfolding and current implications of debates about what human rights are and what human rights are for. Rather, I draw from discussions that have illuminated my study regarding the particular construction and reproduction of derechos humanos in Argentina. To begin, I consider how demands for human rights have been understood as calls for the protection of “negative liberties”. This allows me to draw out a discussion of debates about human rights as civic and political rights as distinct from human rights as economic and cultural rights. As well I will discuss human rights as defense claims as distinct from human rights as constitutive of a particular public. As I have begun to illustrate in Chapter One, these debates have been integral to the development of derechos humanos within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship.
A widely known supporter of the notion of human rights as the protection of negative liberties is Michael Ignatieff who, in his paper “Human Rights as Idolatry” (2001), writes that human rights “is about protecting an essential exercise of human agency” – that is, protecting “the capacity of each individual to achieve rational intentions without let or hindrance” (p. 57). Demands for human rights are therefore demands for the protection of individuals against oppression. To enforce human rights is thus to protect individual rights. Though there are “some conditions of life – the right to speak a language for example – that cannot be protected by individual rights alone”, collective rights claims must not constrain individual rights (p. 67). There is a limit to which a collective is perceived to have rights and to the extent that those rights can be (and deserve to be) protected. Importantly then, according to Ignatieff’s urge to think of the definition and purpose of human rights through the interrelated ideas of “negative liberty” and human agency, human rights do not protect the group but “the individuals who compose it” (p. 67). In that human rights demands are demands for protection against oppression, human rights “are universal because they define the universal interests of the powerless [– the oppressed –] namely, that power be exercised over them in ways that respect their autonomy as agents” (68). Further, that human rights demands are demands for protection against oppression, defines the defense of human rights as a defense against “the worst we [– humans –] can do” rather than the defense of that which is intrinsic to “us” as humans (p. 80). “To be a rights bearer is not to hold some sacred inviolability but to commit oneself to live in a community where rights conflicts are adjudicated through persuasion” (p. 84). Human rights are not “trumps” but a “shared vocabulary” through which deliberation can occur between human agents “with differing ideas of human flourishing” (p. 95).

Ignatieff’s arguments regarding human rights are (in part) a response to the controversy and irresolvable debates about the proposition that rights are intrinsic to humans because of a
constitutive innate dignity. He maintains that such an argument confuses “what is with what ought to be” (p. 80). For example, he writes: “On occasion, men and women behave with inspiring dignity. But that is not the same thing as saying that all human beings have an innate dignity or even capacity to display it” (p. 54). Ascribing intrinsic dignity to the human and establishing this as the reason to defend human rights, he argues, makes a problematic claim about the “sacredness” of the human. The understanding of the human as inherently dignified and thus as sacred engages individuals in futile attempts to come to an agreed upon standard of what is good, hindering a global commitment to human rights as a shared commitment to deliberate about how to foster individual agency. Rather, Ignatieff structures human rights as a call for deliberation about how to protect human liberty that necessitates only tolerance between individuals – “a willingness to remain in the same room, listening to claims one doesn’t (sic) like to hear, for the purpose of finding compromises that will keep conflicting claims from ending in irreparable harm to either side” (p. 84). By defining the defense of human rights as the defense of human liberty Ignatieff is able to outline a theory of human rights that stipulates that the individual is free to decide “what constitutes a good life” (p. 55). In this regard, his theory has a double function. First, it claims that human rights are empowering in that it allows people to “help themselves” (p. 57) and, consequently, “develop agency where it did not exist before” (Brown, 2004, p. 454). Second, it defines human rights as “an account of what is right”, not of “what is good” (Ignatieff, 2001, p. 55). Thus, a group or state may not intervene in the individual lives of those it perceives to have had experienced a violation of their rights without consent from those individuals that they are in fact victims. “Consent ought to be the defining constraint of human rights interventions in all areas where human life itself or gross and irreparable physical harm is not at stake” (p. 74). In this regard, human rights is a “language of empowerment” that allows human agents to come to deliberate about what is good as “moral
equals”. Because human rights are a “toolkit against oppression” (p. 57) – “a pragmatic political instrument” (Gutmann, 2001, p. x) – “human rights should not be conceived as guarantors of social justice, or substitutes for comprehensive conceptions of a good life” (ibid).

Though Ignatieff does not himself distinguish between “first-generation” and “second-generation” rights, as Amy Gutmann (2001) points out in her response to his paper, he does seem to prioritize first-generation rights.59 Specifically, first-generation rights are those defined in the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and include the right to life, the right to vote, and the right to a fair trial (the first 21 articles of the UDHR). Second-generation rights are those in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and include the right to work, the right to leisure, and the right to education (articles 22 to 30 in the UDHR) (Clapham, 2007; Bonner, 2007)60. Generally, the definition of human rights continues to garner much debate and disagreement. In fact, the two Covenants referenced above were created as a consequence of disagreements between UN Member States about “including all types of rights within one treaty” (Clapham, 2007, p. 48). These debates can generally be understood as disagreements (between politicians, academics, and activists, to name a few) about whether all rights (within each Covenant) should be held to the same standard. Succinctly put, such debates are framed by the urge to hold first-generation rights as primary because they are “necessary to democracy” and second-generation rights as secondary because they are only associated with “deepening

59 Ignatieff does so by urging that human rights needs to guard against negative liberties and in so doing will then protect “subsistence rights” (Gutmann, 2001, p. xii). Importantly, Brown (2004) further challenges this prioritization on the basis that his quasi support of “subsistence rights” are in fact a support for economic development and, as such, a prioritization of the ability of states to develop economically and contribute to capitalism over the ability of people to have access to work and food (for example).

60 Bonner notes that there are also those who argue for the defense of “third-generation rights (not in the UDHR)” which have been identified by political scientist Mahmood Monshipouri “as including ‘rights to development, to a healthy environment, to peace, to humanitarian aid, and to the benefits of international common heritage’” (cited in Bonner, 2007, p. 24).
democracy” (Bonner, 2007, p. 24). Social movement activists have often challenged the idea of
一代权利，提出一个扩展的人权观念并认为列在两个共同纲领的权利应被“同等优先”（同一）。
为支持这个论点的背景是将经济和社会权利的观念解释为“必要的为了保护公民和政治权利”（同一）。
同样，Gutmann (2001) 挑战 Ignatieff 的观点认为人权保护是人类自由的保护，认为“虽然权利
于生存权利和基本政治自由（法律程序，有状必应）并非消极自由，但它们同样有必要
它意味着对待人作为积极的主体”（p. xi）
“饥饿的人被剥夺了人性”（p. xii）。

了 Ignatieff 所提出“消极自由”的概念作为人权的定义基础。然而，在她的批评中她
说这个观念的局限在于它通过一个“道德话语”将人权权利结构化，这否定了
“全面正义的政治话语”（p. 453）。在这方面，Ignatieff 的人权观念
的人权权利取代了人权权利所寻求建立的公共形成项目。反驳 Ignatieff 的主张
“没有这样的事就是纯粹减少痛苦或保护免受伤害——减少或保护的性质本身是富有生
产生政治主体和政治可能性”（p. 460）。由此，她在澄清痛苦也产生主体时，她
的主要关注点是 Ignatieff 对人权发展

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61 By highlighting certain “political freedoms” that are included in the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and
that Ignatieff fails to account for in his theory, Gutmann not only notes his prioritization of “first-generation” rights
over “second-generation” rights but also of certain “first-generation” rights over others (in this same category of
rights).
as an “offensive” and “aspirational” claim (rather than a defensive claim) (Di Paolantonio, personal communication, June 24, 2010). In this regard, like Manokha (2009) who argues that human rights is a normative discourse through which collectivities are regulated and regulate themselves, Brown is concerned with how human rights as a discourse is constitutive of a “we.” This is an important concern within the context of her response to Ignatieff for it argues for a notion of collective rights that Ignatieff forecloses when he insists that collective rights “threaten the individual and erode the legitimacy of rights” (Brown, 2004, p. 457)\(^62\). In this article Brown then opens possibilities for us to examine how the human rights discourse functions to construct a “we” “that we were not before” (Simon, 2008, p. 354) – (perhaps) a public bound by a “practical solidarity, one in which we might vow to protect others and ourselves from the kinds of violence we and/or our loved ones have suffered” (Simon, 2008, p. 365). Such an analysis is indeed integral to a study of the landscape of memory in Argentina where *derechos humanos* is mobilized to construct a new a “we” that performs its commitment to *derechos humanos* by participating in others’ suffering and making public demands of the state in the name of that suffering.

\(^{62}\) Specifically, Brown argues that the reason Ignatieff objects to the notion of collective rights is because it would prohibit him from developing an account of what human rights are and what human rights are for that would maintain and contribute to global capitalism. She writes: “The right to food and shelter means the state will organize or provide them, and if the state is in this business, we are in the land of state socialism and if we are in the land of state socialism, individual rights – especially those basic to free enterprise and free trade – are presumed to be limited. With regard to the latter, Ignatieff claims that ‘rights inflation – the tendency to define anything described as a right – ends up eroding the legitimacy of a defensible core of rights….What Ignatieff is rehearsing is a political-economic account of what markets need to thrive’” (Brown, p. 457). Brown presents an important argument about the limitations of Ignatieff’s theory that prompts me to think through some of the issues with human rights as a discourse mobilized by governments to justify wars and international “development” projects. However, her argument also presents an important dilemma. On the one hand, I agree with her criticisms of Ignatieff’s theory as a “political-economic account of what markets need to thrive”. On the other hand I also think it is important to think about Ignatieff’s notion of “rights inflation” and how defining “everything as a right” might function to delegitimize the specificities of certain groups’ demands for protection from oppression, for legal retribution, and for public formation. I will not take these issues up here however as, for the purposes of this study, it is important to think them through within the context of an analysis of my conversations with human rights activists about public remembrance of the dictatorship (in Chapters Four and Five). Thus, these issues will be unraveled in Chapter Six.
2.2.2 *Derechos Humanos* in Argentina

As I have previously outlined, in Argentina demands for *derechos humanos* made by the *movimiento de derechos humanos* serve a dual function: a) to know the truth about what happened in every case of disappearance and to have those responsible for the state terrorism tried in the federal courts; and b) to secure social justice, generally framed as the right to education, work, and health care – that which is often framed as a the right to a “good life” or a “dignified life”. This particular way in which demands for *derechos humanos* are structured is best exemplified through the slogans that head the annual *Marcha de Resistencia* (March of Resistance). Held on December 10th – “International Human Rights Day”63 – every year since 1981, the *Marcha de Resistencia* is a 24 hour march in Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires (though there are smaller marches in important plazas across the country on the same day). The march was initially organized by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* to call attention to the violence perpetrated by the military state. Today the march includes the participation of many *organismos de derechos humanos* and other rights groups who continue to structure it as a form of public protest of state violence and the state’s inability (or unwillingness) to account for its citizens. Nonetheless, because of the historical context in which it was initiated, the *Marcha de Resistencia* is commonly and widely known as a protest organized and lead by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*. Examining some of the slogans under which the march has been organized throughout the years allows us to trace the development of the dual function of demands for *derechos humanos* as they are structured by *organismos de derechos humanos*. For example, in 1983, the banner under which these groups marched in the first *Marcha de Resistencia* in post-dictatorship Argentina read: “*Por la aparición con vida de los desaparecidos. Contra la Ley de*

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63 In 1950 the UN declared December 10th “International Human Rights Day” to mark the anniversary of the adoption of the UDHR two years earlier.
Amnistía.” (“For the demand to bring the disappeared back alive. Against the Amnesty Law”).

Over ten years later in 1995 the banner read: “Porque nos resistimos al olvido y a la impunidad. Porque nos resistimos al ajuste y al desempleo. Porque repudiamos la persecución política y todo tipo de censura a la participación popular. Porque nuestra razón de ser es la lucha de nuestros hijos desaparecidos, de nuestro pueblo.” (“Because we resist forgetting and impunity. Because we resist cutbacks and unemployment. Because we repudiate political persecution and all type of censorship of political participation. Because our reason for being is the struggle of our disappeared children, and our pueblo.”) (Instituto Espacio para la Memoria, 2006b, p. 3).

And, in 2007, the banner read: “Vamos por más. Más verdad, más justicia, más salud, más educación, más inclusión y más redistribución de riqueza” (“We demand more. More truth, more justice, more health care, more education, more inclusion, and more redistribution of wealth”) (Abrevaya, 2007).

As these slogans make clear, demands for derechos humanos made by organismos de derechos humanos include demands related to “first-generation” and “second-generation” rights. These demands serve both to respond to and call public attention to an “absent state” that has failed to account for the violence it has perpetrated against its citizens. The “expanded” notion of human rights that such demands structure constitute state violence as state terrorism, police repression, and economic violence (e.g., cutbacks that lead to poverty and unemployment). To protect and uphold derechos humanos is presented as a responsibility of the state and of civil society. The discourse of derechos humanos thus functions to re-establish the social contract between civil society and the state bound by the democratic promise of the rule of law to protect against crimes (and thus by the state’s measures to protect its citizens) as well as to construct a

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64 The most common translation of pueblo is town, village or “the people”. In this case it should be taken to mean “the people”.

“we” committed to *derechos humanos*. In this regard, the discourse of *derechos humanos* in Argentina articulates claims made of the state regarding the protection of “negative liberties” of individuals and collectivities and is also “aspirational”. With respect to the latter, the discourse of *derechos humanos* functions to; a) call on the democratic state to prosecute violence it is responsible for committing on its own citizens and to transform social injustices, and b) call on civil society to attend to state violence suffered by others by binding in a commitment to protest against violations of *derechos humanos*. This call for civil society to commit to a particular political project is articulated by *organismos de derechos humanos* as a commitment to carry on the work for social justice for which the disappeared were disappeared (a notion on which I focus in Chapter Five through analysis of my conversations with members of *organismos de derechos humanos*). Thus, a discussion of what constitutes human rights in Argentina is much more than a debate about how human rights should be defined. Rather, as I illustrate in detail in Chapters Four and Five, this discussion is directly concerned with the public memory of the disappeared. It is an issue that is deeply affective and strongly tied to a particular political project for the country that articulates a continual learning to live with the loss.

2.2.3 The Discourse of *Derechos Humanos* as Hegemonic

As I have previously mentioned, the discourse of *derechos humanos* has been established as hegemonic within Argentine political resistance today. However, that it is hegemonic in this sense does not mean merely that the discourse of *derechos humanos* serves to structure political protest staged in defense of rights in Argentina. To draw from Chantal Mouffe’s and Ernesto Laclau’s notion of hegemony, that the discourse of *derechos humanos* is hegemonic within Argentine political resistance means that it is a “process of rearticulation” that functions to contain the particularities of varied rights groups’ demands within a commonality (Howarth, 2004; Laclau, 2001; Laclau, 1996; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985a; “Hegemony & Socialism: An
Interview with Chantal Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau”, 2007). Through this process of rearticulation the discourse of *derechos humanos* “becomes the coalescing symbol of a plurality of struggles” (“Hegemony & Socialism: An Interview with Chantal Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau”, 2007) – workers’ rights struggles, Indigenous rights struggles, women’s rights struggles, and the struggle for *derechos humanos* in which the organismos de derechos humanos engage. Hegemony is thus the “putting together [of] a number of different political elements which are not necessarily connected together, but are put together through an articulation” that, importantly, “does not erase differences” (ibid). On the one hand, the demands of an individual group are identified as unique in relation to their difference from the others. On the other hand, “these differences are equivalent to each other” – “each of them cancels (sic) itself” – by “entering into a relation of equivalence with all other differences” (Laclau, 1996, p. 38). Equivalence in this sense does not “simply establish an ‘alliance’ between given interests, but modifies the very identity” – rearticulates – “the forces engaging in that alliance” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985b, p. 184). The discourse of *derechos humanos* as hegemonic within Argentine political resistance is meant to allow rights groups – organismos de derechos humanos, workers’ rights groups, women’s rights groups, Indigenous rights’ groups – to exist as a disjointed unity.

The process of hegemony itself requires the “availability of potential signifiers” – such as “people”, “revolution” or, in this case, *derechos humanos* – and the “credibility” of those signifiers as “a means of signification and interpellation” (Howarth, 2004, p. 262). In Laclau’s (2001) words, “the hegemonic relation requires the production of tendentially empty signifiers which, while maintaining the incommensurability between universals and particulars, enable the latter [the particulars] to take up the representation of the former [the universals]” without erasing the particularities in the process (p. 11). “An empty signer is, strictly speaking, a signer without a signified” (Laclau, 1996, p. 36). No signer is innately “empty” however. It
becomes so through the process of hegemony – a signifier is rearticulated to acquire a universal function that still maintains the specificities of that which it is always coming to signify. The empty signifier, however, never comes to “fully” represent a particular signified, for “if the name (the signifier) is so attached to the concept (signified) that no displacement in the relationship between the two is possible, we cannot have any hegemonic rearticulation” (Laclau, 2001, p. 12). In other words, a situation where the discourse of derechos humanos comes to inextricably “weld together” the “system of differences” within Argentine political resistance – differences between rights groups, their demands, and the purpose of their demands – would no longer be a situation in which the discourse is hegemonic within Argentine political resistance (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985a, p. 138). Hegemony is an endless process that “involves a strategic movement which is always transient, unstable, and negotiated” (“Hegemony & Socialism: An Interview with Chantal Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau”, 2007)65. Thus, the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic was not produced and is not maintained as such solely by the present-day movimiento de derechos humanos.

2.3 Outlining the Historical Conditions of Existence for the Discourse of Derechos Humanos as Hegemonic

Las cuestiones que explican los por qué de la dictadura explican los por qué de muchos procesos represivos que se dieron en nuestro país y, a la vez, de muchos procesos de rebelión o de construcción de alternativas que se dieron a lo largo de nuestra historia.

That which explains the why of the dictatorship explains the why of many repressive processes that occurred in our country and, at the same time, of many processes of rebellion or of constructing alternatives that occurred throughout our history. (Juane Basso, Conversation, June 7, 2007)

65 I do not mean to imply that the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic is not problematic or that by maintaining “the system of differences” between groups and their demands it functions to hold all groups and demands as equally important. As I discuss in Chapter Six this is not the case for a number of reasons, one of those being the way in which the pain and suffering of some is structured as more severe than the pain and suffering of others through other discourses such as, in the case of both groups of Madres de Plaza de Mayo, the discourse of motherhood.
Basso’s comment reminds us that “violations of human rights and organizations devoted to defending and protecting their victims” did not begin with the dictatorship and the consequent formation of the human rights movement, nor is the privileged position of the discourse of derechos humanos within Argentine political resistance maintained solely by the present-day movimiento de derechos humanos (Jelin, 1994, p. 39). As such Basso and Jelin (1994) highlight the importance of coming to understand the legacy of collective action in the defense of rights alongside a legacy of state repression to which this action was a response. They suggest that the conditions for the privileging of the discourse of derechos humanos within Argentine political resistance has been established as a result of an intertwining history of a state which regularly violated its citizens’ rights and a people who stood up to defend those rights. Drawing from Basso and Jelin, in this section I outline the legacy of state repression in Argentina and the political resistance that has emerged in response. Specifically, this outline allows me to examine how a language of rights has been articulated at different junctures by different groups in particular moments of state violence. However, a historical trajectory of the ways in which demands for rights have been mobilized in Argentina through political resistance cannot alone explain how the historical conditions for the hegemonization of the discourse of derechos humanos have been established. Primarily this is because such a trajectory limits our understanding of the place of the discourse of derechos humanos in Argentine political resistance to reasons of temporal continuity. It suggests that because there exists a repressive state apparatus in Argentina that continues to promote and exercise violent repression against civil society, Argentines have and continue to resist that violence through mobilizations organized in defense of rights.

As social movement theories highlight, political collective resistance is also often grounded in a collective identity (Porta & Diani, 2006) – in a sense of belonging to a “we” that has
“sacrificed” and “successfully” struggled against oppression (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Gordillo, 1999). Thus, in this section I also examine how dominant narratives of historical events that emphasize the power of collective struggle serve to legitimize the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic. Bearing in mind the significance of the mobilization of the discourse of derechos humanos to the work of learning to live with loss, this particular analysis of the conditions of existence of the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic speaks to how such narratives articulate a concern with accounting for past lives – for publicly acknowledging the significance of past lives (and the loss of those lives) to the present-day. Lastly, I examine international and national developments in human rights law and in the articulation of the discourse of derechos humanos that function to structure the privileged position of this discourse within the landscape of memory of the dictatorship and within the larger context of Argentine political resistance.

2.3.1 A Note on Methodology

Before delving into an analysis of the conditions of existence of the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic, I turn first to a brief explanation regarding the reading practices I employed to understand certain texts as indicative of the conditions that have produced the discourse of derechos humanos as such. Influenced by Foucault’s work on archaeology, my aim for this chapter was to conduct a literature review of secondary sources that spoke to the rules determining the limits of the sayable of rights claims – how have rights been defined? – and the limits of the constitutive function of these claims – how have rights claims been mobilized to articulate political (collective) subjectivities? With these broad questions in mind, for the discussion below I chose to draw from texts that furthered my understanding of the rules that have motivated the production and reproduction of the privileged position of the discourse of derechos humanos and the “expanded” definition of derechos humanos. In some cases, the focus
of the texts themselves was an analysis of the specificities of demands for rights being mobilized by particular rights groups in certain moments, as well as the function of these demands to articulate an alternative national imaginary than that proposed by the state. In other cases, I used the questions above to frame my understanding of the theoretical inquiry and descriptive account of the rights group, rights claims, and political moment of focus.

As I briefly explained above, my analysis of the secondary sources that informed my understanding of the conditions of existence of the discourse of derechos humanos follows three conceptual themes. There are thus three subsections within this section of the chapter. First, the texts are organized by group and chronologically. This is both for the purpose of readability and to examine the legacy of political resistance and state violence in Argentina. The focus here is to understand how different rights groups define what rights are, how state violence in Argentina has been perpetrated with the purpose of constructing a particular nation, and how demands for specific rights function as hegemonic. This analysis is informed by Mouffe and Laclau’s theory of hegemony and aims to develop a reading of “particular” claims as an articulation of a “universal” (derechos humanos). Though I began my literature search with this as my primary purpose for this chapter, reading some of the work on social movement theories and on how certain protests in Argentine history are considered iconic examples of “successful” demonstrations led me to my second theme. Thus, in the second subsection I examine texts that speak to the function of the memories of such political resistance to the discourse of derechos humanos today. This analysis is also organized chronologically for the purpose of readability but also with the objective of examining how certain images and symbols of past rights groups and mass mobilizations of state resistance have been reproduced. Importantly, through this analysis I examine how these images and symbols are not only politically significant but also how they articulate an investment in honouring past lives and marking their significance to
present-day lives. Lastly, in the third subsection I contextualize the national conditions of existence of the discourse of derechos humanos within an international context, centering on how the language of rights has been mobilized through local and global institutions (e.g., the government and the UN). The aim of my reading of these texts is to understand how the international context informs the local one.

2.3.2 State Violence and Political Resistance in Argentina

Similar to many of the scholars who inform my analysis of the legacy of state violence and political resistance in Argentina (e.g. Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003; Rock, 1987; Schwittay, 2003; Sutton, 2008; Villalón, 2007), I begin with an understanding of state perpetrated violence (whether repression of public dissent or economic violence) as a tool for excluding those who challenge, in varying ways, dominant constructions of the nation and national identity. In this regard, I have also found Fraser’s (2003) analysis of “struggles for recognition” productive for framing a discussion on how people mobilize collective action in response to violence and in defense of rights as demands to be recognized within the nation and incorporated into the national imaginary. Drawing from her work compliments the analysis informed by Mouffe and Laclau regarding the constitutive function of rights claims by providing us with a particular understanding of what it might mean to be recognized and incorporated in this sense.

Fraser (2003) views recognition as a matter of status rather than equality, maintaining that what requires recognition is not identity but rather status as “full partners in social interaction” (p. 27). While her initial claim for examining political struggles as that of a question of status is grounded on the argument that present-day social movements are increasingly moving away from “the language of [wealth] distribution” (p. 21), she concludes that demands for recognition
include demands for equitable economic distribution “as diminished access to economic resources impedes equal participation” (p. 31). Thus, struggles for recognition have a “distributive subtext”. Specifically, misrecognition “means social subordination in the sense of being prevented from participating as a peer in social life” – it is “an institutionalized relation of social subordination” (ibid). As such, misrecognition constructs “others” undeserving of “respect or esteem” and, consequently, constitutes “them” outside of the nation, preventing “them” from participating in social life on par with those on the inside (“us”) (ibid). “In some cases, misrecognition is juridified, expressly codified in formal law; in other cases, it is institutionalized via government policies, administrative codes and professional practices” (p. 28). It is also “institutionalized informally – in associational patterns, long-standing customs, and sedimented social practices in civil society” (ibid). Thus, demands concerned with misrecognition are demands for some form of institutional change.

Considering Fraser’s (2003) analysis, the discussion here illustrates how social movements in Argentina have responded to state violence through demands made in defense of (certain) rights which simultaneously serve as a call for recognition within the national “we”, thus pushing the boundaries of the normative structure. Drawing from Mouffe and Laclau, I examine how such calls for recognition function as a “particular demand towards a “universal”. Certainly,

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66 To date, there is no singular definition of social movements agreed upon by scholars. As it is illustrated in the literature, social movements are indeed difficult to concretely define because they are fluid. In other words, the reasons for their emergence may be different from the reasons that sustain them, collective action is motivated by different national and international contexts at different moments, and in some cases the formation of the social movement requires some form of pre-existing organization whereas in other cases it is more spontaneous. For the purposes of this study I have found Goodwin and Jasper’s (2003) general definition of social movements productive. They succinctly define a social movement as “a collective, organized, sustained and noninstitutional challenge to authorities, powerholders or cultural beliefs and practices” (p. 3). They add: “Social movements are conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society by using extra-institutional means. They are more conscious and organized than fads and fashions. They last longer than a single protest or riot. There is more to them than formal organizations, although such organizations usually play a part. They are composed mainly of ordinary people as opposed to army officers, politicians, or economic elites. They need not be explicitly political, but many are. They are protesting against something” (ibid).
Humphrey and Valverde’s (2007; 2008) analysis of how the discourse of *derechos humanos* is mobilized to legitimize victims as political subjects also informs this discussion. In the following sections I present short histories of social movements in Argentine history whom, in demanding the protection of their respective rights, not only aim to be recognized within the nation and incorporated into the national imaginary (challenging the dominant culture), but also endeavour to re-establish the state’s responsibility to its citizens to protect their rights. In this regard, these small histories mark a legacy of a discourse of rights that has been mobilized to make demands of the state.

### 2.3.2.1 The Labour Movement

I begin with the labour movement and demands for worker’s rights because in many historical accounts of the history of political resistance in Argentina, the labour movement (constituted primarily by unions and workers’ rights groups) has taken center stage. Indeed the labour movement has been historically instrumental in establishing a language of rights within Argentine political resistance and in motivating institutional change, most famously during the Perón era (further discussed below). Here I highlight three particular moments of political resistance in which the labour movement participated, in order to outline how a language of rights has been articulated by this movement within different contexts of political conflict and change. An analysis of these three moments serves to map the development of a rights discourse within the labour movement – the particular – and the way in which it has been mobilized by its constituents as demands to be incorporated into the national imaginary – a universal. Importantly, these three cases illuminate instances of significant political and social change in Argentina with respect to both institutional shifts and transformations in political resistance.
First, the rebellions of 1919 and of 1921-1922 took place within a context of increasing state repression and growing civil unrest primarily led by the labour movement. The late 1800s to the mid 1920s were characterized by a number of mass labour strikes and protests concerned with demands specifically related to worker’s health rights (e.g., workplace safety), increase in wages, and just working conditions (e.g., fair hours) (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Erickson, Peppe, & Spalding, 1974; Korzeniewicz, 1993; Marchak, 1999; Novick, 2008, Rock, 1987). Additionally, this period (primarily the late 1800s to the early 1900s) was also characterized by a large wave of immigration that saw the settlement of approximately 4 million people, mostly from Italy and Spain and, consequently, a growing “working-class” of white, male workers (Marchak, 1999; Molyneaux, 1986; Novick, 2008; Rock, 1987). Thus, the labour movement was predominantly constituted by this working-class. Importantly, demands made by this movement were made both of the state and the elite class (the employers) whose control over the circulation of capital in the country was invested in a particular construction of the Argentine nation67 (Marchak, 1999; Novick, 2008; Rock, 1987). As had been the case since colonization, the nation-building project promoted by the state and the elite class was largely dependent on Argentina’s ability to participate in the global economy as a “white, civilized, and economically powerful” nation (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003; Joseph, 2000; Sutton, 2008; Trinchero, 2006). According to Joseph (2000) and Trinchero (2006), Argentine nationhood emphasized “European-ness” and

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67 A note on class positions during this time: From the early 1850s to the 1920s “a few powerful families descended from the first settlers immediately following the colonization period occupied estates in the exceptionally fertile lands”. However this oligarchy was split primarily into two groups – those that “remained locked in traditional landowning patterns...whose wealth derived from the produce of the land” and those that “became engaged in mercantile business, [and] finance” (Marchak, 1999, p. 44). Most of the “working-class” in Argentina were employed by the few families that belonged to either of these two groups (the “elite class”). Thus, though there were differences in how those working in the agriculture sector and those working in the industry sector were dispersed within the country (according to both land conditions in different parts of the country and the ability of certain cities to lead in the industrial sector such as the capital city of Buenos Aires), labour unrest by the 1930s “had acquired a national scope” (Korzeniewicz, 1993, p. 10) (Also see Brysk, 1994 for a similar outline of class divisions in the early 1800s to early 1900s).
“firstworld-ness”, thus producing the “anthropological metaphor” that “Argentines descend from ships” – the metaphor on which dominant constructions of “true” Argentine identity would become largely based.

Within this context, the rebellions of 1919 which later came to be known as “semana trágica” (“tragic week”) began on January 3rd with mass strikes across the city of Buenos Aires. As had been the case in many of the previous strikes and demonstrations, the strikers were protesting poor working conditions and demanding that the state protect their rights as workers. After days of police repression, a mass uprising of workers took to the streets as a continuation of their demands for better working conditions, as well as in response to the state sanctioned violence. On January 7th the protestors were met by the military and by “right-wing death squads” (hired by the employers), who left over one hundred workers dead and many more wounded (Marchak, 1999). Similarly, in the 1921-1922 Patagonian Rebellion that followed, “soldiers killed 1,500 workers who had rebelled against” their employers (ibid, p. 47).

“Miserable living and working conditions, combined with a lack of alternatives when there were massive layoffs, had sparked the unrest. The workers had already surrendered, after being promised amnesty, when they were massacred” (ibid).

The mobilizations of 1919 and 1921-1922 were organized as demands for just working conditions and thus were demands made in defense of the rights of workers. However,

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68 Feitlowitz (1998) notes that the government’s efforts to repress workers coincided with a newspaper campaign against ‘outside agitators’ and a ‘Bolshevik conspiracy’. “Police and right-wing agitators set upon Jews with impunity, killing 700, wounding approximately 4000, and vandalizing Jewish neighbourhoods, homes, businesses, and synagogues” (p. 269). Thus Feitlowitz (1998) highlights for us the ways in which a stated fear of “communism” was linked to anti-Semitism in Argentina which has roots extending back to the 1900s.

69 The Patagonia of Argentina refers to the Southern provinces of the country. This rebellion is titled after this region because it is where the largest and most significant uprisings took place.
considering the context – demands made by white male workers during a period of nation-building that emphasized the perceived whiteness and firstworld-ness of Argentina – we might also consider these demands as claims to be recognized as an integral contributor to the Argentine nation (Villalón, 2007). A discourse of rights was thus motivated by group-specific concerns – a factor which had significant implications for the delegitimization of demands made in defense of rights by other groups such as those demanding Indigenous rights. Although this is further discussed below, my point here is that though there is a legacy of struggles for rights in Argentina which has served to establish the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic within Argentine political resistance, there are cases in which certain rights claims are privileged over others.70

Certainly, the ability of a social movement to legitimize the priority of its demands for rights over that of another is largely dependent on the international and national socio-political context71. For example, in Argentina the cordobazo72 of 1969, which took place within the context of international changes to human rights law73 and major institutional transformations resulting from mass mobilizations of political resistance (e.g., the Cuban Revolution), saw a shift

70 For example, demands made in defense of rights that were grounded in calls to be recognized within the white Argentine nation functioned to delegitimize demands for Indigenous rights for recognition. Further, rights claims expressed by and for male workers often suppressed the rights of women in so far as men sought recognition as heads of households, fathers, and husbands entitled to the means of support for families (Kari Dehli, Personal Communication, June 24, 2010).

71 For example, the emergence of workers’ movements during this time across Latin America, North Africa and Europe.

72 The suffix “azo” means great or grand. In other words, it implies that that which this suffix is attached to stands out among other situations that are similar.

73 In 1966 the UN adopted the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. Within international law covenants are regarded as treaties and therefore are legally binding. States that sign international treaties are held legally accountable according to state specific constitutions because international law cannot override (in most cases) the sovereignty of a state. Thus, in some cases, these Covenants committed states to legal sanctions if the rights defined within them were violated, while in others they acted more as a “promise” (albeit symbolic) of the signatory to uphold those rights.
in the articulation of rights by the labour movement. As it is generally understood, the
<em>cordobazo</em> was a weeklong series of demonstrations and strikes mostly taking place in the city of Córdoba (though also seen in other major cities across the country) and largely organized by the labour and student movements. In part, the impetus for the <em>cordobazo</em> was the economic and labour policies of the 1966-1973 dictatorship. In 1966 employers in the city of Córdoba began taking advantage of the new economic policies instated by the dictatorship of General Juan Onganía (1966-1969), resulting in massive wage reductions and layoffs. These cuts had been particularly devastating to workers in Córdoba which had a large working-class as a result of the growing automobile industry in the city (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Gordillo, 1999; Marchak, 1999; Rock, 1987). Another important factor in the uprisings of the <em>cordobazo</em> was the increase in state repression that came in 1966 with the new dictatorial government. Thus, the labour movement’s participation in the <em>cordobazo</em> was grounded in the perception of “the government’s illegitimacy…undoubtedly rooted in the combination of its authoritarian political character with economic policies that hurt its specific interests” (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994, p. 491).

For the labour movement the <em>cordobazo</em> marked a significant turning point in its mobilization of a discourse of rights and demands made by workers, though not necessarily only for workers. The labour movement participated in this mobilization in response to the economic violence that resulted from Onganía’s repressive regime, and was thus concerned with a group-specific focus. However, the intent of the <em>cordobazo</em> was also to overthrow the government not only for the good of the workers but also for the good of all Argentines (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Gordillo, 1999; Marchak, 1999). Thus, within the context of the <em>cordobazo</em> we see the mobilization of a discourse of rights being made in the name of “all”, or rather, of others not uniquely identified within the constitution of the collectivity making these demands – a more inclusive discourse of
rights emerges. Not surprisingly, within the context of a dictatorship that had outlawed almost all political action (of any kind), demands for rights included an individually driven “distributive subtext” that unified the collective in a singular struggle. In this regard, the unification of the student movement and the labour movement is particularly important to this analysis of the shifts in the articulation of rights by the labour movement. As Brennan and Gordillo (1994) have noted, within the demonstrations of the *cordobazo* the labour movement positioned itself alongside the student movement with whom it had often clashed in previous demonstrations, standing against what was perceived as the student movement’s “elitism”. Thus, the *cordobazo*, and the labour movements’ articulation of rights within it, was (and is) largely understood as a collective Argentine struggle against a repressive regime and, in turn, a mass mobilization in defense to the right to democracy and political participation that was quite distinct from previous mobilizations of political resistance (particularly in its inclusion of concerns over the state’s obligations to the law and other democratic principles) (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Gordillo, 1999; Marchak, 1999).

Similarly, the phenomenon of “worker occupied enterprises” in the early 2000s took place within the context of unified discontent against the government (Ranis, 2005). However, what is quite explicitly different within this case is the form of political resistance chosen to articulate rights and, in turn, the implications of this new means of political resistance for reframing the relationship between the state and civil society as well as the labour movement itself. The phenomenon of the “worker occupied enterprises” occurred within what has come to be known as the “Argentine economic crisis” (Ranis, 2005; Sutton, 2007; Vilas, 2006). The “crisis” was in large part a result of President Carlos Saúl Menem’s (1989-1999) neoliberal economic model which saw the privatization of most of the state-owned companies, dramatic cuts to public spending, and the “Convertibility Plan” which valued the national currency to the U.S. dollar
(Feitlowitz, 1998; Ranis, 2005; Sutton, 2007; Vilas, 2006). However, by 2001, President De la Rúa’s government could no longer sustain the Convertibility Plan and thus, to prevent capital flight, it sanctioned a drastic freeze on bank accounts that came to be known as the corralito74. During this time, Argentines were restricted to cash withdrawals of three hundred dollars American per week and per person, at a time when the price of basic goods was at more than five hundred and fifty dollars American per month (Ranis, 2005; Sutton, 2007; Vilas, 2006). Though the period between March 2001 and July of 2002 was characterized by large protests organized in response to the “economic crisis”, in December of 2001 the corralito spurred mass mobilizations of a large majority of the Argentine population expressing discontent with their government (these mobilizations are further discussed below).

Within this context, worker-occupied enterprises seemed to be the only alternative to mass unemployment and poverty (Ranis, 2005). As many businesses began to collapse stating bankruptcy as the reason for closure, former workers who had been laid off began to literally occupy the buildings (e.g., factories) to restart work – they began to “recover” businesses75. Importantly, with respect to those within the “Fábricas Recuperadas” (“Recovered Factories”) sector, their “position [w]as…not one of direct confrontation with capitalism as an economic system, but rather to use the mechanisms as (sic) provided by that system to etch out islands of worker control and management” (Ranis, 2005, p. 108). Further, their claims are for “the right to work”. As President of the Recovered Factories, Luis Caro, has stated: “Our struggle is recuperating factories and providing employment…[of] defending… the right embedded in the

74 Corralito is a diminutive of the word corral which is a pen where farm animals are kept. The term corralito refers to the government’s policies on bank freezes which “corralled” US$ 69,843 millions (Vilas, 2006).

75 Though the most well known worker-recovered enterprises are factories, other businesses such as hotels were also occupied and recovered. Thus, I use the word “businesses” rather than “factories”. 
Argentine Constitution’s article 14 which says every Argentine has the right to work in any lawful factory”” (cited in Ranis, 2005, p. 108). Thus, though some of the members of the Fábricas Recuperadas participated in the mass mobilizations that emerged in response to the corralito, and though other rights groups supported them in rallies and demonstrations in defense to their right to work – in defense to their right to recover factories – they removed themselves from the context of unified discontent against the government and framed themselves as fighting for workers and their rights. In this regard, this particular sector of the present-day labour movement demands recognition as workers and thus articulates a language of rights that is quite different than that seen in the cordobazo.

However, if we consider Caro’s following statement – “workers are basically defending their right to maintain their families” – we might understand their demands also as direct calls for recognition to participate in social life. Thus, they speak to the exclusion from the social of the nation. In contrast to the implicit demands to participate “as full partners in social interaction” (Fraser, 2003, p. 27) that are made through defense to the right to work, this comment by Caro contextualizes such demands as explicit and thus positions the workers of the Fábricas Recuperadas within the larger context of mobilizations in defense of rights applying to all persons (despite his comment above about being “committed [only] to the workers”). As such, the rights claims articulated by this particular sector of the labour movement serves to legitimize demands for derechos humanos made by organismos de derechos humanos. Hence, it is a hegemonic claim in that a particular demand coheres into a universal claim. In the same vein, these demands legitimize claims to the right to work and the right to provide for one’s family as an issue of derechos humanos. The present-day labour movement has seen an internal restructuring that includes a working-class belonging to “worker occupied enterprises” structuring new ways of articulating rights and, thus, new ways of relating to the state.
Importantly, positioned within the larger context of Argentine political resistance in defense of rights, this sector of the labour movement reframes the relationship between the state and civil society by continuing to hold the state accountable for protecting their rights while simultaneously participating in the action necessary to protect those rights itself. Considering that many of these factories (and many other recovered enterprises) have been legally transformed into cooperatives\textsuperscript{76}, these workers’ struggles have engendered hope in the possibility of influencing and articulating policy “from below” (Stahler-Sholk, Vanden, & Kuecker, 2007).

2.3.2.2 The *Piquetero* Movement (the Unemployed Worker’s Movement)

The *piqueteros* – constituted by unemployed workers – have also played an important role in mobilizing the discourse of *derechos humanos* as hegemonic within political resistance in Argentina as well as introducing new forms of political resistance. In particular, their signature *piquetes* or *corta de rutas* (picketing or roadblocks) address the state and are also aimed directly at drawing civil society’s attention to injustice. As such, the *piqueteros*’ articulation of rights challenge both the normative relationship between the state and civil society and dominant social boundaries. Specifically, a *piquete* consists of blocking major roads with burning tires or trucks and with the protesters themselves, who hold banners demanding jobs and social assistance programs for those pushed out of the labour market. Also emerging *en mass* in response to the economic crisis, the *piqueteros* and the *piquetes* were initially situated within the struggle waged for the right to work. However, though the ultimate aim of the roadblocks is the demand in

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\textsuperscript{76} Many of the workers who recovered enterprises took their case to court to have the “occupation” or “recovery” of these businesses officially established as cooperatives. “They based their argument on a 1977 law that allowed for state expropriation if it was deemed for the ‘common good whether materially or spiritually’. The law further stipulated that private or public goods could be temporarily expropriated if for reasons of ‘public utility’….However there is an important caveat involved. The expropriations by these local jurisdictions were usually for two years in order to maintain the structural, administrative and productive coherence of the enterprise and could be subject to being returned to its original owners as determined by the expropriators” (the state). As of 2005 there were 13 factories in the city of Buenos Aires that legally became cooperatives through a legislation passed that “made permanent the rights of the worker cooperatives to maintain control over their enterprises” (Ranis, 2005, p. 104).
defense of the right to employment and to be protected by the state (e.g., social welfare), the *piquete* is also structured to disrupt everyday life. It does so both by blocking major routes to the downtown core and thus interrupting morning and afternoon rush hour, and by blocking major roads between provinces impeding “production and circulation of commodities essential to the reproduction of the neoliberal regime” (Petras, 2001, p. 4265). That said, “their aim is to move beyond the struggle for ‘income distribution’ and ‘social inclusion’” (Dinerstein, 2003, p. 3). Their struggle, encapsulated by their motto “‘Work, Dignity and Change’”, is “a struggle for dignity” (ibid).

Like the *Fábricas Recuperadas*, the *piquetes* also function to structure a relationship with the state that holds the state accountable for protecting the rights of its citizens while reframing the relations of power between the state and civil society, contesting the assumption that institutional change can only come from the top down. Indeed, in some cases the *piquetes* did achieve their stated goals of employment (Petras, 2001; Villalón, 2007). For example in 1997 the state addressed demands made by the *piqueteros* by starting a labour program (“*Plan Trabajar*” or “*Plan Work*”) “that fostered the creation of new temporary employment opportunities for the unemployed poor” (Villalón, 2007, p. 149). However, the *piquetes* also differ from the *Fábricas Recuperadas* with the most obvious difference existing between the very people who organize these mobilizations. The two groups emerge with varying access to the cultural capital necessary for participation in a capitalist society – the *piqueteros* do not have the means to occupy and recover a factory, and thus, to create work for themselves like those involved in the struggle for the *Fábricas Recuperadas*. As such, they turn to more “direct” forms of political resistance on the streets (Petras, 2001; Villalón, 2007). As a consequence, *piqueteros* have often been
repessed by the police – actions that have resulted in the murder of a number of *piqueteros*\textsuperscript{77}.

The criminalization of the *piqueteros*, evidenced by the violent repression with which the state has responded to their protests, highlights their particular struggle for human dignity – a struggle to be recognized as “human beings born free and equal in dignity” (Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, cited in Clapham, 2007, p. 183). In this regard, the *piqueteros’* struggle functions to legitimize demands made by *organismos de derechos humanos* for *derechos humanos*, and that very struggle in which the *organismos* participate serves to legitimize that of the *piqueteros*.

2.3.2.3 The Women’s Movement and Women’s Participation in Political Resistance

According to Molyneaux (1986), the story of women’s participation within Argentine political resistance is often missing from the many historical accounts of social movements in the country. Thus, the struggle for visibility and, in turn, the struggle against gender discrimination has often remained in the margins of analyses of demands made in defense of rights in Argentina. Within the Argentine socio-political context, during the Perón era (1946-1955) there was a significant shift in terms of women’s recognition within the political life of the nation. With the Peronist government came women’s suffrage in 1947, the creation of the Peronist Feminine Party in 1949, and the election of 45 women into Congress in 1955 (which was considered a large number by the standards of the time) (Feijoo & Nari, 1996; Navarro & Bourque, 1998). Nonetheless, despite these political feats, in the 1940s and the 1950s women still struggled against predominant norms of femininity, as the women before them did and as

\textsuperscript{77} As I mentioned in Chapter One, Maxi (Maximiliano Kosteki) and Dario (Darío Santillán) are two *piqueteros* that were murdered by the police during a mass demonstration in 2002. I further discuss the significance of public remembrance of these *piqueteros* to the *piquetero* movement and to the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship in Chapter Six.
women continue to do so now. Women’s rights groups have often struggled against the position ascribed to women by the state (as well as many within civil society) as “bearers of the nation” – as those who literally “give birth” to the nation and as those who produce the “good” citizen (as this was defined in different historical moments) by providing a strong familial base within the home. To illuminate how a language of rights has been articulated within this context, here I examine four historical political moments.

Though most of the accounts of the Argentine labour movement focus on the role of men’s participation in resistance against state repression and in demands for just working conditions, women have also historically organized in defense of rights related to their roles as workers. At the end of the nineteenth century, within the context of a growing immigrant population and a strong labour movement, women began organizing political rallies and demonstrations demanding access to work and access to equal pay. A number of women who “identified themselves as women of the working class” also participated in the publication of the underground newspaper “La Voz de la Mujer” (“The Voice of the Woman”) in Buenos Aires and Rosario. During a time when the state, largely supported by the Catholic Church and much of civil society, positioned women as integral to the “birthing” of the nation but otherwise rendered them invisible from the national imaginary, the articles in La Voz “called upon women to mobilize against their subordination both as women and as workers” (Molyneaux, 1986, p. 126). Additionally, as was the case in the international context, the women’s movement was also involved in the struggle for the right to vote and thus for full citizenship rights. Thus, within this context, women’s mobilizations in defense of the right to be recognized as workers by the state and by the largely male workforce (and labour movement) as well as to participate in the political life of the nation articulated calls to be recognized and included within dominant society. Theirs was a struggle to be visible within the national imaginary. In this regard,
considering women’s particular perceived importance for the construction of the nation, their demands made in defense of their rights as workers and as citizens challenged traditional images of motherhood.

While the women’s movement continued to mobilize for the right to work and equal pay, demands in defense of reproductive rights took center stage in the 1960s and 1970s once again challenging traditional images of motherhood and of a woman’s responsibility to be a mother (Bellucci, 1997; Feijoo & Nari, 1996). One of the most visible women’s rights groups during this time was the Movimiento de Liberación Femenina (Movement for Women’s Liberation) who “made the biggest effort to take the abortion debate into the streets” (Bellucci, 1997, p. 101). Nonetheless, during the 1976-1983 dictatorship such efforts, along with all other public efforts in defense of rights were censored and repressed. The year 1994 however was significant for the women’s movement in Argentina particularly with respect to “the subject of abortion, which was brought back into the public eye” within the context of Constitutional reform (ibid, p. 103). Some of the constitutional changes proposed by President Menem functioned to further limit restrictions on reproductive rights. For example, Menem suggested the insertion of a clause within the Constitution to protect “the right to life from the moment of conception until

78 Importantly, much has been written about the role of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (both groups) and the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo in transforming traditional notions of motherhood in Argentina (see Craske, 1999; Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Padilla, 2006; Taylor, 1998). Indeed these groups’ significance extends beyond this transformation as they also have played an integral role in the formation of the movimiento de derechos humanos and the continuing mobilization of the discourse of derechos humanos in political resistance in Argentina today. Additionally, the fact that 100 of the missing children have been found due largely to the endless investigative and public awareness work (e.g., protests, speaking to school children about the missing children) of the Abuelas is an incredible and invaluable achievement. Equally, both groups of Madres are nationally and internationally revered and have used this status to support and bring attention to other rights groups’ struggles against current social injustices in Argentina. That said, it is important to recognize the Madres’ and Abuelas’ overall significance to derechos humanos in Argentina and to challenging common-held constructions of motherhood in the country within the context of the political struggles of women’s rights groups who came before them and who existed at the time of their emergence (and who continue to exist today).

79 Though, as I have previously explained in Chapter One, these were not Menem’s primary aims for Constitutional Reform.
natural death” – a move which was supported and promoted by the Argentine Catholic Church (ibid). In response, over 108 women’s groups sent an open letter to the members of the Constitutional Assembly (directing discussions and debates on the reforms) stating that,

…the government is representing demands of only one institution in Argentine society, although there are many; at the same time it is neglecting the opinions and needs of women, who are the most affected by this matter. If the government wants to protect life, then it should be promoting social policies and laws that would improve the quality of life instead' (ibid).

Thus demands made in defense of rights by the women’s movement continued to articulate calls for recognition within the national imaginary. However, evident within this particular demand for visibility is the mobilization of a language of human rights and thus the contextualization of women’s rights and women’s demands of the state for the protection of those rights within the larger context of Argentine political resistance.

Issues of women’s rights continue to be situated within present-day political resistance by women themselves. Of note, women’s participation in the mobilizations that emerged during the “economic crisis” has been particularly important for shedding new light on the centrality of the notion of “poner el cuerpo” within Argentine political resistance.

Literally, this phrase means ‘to put the body’, which does not quite translate from Argentine Spanish to English. Poner el cuerpo overlaps somewhat with ‘to put the body on the line’ and to ‘give the body’ but it transcends both notions. With respect to political agency, poner el cuerpo means not just to talk, think or desire but to be really present and involved; to put the whole (embodied) being into action, to be committed to a social cause, and to assume the bodily risks, work and demands of such a commitment. Poner el cuerpo is part of the vocabulary of resistance in Argentina. (Sutton, 2007, p. 130)

All of the women interviewed by Sutton (2007) who participated in demonstrations in 2001-2002 used the expression poner el cuerpo to explain how and why they committed to political activism. Though poner el cuerpo is not an expression or practice adopted only by women, women’s conceptualization of this phrase in relation to their ability to achieve social change is quite different than that of men. For both men and women, poner el cuerpo means “to be
committed to a social cause, and to assume the bodily risks, work and demands of such a commitment” through demonstrations and other kinds of political resistance (e.g., participating in educational programs in poor communities). In this regard, the particular conceptualization of commitment that is articulated through the notion of poner el cuerpo legitimizes calls made by organismos de derechos humanos to forge a public bound in a commitment to derechos humanos. In the same vein, this call for public formation largely based on the commitment to carry on the work for social justice for which the disappeared were disappeared serves to legitimize notions of poner el cuerpo. However, for women, poner el cuerpo also holds the possibility of transforming predominant norms of femininity in Argentina and, of making women’s bodies visible within political protests as activists (as the subject position of activist is defined by poner el cuerpo) (Sutton, 2007). Thus, women’s mobilization of poner el cuerpo through their participation in present-day political resistance also seeks to bring new meaning to the objectives of political resistance and the articulation of a language of rights.

2.3.2.4 The Indigenous Movement

The Indigenous movements’ struggle in Argentina has also been one for visibility within the national imaginary, though within a different context of violence – that of institutionalized racism. As in the rest of the world, “the constitution of Argentina as a nation-state in the late 19th century was based on the systematic attempt to eliminate, silence, or assimilate its Indigenous population” (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003, p. 4). The Argentine state’s “campaign” to solve the “‘indigenous problem’” (p. 10) – the “problem” of existing Indigenous peoples in the country – was exercised through military repression, restrictions on migration effectively intended to isolate Indigenous groups in the Argentine “interior” (rural areas of the country), and “civilizing” projects forcing Indigenous people into agricultural-based labour (p. 13). Importantly, these violent state policies and practices, as well as the support for such actions by a large majority of
the non-Indigenous population, were mobilized by a nationhood project aimed at constructing a
civilized, white, and economically powerful Argentine nation (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003; Joseph,
2000; Sutton, 2008; Trinchero, 2006). Indigenous people were positioned as an “internal threat”
(or an “internal enemy”) to this nation-building project which would secure Argentina’s position
within the global market economy – a position perceived by the Argentine state and white
Argentines to be contingent on the ability to make claims of belonging to a white nation
(Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003; Joseph, 2000; Sutton 2008; Trinchero, 2006). This “emphasis on
whiteness [which] was parallel to anxieties about the ‘subtle Indianness’ of the country” served
to transform Indigenous persons as a “non-visible, vanishing yet culturally productive presence”
(Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003, p. 5).

Thus, mobilizations in defense of rights organized by Indigenous groups have articulated
demands for recognition that are quite different than that of other rights groups. Through
demonstrations centered on Indigenous rights grounded on the notion of rights owed to them
because of their particular status within the nation (as that of its first inhabitants), Indigenous
groups articulate a different conception of the citizen and of citizenship rights than that which
structures the citizen as a contributor to the nation and thus deserving of the state’s protection of
rights. In contrast to Fraser’s (2003) “struggles of recognition” framework that has informed
much of my analysis thus far, demands made in defense of Indigenous rights do call for
recognition in relation to “group-specific identity” (p. 27) and claim the state’s protection of
rights on this basis. Within the context of the protests organized by Indigenous groups in the late
1800s to the early 1900s, demands to the right to access the industrial labour sector in the cities
were claims for visibility within the Argentine nation that challenged the image of the rural,
uncivilized “Indian” (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003). Certainly, this particular articulation of the
rights of Indigenous persons as workers and as belonging to Argentina were delegitimized when
situated within the labour movements’ demands made in defense of worker’s rights which reified the image of a white European Argentina. However, later, under the Perón government which “provided important social and political rights to indigenous (sic) groups” (ibid, p. 14) such as national identification papers, Indigenous people were no longer positioned as an “internal threat” but rather as workers and, specifically, workers deserving of rights. Nonetheless, recognition of Indigeneity and of its place within the national imaginary continued to be ignored.

Today, “the new wave of indigenous (sic) activism in Argentina is the ethnic re-emergence of groups that had supposedly disappeared” (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003, p. 20). This “reemergence” has sparked debates among the general population about the authenticity (the “Indianness”) of many of these groups. Within a context in which “the marginalization of racialized individuals is part of the Argentine social fabric” (Sutton, 2008, p. 108), Indigenous rights groups are still struggling to be recognized as part of the nation through challenges to dominant images of Indigeneity. These struggles are directed both at the Argentine state and civil society and have recently been mobilized as a Latin American movement through efforts to create a “pan-Mapuche identity” and a “pan-Guaraní identity” that links the Mapuche of Argentina and Chile and the Guaraní of Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay in a struggle for recognition to the right to identity (Gordillo & Hirsch, 2003; Schwittay, 2003). This is a different notion than the right to identity articulated by the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo that I explained in Chapter One. While the Abuelas’ understanding of a right to identity is linked to familial notions of identity, Indigenous groups mobilize a conceptualization of a right to identity grounded in an interrelated concern regarding cultural identity rights and citizenship rights. These differences stem from different historical and contemporary state violence that each demand for the right to identity seeks to address. However, both sets of demands are made of the state and exist together within the larger context of Argentine political resistance. Read
alongside each other, these two notions of the right to identity reveal a legacy of state violence in Argentina and outline a broader set of responsibilities and victims for which the state is accountable. In this regard, these distinct demands for the right to identity contribute to an “expanded” definition of human rights and serve to legitimize derechos humanos. Identity rights claims articulated by both groups are identified as unique in relation to their differences from each other, yet these differences are recognized as “equivalent” through the discourse of derechos humanos. However, considering the privileged role of the movimiento de derechos humanos in Argentine political resistance, the right to identity as it is articulated by the Abuelas might also function to dismiss demands for the right to identity made by Indigenous groups as being of lesser importance. Coupled with the way in which the violence of institutionalized racism functions to exclude certain people from the national imaginary, Indigenous groups’ claims for the right to identity might be completely delegitimized in the eyes of the state and of civil society.

That said, as Fraser (2003) has noted, such struggles for (Indigenous) identity have a “distributive subtext” as well. In that Indigenous movements’ demands for recognition speak to racism in Argentina, they also speak to the effects of racism and thus the conditions of poverty in which many Indigenous people live. Sutton (2008) argues that Indigenous struggles and anti-racist struggles “resonate” with the discourse of derechos humanos because anti-racist struggles illuminate how “various forms of racism undermine the actualization of human rights to food and

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80 In keeping with Mouffe and Laclau, I have thus far tried to illustrate the ways in which the discourse of derechos humanos as a hegemonic discourse functions to unite rights groups within the larger context of political resistance in which the differences between groups’ demands are maintained and in which groups’ distinct claims for rights serve to legitimize each other. In this regard, I have often focused on the ways in which demands made by various rights groups serve to legitimize demands for derechos humanos made by organismos de derechos humanos (and vice versa). However, in this discussion about Indigenous groups’ claims for the right to identity and Abuelas’ claims for the right to identity we see how, though these two sets of demands for the right to identity are not “welded together”, one may be privileged over another. Though I do not take up this issue any further in this Chapter, I do delve into this discussion in Chapters Four and Six.
shelter, physical integrity, free speech, decent work, and so forth” (p. 114). Thus, she maintains that the discourse of derechos humanos serves to legitimize Indigenous groups’ demands for rights. However, considering how Indigenous movements’ have sought to restructure the dominant conceptualization of citizenship – a conceptualization on which the discourse of derechos humanos is grounded – we might also understand Indigenous demands made in defense of identity rights as a rearticulation of the discourse of derechos humanos. While in some ways such demands in defense of Indigenous rights legitimize demands for derechos humanos made by organismos de derechos humanos (e.g., such as the Abuelas), they also serve to shed light on the normative assumptions on which the discourse is based and the way it consequently might function to render other demands invisible (an issue which is further discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter Six).

2.3.3 In Solidarity: Memories of Past Struggles

...para la protesta social...tan fundamental como la representación de una situación de injusticia es la convicción de que se la puede modificar a través de la acción... (Gordillo, 1999)

for social protest...as important as the representation of a situation of injustice, is the conviction that it can be transformed through action. (Gordillo, 1999)

I begin with this quote from Gordillo’s (1999) analysis of the collective, seemingly singular identity that was forged within the context of the cordobazo because it necessarily grounds participation in a political struggle within the belief that such a struggle can be successful in achieving change. Certainly the legacy of mass mobilizations organized in defense of rights in Argentina has set the conditions for establishing the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic within political resistance. However, the perception that the struggle for derechos humanos in Argentina can transform past and present social and structural injustices has also served this function. For this perception or belief to exist, certain images and symbols of
historical events in which public demands for rights have achieved the desired aims (i.e., the protection of rights and redress for the violation of rights) have to be in place within “popular memory” (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Gordillo, 1999). In line with Brennan and Gordillo’s (1994) as well as Gordillo’s (1999) analysis of the *cordobazo*, Porta and Diani (2006) argue that such images and symbols are usually ones that represent a “‘we’ characterized by common traits and a specific solidarity” (p. 94) and consequently, the collective commitment to a struggle forged in solidarity as the reasons for the success of the struggle. The *cordobazo*, which is credited for the “revolutionary” mobilizations of the 1970s (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994) that are so often referenced in public remembrance of the dictatorship, is thus significant to the analysis of how the “popular memory” of this historical event functions to legitimate the discourse of derechos humanos in Argentine political resistance today. The *cacerolazos* (pot banging demonstrations discussed below) of 2001 are also significant to this analysis but with respect to a more recent event and thus to questions of the conditions that function to maintain this discourse as hegemonic.

2.3.3.1 The *Cordobazo* of 1969 and the Revolutionary Movement that Followed

Though the *cordobazo* is most often remembered as an uprising led by the Cordoban labour movement, or the Cordoban labour and student movements, it is also remembered as a mobilization in which the majority of the “common citizenry” participated (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994). “The principle image that has remained…is of a mass protest, in which all differences, political and class alike, were momentarily eclipsed” (p. 491) uniting all in opposition “against non-democratic rule” (p. 493). A predominant image of the *cordobazo* within the popular memory of rights groups was, and is, that the impetus for this unified action between all Argentines was the “widespread sense of exclusion from the country’s economic, social and
especially political life” that resulted from General Onganía’s repressive regime during the dictatorship of 1966-1973 (p. 491). In that this shared sense of exclusion from the nation is perceived to have motivated the cordobazo, it is also remembered as a largely spontaneous act – “without organized strategy much less any presentiment of the shape the events…would take” – thus attesting to the will of the people to participate as a collective committed to struggling in solidarity for justice. Perhaps most importantly for the “revolutionary” action of the 1970s (which came to be understood partly as a consequence of the cordobazo) is the perceived impact the cordobazo is thought to have had on the overthrow of General Onganía who stepped down shortly thereafter.

The revolutionary struggle of the late 1960s and early 1970s that has come to be so important for public remembrance of the dictatorship (both for those who justify the dictatorship and those who consider it a violation of derechos humanos), was indeed influenced by the perceived success of the cordobazo as well as international events, most notably the Cuban Revolution and the European mass mobilization of May ‘68. As Liria Evangelista (1998) has written of the socio-political context during that time: “the utopias of change and the hopes for a process of social revolution [were] inspired by the particular social and ideological situation prevailing in Latin America, the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the appearance of the French May in 1968” (p. xix). The groups who participated in this social revolution would come to constitute a revolutionary movement characterized by its aim to “at minimum…overthrow the government” (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003, p. 3). Nonetheless, this social revolution was taken up differently by different groups.
On the one hand, there was an increase in armed guerrilla groups in the late 1960s primarily led by the Montoneros and the Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP)\textsuperscript{81} (Revolutionary Army of the People) (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Marchak, 1999). Some members of these groups did participate in and take credit for the kidnapping and assassination of government and business leaders (Feitlowitz, 1998, Guzman Bouvard, 1998; Marchak, 1999). “At their height in 1974-1975, these...groups totaled no more than 2000 individuals, of whom only 400 had access to arms...Over the entire decade of the 1970s...[they] carried out a total of 697 assassinations, killing 400 policemen, 143 members of the military and 54 civilians” (Feitlowitz, 1998, p. 6). Most notable was the 1970 kidnapping and assassination of former military state leader General Aramburu (who ousted the Perón government in 1955) for which the Montoneros took responsibility. On the other hand there was also a general increase in public political resistance both by way of demonstrations, rallies, underground magazines and newspapers as well as non-profit work (e.g., working in poor communities to provide health care and education to the poor). Many of those involved in this latter type of action were also members of the Montoneros or the ERP or the unarmed factions of these two groups, the Juventud Peronista (JP) (Peronist Youth) and the Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores (PRT) (respectively) (Brennan & Gordillo, 1994; Marchak, 1999). Additionally, participation was growing in the Third World’s Priests Movement which argued that “revolutionary structural changes were needed in Argentine politics” (Deiner, 1975, p. 70). That many of the participants in these groups were not involved in armed revolution does not mean that they did not support it. For example, as Marchak (1999) has noted of the Montoneros: “Up to 1974, these Peronist

\textsuperscript{81} There were other guerrilla groups during this time such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) (Revolutionary Armed Forces) and the Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas (FAP) (Peronist Armed Forces) (Feitlowitz, 1998; Marchak, 1999). However the Montoneros and the ERP are the two guerrilla groups most often noted in historical accounts of this era in Argentina.
guerrillas were capable of eliciting popular support on a scale that boggles the mind. Tens of thousands of supporters joined them in demonstrations during the early 1970s. In the midst of an anarchic society given to extremely violent repression and reaction, with no group capable of governing, the Montoneros captured the public imagination and its fury” (p. 97).

In many of today’s historical accounts of revolutionary action in 1960s and 1970s Argentina, those who participated in the revolutionary movement are referred to as “militantes” (“militants”) by those involved in political resistance today. In turn, the methods of political resistance staged by the militante are referred to as “militancia”. Nonetheless, militante is also a term that was and is used by the military and thus has varied meanings. For the military (and its supporters) “militante” is synonymous to violent action and thus defines revolutionary action as necessarily violent. However, for those members of organismos de derechos humanos with whom I spoke that self-identify as former members of revolutionary groups such as the Montoneros and the ERP, the subject position of “militante” has two definitions that contradict the military’s particular image of revolutionary action as violent. For some of these people, though the term militante does connote violence, it frames that violence as necessary and thus justifiable as a means for social and structural political change (e.g., equitable distribution of wealth and overthrowing a military state government). For others, the term refers to those involved largely in non-profit work (e.g., volunteer work with the poor) as well as in public demonstrations against the state. Former self-identified members of Montoneros and the ERP with whom I had conversations as part of this study, emphasized that the objective of their militancia in the 1960s and 1970s was that of a revolutionary project to transform social inequality. They maintained that the question of violent or non-violent revolution is not of importance today. Rather, they argued, what is important is to learn from the ideals (and, for
some, to adopt the ideals) of those who were involved in this revolutionary struggle, whether violent or not, in order to mobilize for action for social change today.

As the 30,000 who were disappeared during the dictatorship are often remembered as militantes by organismos de derechos humanos (and thus as people struggling for social change), the terms militante and militancia (as they are conceptualized by these groups) are integral to demands for derechos humanos that are mobilized through public remembrance of the dictatorship. The use of these terms in the mobilization of these demands (and in the staging of this remembrance) emphasizes the call to civil society to commit to carry on the work for social justice for which the disappeared were disappeared. Echoing the notion of poner el cuerpo, these two terms suggest a sense of discipline and a commitment that is principled and unwavering, thus contrasting distinctly from more spontaneous acts of political resistance (e.g. the cacerolazos described below). As such, through public remembrance of the dictatorship the terms militante and militancia both legitimize the importance of poner el cuerpo within the larger context of Argentine political resistance and also function to rearticulate a call to poner el cuerpo as a call to remember the disappeared through a continuation of their struggle for social justice. The use of these terms in public remembrance practices can then be understood as expressing a concern with honouring the memory of the disappeared and inserting the disappeared into the present— in other words the work of learning to live with loss (a discussion that is central in Chapter Five).

In more general terms, militante is used to refer to those who historically mobilized collective political resistance (mostly in the 1960s and 1970s) and also to those who today mobilize political resistance by participating in public demonstrations and non-profit type work. As such, militancia includes these two kinds of action as political resistance for social change but
it no longer refers to violent action. Dominant memories of revolutionary struggle embodied by the militante of today are important to engendering a sense of belonging to a legacy of militancia and of poner el cuerpo and thus to legitimizing the discourse of derechos humanos within Argentine political resistance. With respect to the cordobazo, however, the images that remain significant today are those of its spontaneous nature and its ability to serve as a testament to the power of a “we” committed in solidarity to a political struggle. Narratives of the cordobazo thus function to lend credibility to calls made through the discourse of derechos humanos for the formation of a public that is committed to social justice. It is on these terms that memories of the cordobazo serve to legitimize the discourse of derechos humanos.

2.3.3.2 The Cacerolazos of 2001

In 2001, as a result of the neoliberal economic policies of the 1990s, over 830,000 Argentines had fallen below the poverty line (Vilas, 2006). Though protests by political activists such as the piqueteros had begun early on in the year, it was not until late December that Argentines took to the streets en mass in an unprecedented alliance between the unemployed, the underemployed, and a substantial sector of the middle class (Lewis, Klein & Basmajian, 2004; Vilas, 2006; Villalón, 2007). The most significant cacerolazos of that year began on December 19th and ended on December 21st. The cacerolazos “consisted of groups of people banging pots…in the streets and plazas as an expression of their discontent with and repudiation of political and economic conditions” (Villalón, 2007, p. 145). What has characterized the mobilizations of December 19th-21st as significant are: a) the unified class expression (across classes) of discontent with the national government; b) the influence these protests had, within the context of a long line of demonstrations, on the resignation of 5 Presidents in 14 days, and c) their spontaneous nature. As they were reported by mainstream media at the time and as they continue to live on in dominant narratives constructed by rights groups, these cacerolazos were
not pre-planned or organized. On December 19th a massive protest began – divided into two major groups, one headed towards the Plaza de Mayo and the other to Plaza Congreso. While some people were continuing the protests that had started earlier that year and others were just joining now, all were united under one slogan “¡Que se vayan todos!” (“They all must go!”). Certainly the cacerolazos of December 19th to the 21st can be considered as mass revolts against the corralito. However, the corralito was issued on December 3rd of 2001. That said, how might we understand the mass unified uprising that occurred on December 19th, 16 days after the corralito?

On December 3rd the Minister of the Economy, Domingo Cavallo, decreed a freeze on all bank accounts – the corralito. Strict limits on cash withdrawals from personal accounts meant people were unable to pay their bills, their mortgages, or buy enough groceries to last a week (Vilas, 2006). In response, “mobs of enraged customers and the general public amassed at the doors of banks”, breaking windows and ATM machines. Large demonstrations continued daily. Further, people began pillaging supermarkets, taking necessities without paying and without much complaint or resistance from the employers. First President De la Rúa ordered police repression. However, when this did not seem to slow down the momentum of these mobilizations, De la Rúa enacted a state of siege on December 19th, calling on the armed forces to repress growing unrest. On the morning of Thursday December 20th the police and the military began firing tear gas and rubber bullets into the crowd of protestors at Plaza de Mayo. Although some of the protestors retreated to their homes at this time, many remained and continued to resist the state repression. The following morning, many of the protestors returned and, on the afternoon of December 20th, De la Rúa resigned. In the city of Buenos Aires, during the state repression that marked the last hours of De la Rúa’s government, at least five people died and over fifty more were injured. The repression continued well into December 21st, the
same day that De la Rúa was charged with treason for illegally renegotiating the country’s external debt (Vilas, 2006).

Within this context, many Argentine human rights activists and scholars have identified the state of siege enacted on December 19th 2001 as the impetus for the cacerolazo uprisings. According to Vilas (2006) and the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) (2003), the state of siege was a significant “breaking point” for Argentines across the country. As CELS (2003) has written, “the implementation of the state of siege of the 19th of December in 2001 broke the implicit social pact between civil society and the state that guarantees democracy” (p. 26, my translation). The characteristic slogan “*Que se vayan todos!*” thus represents a moment in which Argentines’ (those who participated in the cacerolazos) gathered to articulate demands for the recovery of the social contract between the state and civil society that holds the state accountable for protecting its citizens (Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, 2003; Rossi, 2005) – demands that ground the mobilization of the discourse of derechos humanos in Argentina (Humphrey, 2005; Humphrey & Valverde, 2008). Specifically, Rossi (2005) and Enrique Fukman of Asociación de ex-Detenidos Desaparecidos (AEDD) (Buenos Aires) (Conversation, August 27, 2007), argue that it was the widely known memories of the “violation of basic rights” that were committed during the 1976-1983 dictatorship that motivated people to mobilize demands as such through the cacerolazos and that motivated a large portion of Argentine civil society to participate in the cacerolazos. Thus, Fukman and Rossi argue that participation in

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82 This is not the only interpretation of the cacerolazos. With reference to their characteristic as an “Argentine mobilization” (rather than a particular rights groups’ mobilization) Alejandro Kaufman, an Argentine sociologist at the University of Buenos Aires, maintains that the large presence of the middle classes in the cacerolazos was “a movement of victims who were claiming what they were promised. And what they were promised was a certain standard of living in return for the sacrifice of part of the population” (cited in Moreno, 2002, p. 138). Thus according to Kaufman, the cacerolazos were not a moment of unified uprisings but rather the continuation of the lower classes’ struggle for the right to work and to dignity and the middle classes’ co-optation of that struggle into a fight for the right to access their savings and to have the quality of life that consumerism and capitalism guarantees.
the *cacerolazos* functioned to legitimize demands for *derechos humanos* made by *organismos de derechos humanos*.

### 2.3.4 Global and Local Shifts in the Language of Rights

The developments in human rights within an international context that resulted from the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) in conjunction with the indictments of the Nuremberg Trials have had significant impacts on the articulation of rights in local contexts. As I previously explained, by holding states accountable for “promoting” human rights (as it states in the UDHR), groups within civil society have had an official stage from which to voice their demands made in defense of rights (Eide, 1986; Shcaffer & Smith, 2004; Massoud, 2006). Similarly, international developments have seen changes in the articulation of a language of rights by states who have more impetus to recognize and attend to violations of human rights and demands for the protection of those rights (though clearly this has not always been the case as was the case within the 1976-1983 dictatorship). Thus, international and national developments in the articulation of human rights have had (and continue to have) a significant impact on establishing the conditions necessary to legitimize the discourse of *derechos humanos* as hegemonic within Argentine political resistance and, much more generally, to legitimize a culture of political resistance in Argentina which has existed for many years.

In other words, the *cacerolazos* were a mobilization of Argentines “manifesting [their]…unease at having lost [their]…standard of living” (p. 141).
2.3.4.1 The State’s Articulation of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Juan Perón’s rise to power occurred at a time when, in the aftermath of the Nazi initiated genocide of European Jews, there were significant shifts in an international concern for human rights. Specifically, as I have previously explained these shifts functioned to redefine the relationship between the state and civil society, consequently reframing demands made in defense of rights (Eide, 1986). With respect to Argentina, the international human rights movement that emerged via the globalization of the human rights discourse helped strengthen the already existing rights discourse. While changes in the internationalization of human rights did not motivate a shift in the state’s concern for “human rights”, they were nonetheless significant in establishing the conditions both for Perón’s mobilization of the language of rights (albeit mostly workers’ rights) and the consequent support he was able to garner by a large majority of the Argentine population. At the same time, as I stated above, Perón’s government was also characterized by actions that were certainly counter to the “promotion” of human rights. In this regard, the internationalization of state responsibility for human rights at least provided Indigenous groups and other groups continuing their public demonstrations in the defense of rights with some legitimacy and protection against violence. The same can be said for the political resistance of the 1960s and the 1970s which, although often characterized by violent means of political resistance, were nonetheless waged in defense of rights. Specifically, the UN’s 1966 adoption of the two Covenants (on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights) further defining the human rights established in the UDHR had a significant impact on the rise of “movements of national liberation” (Schaffer & Smith, 2004, p. 14). The “struggles for national self-determination and equality for women, indigenous (sic) peoples, and minorities within nation-states led to the rise of local and transnational political movements and
affiliations…all of which have created new contexts and motivations for pursuing personal protections under international law” (p. 15). In 1960s and 1970s Argentina, these global movements along with the changes to international law served to legitimize the struggle for democracy and equality.

2.3.4.2 The Role of Amnesty International and the Inter-American Commission For Human Rights During the 1976-1983 Dictatorship

During the 1976-1983 dictatorship, the loudest voices being heard making demands in defense of rights were that of the movement that mobilized its demands on the basis of human rights (not yet conceptualized as derechos humanos in the way I have described it above). Nonetheless, many Argentines refused to listen out of fear, disbelief, or support for the military dictatorship. However, the 1979 visit to Argentina by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) – the judicial branch of the Organization of the American States (OAS) concerned with protecting human rights – marked a particular shift in how Argentines responded to the repression of the dictatorship and, consequently, in legitimizing the organismos de derechos humanos and their struggle for human rights. The OAS report on disappearances, illegal detention, torture, and mass murder in Argentina in which it explicitly named these acts as violations of human rights was published at the end of 1979. Though the junta banned its release in Argentina, prominent lawyer Emilio Mignone (co-founder of CELS) was able to smuggle in a number of copies. Once the OAS report finally reached the UN, in 1980 a “Working Group on Disappearances” was established which compiled a case against the junta (Marchak, 1999). As a body internationally licensed to examine the status of human rights and to advise on human rights issues, the IACHR’s conclusions “that those responsible should be prosecuted” (cited in Jelin, 1995, p. 119, my translation), alerted many Argentines to the credibility of organismos
derechos humanos’ understanding of the repression as a violation of human rights (Jelin, 1995). Similarly, the UN’s recognition of the dictatorship in Argentina as in itself a violation of human rights functioned in much the same way.

Undoubtedly, Amnesty International also played a significant role in beginning the process of internationally denouncing the dictatorship and in legitimizing human rights within the mainstream in Argentina during the dictatorship (Guest, 1990). However, its visit in 1976 did not result in the same immediate shifts in the legitimization of human rights claims made by organismos de derechos humanos as did the IACHR’s visit. In part, this may be due to the timing of the visit. Organismos de derechos humanos were not as organized and did not have the collective momentum they would soon garner presumably because many of them were just beginning to form. Also, organismos de derechos humanos only became seen as a source of support for many Argentines for denouncing disappearances and for finding the truth about the fate of their loved ones well after the beginning of the dictatorship. Thus, in 1976 this understanding of who these organismos were and what they did was absent and, effectively terrorized by the state, most Argentines feared to speak or listen to any sort of expression of discontent against the military. In fact, most of the mainstream newspapers who reported on Amnesty’s visit expressed hostility against “the foreigners” who dared question their nation and aimed to remind Argentines that Amnesty had “conveniently” failed to investigate “guerrilla activity” (Guest, 1990).

The rejection of Amnesty’s visit by many within Argentine civil society might then have also resulted from the perception of its representatives as foreigners. For this reason Argentines’ viewed Amnesty as doing nothing more than presenting “a provocative report, exploiting its privileged access to outlets like the BBC World Service, and then [returning]...to the security of
their offices in London” (Guest, 1990, p. 77). While the visiting members of the IACHR were also non-Argentines, the IACHR President who led the visit, Andres Aguilar, was a celebrated Venezuelan international lawyer – a Latin American. In contrast, the Amnesty “team was made up of Lord Avebury, a British peer and Robert Drinan, the first Jesuit priest to have been elected to the US House of Representatives” (Guest, 1990, p. 80). A third member, Patricia Feeny, “occupied the Argentine desk at Amnesty’s headquarters in London” (ibid). Though Aguilar’s inherent links to the United States were certainly not completely forgotten, he could be more easily considered as “one of their own” by Argentine civil society than the Amnesty representatives. This understanding of Aguilar ‘s ties to Argentina (and Latin America) may have discouraged Argentines’ to view the IACHR visit through the same lens that saw their rejection of the Amnesty visit. Additionally, unlike the IACHR who was accountable to an international body (the UN) that was perceived to have the power to address and end the human rights violations in Argentina, as a non-government organization Amnesty was neither accountable to anyone nor appointed by a legitimate international collective (rather, it was self appointed). Nonetheless, it is important to note that Amnesty International was an important source for organismos de derechos humanos and others who constantly sent letters to the organization describing the conditions of repression which Amnesty later used to call international attention to the human rights violations being committed by the Argentine state and, subsequently, to garner international support for the organismos de derechos humanos. Further as Guest (1990) has written: “The Amnesty visit to Argentina would turn out to be one of the most significant human rights missions ever undertaken by a nongovernmental organization….It helped confirm Jacobo Timerman’s [a well-known journalist whose initial reporting on

83 This perceived inherit link was in fact a result of Aguilar’s involvement with the IACHR which had gained momentum in its mission to investigate human rights violations after President Carter signed the American Convention on Human Rights in 1977 (Guest, 1990).
Amnesty’s visit echoed those described above] growing doubts and turn him from a sympathizer of military rule into a critic…[It also played a significant role] in suspending US aid to Argentina in Congress” and it opened many doors into European countries where many Argentines were able to claim refugee status (p. 85-86).

2.3.4.3 The 1984 Truth Commission, the 1985 “Juicio a las Juntas”, and the Role of the “Gobierno de Derechos Humanos”

As I have previously described, the transition to democracy saw some major changes in the language of human rights and the state’s articulation of its responsibility to protect human rights (not yet understood as derechos humanos in Argentina). Though newly elected President Alfonsín’s promotion of a political agenda based on human rights was not without its limits and problems, by at least promoting an image of a state that was willing to account for crimes of the dictatorship, both the 1984 Nunca Más report (published by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons) and the 1985 trial functioned to legitimize human rights within the Argentine national imaginary. According to Jelin (1994), as a result of these two events “at the level of culture, values, and ethical commitments, human rights became a key element in the will to construct a new democratic culture” (p. 48).

The impunity laws of the 1980s and the pardons granted by President Menem in 1990 made questionable the significance of human rights to the democratic process. However, the recent shift within the national political terrain motivated by both Kirchner administrations (Néstor Kirchner 2003-2007, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner 2007-Present) has been significant to

84 The terms human rights and crimes against humanity were used in the Nunca Más report and the trial.
reinstating a language of human rights within the Argentine public. The appropriation of the language of human rights by the Kirchner governments has, to a certain extent, functioned to further legitimize the discourse of derechos humanos within the larger context of Argentine civil society. As a consequence, it has also functioned to further legitimize demands for derechos humanos made by the organismos. On the one hand, with respect to the state’s position as a defender of human rights on the global stage, the identification of the Kirchner government(s) as the “government(s) of human rights” has set the conditions for UNESCO to put forth a proposal to transform part of the former torture centre ESMA into an “International Centre for the Advancement of Human Rights”. Thus, regarded by the international community as ready to assume the responsibility of housing such a centre, President Kristina Fernández de Kirchner has signaled the construction of this Centre as a moment that “positions Argentina alongside those countries who are also committed to human rights and to attending to the past” (Un Espacio Mundial Para Cultivar la Vida [A Global Space to Cultivate Life], 2009). On the other hand, despite the Kirchner governments’ stated commitment to human rights, as I explain in Chapters Five and Six, these governments’ particular articulation of human rights is often characterized by organismos de derechos humanos as insufficient because, they claim, the Kirchner administrations maintain a limited notion of human rights which only accounts for past human rights violations (committed during the dictatorship) and not for issues of social justice – not for the struggle for which the disappeared were disappeared. In this regard, the “government(s) of human rights” lends credibility to the discourse of derechos humanos and to demands for derechos humanos made by organismos de derechos humanos only in part.

85 I say human rights rather than derechos humanos because, as many organismos de derechos humanos argue, the Kirchner governments are concerned only with the rectifying the human rights violated during the dictatorship but fail to attend to the social injustices. In fact, many of those people with whom I spoke hold the Kirchner governments responsible for committing economic violence and, thus, for the mass unemployment and poverty that characterizes the lives of many Argentines.
2.4 Situating *Derechos Humanos* within the Landscape of Public Remembrance of the Dictatorship

The analysis of the specific conceptualization of human rights in Argentina (namely as it is structured by *organismos de derechos humanos*) and how the discourse of *derechos humanos* functions and has been established as hegemonic serves to emphasize the particular significance of human rights – of *derechos humanos* – within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. The discussion of the varied ways in which a language of rights has been taken up by Argentine states and rights groups is intended to illuminate the historical conditions in which the discourse of *derechos humanos* is rooted – that is, the conditions which have informed its mobilization and legitimization as hegemonic today. As a hegemonic discourse, the discourse of *derechos humanos* serves as a unifying banner under which different rights groups can protest together to make demands of the state in defense of rights and to call for the formation of a new public. As such, struggles waged by workers’ rights groups, unemployed workers’ rights groups, and Indigenous rights’ groups function to legitimize demands for *derechos humanos* mobilized through public remembrance of the dictatorship and, in turn, the significance of this remembrance. In a similar vein, demands for *derechos humanos* mobilized on the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship also serve to legitimize demands made by other rights groups.

Through this analysis we have begun to unravel the various ways in which demands for *derechos humanos* that function as a call for the defense of an “expanded” notion of human rights and as a call for public formation are made in the name of the disappeared. Though I have thus begun to introduce the reader (in both Chapters One and Two) to a conceptualization of how we might read the articulation of a continual learning to live with loss within calls for public remembrance of the dictatorship, the focus on my conversations with members of *organismos de derechos humanos* that frames much of Chapters Four and Five illustrates the specificities of this
articulation. In Chapters Four and Five I unravel the particular ways in which other rights’ struggles, staged within the larger landscape of Argentine political resistance are taken up by organismos de derechos de humanos as “proof” that; a) the dictatorship was intended to eradicate those that were fighting against the installation of an economic model which was eventually successfully implemented, resulting in gross unemployment and poverty today, and b) that the disappeared are present today through continuing struggles for social justice (i.e., evidence that their fight for a “better Argentina” was not in vain). As this analysis is primarily informed by my conversations with organismos de derechos humanos, in the following chapter I first outline how these conversations took place, who I spoke to, and how I came to understand my interactions with members of organismos de derechos humanos as conversations, rather than formulaic research interviews, and as conversations that initiated the task of “learning from” them and from the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship (Britzman, 1998).
Chapter 3
“LEARNING FROM” MEMBERS OF ORGANISMOS DE DERECHOS HUMANOS

3.1 Contextualizing the Significance and Purpose of Having Conversations with Members of Organismos de Derechos Humanos

When I first arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2006 it was clear to me that the landscape of memory which seemed so chaotic and disorienting had been constructed primarily by organismos de derechos humanos. I knew this not only because I had focused much of my reading on the role of these groups in structuring public practices in remembrance of the dictatorship, but also because much of the landscape was inscribed with their names. The nameless and faceless chalk outlines representative of the 30,000 disappeared painted on the ground at Plaza de Mayo were interspersed with paintings of white head scarves symbolic of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. A mural painted on Avenida de Mayo (a major downtown street) that depicted police officers wearing military uniforms and a group of people standing with a banner that read “¿Y López?” (“And López”)86, also showed those people carrying a banner that read H.I.J.O.S. The plaques placed in the sidewalk in remembrance of individual disappeared persons also bared the name Barrios por la Memoria. I wanted to talk to these groups to untangle the proliferation of remembrance in Argentina – in other words, to understand why certain groups staged particular practices over others and what the purposes of and messages in each of these practices were. From June to July of 2006 I spent my time in Buenos Aires attending various public remembrance events, visiting different sites of memory of the dictatorship, and talking

86 Recall from Chapter One that Jorge Julio López was a witness in the 2006 trial of former police official Miguel Etchecolatz and that he was disappeared in the same year.
with members of *organismos de derechos humanos*. This was my introduction to the landscape of public remembrance of the dictatorship, my preliminary research.

When I returned to the city of Buenos Aires in 2007 I decided to visit other major cities to speak with *organismos de derechos humanos* in different contexts in order to broaden my understanding of this landscape. I traveled to three other locations that were nearby and thus easily accessible: the city of La Plata which, like the city of Buenos Aires, is also in the province of Buenos Aires, the city of Rosario in the province of Santa Fé, and the city of Córdoba in the province of Córdoba. From May 26th to August 29th of 2007 I had conversations with 32 members of *organismos de derechos humanos* in these four cities. As I had done during my first visit to Buenos Aires, in 2007 I also visited sites of remembrance of the dictatorship such as former torture centres, and participated in public remembrance events such as marches, protests and neighbourhood-specific events. However, the focus of my coming to unravel the landscape of memory was my conversations with members of *organismos de derechos humanos* from whom I wanted to learn how to understand the proliferation of public remembrance of the dictatorship as something other than “messy”. Though I did not know exactly what this alternative understanding might be, as I explained in Chapter One, I was dissatisfied with a conceptualization of the landscape of memory as such because it dismissed the deeply affective and passionately contested political issues that I had been told motivated its construction. In my aim to come to this alternative understanding, I centered my conversations on my stated interest in the varying justifications and purposes for public remembrance of the dictatorship that structure the landscape of memory.
3.2 Having and Writing Conversations with Members of Organismos de Derechos Humanos

My endeavour to speak with members of *organismos de derechos humanos* was framed by my aim to participate in face-to-face conversations with these individuals, rather than in formulaic structured interviews. I purposely chose to frame my interactions with members of *organismos de derechos humanos* as conversations because this format allowed me; a) to attend to the emotional aspects of the knowledge sharing in which I was asking them to engage, and b) to situate this engagement as a process in which they too could decide the terms on which this knowledge would be shared. As I detail below, I understood conversations as more dialogic in nature than interviews, which I in turn conceived to be a pre-structured question and answer process. More specifically, drawing from Greenspan and Bolkolsky (2006), I thought that conversations could provide opportunities in which the “rhythm of questions and answers is developed in concert rather than imposed” (p. 440)\(^87\). Thus, I thought the conversation format would provide a more intimate and comfortable setting for those who agreed to speak with me. My understanding of the conversation as a “collaborative” process (Greenspan & Bolkolsky) also informed my notion that it would present more possibilities (than one might find in an interview) for members of *organismos de derechos humanos* to establish the conditions regarding what knowledge would be shared and the terms on which this knowledge would be shared. For these reasons, as well as my perception of the ways in which the term interview might suggest I was conducting a study aiming to produce a report of what occurred during the

\(^{87}\) Importantly, Greenspan and Bolkolsky do not distinguish between interviews and conversations, but rather “good” and “bad” interviews. However, in a footnote Greenspan explains that in a previous study in which he collected testimonies from Holocaust survivors, he avoided using the words “interviewer” and “interviewee”. Instead, he referred to “participants” in order to highlight the collaborative process that characterized their discussions. Thus, Greenspan and Bolkolsky point to the importance of naming discussions with trauma survivors in a particular way – in a way that differentiates these discussions from a preformulated question and answer process.
dictatorship and what people had to say about this past, I thought that conversations would be more appropriate than interviews.

Nonetheless, I recognize that there is an abundance of scholarly work that has drawn from and focused on interviews and that has gone far beyond simply describing and documenting what was shared by the interviewees. I also recognize that describing and documenting “the proper order of events” (Britzman, 1998, p. 118) is important both for academic research and for those who agree to be interviewed. Indeed, this was expressed by the members of *organismos de derechos humanos* with whom I spoke (as I further explain in Chapters Four and Five). Thus, I am not suggesting that we should dismiss interviews as a methodology incapable of informing a critical and thoughtful analysis, nor am I proposing that “grasping the proper order events” (Britzman, 1998, p. 118) is not necessary. Rather, my aim in this section of the chapter is to explain to the reader the choices I made regarding the risks that I was willing and unwilling to take in entering into discussions with members of *organismos de derechos humanos* and in taking up the task of writing about the knowledge they shared.

### 3.2.1 Choosing Conversations over Interviews

Epstein writes that, while the interviews she conducted with her parents about their life during the Jewish Holocaust had provided her with a “clear chronology” of her family history, they created a distance between her and those life stories, as well as between her and her parents (p. 334). These stories were not unfamiliar to Epstein, as her parents had shared them with her at different moments throughout her life. Depending on the moment of their telling, these stories were meant to serve as lessons, were triggered by a particular circumstance, and/or were told for her to re-tell. In some of these moments Epstein asked questions which were sometimes answered and at other times functioned to silence her parents – a silence to which Epstein would
also respond with silence or with more questions. In other moments, for various reasons such as fear, sadness, or simply wanting to let her mother or father speak, she did not ask questions. When Epstein conducted the interviews she did so in her role as a researcher for the William E. Wiener Oral History Library (in New York), where she was charged with recording the life stories of Holocaust survivors now living in the United States. Unlike many of their previous conversations, her parents had wanted to “get it [the interview] done” quickly (p. 335). Epstein attributes her parents’ resistance to sharing their experiences in this format to their disapproval of her involvement with the oral history project. As she explains, her parents could not understand why she would undertake the task of recording stories that would only be deposited in an archive which no one would ever care to look into. As I understand it, Eptstein’s parents were uncomfortable sharing their experiences of this “difficult knowledge” (Britzman, 1998) on someone else’s terms (in this case, the terms established by the oral history project and their daughter as a researcher with the Library). Thus, in my reading of Epstein’s work, one of the primary differences identified between conversations and interviews is the opportunities each provides for negotiating the conditions upon which experiences and knowledge will be shared, produced, and later reproduced. Similarly, Greenspan and Bolkolsky’s (2006) study examining how Holocaust survivors evaluate their interview experiences identifies a particular discussion format as necessary for speaking with people about their experiences with traumatic violence – a format they define as collaborative which I draw from to define the conversation (in relation to the interview).

Quite differently from Epstein, I was not transformed from daughter – from someone with a personal attachment to the story tellers and their lives – to researcher. I entered my relationship with those whom I spoke from my position as a researcher. Though I knew about what had happened during the dictatorship from my parents’ stories of their experiences living in
Argentina during this time and from reading about it, I had not spoken with the majority of these individuals before my visit to Argentina in 2007\textsuperscript{88}. Also unlike Epstein, I was not collecting survivors’ testimonies. My project did not explicitly involve asking questions about people’s traumatic experiences with disappearance. Thus, I was not concerned with appearing personally detached from those with whom I was speaking because this kind of connection never existed both because I did not know them nor had I ever lived the experience of having a disappeared relative. Further, I did not know the experience of living in dictatorial or post-dictatorial Argentina. Though I was born in Buenos Aires in 1980, I had immigrated to Canada with my parents and my sister in 1988 and I had no memories of my life in Argentina. This inherent detachment, however, was precisely my worry. I feared that because I could not be perceived to have a personal link with the past and present into which I was inquiring, my inquiry would seem voyeuristic. I also worried that inviting people to participate in an interview rather than in a conversation risked presenting my research as a study aiming to produce a report about what different organismos de derechos humanos had to say about what had happened during the dictatorship. In other words, I was concerned that the term interview itself would misrepresent my purpose for wanting to speak with members of these groups as part of a fact finding mission rather than an endeavour into how to learn from people’s deeply affective investments in calls for memory and derechos humanos. In this regard it was both my understanding of the interview format and of (what I perceived to be) common notions of the term interview that structure research as a detached and detaching process of describing and documenting events that made interviews (and the use of the term itself) unsuitable for my research.

\textsuperscript{88} However, this is not to suggest that I was inherently positioned as an “outsider”. As I explain further in a proceeding section of this chapter, my position as a researcher was mediated by my ability to claim and “insider” and “outsider” position simultaneously (differently than Epstein).
Though there are interview data collection methods that can be understood to “follow a conversational format”, such as “open-ended interviews” which unfold through a “semi-structured” set of open-ended questions (Roulston, 2006, p. 524), the interview is nonetheless framed as a predetermined process of asking and answering questions. Further, Greenspan and Bolkolsky (2006) explain that “‘open-ended’ does not insure collaboration” (p. 435). Indeed, many of the participants in their study stated that “open-ended questions can just as easily lead to an interview that is monologic and vacuous: a recitation that the ‘interviewee’ could deliver as easily to a wall as to the ‘open’ person in front of them” (p. 435). That said, I worried that the open-ended interview process would inherently structure an impersonal interaction “cut off” from emotions (Epstein, 1979, p. 334). For me, this was an irresponsible way of approaching a study that, while perhaps not explicitly addressing “difficult knowledge” in the same way that studies focused on survivor testimonies do, occurs within the context where mass death and loss is a reality. Throughout my research in Argentina I participated in remembrance events with organismos de derechos humanos that were deeply affective and intimate. People cried, shared personal stories of their loved ones that created moments of sadness and moments of joy, and expressed anger, despair, and hope. Through these events I participated in their anger, their sadness, and their hope. I felt welcomed not only into their lives as activists struggling for derechos humanos but also into their lives as mothers, sisters, brothers, and grandmothers. An example of the latter was when, during a public remembrance event, a member of Herman@s whom I had recently and only briefly met shared with me photographs of her disappeared brother that she carried in her wallet. As I conceived of the conversation format as a dialogical and collaborative process (more so than the interview format), I perceived it to provide a more personal setting that reflected and respected the emotional nature of my interactions with organismos de derechos humanos and of my overall study. For these reasons, I also thought that
using the term conversations – inviting people to participate in conversations with me – was more appropriate.

Thus, in my initial contact emails or phone calls, I invited members of *organismos de derechos humanos* to participate in a conversation with me, explicitly omitting the word interview. In practice, this was translated into my decision (to attempt) to begin the conversations with a general topic of conversation that was of interest to me. Specifically, I said that I was interested in the ways in which people understood and structured public remembrance of the dictatorship as important and, sometimes, as necessary. As well, this general topic of conversation was most often conveyed in the initial contact email or phone call prior to the face-to-face conversations. In this sense, the conversations were indeed structured, but beginning with a general topic of conversation meant that this structure was flexible, leaving room for negotiation about what would constitute the focus of our conversation. In some cases this meant that the face-to-face conversation began with the person with whom I was speaking asking me to reiterate my general research interest, other individuals drew from our initial contact email or telephone conversation and simply began speaking, and still others began with the individual asking me what I wanted to know (more specifically, to tell them the questions I wanted answered), thus framing our conversations as interviews. Importantly, however, my aim to structure conversations does not mean that I avoided questions.

As Greenspan and Bolkolsky (2006) have noted, their participants appreciated and preferred to be asked questions because it demonstrated the researcher’s investment both in what they had to say and in committing to a process of collaboration. They explain:

89 In these initial contact emails or telephone calls we did not speak in detail about the research. Rather the purpose was primarily to set up a time and place to meet.
Again, the core issue is a *mutuality* (sic) engagement of working together in order to understand as deeply and clearly as possible, the experience of the person [with whom the researcher is speaking]. During that kind of engagement, some questions almost certainly will be ‘closed’, because it will be obvious, on both sides, that that is what shared work, at that moment requires….Similarly, there will be times when it is equally obvious that other kinds of questions are needed….In a collaborative endeavor (sic), the form those questions take cannot be anticipated beforehand; but, whatever form they take, they will determine how the [conversation] unfolds from there. (p. 435)

For many of the participants in their study, this was an issue of “professionalism” and “caring”, which Greenspan and Bolkolsky define as “professional caring”. To be caring and to be professional is both to commit time to the conversation and thus allow the participant to go “off track” and “jump from one subject to the next” (p. 442) and to know the “right time” to ask questions so as to keep the participant “on track” (p. 441). It is to negotiate the tension between preformulated structure and “wandering” words, thoughts, and memories. It is to listen and speak with patience. There is, however, no method or criteria to determine what the right moment is to ask a question or what the right questions are. The questions I did ask were informed by; a) my previous conversations, b) remembrance events in which I had participated and/or sites of remembrance I had visited, c) the current political context, and d) the context of the conversation itself which I understood primarily based on my reading of the participant’s comfortability with me, their participation in the conversation, and the topic of conversation (a reading based on verbal and non-verbal cues). That said, I did indeed have certain questions in mind before entering the conversation. However, I attempted to resist beginning with these questions or asking them outside of a context which I understood to be a “right time”. Further, the people with whom I spoke also asked me questions. Sometimes these were clarification questions about my general research interest and also about my opinions of particular political events. For example, in one of my conversations I was asked what I thought of the current Kirchner government and the fact that it had named itself the “government of human rights”. Before I could answer though, I was first asked to explain my definition of human rights.
My aim to minimally structure conversations was not an effort to deny, hide, or erase my identity as a researcher. Indeed, despite my attempt to structure conversations rather than interviews, some people with whom I spoke clearly conceived of our interaction as an interview. The members of *organismos de derechos humanos* with whom I spoke were aware that our conversation was occurring within the context of my dissertation work. In addition to the fact that I explicitly situated the conversations as part of a research study, other aspects of the conversations and of my interactions with members of *organismos de derechos humanos* functioned to do the same. For example, those who agreed to speak with me were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix B)\(^90\). Also, the conversations, which took place in a coffee shop, the person’s house, or the offices of the respective *organismo de derechos humanos*\(^91\), were audio-recorded and later transcribed by me\(^92\). The conversations were generally between one to one and a half hours and were in Spanish. I transcribed the conversations in Spanish and later

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\(^90\) The consent form (which was part of my ethics protocol) was approved by the Ethics Review Board of the University of Toronto on May 24\(^{th}\) of 2007. In this consent form I provided participants the opportunity to choose whether they wanted me to use their real names or pseudonyms in the dissertation. In my ethics protocol approved by the Ethics Review Board I explained that, due to the public nature of *organismos de derechos humanos* and its members, it would be difficult to maintain their anonymity. I also explained that by describing *organismos de derechos humanos* and its members as “public” I meant that they were widely known by name, in part, because of they are often seen speaking on national television, heard on radio programs, and their words recorded in newspaper articles, but also because their purpose is to make their demands public and are directed to an Argentine public. Not surprisingly, all of the participants checked the box on the consent form indicating that they allowed me to use their real names.

\(^91\) In one particular case, my conversation with Elida Luna and Ricardo Dominguez (of *Familiares* in Rosario) took place in the former torture centre known as “El Pozo” (“The Hole”) in the city of Rosario. They suggested that we meet there so that they could also show me the space and the work that *organismos de derechos humanos* had done to reconstruct it as a “sitio de memoria” (“site of memory”) – specifically, what the *organismos* in the city have renamed from *El Pozo* to *Centro Popular de Memoria* (Popular Centre for Memory). I discuss this Centre further in Chapter Five.

\(^92\) I delivered each person with whom I spoke the respective transcription of our conversation via email or post mail. Though I asked people to provide me with feedback both on the transcription itself and on the content of the transcription (e.g., if there was anything they wanted to add or omit), I did not receive any such responses. Once this study is completed I will send a summary outlining the major points and arguments of the work to each individual. Members of the IEM with whom I spoke have also asked me to provide them with a summary of this nature for the group’s archives of theses completed within national and international academic institutions focusing on public remembrance of the dictatorship in Argentina.
translated the excerpts which I chose to include as part of the dissertation (in Chapters Four and Five). In this regard, the conversations were undoubtedly framed by some of the familiar conventions of the interview process. Though there were then points of slippage in my interactions with members of derechos humanos in which I balanced on the line between interview and conversation, what ultimately structured these interactions was my concern for attending to the reality of loss and the emotional aspect of sharing knowledge that could never be situated outside of that loss.

3.2.2 Coming To “Learn From” Members of Organismos de Derechos Humanos

In what might seem to most as an unexpected twist, in my first attempt to work with the transcripts of the conversations in the writing of my dissertation I made a decision to abandon any discussion concerning the ways in which public remembrance of the dictatorship spoke to the problem of living with loss. In other words, I discarded the reality of loss in which my study was inevitably situated. I self consciously made this decision in an attempt to protect the personal integrity and political significance of the remembrance work I had learned so much about. I worried that conceptualizing public remembrance on these terms would pathologize the remembrance practices of people in Argentina as an “inability to let go” of the past. Though I had considered scholarly work that structured an analysis of practices of public remembrance in Argentina as a working through trauma and loss (and an understanding of this process as political), I was nonetheless concerned that writing about derechos humanos in the context of loss risked pathologizing public remembrance of the dictatorship and, as a consequence, risked discounting the significance of this remembrance. I thus ignored that calls to remember the

\[93\] The translations were verified by a native-Argentine Spanish speaker who was living in Argentina during the 1976-1983 dictatorship (and was in her twenties during this time) and who has been living in Canada for the past 22 years.
dictatorship and calls for derechos humanos were made in the name of certain persons – the disappeared. I also ignored comments that explicitly spoke about the experience of loss. I simply placed them outside of a concern with documenting the different ways the discourse of derechos humanos was mobilized by different organizations in the context of their remembrance practices. As for those transcripts of conversations that seemed to focus on a person’s personal experience dealing with the loss of their loved one, I literally filed them away deeming them unrelated and unimportant to my study.

My initial rejection to taking up the problem of living with loss in my writing about the landscape of public remembrance of the dictatorship was grounded in questions of authority and responsibility in writing. When I began to read my transcripts and write about the conversations, because of my inability to conceptualize loss outside of a framework of pathology I did not know how to write in a way that did not make judgments about how and why people remembered. To write about loss meant to write about the abnormal of the landscape of memory. This was how I had read Antonious Robben’s (2005) analysis of remembrance of the dictatorship in Argentina as a response to an “unresolved trauma”. In this work Robben writes that, “the designation pathological or, more accurately, chronic mourning is appropriate here because the various groups in Argentine society are enwrapped in a contestive relation, which keeps them hostage to each other’s memory politics” turning remembrance “into a compulsive practice” (p. 127). As I had understood his analysis, in taking up the question of loss Robben had written about the landscape of memory as the product of an inability to “put [the past] to rest” (p. 121). In my reading of his work I was troubled by how it seemed to assess, or rather dismiss, the credibility of public remembrance and thus of demands for derechos humanos as a manifestation of an obsession with the past. In other words, I took issue with how he had assumed a position of authority that enabled an evaluation of public remembrance of the dictatorship. I thus criticized
his writing as irresponsible because in dismissing remembrance as a compulsion and in subsequently dismissing claims for derechos humanos, his work had failed to document what was “really” happening in the landscape of memory. In this regard I initially understood the question of responsible writing as a question of truth-telling.

However, when I embarked on the task of writing the “truth” that had been communicated to me through my conversations, I would often remember those particular conversations and those specific moments in the conversations that spoke about loss. I suddenly found myself in a position of judgment – that is, I too had taken up my authority as a researcher in a way that had allowed me to assess what was true and what was false and what was important and unimportant to know and write about. Having read Deborah Britzman’s (1998) analysis of “learning from” difficult knowledge (and having engaged with it in my course work), I began to reconsider my work with the transcripts and conversations as a process of “learning from” in an attempt to attend to those conversations about the personal experience of loss and to work through this problem of responsible writing. Following Freud, Britzman (1998) has explained “learning from” and, consequently, “learning about” as such:

Whereas learning about an event or experience focuses upon the acquisition of qualities, attributes, and facts, so that it presupposes a distance (or, one might even say, a detachment) between the learner and what is to be learned, learning from an event or experience is of a different order, that of insight. Both of these learning moves are made more fragile in difficult knowledge. But precisely because insight concerns that acknowledgement of discontinuity from the persistence of the status quo, and hence asks something intimate from the learner, learning from requires the learner’s attachment to, and implication in, knowledge. (p. 117)

This implication requires the learner to acknowledge the differences between her knowledge and the knowledge being passed down. This “kind of implication in knowledge…begins when one moves toward the question of what difference can mean for one’s present life” (p. 118). The knowledge is thus a mode of address “that demands the learner’s transformation” and “an
interest in tolerating the ways meaning becomes, for the learner, fractured, broken, and lost” (ibid). Learning from difficult knowledge suggests a process of coming to reflect on “what such knowledge ‘does’ to the learner and what the learner ‘does’ to knowledge” (ibid).

The knowledge of the ways in which my study of public remembrance of the dictatorship could not be removed outside of the experience of loss – specifically, the loss of a person who has been disappeared – commanded a shift in the reading practices I had employed to initially write my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos. Whereas initially I had read the transcripts with the aim of finding comments that spoke to how public remembrance of the dictatorship articulated demands for derechos humanos (which I had limited to demands for legal redress and demands for social justice), I now had to re-read the transcripts in a way that would account for the loss about which people spoke to me. This re-reading meant listening for the ways in which the disappeared were named, explicitly and implicitly, in justifications given for why public remembrance of the dictatorship is important and how public remembrance of the dictatorship can be most effective (as it was articulated by different people). In this regard, it also meant listening for the ways in which people expressed the significance of the dictatorial past within the present and, subsequently, the significance of the disappeared within the present. That said, because I spoke both with those who had experienced the disappearance of a relative and to those who had not, I also had to listen to the ways in which the “lost object” was named differently by different people. Understanding loss in Argentina only in relation to the disappearance of a family member risked structuring an analysis that privileged the knowledge shared by relatives of disappeared persons over that shared by members of organismos de derechos humanos that have not lived this experience. Additionally, such an analysis ignored the concept of loss as the loss of a (particularly constructed) national identity which has been central to scholarly work on memory in Argentina (e.g., Di Paolantonio, 2000;
Evangelista, 1998; Perelli, 1992). To write a responsible analysis of the knowledge shared in the conversations I thus had to (re)consider how my study was situated in the experience of loss in a much broader sense than that which only focused on the loss of a person that has been disappeared. Consequently, I was able to re-read Robben’s (2005) work and listen to what it told me about the difficulties and particularities of loss in Argentina.

Though in my first reading of the transcripts I counted recurring words and phrases, in my following re-readings this practice changed to noting the specificities of what were seemingly similar statements with the same meaning. In so doing I often found myself surprised to suddenly hear things that not only had I not heard before, but that I also expected not to hear. Such was the case when Rosalia Castello spoke to me about the importance of organizing remembrance events that could possibly serve to help the wounds of the loss of a disappeared relative “feel a bit better” (Conversation, August, 25, 2007, Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro, Buenos Aires). In my re-reading I had to acknowledge moments of surprise as informative of the assumptions that grounded what I thought I knew about public remembrance of the dictatorship and of the function of derechos humanos in the memory landscape. In opening myself up to the possibility of having my knowledge disrupted I realized that in attending to the particularities of people’s conceptualizations of the aims and significance of remembrance I had to listen to the ways in which these particularities existed in relation to each other within landscape of memory – how they spoke to each other’s limits and possibilities and how they functioned to legitimize and delegitimize each other. This listening asked me to commit to continuously return to the transcripts to engage in numerous re-readings. This listening also stood in contrast to my initial reading where my attempt to examine the similarities and differences between varying justifications given for public remembrance of the dictatorship led me to produce a documentation of the debates and conflicts between individuals. Quite
differently, in listening to the ways the specificities of people’s articulations of the aims of remembrance existed in relation to each other, I was able to write about the ways in which my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos informed the larger project of coming to unravel the deeply affective and passionately contested issues and concerns that structure the landscape of public remembrance of the dictatorship. Subsequently, I could write an analysis of how demands for derechos humanos mobilized through this remembrance articulates a continual learning to live with loss.

Through this re-reading I began to reconsider the problem of responsible writing as that of accounting for the personal agency of those with whom I spoke rather than as that of “accurately” describing the landscape of memory which I perceived to be constructed solely on a concern for derechos humanos. Reflecting on my concern for interacting with members of organismos de derechos humanos in a way that would engage us in a negotiation about the conditions upon which knowledge would be shared, I returned to write not with a concern for what I understood as an accurate account of this landscape, but with a concern for not robbing those with whom I spoke of their personal agency. While in my initial writing this had meant abandoning questions of loss because it pathologized remembrance and thus ignored people’s conscious choice to remember for particular reasons, in my re-writing this meant recognizing how questions of loss informed those choices and thus addressing the interrelationship between loss and demands for derechos humanos. In this re-writing I tried “not to position [myself]…as knowing more about these [people] than they know about themselves” (Lather, 2001, p. 216) while not “eliding the inevitable power researchers yield as interpreters and writers” (Lather,
2001, p. 215). Writing about writing about the life stories of women living with HIV/AIDS\textsuperscript{94}, Lather (2001) explains how her and her colleague’s (Cristine Smithies) engagement in such a writing project informed a particular writing practice that “uses a variety of devices, from shifting countervoices and subtextual underwriting to dialogic openness and variability of meaning…. [that] undercut the authors as ‘the ones who know’” (p. 216) and that structures a reading that resists “a linear, tidy tale” (p. 220). My rewriting did not entail such a practice because I am not writing life stories nor was I aiming to engage people in conversations that dealt specifically with the topic of how people live with loss. Nonetheless, the people with whom I spoke were speaking to me about their lived experiences. The task of re-writing thus challenged me to reject the notion of authority as a right to assess and judge another’s knowledge and to account (and be held accountable) for the authority I have in this work in the decisions I have made about what and how to read, what and how to write, how to have conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos, and what risks to take and not to take.

3.3 Members of Organismos de Derechos Humanos

In this work I draw from conversations that I had with 32 members of organismos de derechos humanos: 23 from Buenos Aires, 3 from La Plata, 4 from Rosario and 3 from Córdoba. The people with whom I spoke ranged in age from 30 to 80 (approximately)\textsuperscript{95}. The first few conversations I had were with those I had met in 2006. I spoke with approximately eight members of organismos de derechos humanos in 2006, but I was able to only meet with four of these people again in 2007. In 2006, my initial contact and source of information for whom I

\textsuperscript{94} Lather is referring to the book she co-wrote with her colleague Cristine Smithies “Troubling the Angels: Women Living With HIV/AIDS in 1997.

\textsuperscript{95} I did not collect demographic information therefore I cannot provide the exact ages of those with whom I spoke. However it is public knowledge that the Madres and Abuelas are in their seventies and eighties and that some of the youngest members of H.I.J.O.S are in their late twenties to early thirties.
could speak with was my aunt Silvia Delfino who is herself a member of La Liga and a professor in the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires. In 2007, the people with whom I had spoken the previous year introduced me to other members of organismos derechos humanos with whom I was able to meet. During this time I also contacted organismos de derechos humanos via the email addresses or telephone numbers listed on their websites. Though my aim was to speak with the designated leader of the group (e.g., President or Director) I most often spoke with the person that answered the phone when I called or responded to my email. I attempted to contact all organismos de derechos humanos (that I knew of) within the movimiento de derechos humanos. However, I was not able to meet to have a conversation with everyone I contacted most often because of scheduling conflicts. Also, because I spent the majority of my time in Buenos Aires, I was unable to contact or meet with very many people in the other three cities. Although in most cases I spoke with only one member of an organismo de derechos humanos, in a few cases I spoke with more than one person. There are three reasons for this variation. First, though I had already spoken with a member of a particular group, another member of the same group nonetheless offered to have a conversation with me. This was the case in my conversations with members of the groups Herman@s where, though I had spoken with Marcela Gudiño, Serjio Szjanbaum proposed that we also meet to speak about my stated research interest. Second, the person with whom I had had a conversation suggested that I also speak to another member of the group. This was the case in my conversation with Ana María Careaga of the IEM who suggested that I also speak with the Coordinator of the Sector for the Transmission of Memory and Educational Action within the IEM (Alba Pereyra Lanzilotto) because of my interest in pedagogy and public remembrance of state violence. Third, in three
cases, more than one member of a particular group offered to do the interview together. This was the case for *Familiares* in Buenos Aires, *Familiares* in Rosario, and *Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro* in Buenos Aires. From *Familiares* in Buenos Aires I had a conversation with Hilda Velasco, Hugo Argente, and Ramón Pablo Videla at the same time and from *Familiares* in Rosario I had a conversation with Elida Luna and Ricardo Dominguez simultaneously. Lastly, from the *Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro* I spoke with Rosalia Castello and Carlos di Leone together.

The following Tables are a descriptive outline of each of the people with whom I had face-to-face audio-recorded conversations for this study. I have chosen to provide information regarding each person’s experience with disappearance because, as I illustrated in Chapter One, this is an important factor determining how and why people became involved in the *movimiento de derechos humanos* and how and why new *organismos de derechos humanos* continue to form. In some of the conversations I had with members of these groups people attributed their particular experience with disappearance as that which grounds their conceptualization of the significance of public remembrance of the dictatorship, while in others they did not. I struggled with the decision to include information about people’s experiences with disappearance because I worried that it would encourage the reader to draw causal, simplistic relationships between certain notions of the importance and function of public remembrance and the extent to which a person has been affected by disappearance (e.g., “directly affected” or “not affected”). However, I ultimately decided that this was a risk worth taking because not providing this information

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dictatorship: Sector for Archives and Investigation, Sectors for the Recuperation of Ex-Clandestine Torture Centres, the Sector for the Transmission of Memory and Education Action, The Sector for Communication (Instituto Memoria Espacio para la Memoria, 2006).
would serve to erase or dismiss as unimportant the realities of loss to this study and to the particularities of the landscape of memory in Argentina.

Table 1: Members of *Organismos de Derechos Humanos* in Buenos Aires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Personal History</th>
<th>Human Rights Group and Membership Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argente, Hugo</td>
<td>Argente’s brother, Jorge Daniel Argente, was disappeared in the 1970s.</td>
<td><em>Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas</em> – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbuto, Valeria</td>
<td>Barbuto does not have a disappeared relative.</td>
<td><em>Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales</em> – Archivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blatezky, Arturo</td>
<td>Blatezky does not have a disappeared relative.</td>
<td><em>Movimiento Ecuménico por los Derechos Humanos</em> – Director of the Department of Communication and Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careaga, Ana Maria</td>
<td>Careaga was disappeared in 1977 and detained in the former clandestine torture centre “Club Atlético” for four months. Shortly after her reappearance her mother, Esther Ballestrino de Careaga who was a member of <em>Madres de Plaza de Mayo</em>, was disappeared along with two other members of <em>Madres</em>. Ballestrino de Careaga’s remains were found and reburied in 2005.</td>
<td><em>Instituto Espacio para la Memoria</em> – Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castello, Rosalia</td>
<td>Castello’s brother, Marcelo Castello, was disappeared in 1977.</td>
<td><em>Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos, Liniers, Villa Luro</em> – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cetrángolo, Agustín</td>
<td>In the 1970s Cetrángolo’s mother was detained in the “ESMA” and his father in “Olimpo” and then the “ESMA”. Though his mother was released two weeks after her kidnapping, his father remains disappeared.</td>
<td><em>Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra la Impunidad y el Silencio</em> – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cortiñas, Nora</td>
<td>Cortiñas’ son, Carlos Gustavo, was disappeared in 1977.</td>
<td><em>Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Linea Fundadora</em> – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant’s Name</td>
<td>Personal History</td>
<td>Human Rights Group and Membership Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di Leone, Carlos</td>
<td>di Leone is a resident of the neighbourhood of Mataderos. He does not have any disappeared relatives.</td>
<td>Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos, Liniers, Villa Luro – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fukman, Enrique</td>
<td>Fukman was temporarily disappeared in the ESMA during the dictatorship.</td>
<td>Asociación Ex-Detenidos Desaparecidos - Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gudiño, Marcela</td>
<td>Gudiño’s brother, Jorge Gudiño, was disappeared in the 1970s.</td>
<td>Herman@s de Desaparecidos por la Verdad y la Justicia – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbón, Alicia</td>
<td>Herbón does not have a disappeared relative.</td>
<td>Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos del Hombre – Secretary of the Education Commission of the Asamblea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarach, Vera</td>
<td>Jarach’s daughter, Franca Jarach, was disappeared in 1977. Vera Jarach is also a member of Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Línea Fundadora, though when I spoke to her she spoke to me about remembrance events organized by Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina.</td>
<td>Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina – President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanzilotto, Alba Rosa</td>
<td>Two of Lanzilotto’s sisters were disappeared in the 1970s, one of whom was pregnant at the time of her disappearance. Although Lanzilotto is not the grandmother of a missing child, she joined Abuelas to search for her missing niece or nephew.</td>
<td>Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Fur, Alicia</td>
<td>Le Fur’s sister, Beatriz Le Fur, was disappeared in 1977.</td>
<td>Barrios por la Memoria y Justicia Almagro-Balvanera – Co-Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastorino, Sara</td>
<td>Pastorino is a resident of the neighbourhood of San Cristobal. She does not have a disappeared relative.</td>
<td>Vecinos de San Cristobal Contra la Impunidad – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant’s Name</td>
<td>Personal History</td>
<td>Human Rights Group and Membership Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pereyra Lanzilotto, Alba</td>
<td>Pereyra Lanzilotto, who is Lanzilotto’s daughter, has two aunts who were disappeared and a missing cousin.</td>
<td><em>Instituto Espacio para la Memoria</em> – Coordinator of “Sector for the Transmission of Memory and Educational Action” of the <em>Instituto</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrini, Evel</td>
<td>Petrini’s son, Sergio Petrini, was disappeared in 1977.</td>
<td><em>Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo</em> – General Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rampoldi, Octavio</td>
<td>Rampoldi is a resident of the neighbourhood Colegiales. He does not have any disappeared relatives.</td>
<td><em>Comisión por la Memoria Chacaritas-Colegiales</em> – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schulman, José</td>
<td>Schulman was detained during the dictatorship as a political prisoner in a state prison.</td>
<td><em>La Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre</em> – Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szajnbaum, Sergio</td>
<td>Szajnbaum’s brother was disappeared in the 1970s. Szajnbaum was a member of <em>Herman@s</em> for two years but chose to leave shortly before I spoke with him.</td>
<td><em>Herman@s de Desaparecidos por la Verdad y la Justicia</em> – Former Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velasco, Hilda</td>
<td>Velasco’s husband was disappeared in the 1970s.</td>
<td><em>Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas</em> – Co-Founder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videla, Ramón Pablo</td>
<td>Videla’s partner, Eva Esther Núñez Pereyra, was disappeared in 1977. Videla himself was detained as a political prisoner for the duration of the dictatorship in a state prison.</td>
<td><em>Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas</em> – Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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97 As a political prisoner he was tortured and lived in similar inhumane conditions as many of those held in clandestine torture centres. However he was never “disappeared” and thus was able to have some contact with his family.
### Table 2: Members of Organismos de Derechos Humanos in La Plata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Personal History</th>
<th>Human Rights Group and Membership Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alayes, Adelina</td>
<td>Alayes’ son, Carlos Alayes, was disappeared in 1977.</td>
<td>Madres de Plaza de Mayo – Línea Fundadora – Archivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azzari de Pereyra,</td>
<td>In 1977 Azzari de Pereyra’s pregnant daughter was disappeared. Although her remains have been found Azzari de Pereyra continues to search for her missing grandchild.</td>
<td>Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo – President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorgelina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorobil de Mariani,</td>
<td>In 1977 the Federal Police bombed Chorobil de Mariani’s son’s house where his wife and three month old daughter were present. Chorobil de Mariani’s daughter-in-law was killed and her granddaughter kidnapped. In 1978 Chorobil de Mariani’s son was killed in a confrontation with the police on the street. She is still searching for her granddaughter Clara Anahí. Chorobil de Mariani was the first President of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo though she left the group in the 1990s because of internal conflicts in the group.</td>
<td>Asociación Anahi – President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Isabel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Members of Organismos de Derechos Humanos in Rosario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Personal History</th>
<th>Human Rights Group and Membership Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basso, Juane</td>
<td>Basso did not provide any specific information as to his experience with disappearance. However, because he is a member of H.I.J.O.S we can assume that either both or one of his parents were disappeared or detained as political prisoners during the dictatorship.</td>
<td>Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra la Impunidad y el Silencio – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant’s Name</td>
<td>Personal History</td>
<td>Human Rights Group and Membership Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominguez, Ricardo</td>
<td>Dominguez was disappeared and then released during the coup.</td>
<td>Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallichio 98, Darwinia</td>
<td>Gallichio’s daughter, Stella Maris Gallichio, was disappeared in 1977. At the time Stella Maris’ one year old daughter, Ximena, was appropriated by the military. Ximena’s father was disappeared along with her mother. Though Gallichio never recovered her daughter’s remains, she was able to recuperate her granddaughter in 1989.</td>
<td>Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and Madres de Plaza de Mayo – Línea Fundadora – Member (of both groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luna, Elida</td>
<td>Luna’s husband was disappeared during the dictatorship.</td>
<td>Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas – Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Members of *Organismos de Derechos Humanos* in Córdoba

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Personal History</th>
<th>Human Rights Group and Membership Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Di Toffino, Agustín</td>
<td>Di Toffino’s father was murdered in a confrontation with the military on the street during the dictatorship.</td>
<td>Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra la Impunidad y el Silencio – Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tissera, Gustavo</td>
<td>Tissera was detained as a political prisoner before the dictatorship and held as a political prisoner throughout the duration of the coup.</td>
<td>Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas – Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

98 Gallichio passed away in November of 2008.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Personal History</th>
<th>Human Rights Group and Membership Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torres, Sonia</td>
<td>Torres’ pregnant daughter was disappeared in 1977. Though her daughters’ remains have been found she continues to search for her missing grandchild.(^99)</td>
<td><em>Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo</em> – President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4 A Note on the Use of Observations of Public Remembrance Events and Sites of Memory

Participating in public events staged in remembrance of the dictatorship organized by *organismos de derechos humanos* and visiting sites of memory (e.g., former torture centres) was an integral part of unraveling the proliferation of remembrance practices that characterize the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship in Argentina. Participating in the enactment of public remembrance of the dictatorship was also significant within the context of attending to the affective nature of the conversations and of a study that cannot be situated outside of loss. However, my interest was not in understanding the function of these varying practices but rather why they had emerged and, in this regard, how *organismos de derechos humanos* conceived of the many practices in which they partake as important. As I explained above, focusing my study of the landscape of memory as such structured my conversations with members of these groups which, in turn, informed my understanding of the ways in which a continual learning to live with loss is articulated through calls to remember the dictatorship. Thus, though I recorded fieldnote

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\(^{99}\) As these Tables make clear, the majority of people I spoke with were women. As many historians of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* have argued, women were the ones who initially constituted the human rights movement because they were often not employed full time and therefore could leave the house during the day to protest and to meet to organize protests unlike men who often had to continue to financially sustain the household (Guzman Bouvard, 1994). We might then understand women’s prominent presence over men within the human rights movement today as a consequence of the significance of women to the creation of the movement.
observations of the events in which I participated and of the sites I visited, I do not focus on these observations. In other words, in my writing of the conversations in Chapters Four and Five I generally do not link the observation of certain practices with verbal articulations of the purpose of public remembrance (with the exception of two cases which I discuss below). I have no interest in verifying what people say about memory with what people do when they remember. Rather I draw on the fieldnote observations primarily when they serve to further illuminate or provide examples for certain ideas, concerns, thoughts, questions and issues that were raised in the conversations. I also draw on them to inform my understanding of similar scholarly work and certain theoretical literature, as I have done in Chapters One and Two. As I stated above, when I was in Argentina I drew from these observations to inform my conversations.

Considering that my participation in public events in remembrance of the dictatorship and my visits to sites of memory are a part of this work, a brief note on how I structured my observation notes and how I made decisions about what events to attend and what sites to visit is necessary. Many of the events that I attended and the sites I visited I did so because I was invited by a member of an organism de derechos humanos. However, I also chose to participate in events and visit sites that I had heard of through word of mouth, through listserves organized by organismos de derechos humanos and through publicity in mainstream media (e.g., the national daily Página 12). For those events and sites to which I was not explicitly invited, my decision to attend and record observations depended on the participation of one or more organismos as either organizers or participants and/or the way in which the aim of this event or site was framed as the public remembrance of the dictatorship. This framing was evident
through the use of certain language such as “para recordar el genocidio” (“to remember the genocide”)\textsuperscript{100} or “para reclamar memoria, verdad, y justicia” (“memory, truth, and justice”).

Generally, at these events and sites I took notes regarding the social organization of space (e.g., how do people participate in the event) and the language and symbols used in the event and site to remember the dictatorship and refer to the disappeared. In all cities in which I spoke with members of various organismos many of the buildings are marked by graffiti. In the case where this graffiti structured a call to remember the dictatorship (rather than graffiti that references music or soccer for example) I also recorded observations about the language and symbols used to remember the disappeared and the dictatorship. A list of the events in which I participated and the sites I visited can be found in Appendix C.

\section*{3.5 Limits of the Conversations}

My writing of the conversations has certain limits in terms of what can and cannot be analyzed and in terms of the conclusions that can and cannot be drawn. For example, my intention was to have conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos in a number of cities outside of Buenos Aires so as to provide an analysis of the ways in which different local political issues might inform remembrance of the dictatorship. However, because I was unable to spend extended periods of time in La Plata, Rosario, and Córdoba I was only able to have conversations with those groups who have accessible contact information, meaning I spoke with a very small number of people in these cities (compared to the number of people I spoke with in Buenos Aires). Therefore, my writing of the conversations in Chapters Four and Five cannot adequately speak to the ways that local political issues inform public remembrance.

\textsuperscript{100} As I have previously noted, the dictatorship is often referred to as a genocide by many organismos de derechos humanos. The terms on which this occurs and the implications of remembrance of the dictatorship as such are discussed in the following chapter.
Further, when I asked those members of *organismos de derechos humanos* with whom I spoke in these three cities about whether or how the local context informs remembrance of the dictatorship differently than in Buenos Aires, they answered generally that the *movimiento de derechos humanos* as a whole is concerned with “the truth” of the dictatorship (further explained in Chapter Four) and that differences do not exist between cities. As I did not then follow-up with questions that might elicit a response that would address how local issues of present-day state perpetrated injustices inform the way that the dictatorship is remembered (for example by citing specific local issues occurring at the time) my analysis of the conversations also has limitations with respect to the questions I did and did not ask. Lastly, because I conducted my research in urban centres, neither the analysis of the conversations nor the overall study addresses the politics of memory in rural Argentina where the political and socio-economic context is much different than that of urban regions in the country (e.g., there is much more poverty in rural areas).

Nonetheless, considering that much of the research on public remembrance of the dictatorship in Argentina is conducted in Buenos Aires, this work begins to highlight the significance of examining public remembrance within a larger context extending outside of Buenos Aires. Through conversations with members of *organismos de derechos humanos* in cities other than in Buenos Aires and through consideration of the limitations of these conversations, this work will hopefully encourage further scholarship into the role of local political and economic contexts in public remembrance. However, because in the city of Buenos Aires I was able to speak with members of *organismos de derechos humanos* whose remembrance practices generally focus on individual disappeared persons and are contained within specific neighbourhoods (rather than nationally important locations) (e.g., *Barrios por la Memoria*), the analysis of focus in Chapters Four and Five illuminates the interrelationship
between the larger political and more intimate and personal motivations for remembrance of the dictatorship. Further, the work also benefits from a large number of participants who are able to provide varied conceptualizations of the purpose of public remembrance of the dictatorship.

It is also important to consider how I was positioned throughout the conversations by those with whom I had spoken for this study, particularly with respect to my Argentine-Canadian identity and my age (in relation to the age of those with whom I spoke). Specifically, my Argentine identity and fluency in Spanish allowed me to easily access members of organismos for conversations as I could claim the position of an “insider”. Despite my worries regarding my inability to claim a link to the dictatorial past because of my lack of personal memories of this period, I was explicitly positioned as an insider in the sense of having been affected by the dictatorship. Thus, I was implicitly positioned as being able to come to our conversations with a particular sense of understanding the dictatorship and, more importantly, the effects of the dictatorship. For example, this was the case in my conversation with Agustín Cetrángolo from H.I.J.O.S (Buenos Aires), who implicated me as having been affected by the dictatorship in his explanation of how public remembrance of the dictatorship can motivate social change if it highlights the ways in which one’s present life has been affected by the dictatorial past.

Cetrángolo: ¿Vos, por qué te fuiste de la Argentina?

(Cetrángolo: Why did you leave Argentina?)

Ana Laura: Bueno, yo me fui cuando tenía siete años con mis padres y mi hermana. Basicamente nos fuimos porque mis padres no encontraban trabajo.

(Ana Laura: Well, I left when I was seven years old with my parents and my sister. Basically, we left because my parents couldn’t find work.)

Cetrángolo: Bueno, entonces si yo quiero hacer un recorrido con vos de memoria, te tengo que marcar que vos te tuviste que ir del país a los siete años porque tus viejos no encontraban trabajo y que eso es consecuencia de la dictadura.
(Cetrángolo: Ok, so if I want to go through a journey of remembrance with you, I have to mark for you that you had to leave the country at seven years old because your parents could not find work and that that is a consequence of the dictatorship.) (Conversation, July 13, 2007 101)

In some cases, my ability to be positioned as an insider may have established the conditions for participants to trust me and to trust my intentions with respect to my purpose for embarking on a study into remembrance of the dictatorship in Argentina. As such, my position as an insider may have opened possibilities for people to speak with me about certain things that they may not have otherwise. In this regard, the opposite might be said for my identity as a Canadian, and therefore as an “outsider”. However, considering that the dictatorship was an Argentine against Argentine violence, this particular outsider identification presents possibilities of witnessing what has been denied in the local context, also informing the content of what people chose to share. Further, the age difference between myself and most of the people with whom I spoke may also have informed what people spoke to me about. Within the context of a concern for keeping the memory of the dictatorship “alive”, being from a younger generation than most of the people with whom I spoke may have positioned me as someone who was expected to carry this memory forward – a factor that may have had significant implications for what people shared with me particularly with regard to the purpose of remembrance as well as the content of what should be remembered.

3.6 Contextualizing the Conversations: Political Shifts in 2007

Equally important to outlining the limits and possibilities of the study is a description of the shifting national political context that took place in 2007 with a focus on those events that occurred between May 26th and August 29th. Such a description is important considering that in

101 As I further explain in Chapter Four, here Cetrángolo is making reference to the notion that poverty and unemployment is one of the present-day effects of the dictatorship.
some of my conversations some of these events informed particular notions of the objective of remembrance and were referenced to legitimize the urgency of the call to remember the dictatorship. Six weeks before I arrived in Argentina, Carlos Fuentealba was murdered by the Provincial Police of Neuquén during a teachers’ protest. In some mainstream media, as well as in conversations I had with members of organismos de derechos humanos, his murder was presented as a reminder of the freedom with which the state (the police) continues to violently repress dissent. Specifically within the context of the nine month anniversary of the disappearance of Jorge Julio López on June 18th, for many members of organismos de derechos humanos Fuentealba’s murder also stood as a reminder of the continuing culture of impunity and authoritarian violence for many human rights activists.

Though the disappearance of López and the kidnapping of Luis Gerez were meant as threats to the democratic state for establishing the conditions for such trials to take place, the trials nevertheless continued across the country (recall from Chapter One that López and Gerez are believed by human rights groups to have been kidnapped by members of the Federal police and that, though Gerez was released, López remains disappeared). In June of 2007 the state announced that it was opening up an investigation into the kidnapping, torture, and murder of 52 persons committed by former General Antonio Bussi and ex-General Benjamín Menéndez who served as the last de-facto President during the dictatorship (the two were later tried and convicted in 2008). Bussi, who had served as de-facto governor of the province of Tucumán during the dictatorship (and then as democratically elected governor in the 1990s in the same province), is particularly known for his brutality during the dictatorship – a brutality that continued once
democracy was restored (Marchak, 1999)\textsuperscript{102}. The possibility of trying Bussi in the federal courts where his guilt could be officially verified and punished was significant because of his prominent role in the repression during the dictatorship and in police violence during democracy\textsuperscript{103}. Also in June the Ministry of Defense prohibited the military from “publicly recognizing or paying homage’…to military persons who participated in the overthrowing of constitutional governments” (\textit{Prohíben a los Militares Homenajear a Represores} [The Military is Prohibited From Paying Homage to the Repressors], 2007, p. 11, my translation). Thus, within a context of the state’s continuing efforts to settle accounts with the nation’s authoritarian past and the consequent possibility of more kidnappings and disappearances, organismos de derechos humanos began to make demands of the state to provide physical security for those involved in the trials, particularly for witnesses.

In response, the state began providing witnesses with ankle bracelets so as to monitor their whereabouts as a measure of security. Nonetheless in June of 2007 a former disappeared person who was scheduled to serve as a witness in the upcoming trial of Catholic Priest Christian Von Wernich, revealed that she had recently been sequestered by two men who later released her. According to Nilda Eloy, also a former disappeared person who testified at the Etchecolatz trial like López, this was “a message for everyone...with this they are saying to us: ‘We do what we want despite your supposed special protection for witnesses’” (Dandan, 2007, p. 4, my translation). Thus when the Von Wernich trial began on July 5\textsuperscript{th}, fear of persecution within the

\textsuperscript{102} Once democracy was restored this brutality continued through state sanctioned police violence, rather than through disappearances.

\textsuperscript{103} In 2004 Congress barred Bussi from assuming his seat because of suspicion that he had been involved in kidnapping, torture, and murder during the dictatorship. However, in 2008 the Supreme Court ruled that Congress had exceeded its constitutional authority in making this decision. Nonetheless his 2008 conviction and sentence to life in prison resulted in his inability to assume his seat.
movimiento de derechos humanos was heightened. For the movement this trial was of particular importance because it stood as a reminder of the Catholic Church’s participation in the dictatorship and because it was the first trial since the disappearance of Julio López,

Within this context of continuing resistance to the state’s efforts to establish the rule of law, the state-sanctioned pardons granted in the 1990s to those convicted in the 1985 trial were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in July of 2007. Also in July Luis Patti, a prominent politician and self-confessed torturer (during the dictatorship) was not permitted to assume his seat in the Chamber of Deputies because of his involvement in “crimes against humanity” (as it was stated by the Chamber)104. Efforts made by the state to right the wrongs of the past began with Néstor Kirchner who assumed the Presidency in 2003. According to many organismos de derechos humanos, unlike previous post-dictatorship governments who had attempted to institutionalize policies and practices of “forgive and forget”, Néstor Kirchner’s administration was the first to heed the movimiento de derechos humanos’ demands for “memory, truth, and justice”. Thus Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s announcement of her intention to run for President in the upcoming October election was important news for those organismos de derechos humanos who assumed that her administration would be the same as her husband’s105.

While this event was for obvious reasons of national importance, the June 25th election of Mauricio Macri as Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires was also considered

104 The Supreme Court ruled in 2008 that the Chamber of Deputies had exceeded its constitutional authority making this decision. Nonetheless, due to public outcry Patti has not been allowed to assume his position as Deputy. Further, he is currently under investigation for crimes committed during the dictatorship and for the 2006 kidnapping of Luis Gerez.

105 Fernández de Kirchner is the current President of Argentina. She assumed office in December of 2007.
important for all Argentine citizens because of the political and economic power this government holds as that of the capital city of the country. Macri, leader of the political party Propuesta Republicana (Republican Proposal), was elected with over 60 percent of the vote. Throughout the campaign many organismos de derechos humanos expressed concerns over his statements regarding human rights, claiming that his victory would pose a threat to the rights of particular citizens, such as the poor and the unemployed, as well as to “memory policies”. Particularly, they were concerned over how this new government would handle financial negotiations made between organismos de derechos humanos and previous city governments for the reconstruction of former sites of torture into “sites of memory”\(^{106}\). This concern was grounded in comments made by Macri such as “‘the twentieth century was for human rights and the twenty-first century will be for [fulfilling our] citizen obligations’” (Pertot, 2007).

3.7 Situating the Role of Conversations with Members of Organismos de Derechos Humanos to this Study

My analysis of conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos serve to draw out; a) the various ways in which demands for derechos humanos are made in the name of the disappeared (that articulate not only the loss of disappeared persons but also the loss of a particular construction of the Argentine nation and identity), b) the various ways in which such demands are mobilized through public remembrance of the dictatorship, and c) the various ways in which such remembrance articulates a continual learning to live with loss. In this regard, my re-readings of the transcripts of the conversations function to detail how learning to live with loss is conceptualized. In my re-readings I continually heard people express a concern for structuring

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\(^{106}\) Collaboration between human rights groups and the state (the city of Buenos Aires) began with former Mayor Aníbal Ibarra in 2000. This collaboration primarily manifests in financial support from the state over which human rights groups have control to use as they deem appropriate in these reconstruction processes.
public remembrance of the dictatorship as an urge to remember “the truth” about why the disappeared were disappeared and as an urge to attend to the consequences of the dictatorship seen in the present (e.g., social injustices, among others). In fact, in many of my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos, the truth and a particular notion of the presentness of the past grounded the aims and importance of public remembrance presented. An analysis of this truth and of the ways in which the dictatorship is understood to have affected the present is thus integral to an understanding of what constitutes learning to live with loss and how public remembrance of the dictatorship can be conceptualized to articulate such a learning. As such, in Chapter Four I highlight how the truth is defined and how the presentness of the past is understood. I begin Chapter Five with an analysis of how we might understand calls to remember the truth and to attend to the effects of the dictatorship today as a process of inheritance – of passing down knowledge about what happened to the disappeared and who the disappeared were as well as responsibilities to commit to a militancia and secure derechos humanos in Argentina today. In Chapter Five I explain in detail the varied articulations of the objective of public remembrance. This analysis focuses on how the work of learning to live with loss is structured through distinct aims of remembrance.

While, as I noted above, I do not focus on my observations of public remembrance events and sites of memory, in the last two sections of Chapter Five I do. This is because of the particular way in which the conversations highlighted here centered on specific practices of remembrance that emphasized the importance of place to remembrance of the dictatorship. Further, in Chapters Four and Five the excerpts from my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos are not intended to be read as indicative of a singular opinion or way of thinking. In part, this is because the members of organismos de derechos humanos with whom I spoke sometimes stated that they were expressing their own individual thoughts and
opinions while at other times stated that they were expressing the thoughts and opinions of the
group in which they are a member. The excerpts should also not be read as such because I am
not structuring an analysis of the debates and differences between *organismos de derechos humanos* and/or individuals. My conversations took place within a particular political and
personal context (i.e., a particular moment in a person’s personal life that informed the
knowledge they chose to share with me in that moment). Thus, I do not read a person’s focus on
how certain practices of remembrance might contribute to the work of “working through” loss as
suggesting that she or he does not think of *derechos humanos* as important (or vice versa).
Rather the excerpts, and the conversations in general, are meant to illuminate how we might
think of public remembrance as a continual learning to live with loss that instantiates *derechos humanos* as fundamental to the reconstruction of Argentine society.

Focusing on my conversations with *organismos de derechos humanos* in Chapters Four and
Five allows me to elaborate on the theoretical discussion in Chapters One and Two. Further, it
allows me to draw a contemporary map of the deeply affective and passionately contested
political issues that have motivated the *movimiento de derechos humanos*’ construction of the
landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. As such, in the discussion in Chapters Four and
Five, I draw from theories of psychoanalysis that explain what it means to “work through” loss
and trauma as well as theories of cultural remembrance and cultural trauma that explore the
cultural frames through which the past is understood as meaningful to the present in order to
deepen my understanding of how people articulate a continual learning to live with loss within
this landscape.
Chapter 4
ACCOUNTING FOR THE TRUTH AND THE PRESENTNESS OF THE PAST

4.1 Situating the Truth and the Presentness of the Past in Public Remembrance of the Dictatorship

For several years organismos de derechos humanos have made public demands of the state and of civil society to acknowledge “the truth” of why the disappeared were disappeared and to attend to the ways in which the dictatorial past has marked the present. As I have explained in Chapters One and Two, public remembrance of the dictatorship has often mobilized a narrative of the 1976-1983 coup as the persecution of “leftist politics” (Calloni, 2006; Taylor, 2003) and claims of a continuing individual and collective suffering that has resulted from this historical violence. It is not surprising then that in many of my conversations with organismos de derechos humanos certain conceptualizations of this truth and of the presentness of the past grounded particular understandings of the purpose of public remembrance. In this chapter I turn to these conversations in order to outline a detailed discussion of the diverse constructions of this truth and of the varied articulations of how the dictatorship continues to affect present-day lives. This discussion is important as it serves to contextualize the analysis in Chapter Five regarding the aims of remembrance of the dictatorship within specific understandings of why this remembrance matters (and should matter to Argentines today). It is also an important discussion as it speaks to how the individual and collective endeavour to learn to live with loss is articulated through concerns for legitimizing the truth within the Argentine courts, for addressing contemporary social injustices, and for attending to individual grief and loss. My purpose in this chapter is to unravel how these concerns exist in relation to each other in order to trace the
diverse ways in which public remembrance of the dictatorship mobilizes attempts to come to live with loss.

4.2 Establishing The Truth about why the Disappeared were Disappeared

Though organismos de derechos humanos continue their search for truth about what happened in each case of disappearance primarily through the legal institutions of the democratic state (e.g., the current trials), the process of this search has lead many groups to establish a shared conceptualization of the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared. To summarize, the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared was stated in my conversations as such; a) that the 1976-1983 military dictatorship was executed in order to implement a particular “economic plan”, b) that the military state had to eradicate anyone who stood in opposition to this plan, and c) that those that were disappeared were targeted by the military because they were mobilizing action to resist the dictatorship and its practices for the purposes of constructing a “better Argentina” (or a “better world”), generally defined as a more equitable Argentina with equal access to work, health care, education, and housing. The period of the 1976-1983 dictatorship is thus narrated by many organismos de derechos humanos as a means to an end – the means being the eradication of those who were working to construct a “better Argentina” who clashed with the ends of the military’s overthrow of the democratic government in order to execute a particular economic plan\textsuperscript{107}.

\textsuperscript{107} With respect to my aim to present a descriptive account of the truth, my intention is to examine how this truth was produced in the conversations rather than how it is circulated outside of the conversations. Nonetheless, it is important to reiterate that, as I explained in Chapter One, this truth exists within the larger context of the narrative of “Plan Condor”. The narrative of Plan Condor, which explains how the military of 6 countries in the Southern Cone of Latin America coordinated repression tactics to eliminate “leftist politics,” is widely circulated within Latin America today (Taylor, 2003; Calloni, 2006). As this truth is thus widely circulated within Argentina and Latin America, I do sometimes note how the truth produced in the conversations is positioned within this larger circulation.
Though there exists a conceptualization of the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared that is shared by many of the groups within the movimiento de derechos humanos, different individuals within the movement have particular and varied ways of articulating this truth that structure certain understandings of who the victims were, who the perpetrators were, and how retribution for the victims can be achieved. In my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos, there were three primary articulations of the truth of what occurred during the dictatorship. The dictatorship was defined as a crime against humanity, as a genocide, and as a violation of human rights. These different articulations of the truth narrate the dictatorship through an account of the crimes committed, highlighting different conceptualizations of memory and of justice and, in turn, of the function of public remembrance of the dictatorship. Further, these diverse articulations illuminate the particular ways in which living with loss is understood within the landscape of memory of the dictatorship. As I explain below through an analysis of the ways in which the dictatorship was identified as a crime against humanity, as a genocide, and as a violation of human rights, the use of these terms is not only a matter of holding the state accountable for the disappearances and of legitimizing a particular memory as truth. Indeed, producing a “master narrative” (Alexander, 2004) of why the disappeared were disappeared is important for verifying the state’s responsibility to prosecute the perpetrators in the federal courts as well as for justifying calls for civil society to participate in making demands of the state for legal redress. However, the varied ways in which organismos de derechos humanos construct the truth about the disappeared as people who struggled for a “better Argentina” also speak to a concern for asserting the significance of their lives and “deaths” to present-day lives – that is, they articulate the political and affective dimensions of the task of learning to live with loss.
4.2.1 Defining the Dictatorship as a Crime Against Humanity

Within my conversations with members of *organismos de derechos humanos*, the identification of the crimes committed during the dictatorship as crimes against humanity often occurred within the context of demands for judicial punishment of the perpetrators (rather than, for example, within the context of calls to remember). This is perhaps not surprising given that those currently on trial for crimes of torture, kidnapping, and murder (where it can be proven that a person was murdered and thus that a person is dead) between 1976 and 1983 are being tried for crimes against humanity. As I explained in Chapter One, such prosecutions are possible because the current Argentine constitution “deems international treaties superior to domestic law” (Levit, 2010, p. 275). The following are examples of how the crimes committed during the dictatorship were articulated as crimes against humanity in the conversations I had with members of *organismos de derechos humanos*.

Ana María Careaga: *Acá la justicia pendiente tiene que ver con los crímenes de lesa humanidad. Eso hay que garantizar. Digamos, no solamente expresar la voluntad de que haya justicia, sino generar las condiciones en los juzgados [para poder juzgar crímenes de lesa humanidad].*

(Ana María Careaga: Here, the justice that is pending has to do with crimes against humanity. This has to be guaranteed. I mean, not only to express the will for justice, but rather to generate the conditions in the courts [to be able to try crimes against humanity].) (Conversation, July 4, 2007, *IEM*, Buenos Aires)

Agustín Di Toffino: *Nosotros creemos que la justicia tiene que ser una construcción social porque la impunidad hizo imposible juzgar a quienes cometieron delitos de lesa humanidad en este país.*

(Agustín Di Toffino: We believe that justice has to be a social construction because the impunity made it impossible to try those who committed crimes against humanity in this country.) (Conversation, July 19, 2007, *H.I.J.O.S*, Córdoba)

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108 As I further explain in Chapter Five, when Di Toffino says that “justice has to be a social construction” he means that justice is not just a matter of legal redress but also of civil society’s recognition and repudiation of the crimes committed during the dictatorship and of the perpetrators.
Gustavo Tissera: Se han cometido crímenes de lesa humanidad. Estos delitos, como todos, deben ser juzgados por sus propias leyes. Un delincuente de lesa humanidad tiene que ser juzgado con las leyes de crímenes de lesa humanidad.

(Gustavo Tissera: Crimes against humanity have been committed. These crimes, like all crimes, should be tried by their proper laws. A delinquent who committed crimes against humanity should be tried with the laws of crimes against humanity.) (Conversation, July 19, 2007, Familiares, Córdoba)

To understand the significance of the articulation of the dictatorship as a crime against humanity within public remembrance practices we must turn to the definition of what constitutes a crime against humanity under international law. The official definition of crimes against humanity in Article 7 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court states that:

crimes against humanity means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack: a) murder; b) extermination; c) enslavement; d) deportation of forcible transfer of population; e) imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; f) torture; g) rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; h) persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender…grounds…i) enforced disappearance of persons; j) the crime of apartheid; k) other inhumane acts of similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health. (Clapham, 2007, p. 40)

Distinguishing a crime against humanity from a crime of war is that, unlike those crimes committed under the jurisdiction of the laws of war, a crime against humanity is independent of the context of “armed conflict”. Thus, the crime need not be committed against an (perceived) enemy but rather “any civilian population” (including the state’s own) (Mettraux, 2002; Robinson, 1999). That “combatants in the traditional sense of the term cannot be victims of

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109 Since the end of the Second World War the definition of crimes against humanity has been developed through three primary phases: the Nuremberg Charter, the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the Statute of the International Criminal Court (Article 7) which was the phase which involved “universal negotiation” (Mettraux, 2002; Robinson, 1999). “For this reason, one could reasonably expect Article 7 to be more detailed than previous definitions, given the interest of participating states in knowing the precise contours of the corresponding obligations they would be taking” (Robinson, 1999, p. 43). As such, I refer to Article 7 of the International Criminal Court to explain the legal criteria of what constitutes a crime against humanity.
crimes against humanity” inherently renders those named victims of crimes against humanity as non-combatant, innocent civilians (Mettraux, 2002, p. 257). Furthermore, that the attack must be “widespread” or ‘systematic” in order for the crimes committed within that attack to be considered crimes against humanity, “connotes the large-scale nature of the attack and the number of victims” as well as “refers to the organized nature of the acts of violence and improbability of their random occurrence” (Mettraux, 2002, p. 260). In other words, the definition of crimes against humanity requires that such crimes be committed with intent (Mettraux, 2002; Robinson, 1999). “In addition to proving intent to commit the underlying offense, the perpetrator must know that there is an attack on the civilian population and that his acts comprise part of that attack”. Knowledge of “the perpetrator’s awareness of his participation may be inferred from circumstantial evidence, examples of which include the accused’s position in the military” (the motive of the perpetrator is not legally relevant) (Mettraux, 2002, p. 261-262).

Read alongside the definition of crimes against humanity, the excerpts cited above reveal that the identification of the dictatorship as a crime against humanity has important implications for the representation of the disappeared within the truth of why the disappeared were disappeared. Defining the crimes of the dictatorship as crimes against humanity legitimizes the position of the disappeared as an “identifiable group” persecuted on “political grounds” and thus characterized by its particular political motivation. Largely because of the absence of “armed conflict” as a stipulation of what constitutes a crime against humanity, this definition asserts the position of the disappeared as victims, not enemies. Naming the crimes of the dictatorship as crimes against humanity then delegitimizes “la teoria de los dos demonios” (“the theory of two
evils") which justifies the dictatorship as a war against an enemy\textsuperscript{110}. In that crimes against humanity are committed against “any civilan population” and not necessarily an enemy, this particular articulation of the crimes of the dictatorship establishes the conditions for organismos de derechos humanos to locate those that were disappeared as members of the “civilian population” in Argentina. In other words, the legal definition of crimes against humanity allows organismos de derechos humanos to relocate the disappeared within “our” society, removing them from the military’s construction of those that were targeted (the disappeared) as against “us” and outside of “us”. Lastly, given that crimes against humanity require intent to be considered as such, demanding recognition of the crimes of the dictatorship as crimes against humanity functions to counter the notion that the dictatorship was the work of a small number of “bad apples” who committed excesses.

Demands to have the crimes of the dictatorship tried as crimes against humanity might then be read as calls for the state to recognize and thus assume responsibility for the violence committed against its own citizens. Thus, indicting the kidnappings, tortures and murders\textsuperscript{111} committed between 1976 and 1983 as crimes against humanity names the disappeared as citizens – as valuable members of Argentine society. Specifically, identifying those who were disappeared as citizens committed to a political project that was motivated by a concern for “our” suffering (the suffering that results from economic and political state violence) binds “us” to a responsibility to struggle for justice for the disappeared. That said, the ways in which the

\textsuperscript{110} Recall from Chapter One that “the theory of two evils” was mobilized during the dictatorship by the military and its supporters to justify the coup as a necessary war against an enemy and thus as a war between two equally armed groups. The theory of two evils was also later mobilized by post-dictatorship governments in their articulations of reconciliation as a necessary means for the reconstruction of the Argentine nation.

\textsuperscript{111} The perpetrators of the dictatorship cannot be tried for disappearing people because provisions prohibiting disappearance were not included within the Argentine criminal code until after the dictatorship (and laws are not retroactive).
prosecution of crimes against humanity repositions the disappeared within Argentine society as victims and as socially conscious citizens is not simply a struggle of situating a particular memory as truth in order to falsify another (e.g., the theory of two evils). Similarly, trying the crimes of the dictatorship “by their proper laws” and establishing the conditions necessary to try these crimes as such is not only about due process (which is undoubtedly important for democracy). It is also a struggle to honour the lives of the disappeared, affirming that they are not and were not disposable, as well as a struggle to assert their significance to the present-day by assuming them as “our” “dead” and taking up the task of making them part of “our” attempts to reconstruct a democratic present and future.

4.2.2 Defining the Dictatorship as a Genocide

The articulation of the dictatorship as a genocide is not surprising given that organismos de derechos humanos have been doing so since the early 1980s (Osiel, 1986). Within the context of the 1985 trial, demands for the indictment of genocide made by organismos de derechos humanos were, in part, a response to President Alfonsín’s decision to try only nine members of the first three ruling juntas for crimes committed against individuals. Specifically, the government chose to indict the junta leaders for “false imprisonment, accessory after the fact, aggravated robbery, extortion, reduction to involuntary servitude, documentary falsification, torture, murder, and forgery of official documents” (Osiel, 1986, p. 148). Subordinate officers would not be tried on the basis that they were “simply following orders” (p. 147). Alfonsín also decided to try leaders of leftist guerilla groups (e.g., the Montoneros and the People’s Revolutionary Army) “for offenses ranging from ‘illicit association’ with an outlawed organization to kidnapping and murder” (ibid). As Osiel (1986) has explained, Alfonsín’s decision about which crimes and perpetrators should be tried was based both on moral grounds and “practical politics”. With regard to the latter, Alfonsín was primarily concerned with the
possibility of further military violence and with reconciling the Argentine nation. In this sense, the trial was intended as a possibility for the new military leadership and the officer corps to disassociate itself from the errors of the past committed by only a few senior military officers. With respect to the former, “Alfonsín was convinced that the moral grounds stemmed from the theory of deterrence, which should guide the choice of defendants” (p. 151). In this view, the objective of the trial was to prevent a reoccurrence of human rights violations more so than to address the wrongs of the past. “It made no sense, then, to punish anyone whose criminal conduct could not be deterred by threat of future sanction” because of their obligation to obey their superiors (ibid). In this regard, it was the superior officers who needed to be told that illegal violence would not be tolerated by future democratic governments.

Organismos de derechos humanos, however, sought the indictment of genocide of all of the military officers who had committed crimes during the dictatorship and justice for all of the disappeared. These groups argued that even those officers who had followed orders to kidnap but claimed to have “killed or tortured no one with [their]…own hands” (Osiel, 1986, p. 165) were fully aware that their victims would be tortured and probably murdered. Thus, their acts “were indistinguishable for moral purposes from the acts of those to whom [they]…handed over [their]…helpless prey” (Osiel, 1986, p. 165-166). As Osiel has noted, the organismos de derechos humanos contended that it was the immorality of the act that should determine who would be tried, not the perceived possibility of the perpetrators (or others who would come to occupy senior positions) to act again. Further, the organismos rejected the prosecution of members of leftist groups such as the Montoneros and the People’s Revolutionary Army because it sustained the theory of two evils and thus equated the social justice activism of the disappeared with violent state repression. While “the President believed that the disappeared had been chosen for their fate because they had dared to disagree with those who did not tolerate
disagreement”, organismos de derechos humanos maintained that “it had not been ‘intolerance’ of a generic brand” (Osiel, 1986, p. 162). The organismos argued that the military’s lumping together of members of guerilla groups and peaceful dissenters into the category of “subversive” demonstrated that those who had been disappeared had been chosen because of their particular political beliefs. Furthermore, they stated that an analysis of the groups and professions to which those persecuted by the military belonged would also serve as evidence of the political motivations underlying the military coup (p. 163). For these reasons, the movimiento de derechos humanos adopted the position that trials for the crime of genocide would account for the victims as political opponents of the military coup and would thus more accurately reflect historical truth (an assertion whose meaning will become evident in my text below). They took this position despite their realization that it was somewhat askew of international law.

Under international law the dictatorship cannot be prosecuted as a genocide. Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) defines genocide as:

112 The “Nunca Más” report published in 1984 by the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) found that of the 8,960 cases of disappearance it was able to identify “81 per cent were aged between sixteen and thirty” with 70 percent of the total number being men (Marchak, 1999, p. 155). “By occupation…30.2 per cent of the disappeared were blue-collar workers, 21 per cent were students, and 37.3 per cent were white-collar workers, professionals, teachers, journalists or artists” (ibid).

113 Lastly, as Osiel (1986) has explained, the organismos maintained that “beyond [Alfonsín’s]…errors of moral judgment and historical understanding lay one political strategy as well” (p. 168). Specifically, they believed that the President had only prosecuted the guerillas with the intention of later freeing them, thus seeking to defuse the organismos’ opposition to the amnesty laws he had always planned on enacting. In turn, their demands to have all of the military tried for the genocide of 30,000 Argentines was also motivated by a “practical politics” to secure legal redress.

114 I have chosen to refer to Article 2 of the Convention for my analysis of how the dictatorship is articulated as a genocide because it is this article that has been, and continues to be, a point of contention between those who argue that political groups should be included in the definition of who can be considered a victim of the crime of genocide and those who do not. As I further explain throughout this chapter, the inclusion of political groups within this definition is particularly important for organismos de derechos humanos.
entailing the commission of any one of a series of enumerated acts which are committed with the ‘intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such. These acts include killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group’s physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births; and forcibly transferring children to another group (Lippman, 2002, p. 181).

Thus the dictatorship does not qualify as a genocide because the military was not (and did not claim to be) targeting a group based on its nationality, ethnicity, race or religion and because the definition of genocide excludes the elimination of political groups. Though political groups had been included in the initial draft of the CPPCG put forth by the U.N. General Assembly in 1946, ultimately a majority of member states chose to remove them from the definition of what constitutes a crime of genocide and who constitutes its victims. The decision to exclude political groups from the final draft completed in 1948 resulted from “the rationale…that racial, religious, ethnic and national groups [have] historically…been targets of animosity and [have been]…characterized by…inevitability of membership” (Lippman, 2002, p. 181). In other words, “affiliation with political groups…was considered a matter of individual choice and such movements were viewed as ephemeral and thus not needing individual protection” (ibid).

Further, many member states feared that the inclusion of political groups would jeopardize the acceptance of the CPPCG by a number of states who might view the Convention as an international interference into national politics (Feierstein, 2006; Lippman, 2002).

Nonetheless organismos de derechos humanos continue to demand that the dictatorship be recognized as a genocide by the federal courts and that those prosecuted be charged with committing a genocide. In my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos the dictatorship was often identified as a genocide either by naming the dictatorship a “genocidio” (“genocide”) and/or by naming the perpetrators of crimes during the dictatorship as “genocidas” (for which there is no English translation but in French is translated as genocidaire).
The following two excerpts from my conversations with Nora Cortiñas and Octavio Rampoldi serve as examples of the insistence on naming the dictatorship a genocide. Of note in these excerpts is the articulation of the dictatorship as a genocide within the context of demands for legal redress (as in Cortiñas’ case) and calls for memory (as in Rampoldi’s case) – the latter being different than the ways in which the dictatorship was conceptualized as a crime against humanity.

Nora Cortiñas: Referente a la justicia, [la dictadura] es un capítulo muy especial…Nosotros tuvimos esa dictadura cruel donde se cometió un genocidio. Después vino un gobierno constitucional que hizo un juicio a las tres juntas militares…Pero en ese mismo gobierno se dictaron las leyes de impunidad. Entonces seguimos con esa lucha. Luchamos porque además de las leyes, cuando cambia ese gobierno [el de Alfonsín], los pocos responsables de ese genocidio fueron liberados a través de un indulto inconstitucional que hizo el Presidente Menem. Entonces, es por eso lo que luchamos, por la condena de genocidio a todos los genocidas.

(Octavio Rampoldi: The idea [of remembrance events in the neighbourhoods] is to tell the neighbours that there were people in their neighbourhood who were disappeared, that the genocidas acted in their neighbourhood.)

While in most of my conversations the dictatorship was generally identified as a genocide as such, the following excerpts from my interviews with Ana María Careaga and Hugo Argente are

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115 Rampoldi emphasizes the aim of remembrance practices that take place within specific neighbourhoods to remember individual disappeared persons from that neighbourhood because the group in which he is a member is characterized by such individualizing neighbourhood specific practices. I further discuss these practices in Chapter Five.
examples of the ways in which some of those with whom I spoke specifically qualified the dictatorship as a “political genocide”.

Hugo Argente: Esto fue un genocidio político en pos de poder implementar un plan económico. Esto no fue unos muchachos locos o unos milicos malos. Los que desaparecieron fueron desaparecidos porque estaban comprometidos a un proyecto político a fines de derrotar este plan económico.

(Hugo Argente: This was a political genocide with the aim of implementing an economic plan. This was not some crazy guys or some bad military men. Those that disappeared were disappeared because they were committed to a political project aiming to dismantle this economic plan.) (Conversation, July 11, 2007, Familiares, Buenos Aires)

Careaga: El Terrorismo de Estado[1976-1983] fue implementado no como un fin en sí mismo, sino con la tarea de garantizar la posibilidad de implementar un modelo económico que corresponde a los intereses de los poderosos en desmedro de la mayoría de la población de este país. Entonces, para lograr este genocidio político tuvieron que destruir el grupo que estaba trabajando contra esto.

(Careaga: The State Terrorism [1976-1983] was implemented not as an end in itself, but rather with the aim of guaranteeing the possibility of implementing an economic plan that corresponds with the interests of the powerful and results in the decline of the majority of the population of this country. So, to accomplish this political genocide they had to destroy the group that was working against this.) (Conversation, July 4, 2007)

Though in these conversations there was no explicit explanation of how the dictatorship can be conceptualized as a genocide, Argentine sociologist Daniel Feierstein (2006) and journalist Alipio Paoletti (1987) have constructed an account of the dictatorship as a political genocide based on “evidence” of its “genocidal characteristics” – specifically, its systematic nature. Paoletti’s extensive report of the clandestine torture centres across the country functions to map the intricate organization of the coup alongside parallels made between torture methods used during the dictatorship and in the Nazi concentration camps. Both these parallels and the systematic nature of the centres are meant to serve as “proof” of the dictatorship as a genocide. Feierstein also traces the ideological origins of torture practices in the dictatorship to the Nazis and draws from statements made by leaders of the military dictatorship referring to the intent to rid the nation of particular political ideologies.
Given that Feierstein, Paoletti, and many members of *organismos de derechos humanos* have a very clear understanding of why the dictatorship cannot be defined as a genocide (under international law), how might we understand their continual insistence that the dictatorship be named a genocide both in the courts and within the landscape of memory? Following Osiel (1986), we can conclude that Feierstein’s and Paoletti’s analysis of how the dictatorship can (and should) be identified as a genocide speaks to a matter of and concern for historical truth rather than the discourse of international law. As we shall see below, this truth is a matter of recognizing similarities in regard to how a modern deadly persecutory apparatus operated, particularly in reference to ways the Nazi regime went about eliminating Jews and others deemed unfit for and a threat to their nation. As Feierstein himself has observed, the term genocide most “accurately” accounts for “the level of planning” that was put into organizing the dictatorship (p. 150)\(^\text{116}\). Thus, generally, naming the dictatorship a genocide recognizes it “as willful and cruel”, challenging its construction as mostly “thoughtless or banal” (Osiel, 1986, p. 166). Further, though the very act of naming the dictatorship a genocide (and thus a crime) implies a guilty party, the willful characteristic of the dictatorship implied through its identification as a genocide underscores the “rationality” and “sanity” of the accused, countering the rationalization of the dictatorship as the work of a few “mad men”.

With respect to the articulation of the dictatorship as a “political genocide”, by highlighting the objective of the coup to implement an economic project this articulation “accurately” asserts the political motivations of the military to destroy a group characterized by its political

\(^{116}\) Like Paoletti, here Feierstein makes specific reference to the methodological nature of the kidnappings and of the construction of clandestine torture centres across the country that had begun before 1976. He writes: “The entire territory was divided into five operation areas and 19 sub-areas, under operational control of the Armed Forces. Nearly 350 clandestine detention centres were opened...There was not a single city which did not have one of those centres nearby. The multi-killings were carried out with a speed of accuracy which showed years of previous conceptual elaboration and learning” (p. 150).
ideologies. The definition of the dictatorship as a political genocide then recognizes the disappeared as members of a group whose very existence was being persecuted. Subsequently, the disappeared are positioned as victims both as a consequence of their membership in the group under threat of destruction and the implication of the existence of victims that the definition of genocide itself structures. As such, as Osiel (1986) has noted, identifying the dictatorship as a genocide, whether political or not, is important as it delegitimizes the theory of two evils that continues to circulate in public discussions about the current trials. Though this clearly has significant political implications it is also important for the work of learning to live with loss because of the particular way in which the articulation of the dictatorship as a genocide (re)defines the victims of the dictatorship as heroes of a struggle against injustice – the way in which it constructs the victims of the dictatorship as significant to “our” lives today.

The conceptualization of the dictatorship as a (political) genocide is thus constructed by organismos de derechos humanos on moral and legal grounds that draw from how genocide is understood on these terms within a larger global context and within a particular historical context in Argentina. The term genocide, “commonly [understood]...as the ultimate crime against humanity”, acknowledges a moral responsibility “we” have to protect each other from evil and to

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117 For example, Cecilia Pando, a well known supporter of the dictatorship who heads the Asociación de Familiares y Amigos de los Presos Políticos de Argentina (Association of Family and Friends of Political Prisoners in Argentina) – political prisoners referring here to the perpetrators of the dictatorship who have been convicted and sentenced to jail – is regularly seen on popular television programs and at the trials condemning the judicial punishment of those whom she continuously refers to as the “defenders of the nation”. Pando herself is the wife of a former military officer. Most recently, she and other members of the group chained themselves to the building housing the Argentine military headquarters in the city of Buenos Aires in demand of a meeting with Defense Minister, Nilda Garré, and the leaders of the military. The stated objective of the meeting was to demand an end to the trials and pardons for those who had been convicted (Con Ganas de Salir en la Tele [With the Aim of Being TV], 2010).

118 The construction of the victims of the dictatorship as heroes because of their participation in a struggle for social change recalls discourses of war that often frame soldiers as heroes because of their commitment to (sacrifice their lives for) a particular fight (a fight for a greater good).
account for the most abhorrent of crimes (Mettraux, 2002, p. 302)\textsuperscript{119}. Naming the dictatorship a genocide speaks to a degree of violence that “we” cannot simply walk away from. Within the Argentine context, the identification of the 1976-1983 dictatorship as a genocide distinguishes this coup from the five military dictatorships that preceded it in the twentieth century\textsuperscript{120}. Qualifying the dictatorship as a genocide signifies the period between 1976 and 1983 as an aberration in Argentine history. Further, this particular instance of state repression has identifiable victims. Standing out as a singular event, the dictatorship and its victims command our attention. More specifically, the term genocide delineates “a moral debt owed to the victims” (Osiel, 1986, p. 166) that, as Osiel has explained, organismos de derechos humanos have long argued should be reflected within the legal terms on which the dictatorship is understood. As such, through public remembrance of the dictatorship as a genocide and demands that the crimes of the dictatorship be tried as crimes of genocide, state repression is recognized as a moral and legal wrong for which “we” are responsible\textsuperscript{121}.

\textsuperscript{119} Certainly there are differences between the construction and reproduction of the truth as a crime of genocide and as a crime against humanity. The most obvious of these being that a crime of genocide is constituted by the perpetrator’s “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (Clapham, 2007, p. 36, my emphasis) rather than the perpetrator’s intent to commit “a widespread or systematic attack” (Clapham, 2007, p. 40, my emphasis). However there also exist similarities. In fact the “historical and sociological treatment of these two crimes” has been parallel (Mettraux, 2002, p. 302-303). This may explain why some people such as Careaga refer to legal punishment of crimes against humanity and not genocide, even though she names the dictatorship a political genocide. Mettraux (2002) explains that this may be the case because “the fact patterns of the two crimes tend to be quite similar” (p. 303). That said, “in several cases before the [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia] and the [International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda], the same set of facts form the basis of genocide and crimes against humanity charges” (p. 303). However, as Clapham (2007) notes, the similar treatment of these crimes, in sociological and historical terms, might also be a consequence of their association with the Holocaust and the Nuremberg Trials. Clapham argues that the indictment of crimes against humanity in the Nuremberg Trials and the resulting CPPCG which identified the Holocaust as a genocide and the crimes against humanity that were committed during this period as crimes of genocide has led to a similar use and understanding of the two terms. In the proceeding pages of this section I discuss the particular implications for living with loss of naming the dictatorship a genocide (rather than a crime against humanity).


\textsuperscript{121} Thus, counter to Huyssen’s (2003a&b) argument that the conflation of the Holocaust and the dictatorship risks erasing the specificities of both (an argument which I discuss further in a proceeding section in this chapter), I am
Indeed, this responsibility has been assumed by national and international (or, rather, foreign) courts. In 1997, in response to demands made by organismos de derechos humanos, “the Spanish justice opened a case against the Argentine military for the crimes of ‘terrorism and genocide’, which fell under Baltasar Garzón’s competence” (Feierstein, 2006, p. 157)122. Within this context, Judge Garzón found himself charged with the task of constructing a legal argument for the perpetrators of the dictatorship to be tried for crimes of genocide. As Feierstein (2006) has explained, Garzón developed a number of such arguments. For example, he challenged the constitutionality (with reference to the Spanish Constitution) of excluding political groups while also contending that the religious ideology underlying the dictatorship classified it as a genocide and that those persecuted could also be understood as a “national group” and thus as victims of a genocide. Following Garzón’s arguments, the principal judge presiding over the Etchecolatz case123 argued that the crimes against humanity for which Etchecolatz had been found guilty had been committed “within the context of a genocide” (Judge Carlos Rozanski cited in La Liga por los Derechos del Hombre, 2007, p. 35, my translation)124. Like Garzón, Rozanski maintained that a “‘national group does not mean a group of people who belong to the same nation’, but

here arguing that drawing this parallel, as Paoletti and Feierstein do quite explicitly, produces the conditions that highlight the uniqueness of the victims of the dictatorship and that make it possible to narrate the dictatorship as a distinct event in Argentine history. Though above I have outlined the possibilities this offers for public remembrance, in Chapter Six I consider the limitations that such a narration potentially poses.

122 Succinctly put, Spanish law recognizes the principle of universal jurisdiction that establishes that some crimes are so abhorrent that they can be tried anywhere regardless of whether the crime was committed against citizens of the country in which the crime is being tried or whether it is committed by citizens of that country.

123 Recall from previous chapters that Etchecolatz is a former police officer who was found guilty and sentenced in 2006 to life in prison for the crimes of illegal detention, kidnapping, torture, and murder.

124 The same tribunal which convicted and sentenced Etchecolatz (the Federal Oral Criminal Tribunal No. 1 of La Plata) also determined in its sentencing of Argentine Catholic priest Christian Von Wernich that the crimes against humanity of which he had been found guilty in 2007 were committed “within the context of a genocide”.
rather, simply, a national human group, a human group differentiated, characterized by something, constitutive of a larger collective” (p. 28). In his sentencing Rozanski thus argued that between 1976 and 1983 the military had organized “a plan of selective elimination” of persons whom it characterized by their (perceived) belief in the “principles…of Marxism or atheism” (ibid)125.

Though Rozanski only alludes to the dictatorship as a genocide, his use of the language of genocide nonetheless has important implications for a potential restructuring of the relationship between the state and civil society. Drawing from Laclau and Mouffe, we might examine his ruling as a “rearticulation” of the stage upon which rights groups in Argentina mobilize their rights claims. By charging Etchecolatz for having committed crimes “within the context of a genocide” Rozanski has legitimized demands made by organismos de derechos humanos. Furthermore, by recognizing that the victims of the dictatorship were persecuted because of their political ideologies Rozanski also affirmed the state’s obligation to protect political activists. Importantly, this is not to suggest that Rozanski’s decision initiated a new set of procedures under which the crimes of the dictatorship could be tried126. In the same vein, I am not suggesting that rights groups are now safeguarded against police repression. Rather, within the context of Laclau and Mouffe’s notion of hegemony as a “process of rearticulation” that recognizes a universal without erasing the particularities, my point is that, by considering demands made by organismos de derechos humanos, Rozanski’s landmark ruling has informed a

125 In this sense, Rozanski argues that the “national human group” that was targeted by the military was persecuted because of its political and religious beliefs and ideologies. In so doing he also argues that the coup was organized on political and religious grounds.

126 In fact, this has not been the case. For example, in the presently on-going trial of a number of military officers who operated in the former clandestine torture centre “Unidad 9” (“Unit 9”) in La Plata, the principal judge stated that the crimes could not legally be charged as crimes of genocide because political groups do not legally qualify as victims of such crimes (D’Amico, 2010).
resignification of civil society’s role in the construction of a democratic Argentina. In other words, by taking on demands made by organismos de derechos humanos, his ruling contributes to a new (or alternative) understanding of the state’s responsibilities to those who mobilize rights claims within the larger context of Argentine political resistance. Subsequently, his ruling lends to the establishment of a “chain of equivalences” between these demands through which varying rights claims are redefined as obligations of the state. In this regard, his ruling has significant implications for the reproduction of the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic – for derechos humanos to be legitimized as “the coalescing symbol of a plurality of struggles” (“Hegemony & Socialism: An Interview with Chantal Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau”, 2007)

Within the context of the public remembrance of the dictatorship and of the disappeared, Rozanski’s analysis of how groups characterized by their political ideologies can be understood as a “national group” legitimizes the political choices made by those who were disappeared. Thus, similar to the way in which naming the crimes of the dictatorship as crimes against humanity repositions the disappeared as valuable members of society, so too does Rozanski’s ruling. More specifically, his ruling recognizes the lives of the disappeared not only as deserving of protection under international law, but also as lives that matter – lives that “count as lives” and that make “for a grieveable life” (Butler, 2004, p. 20). There is, however, an important distinction between crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide that further explains why organismos de derechos humanos continue to insist that the dictatorship be legally recognized

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127 As Laclau (1996) has stated “the presence of empty signifiers…is the very condition of hegemony” (p. 43). Thus, here, I am not claiming that Rozanski’s ruling has established a hegemonic relationship between the state and civil society because, as far as I understand this context, there is no empty signifier (defined as that which has acquired a universal function while still maintaining the specificities it is coming to signify) present. Rather, I am drawing from this theory to attempt to structure an understanding of the specific and broader implications of Rozanski’s use of the language of genocide and how his ruling contributes to the function of the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic.
and publicly remembered as a (political) genocide. As Rozanski noted in his ruling, Etchecolatz’s crimes could be understood as having occurred “within the context of a genocide” because his acts aimed to destroy a group within the Argentine nation in order to “‘alter [the] social relations’” of the nation itself (Feierstein & Levy, 2004, p. 88, cited by Judge Carlos Rozanski, cited in La Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre, 2007, p. 31, my translation). Naming the dictatorship a genocide thus implicates a national “we” as affected by the dictatorship. Demands for the crimes of the dictatorship to be indicted as crimes of genocide are then not only a concern for the verification of historical truth within the courts. They are also calls to come to understand how “our” way of being with each other has been altered because of and by the disappearance of 30,000 of “our” own and, subsequently, how “we” were when they were present and how “we” might make them part of our present again. Understood on these terms, identifying the dictatorship as a genocide responds to the loss of individuals and of an Argentine social imaginary. Thus, demands for the indictment of the perpetrators of the dictatorship as *genocidas* and public remembrance of the dictatorship as a genocide articulate a continual learning to live with loss.

### 4.2.3 Defining the Dictatorship as a Violation of Human Rights

Although not a common articulation in my conversations (in comparison to that of the dictatorship as a crime against humanity and as a crime of genocide) there were some who spoke of the crimes committed during the dictatorship as human rights violations. This particular articulation often occurred within the context of concerns for legal redress. For example:

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128 In my translation of both of these excerpts I have chosen not to use the term *derechos humanos* and thus translate Barbuto’s and De Wandelaer’s use of the term *derechos humanos* as human rights. This is because they are not referring here to that sense of expanded human rights that *derechos humanos* implies (e.g., they are not referring to social justice issues).
Valeria Barbuto: *El CELS trabaja para lograr justicia, verdad y memoria por las víctimas [de la dictadura]. Creyendo absolutamente que las víctimas de la dictadura fueron víctimas de graves violaciones a los derechos humanos y que el estado de entonces fue el culpable y que el estado de hoy tiene que dar respuesta a eso.*

(Valeria Barbuto: The CELS works to achieve justice, truth, and memory for the victims [of the dictatorship]. Believing that, absolutely, the victims of the dictatorship were victims of grave violations of human rights and that the then state was guilty [of perpetrating these violations] and that the current state has to give a response for this.) (Conversation, July 16, 2007, CELS, Buenos Aires)

Juan De Wandelaer: *Tenemos que hacer que sean juzgados los militares responsables de graves violaciones a los derechos humanos.*

(Juan De Wandelaer: We have to make sure that the military responsible for grave violations of human rights be tried.) (Conversation, July 13, 2007, SERPAJ, Buenos Aires)

The term ‘human rights violations’ refers to the violation of the rights established through the UDHR signed in 1948. As I explained in Chapter Two, in accordance with the International Covenants that were passed in 1966 the rights within the UDHR can be understood as rights pertaining to economic, social and cultural rights (e.g., the right to work and the right to education) and civil and political rights (e.g., the right to protection of the law against attacks and the right to take part in government). Similar to the legal definitions of crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide, the legal definition of human rights violations provides an avenue through which people can seek justice and protection under international law. Importantly, both crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide are in and of themselves violations of human rights, most notably because these crimes deny the right to life (Article 3 in the UDHR states that “everyone has a right to life, liberty, and security of person” (cited in Clapham, 2007, p. 183)).

However, what distinguishes a human rights violation from a crime against humanity and a crime of genocide is the “characteristic of the victims and of the act” (Feierstein, 2006). Whereas crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide are necessarily directed against an identifiable group, violations of human rights are not. Additionally, violations of human rights
are not defined by their intent to completely destroy or seriously harm a particular group. These distinctions may explain why articulations of the dictatorship as a crime against humanity and as a genocide were privileged over the identification of the crimes of the dictatorship as a human rights violation in my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos. Nonetheless, similar to the identification of the dictatorship as crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide, naming the dictatorship a violation of human rights recognizes the disappeared as victims, as citizens, and as persons whose lives and “deaths” demand “our” attention. This identification is thus important to the work of learning to live with loss.

4.3 The Presentness of the Pasts

Between July and October of 2007 Catholic Priest Christian Von Wernich’s trial for murder, illegal detention, and torture committed during the 1976-1983 dictatorship foregrounded many discussions within the human rights movement in Argentina. On July 5th, the first day of the trial, organismos de derechos humanos gathered outside of the courthouse in the city of La Plata denouncing Von Wernich as a “¡genocida!” and a ¡represor!” (“repressor!”). Within this context, what was particularly surprising to me was the equation of the term genocida and represor. In many of the conversations I had with members of organismos de derechos humanos, these two terms had also been used interchangeably when referring to those that committed crimes during the dictatorship. At the same time, the term represor was also used by those with whom I spoke, and generally within Argentine political resistance, to refer to those who continue to perpetrate state violence such as the police. Using the same “name” to identify the military who disappeared between 1976 and 1983 and to identify the police who murder
protestors and disappear witnesses in the current trials draws a particular link between the state violence of the past and the state violence of the present. Positioning the state violence of today as the same as the military state violence of 1976-1983 calls attention to the continuing presence of the violent apparatus of the dictatorship, in turn functioning as a demand for legal redress for both the crimes of the dictatorship and the crimes perpetrated by the police today – demands aimed at securing the end of this apparatus and thus the end of the continuing state violence.

However there are varying conceptualizations of how the dictatorial past can be seen in the present, which in some cases articulate a similar function and, in other cases, articulate different notions of how attending to the presentness of the past can serve the present. The discussion below outlines the ways in which the people with whom I spoke expressed a concern for the present-day socio-economic effects of the dictatorship as well as for the individual and emotional consequences of having had a family member disappeared. The excerpts highlighted below illustrate how the task of learning to live with loss involves attempts to honour the lives of the disappeared, to bring them forth into the present and, in some cases, to live with a pain and grief that cannot be remedied.

4.3.1 “Today’s Genocide”

Though the interchangeable use of the term represor and genocida might seem to imply that the represores of today are also genocidas, a look at the way in which present-day state violence is conceptualized as “el genocidio de hoy” (“today’s genocide”) troubles this assumption. The excerpts below illustrate how this conceptualization blurs and continuously shifts the boundaries between the similarities and differences of past and present state violence.

129 As I explained in Chapter Three, though Jorge Julio López is the only witness that was disappeared that remains disappeared, two other witnesses were kidnapped (or temporarily disappeared) in 2006 and in 2007 and threatened with death if they testified in the trials.
Careaga: Las consecuencias [de la dictadura], en la actualidad, son un país con más de la mitad de la población bajo línea de pobreza....Entonces, [yo] planteo que se ha llegado a niveles de miseria tan grandes en nuestra sociedad que se puede hablar del excluido del sistema, de alguna manera, como la reactualización de la figura de la desaparición. Como que fue necesario un genocidio para otro genocidio: el de exclusión por desigual distribución de la riqueza.

(Careaga: The consequences of [the dictatorship], in reality, are a country in which more than half of the population lives below the poverty line…. So, I also maintain that we have reached levels of poverty so big in our society that we can talk about those that are excluded from the system, in a way, as the reactualization of the figure of disappearance. As if one genocide was necessary for another genocide: one of exclusion by unequal distribution of wealth.) (Conversation, July 4, 2007)

Arturo Blatezky: Nosotros en el MEDH fuimos unos de los primeros en resaltar esto que en realidad el genocidio sigue. Cuando algunos empiezan a hablar del terrorismo de estado como genocidio, nosotros decíamos “sí, el genocidio es la massacre de los 30,000, pero sigue con los chicos pobres que mata la policía con el gatillo facil y los chicos que se mueren de desnutrición.

(Arturo Blatezky: In the MEDH we were one of the first to highlight this, that in reality, the genocide continues. When some people started talking about the state terrorism as a genocide, we said “yes, the genocide is the massacre of the 30,000, but it continues with the poor kids that get murdered by the “trigger-happy” police and with the kids that die of hunger”.) (Conversation, July 18, 2007, MEDH, Buenos Aires)

Enrique Fukman: En el organismo empezamos a intentar a planificar la violencia actual con el pasado. Hay una relación. El gatillo facil no esta separado del genocidio, porque es otro genocidio a los pobres...Hay gente que son desaparecidos por pobresa.

(Enrique Fukman: In the group we have started to try and trace the violence of the present in the past. There is a relationship. The “trigger-happy” is not separate from the genocide, because it is another genocide of the poor…There are people that are disappeared by poverty.) (Conversation, August 27, 2007, AEDD, Buenos Aires)

Within these three articulations of state violence today as a genocide, both economic violence and police violence is identified as genocidal violence. For example, Fukman and Blatezky express the notion that police violence is a means of the genocide of the poor (though Fukman does so more explicitly than Blatezky). In all three excerpts we see the conceptualization of

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130 “Trigger-happy” is the translation of *gatillo facil* – a term used to refer to the sense of freedom with which police use gun violence both in demonstrations and generally, though most often in poor neighbourhoods. This term thus makes reference to the impunity of present-day state violence – an impunity which is widely understood to be a consequence of the impunity that followed the military dictatorship.
present-day state violence (economic violence and police violence) as a genocide established on
the identification of the victim of that genocide – the poor. However, though Careaga and
Fukman identify the victims of today’s genocide as victims of disappearance, Blatezky implies
this through the understanding that “today’s genocide” is a “continuation” of the “genocide” of
the dictatorship. Of note here is the distinction between how the victims of “today’s genocide”
are named with respect to specific articulations of present-day state violence as a genocide. For
example, Careaga and Fukman speak of “today’s genocide” as “another genocide” (separate
from the dictatorship). This particular articulation serves to name “another” group of
disappeared persons – the poor. That said, Careaga’s statement that the poor can “in a way” be
understood as victims of disappearance also highlights the difference between the social
exclusion that results from present-day state violence and that which resulted from the violence
of the dictatorship. In contrast to Careaga and Fukman, Blatezky’s articulation of “today’s
genocide” as the “same genocide” that took place between 1976 and 1983 functions to name two
groups of victims of the same violence – the disappeared and the poor. Further, that Blatezky’s
notion of today’s genocide as the “same genocide” names two groups of victims of a perceived
continuing genocide and, in this regard, that all three articulations of today’s genocide identify
different mechanisms of social exclusion (enforced by the state), complicates both the notion that
“the past is the same as the present” and the understanding of how we come to articulate a
relationship between the past and present for the construction of a particular present and future.

The conceptualization of today’s genocide explained through the conversation excerpts
above situate the mass poverty and police violence (aimed at eradicating the poor) as “proof”
that the dictatorship ultimately aimed to impose particular economic policies and practices.
These understandings of today’s genocide legitimize the truth constructed by organismos de
derechos humanos about why the disappeared were disappeared and how certain people were
chosen by the military for disappearance. In this regard, identifying economic violence and police repression as the genocide of today might be understood as a matter of historical truth. Public remembrance of the dictatorship that aims to highlight this present-day violence as a genocide is thus significant to the task of learning to live with loss as it affirms the political identities of those who were disappeared. Further, naming the economic and police violence of today as a genocide commands the Argentine public’s attention because of the particular obligation for moral and legal redress that the term genocide evokes. Similar to the ways in which the term (political) genocide distinguishes the specificities of the dictatorship and its victims within Argentine history, speaking of poverty and police repression as the genocide of today and the poor as the victims of this genocide recognizes this current violence and its victims as distinct from the legacy of economic and police violence in Argentina. Thus, the mobilization of notions of today’s genocide through public remembrance of the dictatorship legitimizes demands made by rights groups who struggle against this violence and, subsequently, contributes to sustaining the discourse of derechos humanos as hegemonic – as a “coalescing symbol of a plurality of struggles” through demands that are made to have individual and collective suffering recognized as a political issue (“Hegemony & Socialism: An Interview with Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau”, 2007). Articulations of today’s genocide are thus also significant to the task of learning to live with loss because of how they bind “us” in a responsibility to attend to each other’s suffering – to acknowledge others’ suffering and the violence of which it is a consequence as a wrong for which “we” are responsible.

However, while identifying present-day state violence as a genocide has important political implications for contemporary demands for social justice and legal redress, as well as for learning to live with loss, this notion does not go unchallenged. In fact, Blatezky himself
explained that “some *organismos de derechos humanos*” are opposed to calling the economic and police violence of today a genocide because it “liquefies” memory\(^{131}\).

**Blatezky:** *Recuerdo bien que cuando nosotros empezábamos a hablar de esto [del genocidio que hoy continuá] algunos en los organismos de derechos humanos decían “no, no, no. Ustedes están licuando la memoria”. Y nosotros les decíamos, “no, porque hacer memoria es decir: este país de hoy, de la Argentina de Kirchner no es el país que querían los 30,000 desaparecidos. Eso para nosotros es hacer memoria. Hacer memoria de los proyectos y las luchas de ellos”.*

(Blatezky: I remember that when we started talking about this [about the genocide that today continues] some people in the *organismos de derechos humanos* said “no, no, no. You are liquefying memory”. And we said, “no, because doing memory is to say: this country today, Kirchner’s Argentina, is not the country that the 30,000 disappeared wanted. That for us is remembering. Remembering their projects and struggles.) (Conversation, July 18, 2007)

In a similar vein, although Valeria Barbuto of the *CELS* (Buenos Aires) does not explicitly argue against naming certain injustices of today a genocide, she does provide us with an example of how some people (within the *movimiento de derechos humanos*) express opposition to the conceptualization that the dictatorship “is the same as” the present.

**Barbuto:** *Las consecuencias más graves [de la dictadura] que tenemos hoy es la de un sistema económico de exclusión que, si bien es obviamente anterior a la dictadura, la dictadura profundiza... Lo que sí esta claro es que la dictadura profundizó, al menos, un sistema de exclusión con una cantidad de pobreza y marginación enorme. Pero si digo esto, porque es importante: no es lo mismo la dictadura que la democracia. Y no te puedo hablar en este sentido de continuidad, de que sea lo mismo. Incluso en la peor de las democracias hay cosas que podemos hacer que son buenas, cosas que no suceden en las dictaduras.*

(Barbuto: The most serious consequences of the dictatorship that we have today are related to the economic system of exclusion that, though it obviously existed before the dictatorship, the dictatorship deepens....What is clear is that the dictatorship at least deepened a system of exclusion resulting in an enormous amount of poverty and marginalization. But I will say this, because it is important: the dictatorship is not the same as democracy. And I cannot talk to you in that sense about a continuation, that it’s the same. Even in the worst democracies there are things we can do that are good, things that would not happen in a dictatorship.) (Conversation, July 16, 2007)

\(^{131}\) Blatezky did not identify which groups expressed these criticisms.
Importantly, these two excerpts highlight different issues with respect to the identification of present-day injustices as the genocide of today. First, Barbuto’s arguments tell us that it is necessary to note the differences between a dictatorial state and a democratic state because of what democracies afford citizens that dictatorships do not. Second, the critics that Blatezky mentions are concerned with how this articulation of current state violence might “liquefy” memory. As I understand these critics, this is a concern over how the notion of the genocide of today might dilute the substance of what the focus of remembrance should be (according to these critics) – the disappeared.

Drawing from scholars who have cautioned against using the term “Holocaust” as a privileged frame for describing all human suffering, we might understand the concern over the “liquefication” of memory as a concern over forgetting the disappeared. For example, Lentin (2002) and Huyssen (2003a&b) maintain that conflating all victims of “unspeakable catastrophes” as those subjected to a “Holocaust” enacts a forgetting of the Nazi attempt to annihilate the Jews of Europe. Perhaps the critics that Blatezky speaks about recognize that the identification of the poor and the disappeared as victims of the same “continuing genocide” might diminish the significance and horror of the violence of the dictatorship, potentially leading to a forgetting of this particular period of state violence. Additionally, we might understand such criticisms of the conceptualization of today’s genocide as a concern over how the act of naming the poor and the disappeared victims of the same mechanism of repression (disappearance) functions both to forget the disappeared and to delegitimize the pain of their friends and relatives. Thus, these critics take issue with the mobilization of the term today’s genocide because they worry that it erases the specificities of the dictatorship within Argentine history and decreases the urgency of the command to assume a moral and legal responsibility for these wrongs.
Following a similar line of thinking, we must also consider how the identification of both the dictatorship and present-day state violence as a genocide might function to forget the history of the Indigenous genocide in Argentina (and the rest of Latin America). Regarding the privileged role that the discourse of derechos humanos holds within political resistance in Argentina, when articulated through the language of genocide it might work to discount claims for rights made by Indigenous groups who ground such claims on the genocidal process of colonization that has led to the institutionalization of racism in Argentina. Similarly, I wonder how the use of the term “political genocide” functions to minimize the particular experience of Jews who were disappeared in the clandestine torture centres. By identifying the victims of the dictatorship solely by their political ideology and by diminishing the religious ideology underlying the dictatorship and, in turn, the anti-Semitism that characterized the military, the term “political genocide” forgets the “especially vicious treatment of Jewish prisoners” (Marchak, 1999, p. 14). In this regard, diminishing the anti-Semitism in the dictatorship also risks forgetting a history of anti-Semitism in Argentina – a forgetting that is particularly important within the context of recent acts of anti-Semitism such as the bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association building in Buenos Aires in 1994 and the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992.

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132 Though in my conversations no one spoke about this issue, an informal conversation I had in the city of Córdoba revealed that, “in the Northern rural provinces of Argentina [e.g., Salta, Jujuy, Tucumán] Indigenous communities speak about the dictatorship differently than they do in some of the centrally located provinces [e.g., Buenos Aires, Córdoba] – they do not speak of ‘the repression’ of the dictatorship but rather of the dictatorship as a moment within a legacy of state violence” (I cannot reveal the identity of the person who made this statement as they did not give me permission to do so).
4.3.2 The Presence (and Absence) of the Disappeared in the Struggle for Social Change Today

Drawing links between the similarities (and differences) of past and present state violence is not the only way in which the presentness of the past was articulated in my conversations. Members of both groups of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo spoke to me about the ways in which the disappeared themselves remain present – a distinct understanding of the presentness of the past that stems from a particular notion of their role as mothers. The Madres de Plaza de Mayo (both groups) are widely known for their assertion that their disappeared children “birthed” their struggle for social justice (Guzman Bouvard, 1994). As Guzman Bouvard (1994) explains, there is a particular historical context for this assertion that stems from anger at the military’s representation of their children as political dissidents and social deviants (more explicitly, as “terrorists”), from the realization that their children were disappeared because they were “involved in something” (that is, a struggle for social change), and from a concern for the socio-economic problems of the country (p. 176). She writes:

At first…attempts to smear the reputations of their children enraged the Mothers. Later, they concluded that the young people [the disappeared] must indeed have been involved in something – that…their children were political reformers who wished to create far-reaching social changes….This [conclusion] sensitized them to the economic problems in the country and would inspire them to become activists themselves. (p. 176-177)

By highlighting the influence their children have had on them (on their activism) and, in turn, the effects of disappearance on their present-day lives, the Madres maintain the memory of the disappeared continuously present. This is to be understood in two ways. First, the Madres explain their activism from their position as mothers and their maternal role in the family which they have “socialized” into a maternal role in the public sphere (Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Taylor, 1998). In this respect, some Madres have spoken of all of the children of Argentina who live in poverty as “their children” and have thus explained their responsibility for social change (and
their demands for derechos humanos) as a maternal responsibility. Second, the Madres claim that “their [disappeared] children [and all of the disappeared] live through them” (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 183). As I explained in Chapter One, this conceptualization of the disappeared as present has also been expressed by the President of the Asociación Madres, Hebe de Bonafini, who has stated that the disappeared are “alive”. Specifically the Asociación Madres’ refusal to name the disappeared dead is both a rejection of state attempts to evade its responsibility to determine who disappeared whom, when, where, and how, as well as a claim that the disappeared “live on” through present-day struggles for social justice. This understanding of the disappeared as “living on” through the youth who struggle for social justice today was also expressed in some of my conversations with members of both groups of Madres. For example, this is what Evel Petrini of Asociación Madres (Buenos Aires) meant when she told me that the disappeared are “más vivos que nunca” (“more alive than ever”).

Petrini: Las Madres no creemos en la muerte de nuestros hijos. Nuestros hijos no están muertos. Nuestros hijos están más vivos que nunca. Están en todos los que quieren luchar por la dignidad del hombre, como ellos.

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133 As a result of this particular understanding of maternity, there have been many scholarly debates about whether or not the Madres are feminists and whether or not the Madres have actually challenged traditional understandings of motherhood in Argentina. These debates are beyond the scope of this project. However, generally, on the one hand some have criticized the Madres for this stance on maternity arguing that “they have not altered the politics of the home, for example, the gendered divisions of labor” (Taylor, 1998, p. 192). On the other hand, others applaud this stance on motherhood arguing that they have “revolutionized motherhood”, subverting “the concept of motherhood as merely biological” by stepping “out of their roles as passive private persons” (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 176). Much has been written about this topic by other scholars as well such as Craske (1999) and Padilla (2006).

134 As I explained in Chapter One, members of H.I.J.O.S have noted that they too take up the principles and ideals that their parents struggled for, inserting the disappeared into the present in a way that is similar to the Madres (Guzman Bouvard, 1994; Taylor, 2003). Though the members of H.I.J.O.S with whom I spoke did not express this in our conversations, Taylor (2003) has written that H.I.J.O.S also articulate an understanding of their own activism as a continuation of their disappeared parents’ struggle. As I discuss in Chapter Five, however, in my conversations, members of H.I.J.O.S explained that they are influenced by their parents’ ideals but do not conceive of their own social and political activism as a continuation of their disappeared parents’ struggle for a “better Argentina”. That said, members of H.I.J.O.S did not speak to me about their parents “living through” them (or “living on” in other youth who participate in contemporary struggles for social justice).
(Petrini: Us Mothers don’t believe in the death of our children. Our children are not dead. Our children are more alive than ever. They are in all of those who want to fight for the dignity of man, like they did.) (Conversation, July 20, 2007)

Similarly, Nora Cortiñas of the Madres – Línea Fundadora also articulated the presence of the disappeared in contemporary struggles for social justice.

Cortiñas: Ahora que cumplimos los 30 años en la Plaza [de Mayo] tenemos homenajes todos los días. Los que nos agasajan a nosotros con esos homenajes lo hacen porque nuestros hijos e hijas dejaron sus huellas de militancia en la lucha de hoy por la justicia social. Pero nosotras vemos que cada día está más deteriorada la justicia social. Y cómo faltan los que faltan.

(Cortiñas: Now that we reached 30 years in the Plaza [de Mayo] we have people paying homage to us everyday. Those who shower us with attention when they pay homage to us do so because our children left traces of their militancia in today’s struggle for social justice. But we see that everyday social justice is more deteriorated. And the absence of those that are no longer with us is felt so strongly.) (Conversation, June 22, 2007)

Unlike Pettrini, Cortiñas does not ground her notion of the presence of the disappeared on a conceptualization of the disappeared as being “alive”. In fact, she notes the absence of the disappeared in her articulation of how they remain present. This is an absence that is quite distinct from claims that de Bonafini has made about how the “‘absence’” of her disappeared son motivated her to “‘shout for him’” – to make his demands for social justice for him (Guzman Bouvard, 1994, p. 179). Rather, Cortiñas emphasizes the present absence of the disappeared

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135 On April 30th 2007 the Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Línea Fundadora and the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo celebrated their 30th anniversary of their marches in the Plaza de Mayo.

136 This is an example of the ways in which people simultaneously hold different, and sometimes contradicting, notions of certain concepts such as (in this case) the presentness of the disappeared. Guzman Bouvard (1994) states that in 1986 de Bonafini made public statements about the disappeared being “alive” and about her refusal to speak of them as absent. Guzman Bouvard also notes that in the same year de Bonafini made statements that spoke about the absence of her son (i.e., that his “absence” motivated her to “shout for him”). Though Guzman Bouvard does not explain this contradiction she does provide information as to the context in which these statements were made – the former with respect to the exhumation of graves, the 1985 trial, and the division of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo into two groups, and the latter with respect to the military’s denials of disappearances. An understanding of the political context in which these statements were made speaks to the ways in which demands for derechos humanos are made in response to the shifting political terrain. Subsequently, de Bonafini’s seemingly contradictory
that exists both through contemporary struggles for social justice and the lack of social justice today (e.g., growing poverty and unemployment). Cortiñas’ comments thus serve as an example of the ways that (certain) conceptualizations of the presentness of the past function to articulate calls for social justice and express a sorrow that comes from experiencing loss. In the excerpt highlighted above, this is most evident through Cortiñas’ lament for the absence of social justice and the absence of the disappeared. This lament, which functions to weave the two absences as interrelated, serves to legitimize the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared, calls for memory, and calls for social justice – for inserting the disappeared into the present.

Despite the differences noted above, the unique way in which both groups of Madres articulate the disappeared as “living through” their present-day activism speaks to the problem of learning to live with loss as the task of coming to an understanding of how that loss has transformed one’s present. For the Madres the loss of their individual children (and all of the disappeared) has redefined their notion of their maternal roles as that of activist mothers. Through this redefined role the Madres have also come to a new understanding of who their children are and, thus, to whom they are accountable as mothers. The loss of their individual children has thus motivated, or, “birthed” their struggle for social justice – a struggle that is focused not only on attending to the current economic violence and on keeping the memory of their disappeared children alive, but also one that is concerned with honouring the 30,000 who committed themselves to a particular political project for the Argentine nation. Considering the discussion in Chapter One regarding the work of mourning, in this analysis I am not suggesting
that the Madres have therefore successfully mourned because they have been able to form new attachments. Rather, the Madres’ distinct articulation of the ways in which the disappeared remain present in their lives is significant to us because it illuminates an understanding of how learning to live with loss involves “working through” a collective and an individual loss and thus an acknowledgement of the way that loss has redefined the frames through which one understands her or his present.

4.3.3 The Lived and Felt Consequences of Disappearance

Marcela Gudiño: Hace unos pocos días estaba hablando con mi mama acerca de Jorge [el hermano desaparecido de Marcela] y me dice, “a veces, cuando veo un indigente en la calle, lo miro por un rato par ver si es Jorge. Es como que tengo una fantasía que por ahí se enloqueció. Que esta vivo pero no sabe quien es. Que esta viviendo en la calle. “Y yo le dije, “mami, Jorge está muerto”. Y yo se que sabe que Jorge está muerto. Pero sin embargo lo sigue buscando

(Marcela Gudiño: A few days ago I was speaking with my mother about Jorge [Marcela’s disappeared brother] and she says to me, “sometimes when I see a homeless person on the street, I look at him for a while to see if it’s Jorge. It’s like I have a fantasy that maybe he went crazy. Maybe he is alive but he doesn’t know who he is. That he is living on the street.” And I said to her, “Mom, Jorge is dead”. I know that she knows that Jorge is dead. But despite this, she keeps searching for him.) (Conversation, July 12, 1007, Herman@s, Buenos Aires)

Through the story of how her mother has been affected by the disappearance of her son, Gudiño tells us of the ways in which the traces of the dictatorship will forever and inevitably remain present (at least for some). More explicitly than the conversations on which I have thus far focused, the story of Gudiño’s mother speaks of the pain that marks the lives of those who have a disappeared relative. Though some individuals such as Hebe de Bonafini maintain that exhuming graves and verifying death is not a priority, and though the remains of some disappeared persons have been found and the circumstances of their deaths verified, the majority of relatives of disappeared persons will likely never know what happened to their loved ones.
While neither Gudiño nor her mother state directly that this creates a sense of the past as present, I read Gudiño’s mother’s story as an articulation of the ways in which the consequences of disappearance exist today, always foregrounding the past (a particular past) in the present. These consequences are quite different than those expressed by articulations that highlight the presentness of the past through current socio-economic inequities and/or police violence. Here what remains present is the way in which disappearance imprints itself on the everyday lives of those in the present.

For Gudiño’s mother, this imprint – this mark – manifests itself in the ways in which she searches certain faces on the street, still hoping to find her son despite knowing that he is dead. This is also the case for Malena Tytelman who, in her 2002 monologue performance of “Cuando Ves Pasar el Tren” (“When You See the Train Pass By”), explains how the experience of living knowing that one has a sibling that was appropriated by the military and is now living somewhere, under some name, evokes a constant “looking” for evidence of their existence.

¿Viste cuando estás parado en el andén, y ves pasar el tren? Si mirás un poco, de repente pasa delante tuyo una catarata de caras. El tren se termina de golpe...y de todas las caras que viste hay un par que te quedan grabadas. Grabadas en detalle, por lo menos po un rato, porque éas son las caras a las que les encontraste algo...Yo no iba buscando, pero miraba....En un momento, de tanto mirar, entre ese mar de caras, ves a alguien que se acomoda un mechón de pelo detrás de la oreja. Pelo lacio y oscuro. Como el mió. Me pasaba de estación. Me olvidaba de bajarme mirando una oreja.

You know when you’re standing on the platform, and you see the train pass by? If you look for a while, all of a sudden you see a waterfall of faces pass in front of you. The train stops suddenly...and out of all of the faces that you saw there are a few that stay etched in your mind. Etched in detail, at least for a while, because these are the faces in which you found something...I wasn’t searching, but I was looking....When you’re sitting on the train, in a moment, from so much looking, in that sea of faces you see someone who brushes a lock of their hair behind their ear. Straight dark hair. Like mine. I would miss my station. I would forget to get off.

137 Her monologue was performed within the context of Teatro por la Identidad (Theatre for Identity) which, as I explained in Chapter one, is a series of plays organized by the Abuelas and local actors.
because I was looking at an ear. (Tytelman, 2002, cited in Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, 2005, p. 328)

Hugo Argenosa, who is also searching for a “missing child” (his disappeared sister’s son) explained that he is marked by the pain of not knowing whether he is searching for a person that is alive or dead – the pain of not knowing whether he will ever meet his nephew or be able to bury his remains. In one of the current trials Argenosa provided testimony about the disappearance of his pregnant sister in which he stated the following: “Yo quiero que esté con vida...aunque a veces, como han hecho tantas atrocidades estas bestias, a veces pienso que está muerto....Es horrible esta situación, es un dolor que va tomando todo el cuerpo, como una enfermedad terminal que nunca se está pudiendo superar” (“I want him to be alive...though sometimes, considering the atrocities that these monsters committed, sometimes I think that he is dead....This situation is horrible, it’s a pain that takes over your whole body, like a terminal illness that can never be overcome”) (cited in Dandan, 2010). The experiences recounted by Gudiño’s mother, Tytelman, and Angerosa thus serve to remind us of the different ways in which the past – specifically, disappearance – is lived and felt in the present by those who have a disappeared relative and, in the case of Tytelman and Angerosa, those who have a missing family member as a consequence of that disappearance. Ultimately, these experiences remind us that the task of learning to live with loss involves the work of coming to live with a pain that cannot be healed.

4.4 Situating the Truth and the Presentness of the Past in the Work of Coming to Live with Loss

Discussions about the terms on which the crimes of the dictatorship should be understood, tried, and punished are indeed a demand for the state to recover its democratic promise to civil society to punish unlawful acts. The recovery of the social contract between the state and civil
society as such is understood as necessary for the reconstruction of democracy and for ending a continuing culture of impunity that today manifests in police repression. In this regard, the legal discourse mobilized through demands that structure the rule of law as necessary for the repair of the democratic state, functions to acknowledge the disappeared (and their relatives) as citizens deserving of recognition as victims with rights (to access legal institutions, to protection from the state, and to redress for the harm done to them). Discussions about the terms on which the crimes of the dictatorship should be tried and punished are then calls to give deference to the disappeared (and their relatives) – to recognize their lives and “deaths” as significant – denied to them by the military. Similarly, demands for legal redress that serve as demands to legitimize the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared also express a call to remember the disappeared for who they “truly” were – militantes participating in a political project to construct a “better Argentina”. Equally, demands to have socio-economic injustices and police repression affirmed as the consequences of the dictatorship function both to attend to contemporary state violence and to the victims of that violence as well as to grapple with the ruptures initiated by the absence (the present absence) of the disappeared. In this regard, demands for legal redress and claims about the presentness of the past speak to the loss of a “we” defined by its political will to construct an equitable Argentina. However, as we have seen in the previous section of this chapter, this rupture is not only visible within the Argentine social landscape but also within the individual lives of those who have to live with the loss of a disappeared relative. Thus demands made for truth and for legal redress, as well as claims made about the presentness of the past, also speak to the problem of learning to live with the loss of individuals.

Importantly, my intent is not to suggest that loss is disingenuously instrumentalized within demands for justice for past and present violence and within calls for a recognition of the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared. I am not claiming, nor do I mean to imply that
concerns expressed by members of organismos de derechos humanos regarding contemporary social injustices are a cynical form of political discourse. Rather, in this work I am attempting to explore the ways in which the past (particular violent pasts) is understood as significant to the present and the ways in which the “dead” (the disappeared) are understood to matter to the lives of those today. As I detail in Chapter Five, the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared and different notions of how the past remains present informs certain conceptualizations of how public remembrance should engage people in a particular political project and in the work of working through loss. Through an analysis of the distinct ways in which people articulate the aims of remembrance and how public remembrance should be structured, I draw a map of how people express their investment in telling the truth (and concerns for having the truth re-told) and in establishing derechos humanos in Argentina as a continual learning to live with loss. In Chapter Five I draw from my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos to examine how these distinct articulations speak to each other and thus further an understanding of public remembrance as the simultaneously political and affective work of learning to live with loss. Though I mostly draw from these conversations, in the last two sections of the chapter I also examine how particular practices of remembrance that emphasize the importance of place to memory, contribute to these understandings as well.
Chapter 5:
PUBLIC REMEMBRANCE OF THE DICTATORSHIP:
ACCOUNTING FOR DERECHOS HUMANOS AND THE SPECIFICITIES OF LEARNING TO LIVE WITH LOSS

5.1 “Nunca Más”: Structuring Remembrance as a Process of Inheritance

Over and over again, actors who struggle to define and name what took place during the periods of war, political violence, or state terrorism, as well as those who seek to honor the victims and identify the perpetrators, interpret their actions as necessary steps to make certain that the horrors of the past do not recur – “Nunca Más” (‘Never Again’) (Jelin, 2003, p. 3).

As the focus of this chapter is to unravel the diverse aims of remembrance of the dictatorship articulated in my conversations, I begin this chapter with this quote because it references one of the most commonly stated purposes for public remembrance of violence – to protect the present and future from its reoccurrence. The cry “¡Nunca Más!” (“Never Again!”) is made in the name of those no longer with us and of those yet to come. It is simultaneously a cry of lament for individuals lost and a cry of resistance against forgetting and, consequently, against a repetition of violence that will produce more victims and more loss. Over the years organismos de derechos humanos in Argentina have, at different moments, grounded their calls to remember on the notion that remembrance of past violence will assure that it is never again repeated. In particular, in the Southern Cone of Latin America, the association between remembering dictatorial violence and assuring that it does not occur again in the future “is very strongly established” (Jelin, 2003, p. 3). In Argentina the phrase “nunca más” (“never again”) has gained iconic status in large part because of the 1984 CONADEP report titled Nunca Más, which

138 In part, this association has been established through investigative reports similar to that of the Nunca Más in other Southern Cone countries such as “Brasil: Nunca Más” (1985) and “Uruguay Nunca Más” (1989).
rooted a connection between truth-telling and guaranteeing that the events to which this truth referred would never happen again\textsuperscript{139}. Both within the Argentine context and within a larger, global context, this connection is founded on an assumption that if “we” (namely, younger generations) know about the violent past it will never again be repeated.

The urge to remember the dictatorship so that authoritarian violence will never happen again was also expressed in some of the conversations I had with members of \textit{organismos de derechos humanos}. The following excerpts are examples of the ways in which the goal of assuring that dictatorial violence is not repeated is expressed as a generational concern, structuring remembrance of the dictatorship as the practice of teaching younger generations about the truth of what occurred during this period (i.e., that people were disappeared by the military state) and of why the disappeared were disappeared. All three examples reference the classroom setting as an important place for this kind of educational memory work.

\textbf{Alba Rosa Lanzilotto:} \textit{El pasado nos enseña, ayuda a que no se repitan las pesadillas en el presente. Si nosotros lo recordamos, no se va a volver a cometer…. Y por eso vamos sembrando la memoria en las nuevas generaciones, dando charlas en las escuelas y contándoles la memoria de la verdad.}  

(Alba Rosa Lanzilotto: The past teaches us, it helps to assure that the horrors of the past are not repeated in the present. If we remember them, they will not be repeated again…. And, so we plant the seeds of memory in the new generations, giving talks at schools and telling them the memory of the truth.) (Conversation, July 23, 2007, \textit{Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo}, Buenos Aires)

\textbf{Jorgelina Azzari de Pereyra:} \textit{El objetivo de la memoria es el no olvidar. Tenerlo siempre presente para no permitir que nunca más pueda suceder esto. Y la manera que no va a pasar es teniendo la memoria siempre…. En tonces nosotros trabajamos con las escuelas... Es necesario, estas charlas que se dan en las escuelas, para que los chicos sepan la verdad. Por que es la única manera que no se va a permitir que pase otra vez.}

\textsuperscript{139} The truth-telling to which I am referring here is primarily that of factual information about how many persons were disappeared, that people were detained and tortured in clandestine torture centres and, generally, that this kind of state repression occurred.
Jorgelina Azzari de Pereyra: The objective of memory is to not forget. Always have it present so that it won’t be repeated. And the only way its not going to happen is by always remembering….So we work with schools…It is necessary, these talks we give in the schools, for the kids to know the truth. Because it’s the only way that it won’t be repeated.) (Conversation, August 24, 2007, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, La Plata)

Sonia Torres: Si yo te tendría que hablar de los últimos 30 años de la vida de las Abuelas y de las Madres, tendría que decir que hicimos de la memoria una práctica cotidiana….Y una forma de hacerla fue frecuentando los colegios primarios y secundarios y transmitirles lo que pasó en esos años, para que nunca más se vuelva a repetir.

(Sonia Torres: If I had to talk to you about the last 30 years of the life of the Abuelas and of the Madres, I would have to say that we integrated memory into every day life…And one way in which we did that was by visiting elementary and secondary schools to transmit what happened during those years, so that it would never again be repeated.) (Conversation, July 19, 2007, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Córdoba)

Within the context of our understanding of present-day state violence in Argentina and the particularities of living with loss in this context, these urges to remember the dictatorship in order to guarantee that authoritarian violence and disappearances do not happen again may be read as no different than the simple act of filling out a quick-fix prescription. Indeed, calls to remember historical violence so that it is not repeated have been made time and time again, yet wars, genocides, state terrorism, and political violence continue. However, I have chosen to highlight these excerpts in the introduction of this chapter because they tell us more than merely that we have to know the past and that we have to protect the present from its repetition. In addition, these excerpts illuminate remembrance as a process of inheritance in which what is passed down is both knowledge and responsibilities. These excerpts thus frame the following analysis of the distinct ways that public remembrance of the dictatorship articulates a continual learning to live with loss as a call to action – a call made to a particular Argentine public to bind in a commitment to learn about the truth of why the disappeared were disappeared, to grieve their loss, and to work to establish derechos humanos in Argentina. As the discussion in this
chapter illustrates, public remembrance is thus a call for a public formation made in the name of the disappeared and in the name of the victims of contemporary socio-economic violence.

5.2 Recovering the Struggle of the Disappeared for Social Justice, Giving Deference to Their Lives

As I have explained in previous chapters, calls to remember the dictatorship that articulate demands for derechos humanos are often structured as a call to civil society to commit to carry on the work for social justice for which the disappeared were disappeared. In my conversations with members of organismos de derechos humanos, the aim of remembrance of the dictatorship to recover the struggle of the disappeared was often expressed as a need to “rescatar la lucha de los desaparecidos” or “reivindicar la lucha de los desaparecidos”\(^{140}\). Considering the truth about who the disappeared were – a group of people engaged in a struggle for a “better Argentina” – calls for memory that aim to recover the struggle of the disappeared should also be read as calls for social justice. Within the context of the discourse of derechos humanos, it is economic violence and economic and social rights that are highlighted within the call to recover the struggle of the disappeared. The following excerpts provide examples of the ways in which the aim of public remembrance as such is often articulated.

Evel Petrini: Nosotras participamos en… todas las marchas que tienen que ver con las injusticias sociales. Las Madres queremos que los jóvenes tengan una política solidaria, una política que sea para el otro, no para uno… Estamos trabajando por reformar, por dar cabida a ese cambio que los chicos[los desaparecidos] querían. Por eso sacaron 30,000 que pensaban, que educaban, que fomentaban….La lucha nuestra es la lucha de nuestros hijos – es recuperar la lucha de nuestros hijos.

(Evel Petrini: We participate in…all of the marches that have to do with social injustices. Us Madres want young people to have a politics of solidarity, a politics that is for the other, not for one’s self… We are working for change, to facilitate that change that the kids [the disappeared] wanted. That’s why they took 30,000 who thought, who taught, who fomented….Our struggle is the struggle of our own children.)

\(^{140}\) Rescatar and reivindicar are synonyms meaning to recover or rescue.
children – it's recuperating the struggle of our children.) (Conversation, July 20, 2007, Asociación Madres, Buenos Aires)

Nora Cortiñas: Hacer la memoria es estar en lo mismo que estarían nuestros hijos. La gente que sale a la calle, los piqueteros, estamos en todo eso. Hacemos memoria todos los días...cuando tomamos las banderas de nuestros hijos, nuestras hijas, y marchamos con los Aborígenes que salen a reclamar sus tierras. Las Madres estamos también en la recuperación de espacios para la vivienda...apoyando las fábricas que fueron tomadas por sus trabajadores cuando los dueños las abandonaron.

(G Nora Cortiñas: Remembering is being involved in the same things that our children would be involved in. The people who take to the streets, the piqueteros, we are involved in all of that. We do memory work every day...when we take up our sons’ and daughters’ banners and march with the Aboriginals who are reclaiming their land. The Madres are also involved in the recuperation of spaces for affordable housing...supporting the factories that were taken over by their workers when their owners abandoned them.) (Conversation, June 22, 2007, Madres-Linea Fundadora, Buenos Aires)

Gustavo Tissera: Nosotros buscamos un mundo mejor, un mundo para todos. Nuestros compañeros lucharon por eso. Entonces la memoria es la reivindicación de la lucha. Por ejemplo, nosotros participamos en las demostraciones cuando el Gobernador actual...pretendió privatizar las empresas estatales...Es decir, tenemos que ver que derechos humanos no es simplemente repudiar la tortura en los años '70s. Derechos humanos es la explotación del hombre....Entonces colaboramos con los movimientos campesinos, participamos cuando hay problemas sindicales. Todo eso forma parte de derechos humanos. No hay una separación, porque ellos lucharon por eso.

(G Gustavo Tissera: We are working towards a better world, a world for everyone. Our compañeros fought for that. So memory is the recovery of the struggle. For example, we participated in the demonstrations when the current Governor...tried to privatize the state run factories...So, we have to see human rights not simply as repudiating the torture that occurred in the '70s. Derechos humanos is the exploitation of man....So we collaborate with the campesino movements141, we participate when there are union problems. All of that is part of derechos humanos. There is no separation because they fought for that.) (Conversation, July 19, 2007, Familiares, Córdoba)

These examples articulate a unique definition of remembrance of the disappeared that identifies public remembrance not as a contained practice of remembering that is marked out by public rituals of remembrance, but rather as participation in demonstrations organized in demand

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141 Generally, the campesino movement is constituted by poor, smallholder farmers in rural areas of the country.
for (some) of the same rights for which the disappeared struggled to defend\textsuperscript{142}. As Petrini, Cortiñas, and Tissera explained, part of the work of public remembrance of the dictatorship is participating in events that are organized by other rights groups. For example, this was the case at the June 26\textsuperscript{th} (2007) march in remembrance of and demands for justice for Darío Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki organized by the \textit{piquetero} movement in Buenos Aires and attended by members of \textit{Madres-Línea Fundadora} and \textit{H.I.J.O.S}\textsuperscript{143}. Within this context, Petrini’s understanding of the aim of public remembrance of the disappeared as that of recovering their struggle illuminates a particularly distinct definition of memory that purposefully differentiates between memory as remembering and memory as action. Petrini explains it as such:

\textbf{Petrini:} \textit{Las Madres no nos hemos quedado en el recuerdo. Para nosotros la memoria es una memoria fértil, una memoria de acción, una memoria del hacer. Pensamos que ni los museos, ni los monumentos póstumos, ni las placas recordatorias son reivindicación de la lucha de nuestros hijos.}

\textit{(Petrini: Us Madres have not stayed in that which is remembrance. For us, memory is a fertile memory, a memory of action, a memory of doing. We think that neither museums, nor posthumous monuments, nor plaques in remembrance can recover the struggle of our children. (Conversation, July 20, 2007)}

Whether articulated as a memory of action or not, these three examples of the varied ways in which public remembrance of the dictatorship is defined as engaging in a struggle for social justice in which the disappeared were involved structure remembrance as a call to action. This action can generally be defined as a commitment to \textit{militancia} – to participate in political protests and non-profit volunteer work. More specifically, this action might be understood as

\textsuperscript{142} These excerpts recall similar ideas to those highlighted in Chapter Four through an account of my conversations with Evel Petrini and Nora Cortiñas as well as those who spoke to me about “today’s genocide”. However, where the focus in Chapter Four was to understand how these members of \textit{organismos de derechos humanos} articulated a notion of the presentness of the past, the excerpts highlighted in this section of this chapter explain how the aim of remembrance as that of “recovering” the struggle of the disappeared is often mobilized. The discussion in Chapter Four thus served to contextualize this aim in a particular understanding of how the dictatorial past has affected the present and why this specific aim of remembrance is thus considered important.

\textsuperscript{143} Recall that Santillán and Kosteki were two \textit{piqueteros} (unemployed workers) murdered by the police during a \textit{piquete} (a road block) in 2002 (which occurred within the context of the “economic crisis” in Argentina).
assuming the disappeared’s ideals, principles, and commitment to secure social justice as one’s own. Public remembrance of the disappeared is thus presented as inherently producing an “expanded” notion of human rights – that is, producing a conceptualization of derechos humanos. Within this understanding, Tissera’s explicitly articulated concern to recognize derechos humanos as not only having to do with the violence of the dictatorship but also with the economic violence of today can be read as a concern about the way in which human rights is generally understood within a national (and international) context. Specific to the case of Argentina, Tissera’s call for an expanded understanding of human rights – derechos humanos – thus implies that there is a limited understanding of what constitutes human rights in Argentina that emphasizes authoritarian violence, kidnapping, illegal detention, torture and disappearance as the definition human rights violations. In calling for derechos humanos which asks that people attend to the economic violence of today (and the victims of that violence) and, consequently, in identifying the limits of the current definition and practice of human rights, the excerpt from my conversation with Tissera underscores the function of remembrance of the dictatorship as the formation of a public committed to transforming present-day injustices (rather than one concerned only with historical injustices).

Identifying the limits of derechos humanos as such was also expressed in my conversations as a criticism of (the then current) Néstor Kirchner’s government and its stated commitment to human rights, as well as a criticism of the notion that knowing about the past will inherently guarantee that it will never again be repeated.

Sara Pastorino: Está Kirchner en el gobierno que, aunque no sea de derecha derecha, por lo menos esta haciendo algo por la justicia. Pero no esta haciendo nada por la justicia social. Solamente meter esos tipos en cana no es suficiente. Los derechos humanos no solo tiene que ver con el pasado pero con los derechos que se violan hoy también.

(Sara Pastorino: Right now Kirchner is in the government [and]... although he is not from the left left, at least he is doing something for justice. But he is not doing anything for social
justice. Solely putting those guys in jail is not enough. Human rights has to do not only with the past but with the rights that are violated today also.) (Conversation, August, 27, 2007, Vecinos de San Cristobal Contra la Impunidad, Buenos Aires)

Ana María Careaga: En todas...[las Areas del IEM] trabajamos con este concepto de que la dictadura fue implementada no como un fin en sí mismo sino con la tarea de garantizar la posibilidad de implementar un modelo económico que responde a los intereses de los poderosos en desmedro de la mayoría de la población de este país. Entonces nosotros planteamos que cuando se habla de los derechos humanos...hay que hablarno solamente delos delitos de lesa humanidad, sino también de los derechos que se vulneran permanentemente que tienen que ver con el acceso – la imposibilidad de acceso a la salud, a una vivienda digna, a la educación....Si el concepto de memoria es un concepto que solo está vinculado al pasado y no lo vínculo al presente, no es garantía de nada. Si el concepto de memoria es recordar porque eso que pasó es lo que hizo posible que hoy pase esto, entonces es para que nunca más eso y esto. Es una consecuencia directa.

(Ana María Careaga: In all...[of the Sectors of the IEM we work] with this notion that the dictatorship was implemented, not as an end in itself, but rather with the intent to guarantee the possibility of implementing an economic model that responds to the interests of the powerful that results in the decline of the majority of the population of this country. So we maintain that when one talks about derechos humanos...one has to talk about those not only related to the crimes against humanity, but also those that are violated permanently that have to do with access – the impossibility of accessing health care, dignified housing, and education....If the notion of memory is a concept that is only related to the past and not related to the present, it doesn’t guarantee anything. If the concept of memory is to remember that because that which happened is what made possible that which is happening today, then its for never again this and that. It has a direct consequence.) (Conversation, July 4, 2007, IEM, Buenos Aires)

Though the call for an expanded notion of human rights is here articulated as a criticism of the (Kirchner) “gobierno de derechos humanos” (“government of human rights”) and as a need to draw a causal relationship between the dictatorship and present state violence so as to make the cry for never again functional, read within the context of Petrini’s, Cortiñas’, and Tissera’s comments, it also articulates an attempt to learn to live with loss. Petrini, Cortiñas, and Tissera explain that they engage in a political project for social justice because that is what the disappeared did. To recover the struggle of the disappeared is, in this sense, to recover the memory of the disappeared as militantes and therefore to reject their construction as “terrorists” and “guerrillas” – a construction that continues to circulate within the larger context of Argentine civil society. The function of public remembrance of the dictatorship to “work towards a better
world” thus expresses both a concern and demand to attend to present-day state violence and to honour the disappeared. Present in this concern is a call to form a public grounded not only in a commitment to social justice but also in a commitment to secure the continuation of the remembrance of the dictatorship and the disappeared.

5.2.1 Remembrance of the Dictatorship as Self-Transformational

Within the context of the larger aim of public remembrance to recover the struggle of the disappeared for social justice was the understanding of the function of public remembrance of the dictatorship to evoke a transformation of self. In the following examples where a self-transformation is directly expressed as a goal of public remembrance, what it means for one to undergo such a change and how such change may occur is articulated differently. Importantly, the differences indicated here help to more explicitly define the notion of self-transformation.

Agustín Cetrángolo: No se entiende el plan sistemático de exterminio si no comprendemos a quien se exterminó y por qué se estaba exterminando... Entonces cuando vamos a las escuelas a hablar con los chicos señalamos las consecuencias que tuvo el terrorismo de estado para rescatar el proyecto de país por el que lucharon los compañeros desaparecidos. Digo, uno tiene que poder marcar las consecuencias que tuvo la dictadura hoy en día para cualquier persona. Entonces tratamos de relacionar las consecuencias que tuvo en cada chico....Si yo quiero hacer un recorrido con vos de memoria, te tengo que marcar que vos te tuviste que ir del país a los siete años porque tus viejos no encontraban trabajo y que eso es consecuencia de la dictadura. Bueno, desde ahí, desde el entender que[la dictadura] ha sido parte de tú formación vos empiezas a hacer preguntas. Vas a pasar por una experiencia que te va a hacer interrogar a vos misma y te va a cambiar. Nosotros queremos que los chicos se vayan motivados para trabajar a cambiar nuestra sociedad.

(Agustín Cetrángolo: You cannot understand the systematic economic plan without understanding who was exterminated and why there was extermination.... So, when we go to schools to talk with the kids we highlight the consequences that the state terrorism had in order to rescue the project for this country for which the compañeros who were disappeared struggled. I mean, one has to be able to mark the consequences that the dictatorship has today for any person. So we try to relate the consequences that it had for every kid....If I want to go through a journey of remembrance with you, I have to mark for you that you had to leave the country at seven years old because your parents could not find work and that that is a

144 In all of these excerpts the transformation is not intended for those with whom I spoke as the rememberers, but for another who has yet to remember.
consequence of the dictatorship. Well, from there, from the understanding that [the dictatorship] has been a part of your formation, you start asking questions. You are going to go through an experience that is going to make you interrogate yourself and its going to change you. We want the kids to leave motivated to change our society.) (Conversation, July 13, 2007, H.I.J.O.S, Buenos Aires)

Alicia Herbón: Cuando vamos a las escuelas lo que tratamos de hacerles entender [a los estudiantes] es que lo que hizo la dictadura fue una cosa terrible, pero que hay que hablar también de los derechos de ahora. Los chicos que no comen, los chicos que no pueden ir a la escuela...que los derechos humanos son todos [los derechos]. Entonces nosotros pensamos que la memoria sirve para... apuntar hacia la integralidad de los derechos humanos. El pasado tiene que servir para iluminar el presente y el futuro. Nuestra esperanza es que desde ahí [los estudiantes] van a ser cambiados, motivados a recuperar el proyecto de país por el cual[los desaparecidos] fueron desaparecidos.

(Alicia Herbón: When we go to the schools what we try to make them [the students] understand is that what the dictatorship did was something terrible, but we have to speak also of the rights of today. The kids who don’t eat, the kids who can’t go to school...that human rights are all [of the rights]. So we think that memory should serve to highlight the interrelationship between human rights. The past has to serve to illuminate the present and the future. Our hope is that from this they [the students] will be motivated to recover the project for the country for which they [the disappeared] were disappeared.) (Conversation, July 16, 2007, APDH, Buenos Aires)

Alba Pereyra Lanzilotto: Referente a nuestro trabajo con los chicos [en las escuelas], nosotras empezamos con el presente. Entonces cuando llegamos a la época de la dictadura se hace claro como el presente demuestra las consecuencias de esa época. Por ejemplo empezamos con una fotografía de los piqueteros. “¿Qué pasa con los piqueteros?” Y decimos, “bueno, son personas que no tienen trabajo, que cortan las rutas”. Entonces ahí empieza la discusión. “¿Cortan las rutas y no dejan la libre circulación que es un derecho?” “Y pero, también el trabajo es un derecho”, “¿Y por qué no tienen trabajo?” “Porque cerraron las fábricas”. “¿Y, por qué cerraron las fábricas?” “Los cierres de fábricas empezaron durante la dictadura”. Entonces desde el presente vamos caminando hacia atrás....Cuando se toma la historia desde el ’76 se toma, sí la aparición de los organismos de derechos humanos que reclaman por la vida de sus familiares. ¿Pero por qué? Porque sus familiares desaparecen porque eran personas que tenían formada su ideología en función de un proyecto político, y lo que hay que rescatar es ese proyecto político. Y esto es lo que tratamos de provocar en los chicos. Estas reflexiones sobre si mismos y sus vidas hoy en relación al pasado provoca un cambio que los deja llegar a ese proyecto político.

(Alba Pereyra Lanzilotto: With reference to our work with the kids [in the schools], we start with the present. So when we get to the period of the dictatorship it becomes clear how the present illustrates the consequences of that period. For example, we start with a photograph of the piqueteros, and they ask “what happened with the piqueteros?”. And we say, “well, they are people who don’t have work, and they put up roadblocks.” So the conversation starts from there. “They put up roadblocks and they cut the right to circulation?” “Yes, well, work is also a right”. “And why don’t they have work?” “Because they closed the factories”. “And why did they close the factories?” “Factory shutdowns began during the dictatorship.”
So from the present we move backwards.... When we start narrating history from ’76, yes we start with the appearance of the organismos de derechos humanos that made demands in defense of their relatives’ lives. But why? Because their relatives were disappeared because they were people that had a well formulated ideology in function of a political project, and what needs to be rescued is that political project. And this is what we try to provoke in the kids. These self-reflections about their life today in relation to the past provokes a change that allows them to get to this political project.) (Conversation, July 4, 2007, IEM, Buenos Aires)

Similar to previously discussed conceptualizations of the presentness of the past, these three excerpts emphasize that what is to be learned through remembrance of the dictatorship is the socio-economic consequences of this particular period of violence in the present and how these consequences are lived by individuals today. Echoing Tissera, Careaga and Pastorino, Pereyra Lanzilotto’s and Herbón’s understanding of how the past can evoke a change within a person that will motivate her or him to participate in the struggle for social change is situated within a call for an “expanded” notion of human rights. This call is then also a call to honour the disappeared. Similarly, the notion of public remembrance of the dictatorship as the practice of engaging in a political project for social change that was articulated by Cetrángolo, Herbón, and Pereyra Lanzilotto illustrates how the work to secure social justice in Argentina articulates a version of the work of learning to live with loss that involves an acknowledgement of how the past has transformed one’s present. However, the definition of the self-transformation that remembrance evokes is expressed differently in these three excerpts. For example, unlike Herbón and Pereyra Lanzilotto, Cetrángolo identifies a notion of this self-transformation as the recognition of one’s self as a victim of the current socio-economic violence that has resulted from the dictatorship. The end goal of this process is to come to understand one’s self as a victim of the dictatorship and thus be motivated to struggle for social change today. For Pereyra Lanzilotto and Herbón a self-transformation occurs when a person is motivated to struggle for social change because of a newly developed understanding of contemporary socio-economic violence as an issue of derechos humanos and, thus, of the poor as victims of such violence.
Despite these differences, however, these excerpts serve as examples of the ways in which public remembrance structures a process of teaching and learning that aims for the learner to identify with others’ suffering in order to be able to come to participate in the transformation of social injustice.

5.2.2 The Problem with Identification

There are, of course, articulations of the purpose of remembrance of the dictatorship that explicitly highlight criticisms of the notion that remembrance should serve to recover the struggle of the disappeared. For example:

Hugo Argente: Yo doy muchas charlas en las escuelas y cuando[los estudiantes] dicen “tenemos que reconstruir” yo les digo, “no ...olvidense, no reconstruyan nada. ¡Construyan!” . Siempre se idealiza a los militantes de los ‘70, a los desaparecidos, y es un error horrible porque te frena. Nosotros somos seres humanos...nos gusta ir a comer, tomarnos nuestro vinito, y bailar. Somos seres humanos a los cincuenta y pico de años. ¡Mirá si no éramos seres humanos a los ventipico! Entonces digo, agarrá nuestros ideales, nuestro concepto de organización y de compañerismo, pero empezá a construir algo diferente. Tan grandes no debemos haber sido si nos costó los que nos costó...los compañeros presos, los desaparecidos. Bueno, también construyan sobre nuestros equívocos. Abracen nuestros ideales pero tráiganlos a la coyuntura actual.

(Hugo Argente: I give a lot of talks in schools and when they [the students] say “we have to reconstruct” I say, “no...forget that, don’t reconstruct anything. Construct!”). People always idealize the militantes of the ‘70s, the disappeared, and it’s a horrible mistake because it immobilizes you. We are human beings...we like to go out to eat, to drink wine, and to dance. We are human beings at fifty something. As if we weren’t human beings at twenty something! So I say, take our ideals, our concept of organization and compañeroismo, but start constructing something different. We couldn’t have been so great if it cost us what it cost us...compañeros that were imprisoned, the disappeared. Well, construct also based on our mistakes too. Embrace our ideals but within the context of your reality.) (Conversation, July 13, 2007, Familiares, Buenos Aires)

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145 Hugo is using the “we” here because he identifies as a “militante of the 70s”. In this excerpt “we” refers to the militantes of 70s that were not disappeared and are alive today which is why he speaks in the present tense.

146 Compañerismo is a derivative of the term compañero/a (companion being the masculine of the noun and compañera being the feminine of the noun). We might then understand compañeroismo as the upholding of those ideals that compañero/a implies – “solidarity, camaraderie, and equality” (Dixon, 1998, p. 3).
Juane Basso: *Es terrible cuando muchas organizaciones dicen que van a reproducir [la lucha de los desaparecidos] a pesar de que [los desaparecidos] hayan fracasado. La memoria nos da también la oportunidad de poder basar la mirada en los errores de la generación de los ‘70s y del pueblo Argentino. Entonces tenemos que discutir incluso el dogmatismo de la generación del ‘70 y el pensamiento Eurocentrico que está tan desarrollado en la izquierda como en la derecha.*

(Juane Basso: It’s terrible when so many organizations say that they are going to reproduce [the struggle of the disappeared] even though they [the disappeared] might have failed. Memory also gives us an opportunity to look at the mistakes of the generation of the ‘70s and of the Argentine people. So we also have to discuss the dogmatism of the generation of the ‘70s and the Eurocentric thinking that is as much developed in the left as it is in the right.) (Conversation, June 7, 2007, *H.I.J.O.S*, Rosario)

Agustín Di Toffino: *Nosotros decimos que nuestros padres lucharon para construir un país mejor. Y se llevó adelante un terrorismo de estado para frenar esa lucha. Pero sería muy empobrecedor tomarlo en terminos lineal, de que nosotros somos la continuidad de la lucha de nuestros padres...Ellos lucharon en un momento determinado...Nosotros también estamos luchando para construir un país mejor y hemos logrado heredar ese sentido sobre la vida que tenían nuestros padres. Nuestros padres tenían un gran amor sobre la vida, y eran personas con principios y con valores muy altos. Estamos muy orgullosos de ser sus hijos pero tampoco creemos que se puede simplificar todo en decir ‘ustedes son la continuidad’. Porque reivindicar no es copiar. Reivindicar no es hacer lo mismo que han hecho ellos. Reivindicar es extraer esos valores que ellos tenían pero de una manera crítica. Es también poder criticar. Es poder cuestionar y poder dudar. Pero de algo estamos convencidos, a ellos los mataron no por sus defectos, sino por sus virtudes, por ese sueño.*

(Agustín Di Toffino: We say that our parents fought to construct a better country. And the state terrorism was executed to block that struggle. But it would be very limiting to take it up in linear terms, that we are the continuation of the struggle of our parents...They fought in a specific moment...We are also fighting to construct a better country and we have been able to inherit the sense of life that our parents had. Our parents had a great love for life and they were persons with principles and with very high values. We are very proud to be their children but we also don’t think that everything can be simplified by saying ‘you are their continuation’. Because recovering is not copying. Recovering is not doing the same thing that they did. Recovering is to extract those values that they had but in a critical way. Its also being able to criticize. Its being able to question and being able to doubt. But the one thing that we are convinced of is that they were killed not because of their defects, but because of their virtues, and because of that dream.) (Conversation, July 19, 2007, *H.I.J.O.S*, Córdoba)

Argente, Basso and Di Toffino caution against the notion that the purpose of remembrance of the dictatorship is to take up the same struggle that the disappeared were involved in and for which they were disappeared. For example, Basso and Argente ground their criticisms of the notion of “recovering the struggle” on a recognition of the failure of this struggle. They thus present an
articulation of the aims of remembrance that focuses on learning from the mistakes of this struggle. However, whereas Argente maintains that this learning still calls for the learner to take up the ideals held by the disappeared but to practice those ideals differently, Basso seems to argue that in fact those ideals need to be questioned. In this regard, he begins to open up possibilities of a discussion of racism in Argentina and, importantly, of issues of racism within political resistance in Argentina. Di Toffino also conceptualizes remembrance of the dictatorship as a call to take up the values and ideals held by those that were disappeared but to do so critically, constantly questioning how taking up those values might serve to give meaning to the present to act to build a “better Argentina”. These differences speak to a common concern for structuring a public remembrance of the dictatorship that will serve the (perceived) needs of the present – a concern that is expressed in many of the conversations I had with members of organismos de derechos humanos (as illustrated in the excerpts cited throughout this chapter thus far).

Though some articulations of this concern emphasize a need to differentiate the past from the present, while others draw a linear relationship between the past and present and thus highlight the consequences of the dictatorship seen today, these excerpts serve as examples of how people attempt to address current state violence through remembrance of historical state violence. Through these excerpts we also see that this concern is expressed in the name of the disappeared and in the name of the victims of contemporary state violence. Indeed, there are differences with respect to how the demand to acknowledge the suffering of the victims of past and present violence is made. As I have described above, this demand calls on the living to identify with the disappeared, to identify as a victim of the dictatorship, or to recognize one as distinct from those who struggled against social injustices in the 70s. Nonetheless, this demand is always intended to assign a responsibility to construct a peaceful Argentina with equitable
access to work, housing, health care, education and a dignified quality of life. Made in the name of the disappeared this demand thus also functions to assign responsibility to carry the story of their lives as militantes into the future, always keeping them present and thus reasserting their value to the living and to present-day Argentina.

5.3 The Demand for Legal Redress: Limits and Possibilities for Democracy and Learning to Live With Loss

As I have explained in previous chapters, making public demands for trial and punishment of the perpetrators of the dictatorship is part of participating in a struggle derechos humanos. These are demands to recover the social contract between the liberal state and civil society bound by the promise of the state to protect its citizens and seek legal retribution for those who have suffered violence. In this regard they are also demands to have suffering acknowledged as such by those who have caused it. Importantly, these demands then imply the possibility of the partial amelioration of this suffering through this acknowledgement and through legal punishment of its perpetrators. Thus, these are demands to have suffering legitimized by and through the state.

However, as the excerpts below illustrate, in the case of Argentina legal redress is additionally important because it presents the possibility of establishing the truth about what happened to the disappeared (that they were murdered, who murdered them, when, where and how, and where they were detained) and of legitimizing the truth of why the disappeared were disappeared.

Juan De Wandelaer: Una de las cosas que Adolfo Pérez Esquivel siempre dice es que sobre la impunidad es imposible construir la democracia, con lo cual sí o sí tenemos que hacer que sean juzgados los militares responsables de graves violaciones a los derechos humanos. Y bueno, desde ahí se construye la memoria porque los juicios nos dejan saber sobre los desaparecidos – quiénes fueron los responsables, cómo hicieron desaparecer a esas personas, dónde, cuándo. Es importante no sólo para la memoria pero también para los familiares. Para los familiares es muy importante tener respuesta a esto. Pero bueno, las respuestas son solo una parte, y por eso tenemos sitios como el Monumento a la Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado.
(Juan De Wandelaer: One of the things that Adolfo Pérez Esquivel always says is that democracy cannot be constructed within a context of impunity, so no matter what, we have to make sure that the military responsible for grave violations of human rights are tried. And well, from there memory is constructed, because the trials allows us to know about the disappeared – who were those responsible, how did they disappear people, where, when. Its important not only for memory but also for the relatives. For the relatives its very important to have a response to this. But well, these responses are only one part, and for that reason we also have sites like the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism.) (Conversation, July 13, 2007, SERPAJ, Buenos Aires)

Schulman: Yo, en la justicia no creo. Porque la justicia que viene 30 años tarde en realidad no es justicia. ¿Entonces para qué voy a testimoniar? Para que los jóvenes sepan por lo que nosotros luchamos. Entonces en realidad la relación que yo establezco entre la memoria y la justicia es [que]… la justicia es un espacio para esclarecer la memoria con la verdad y, bueno, por esto tenemos que seguir reclamando que sean juzgados los genocidas.

(Schulman: I don’t believe in justice. Because justice that comes 30 years later, in reality is not justice. So, why do I serve as a witness? So that young people will know what we fought for. So, in reality the relationship that I am establishing between memory and justice is that…justice is a space to illuminate memory with the truth and, well, for that reason we have to continue to demand that the genocidas be tried.) (Conversation, July 17, 2007, La Liga, Buenos Aires)

Schulman and De Wandelaer articulate different notions of truth that the legal trials of those who committed crimes during the dictatorship can establish. These distinct notions of truth inform the ways in which the two of them differently articulate the significance of legal redress. For Schulman, the trials can function to legitimize the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared and thus the truth about what the disappeared and all militantes of the 70’s “fought

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147 Adolfo Pérez Esquivel is the President of the SERPAJ.

148 I have not translated this into derechos humanos because, here, De Wandelaer is not referring to that “expanded” notion of derechos humanos. Rather, he is referring solely to the repression of the dictatorship.

149 De Wandelaer did not explicitly explain how certain remembrance practices such as the Monument of the Victims of State Terrorism can address (at least in part) the desire to mourn.

150 Schulman uses the term “we” here because he identifies himself as someone who participated in a struggle for a “better Argentina” in the 1970s (specifically as a member of the Communist Party).
for”. Speaking from his position as a former political prisoner\textsuperscript{151}, Schulman highlights his testimony as that which can lend evidence to the narrative that the military junta persecuted people committed to a particular “fight” and who held particular ideals. In that trials can verify that people were persecuted by the military because of their struggle for social justice (their political ideologies and membership), for Schulman they serve to legitimize that struggle and the identity of the disappeared (and surviving \textit{militantes}) as people committed to building a “better Argentina”. Much like the discussion in the section above, the excerpt from my conversation with Schulman then speaks to a concern with honouring the disappeared by remembering them as \textit{militantes} working towards the construction of this Argentina. However, though he implies the possibilities of legal redress as such, he also notes the limits of the judicial system due to the failure of the rule of law which established the conditions for the perpetrators of the dictatorship to live their lives comfortably, unpunished for 30 years. Schulman thus identifies the impossibility of ever achieving a complete sense of justice (though he does not explicitly define what this might mean).

By highlighting the possibility that trials present for providing relatives of disappeared persons with verification of the death of their disappeared loved ones and answers as to the circumstances of their deaths, De Wandelaer identifies another kind of truth for which the trials can account, as well as another limitation of legal redress – that is, that this truth cannot replace the need to mourn. While he designates certain remembrance practices with the function of addressing this particular limitation, in the excerpt below Careaga also articulates similar limits of legal trials.

\textsuperscript{151} Recall from Table 1 in Chapter Three that Schulman was a political prisoner, not a disappeared person. This is because, he was both accounted for by the military as a prisoner and because his family knew where he was detained.
Careaga: La justicia… es una deuda pendiente. No solamente para las víctimas directas sino también para el conjunto de la sociedad. Porque la justicia es parte de la democracia y una sociedad que no utiliza esas herramientas de justicia garantiza…impunidad para más violencia. Pero, bueno, hay algo que no es reparable que tiene que ver con la pérdida irreparable de nuestros seres queridos.

Careaga: Justice…is a pending debt. Not only for the direct victims but also for all of society. Because justice is part of a democracy and a society that does not utilize those tools of justice guarantees….impunity for more violence. But, well, there is something that is not reparable that has to do with the irreparable loss of our loved ones. (Conversation, July 4, 2007)

Careaga’s comments emphasize the need for trials both for the relatives of disappeared persons (and former disappeared persons), as well as for the reconstruction of a democratic society. In recognizing the importance of legal redress for “all of society” she identifies judicial punishment of the perpetrators of the dictatorship as necessary to ending the culture of impunity and continuing violence (specifically, police violence) and, thus, as necessary to rebuilding democracy. Though she does not state explicitly how legal trials are also important for the “direct victims”, the following excerpt from my conversation with Valeria Barbuto articulates justice as a “debt” owed to the relatives of disappeared persons because of their position as citizens of a democratic state deserving of certain democratic rights.

Barbuto: Para nosotros [en el CELS] básicamente la democracia tiene que ver con ciertos principios. Entonces es responsabilidad del estado conseguir justicia para los familiares de las víctimas de violaciones de derechos humanos porque, para nosotros, cuando no se deja actuar al poder judicial se está violando un principio de democracia).

(Barbuto: For us [in the CELS] basically democracy has to do with certain principles. So, it’s the responsibility of the state to achieve justice for the relatives of the victims of violations of human rights because, for us, when the justice system is not allowed to act, it’s a violation of one of the principles of democracy.) (Conversation, July 16, 2007)

Barbuto thus identifies legal redress as a responsibility of the state to its citizens, which in this case are the relatives of disappeared persons. In the demands for justice articulated by Barbuto, we hear a call for the recognition of relatives of disappeared persons as citizens deserving of rights (in this case the right to legal redress for the injustices they have suffered). In
other words, Barbuto articulates a call to give deference to the relatives of disappeared persons – to recognize their suffering as a political issue – denied to them by the military and post-dictatorship states. While perhaps Careaga also implies that legal trials of the perpetrators of the dictatorship are also a responsibility of the state by naming justice a “debt” to democratic society, her articulation of justice defines it as a tool for repair that, unlike Barbuto’s comments, distinguishes between the victims of the dictatorship and the rest of society (the implications of which are further discussed in Chapter Six). Furthermore, in contrast to both De Wandelaer’s and Schulman’s comments, Careaga’s notion of why justice is important as a tool of repair for the democratic state, juxtaposed with her acknowledgement of the limits of such repair, reminds us that for some (perhaps many) Argentines the loss of a person who has been disappeared remains irreparable. The many differences among the excerpts from these four conversations offer different notions of the significance and function of justice, memory and truth and speak to the varied ways in which people attempt to simultaneously account for individual lives and individual loss through the task of reconstructing democracy and eradicating present state violence.

5.3.1 Civil Society’s Role in Condemning the Perpetrators of the Dictatorship

Similar to comments made in some of the excerpts highlighted above, an email I received recently from Juane Basso of H.I.J.O.S in Rosario denounced the failure of the Argentine democratic state to punish the perpetrators of the dictatorship. In this email H.I.J.O.S (in Rosario) note that despite the charge of committing crimes against humanity, many of those awaiting trial for these charges are allowed to return to their homes under house arrest. Within this context, it is Argentine society that has been failed by the state because these trials are taking place over 30 years after the crimes were committed, because the decision to sentence
perpetrators of such atrocious crimes to house arrest inherently assigns civil society with the responsibility to (find some way to) punish the guilty, and because the sentence of house arrest not only fails to meet the demands for trial and punishment of the perpetrators but also produces a situation in which the perpetrators benefit from these demands rather than civil society.

Convocamos a todos los rosarinos al escrache que organizamos [H.I.J.O.S Rosario]... como forma de repudio a la liberación de Rubén Lofiego, Mario Marcote y Ramón Vergara imputados...por cometer delitos de lesa humanidad durante la última dictadura militar.... El argumento que los genocidas tienen derecho a volver a sus casas por el tiempo que llevan detenidos sin que se realicen los juicios, es una verdadera hipocresía: no es la sociedad, ni las víctimas, ni los...testigos responsables de enjuiciar y castigar a los genocidas. Es la responsabilidad del propio poder judicial que ha permitido...que estos juicios... no se hayan llevado adelante todavía. ¡Venimos reclamando que estos genocidas fueran juzgados desde hace décadas! Y hoy con esta resolución los beneficiarios son ellos.

We call on all residents of Rosario to participate in the escrache that we [H.I.J.O.S Rosario] are organizing...to repudiate the liberation of Rubén Lofiego, Mario Marcote and Ramón Vergara charged...for committing crimes against humanity during the last military dictatorship...The argument that the genocidas have a right to return to their homes because of the length of time they have been detained awaiting trial, is truly a hypocrisy: it is neither society nor the victims, nor the...witnesses that are responsible for trying and punishing the genocidas. It is the responsibility of the very judicial powers that have permitted...the delaying of these trials. We have been demanding that these genocidas be tried for decades! And today, they are the ones who are benefiting from this action. (Email, May 25, 2010)

The notion that civil society is inherently assigned with the responsibility to punish the guilty as a consequence of the failure of the state to do so is not new within H.I.J.O.S’ demands for legal redress. As I explained in Chapter One, in the 1990s H.I.J.O.S began with their practice of escraches as a means of creating a symbolic trial in which the perpetrators’ crimes were publicized and the perpetrators themselves repudiated and shamed for committing such atrocities. However, these symbolic trials were never intended to (nor could they ever) replace legal trials in the Argentine courts. In other words, the escraches never aimed to replace the state’s responsibility to try the perpetrators of the dictatorship or the possibilities that legal trials provide for verifying and legitimizing truths and for re-establishing democracy. H.I.J.O.S always continued to demand “¡juicio y castigo!” (“trial and punishment!”) within the context of
the *escraches*, graffitied this slogan on buildings and sidewalks in the neighbourhood where the protest was taking place. In that the *escraches* have always stood as a *symbolic* trial and act of punishment (i.e., shaming), they have consistently pointed to a lack of trial and punishment of those who kidnapped, tortured, and disappeared during the dictatorship. However, as the excerpts below explain, the *escraches* staged by H.I.J.O.S also pointed to the need for “social condemnation” – for the need for civil society (in addition to the state) to also denounce the genocidas and the genocidio.

Cetrángolo: El escrache es una fiesta que pretende generar conciencia y lo que llamamos condena social en función de conseguir el juicio y castigo. Porque el genocidio acá nos afectó a todos, no solo a los hijos [de los desaparecidos]. Entonces debería ser toda la sociedad la que esté involucrada.

(Juane Basso: Para nosotros el único camino que había era construir la cárcel simbólica y asegurar que nadie deje de saber quiénes eran los represores y que, a la vez, [la sociedad civil] los condene públicamente. Y además, en la construcción de esa condena social, nosotros veíamos un camino para forzar la cuestión institucional. Si la condena era una cuestión de todo el pueblo argentino, en algún momento se iba a tener que hacer eco en la instucionalidad.) (Conversation, July 13, 2007)

Di Toffino: Nosotros hicimos una práctica que interrumpió la vida cotidiana en Argentina que son los escraches. Al demostrar a los vecinos [del represor] quién era esta persona – cuantas personas había matado, cuantas personas había torturado – los vecinos se sorprendían y ahí se construye la condena social. El dueño del almacén deja de venderle el pan, la persona que le vende el diario no le vende más el diario, la gente empieza a repudiar esa persona por lo que hizo. Pero la condena social tiene que ser un mecanismo para llegar a la justicia real.

(Di Toffino: We started a practice that interrupted everyday life in Argentina, which is the *escraches*. In showing the neighbours [of the repressor] who this person was – how many people he had murdered, how many people he had tortured – the neighbours were surprised...
and there the social condemnation is constructed. The owner of the store stops selling him bread, the person who sells him the newspaper doesn’t sell it to him anymore, people start repudiating that person for what he did. But social condemnation has to be a mechanism to achieve real justice.) (Conversation, July 19, 2007)

As Di Toffino explains, for civil society to condemn the perpetrators means to interrupt the everyday lives that they have been able to live in comfort because of the impunity laws of the 1980s and pardons of the 1990s. By refusing to sell them their bread or their newspaper, the residents of the neighbourhood are rejecting the perpetrators from belonging in the neighbourhood. The residents are thus publicly acknowledging their knowledge of the crimes the perpetrators committed during the dictatorship and forging a new community within the neighbourhood that demarcates those included and those excluded based on a repudiation of those crimes. In this regard, they are also forging a new community based on a commitment to remember the dictatorship. Di Toffino, Basso, and Cetrángolo conceptualize this social condemnation as an important part of having demands for legal recall in the Argentine courts met. Thus, social condemnation is defined in these excerpts as the act of rejecting the perpetrators of the dictatorship from the formation of a public that binds on the basis of remembering the dictatorship. To participate in this social condemnation is then to engage in certain practices that inherently function as a call for the state to try and punish those who committed crimes during the dictatorship. Drawing from Cetrángolo’s articulation of social condemnation we can also understand it as the act of coming to understand one’s self as affected by the dictatorship – a subject position which, as he implies, endows a person with a responsibility to “out” the perpetrators and shame them for their crimes and, in effect, demand that the state account for the violence of the dictatorship. Cetrángolo thus articulates a call for public formation that breaks the perceived differences between those directly affected and those not affected. This has important implications for considering a notion of collective loss (and
trauma) and, in turn, an invitation to come together to collectively learn to live with that loss (this is an issue which I further discuss in Chapter Six).

5.4 The Role of Sites of Dictatorial Violence in Calls for Memory and Justice

In this section I will focus briefly on two conversations in which the role of sites of dictatorial violence within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship were highlighted. These conversations speak to a particular issue within public remembrance of the dictatorship about how sites where death and torture occurred can function to teach civil society about the dictatorship and the truth of why the disappeared were disappeared. They thus illustrate a discussion about how certain physical markings of the dictatorship become integral to the work of learning to live with loss. Questions about what to do with sites of dictatorial violence (e.g., transform these places into museums or reconstruct them as they were during the dictatorship), primarily former torture centres, have in recent years become increasingly important. However, the site of former torture centres – that is, the building themselves – have played a central role in remembrance practices and in calls for memory and legal redress for many years. For example, Campbell (2006) tells us that H.I.J.O.S has staged escraches in front of former torture centres since the 1990s in order to highlight the existence of these places to neighbourhood residents. In the days leading up to these escraches H.I.J.O.S plasters public places in that neighbourhood with maps that mark the location of the former torture centre as well as the location of nearby homes with the words “Usted esta aqui” (“You are here”). Within the context of escraches that take place at a former torture centre (instead of a torturer’s house), Campbell argues that this remembrance practice is intended to challenge (certain) Argentines to think about what they were doing at the time that people were being tortured next door and what they are doing now as
the vacant buildings continues to exist as markers of murder and torture in the neighbourhood\textsuperscript{152}. In this regard, escraches ask Argentines to be personally affected by the loss of the disappeared and by the violence of the dictatorship and, importantly, to consider how they live with that loss and with the knowledge of the violence responsible for this loss.

Currently, since the Argentine state has sanctioned these sites as property of the state and allowed organismos de derechos humanos to enter and to reconstruct them as “sitios de memoria” ("sites of memory")\textsuperscript{153}, many organismos de derechos humanos’ discussions regarding the place of sites of dictatorial violence in calls for memory and justice have centered on debates about how to engage in such a reconstruction. This process of reconstruction has manifested in different ways in different sites due to varying factors such as funding and the location of the site. Funding restrictions have, for example, impeded organismos de derechos humanos from constructing archive centres and maintaining the buildings for events such as guided visits or housing public exhibitions\textsuperscript{154}. My intent in this section, however, is not to detail

\textsuperscript{152} While Campbell does not speak specifically about any one escrache, her analysis best exemplifies the example of Olimpo and Automotores Orletti – two former torture centres located in the city of Buenos Aires in densely populated neighbourhoods. In contrast, former torture centres such as Mansión Seré were located in the outskirts of the city in sparsely populated areas where it is less likely that people witnessed kidnapped persons brought into the centre and where today there is little traffic of people who have to pass these places in their everyday. The case of the Escuela de Mecanica de la Armada (ESMA) (Navy School of Mechanics) is unique in comparison to both of these examples in that the ESMA was located near a neighborhood that was not (and is not) as densely populated as those in which Olimpo and Automotores Orletti exist, but is nonetheless situated in a busier part of the city relative to Mansión Seré.

\textsuperscript{153} For example, the former ESMA was renamed “Espacio para la Memoria y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos” (“Space for Memory and Promotion of Human Rights”) in 2004 as a consequence of an agreement signed between the Federal Government, then represented by President Néstor Kirchner, and the City Government of Buenos Aires, then represented by Mayor Aníbal Ibarra. The site, which continued to be utilized by the navy for training, was only completely vacated by the navy in 2007. Since then organismos de derechos humanos have had government permission to work on reconstruction projects inside the former ESMA.

\textsuperscript{154} The reconstruction of these sites is also informed by debates between organismos derechos humanos pertaining to whether a former torture centre should remain as it is and be used only for guided visits or should house specific materials and/or events intended to educate people about the dictatorship. For example, members of the Asociación Ex-Detenidos Desaparecidos have argued that the former ESMA should be left as it is because a place where death and torture took place should only speak about that death. This group has maintained that the building itself can in
the reconstruction of different sites but rather to understand the significance people ascribe to
them within the landscape of memory.

Of note is the understanding of sites of dictatorial violence as important because of their
perceived ability to undeniably confirm the truth and thus serve to try and punish the
perpetrators. In the excerpts below, Maria Isabel Chorobil de Mariani and Elida Luna speak
about two different sites of dictatorial violence. Chorobil de Mariani refers to the house in La
Plata now known as Casa Mariani-Teruggi (Mariani-Teruggi House) where her daughter-in-law,
Diana Teruggi, was murdered along with four other people during an attack by the military (her
granddaughter, Clara Anahí, survived the attack but was kidnapped and still remains missing
today). Luna refers to the former torture centre El Pozo (The Hole) in Rosario that has been
renamed by organismos de derechos humanos as Centro Popular de la Memoria (Popular Centre
for Memory) and where a photograph memorial exhibition is currently housed.

Chorobil de Mariani: Yo preservo la casa para que la pueda visitar otra gente. Es parte de
la memoria [de la dictadura] pero también sirve como un reclamo de justicia porque sirve
como prueba de lo que hicieron [los militares].

(Chorobil de Mariani: I preserve the house so that other people can visit it. It’s part of the
memory [of the dictatorship] but it also serves as a demand for justice because it serves as
evidence of what they [the military] did.) (Conversation, July 14, 2007, Asociación Anahí,
La Plata)

Luna: Nosotros hemos tenido una posición muy firme al decir que este lugar es un lugar
único y que, por ejemplo, nos parece bien que se haya abierto [al público]. Pero ahí

fact speak to this history making it unnecessary to put anything in there. In contrast, the Asociación Madres de
Plaza de Mayo led by Hebe de Bonafini have argued that a “museum of life” should be housed in the former ESMA.
Currently this group has transformed part of the building into a cultural centre which offers a variety of art classes
and functions as a space to hold music concerts and festivals. When I last visited the former ESMA in 2007, much
of the rest of the space was still under debate and thus remained empty and was only open for guided visits to people
conducting research in institutions outside of Argentina. Additionally, there is important forensic research being
conducted in there by members of the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (Argentine Team of Forensic
Anthropologists) that has been of use in the current trials. For further detail on these debates see Di Paolantonio
adentro [del patio] se hacen festivales, se hacen juegos, y en este lugar [del ex-centro clandestino] lo que nosotros queremos es poder hablar de nuestra historia. Si nosotros empazamos a hablar de todo y de cualquier cosa aquí adentro, ¿cuándo vamos a trabajar por la memoria? ¿Cuándo vamos a conocer la verdadera historia que vivimos los que militábamos en esa época? Nosotros queremos que la gente pueda visitar este lugar para conocer la verdad. Mi compañero [Ricardo Dominguez] era Montonero. Entonces él tiene un montón de cosas para contar en ese espacio.

(Luna: We have held a very firm position in saying that this place is a unique place and that, for example, we think its fine that its been opened [to the public]. But inside there [the courtyard] there are festivals, there are games, and in this place [in the ex-clandestine centre] what we want is to be able to talk about our story\textsuperscript{155}. If we start talking about everything and anything in here, when are we going to work for memory? When are we going to learn the true history about what those who participated in militancia during that time lived through? We want people to be able to visit this place to learn the truth. My compañero [Ricardo Dominguez] was a member of the Montoneros. So he has a bunch of things to tell people in this space.) (Conversation, July 26, 2007, Familiares, Rosario)

Both women imply that sites of dictatorial violence house a particular truth and should thus be open to the public to disseminate this truth. While Luna highlights the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared (and perhaps about the experiences of those who were detained in the torture centre), Chorobil de Mariani seems to highlight the truth about the violent nature of the dictatorship. I understand Chorobil de Mariani’s comments above as such because they imply that the house – still standing riddled with bullet holes, smashed windows, and half of the roof missing – visibly “embodies a difficult social past” and can thus “speak for itself” (Till, 2008, p. 108). As the guide that led me through the house explained to me, this site is “living evidence” of the truth.

\textsuperscript{155} The building now known as El Pozo in which the torture centre functioned is actually part of a larger structure known as Plaza Cívica. It is a colonial structure enclosing a central courtyard (much like Plaza Mayor in Madrid, Spain though quite smaller in size) that today serves as an urban public square where, often, festivals and music concerts are held. Between 1976 and 1979 the building housed by the intelligence services of the police was used as an illegal torture centre. After the fall of the dictatorship Plaza Cívica continued to serve its official functions for the police until 2001. On March 22, 2001 the Provincial Government mandated a resolution ordering the removal of the police headquarters, officially submitting part of the building to the municipality, another part to the Provincial Government under the direction of the Human Rights Secretariat, and the central courtyard became an open public squared maintained by the city of Rosario. El Pozo was granted to human rights groups who have today constructed a “Popular Centre for Memory”.

El tema es que esta Casa es una prueba viva, es contundente. Y queremos que las visitas se vayan con esta historia que se hace tan clara a través de la Casa.

(The thing is that this House is living evidence, its convincing. And we want that those who visit the House to leave with this story that is told so clearly through the House. (Anonymous\textsuperscript{156}, Personal Communication, July, 14, 2007)

However, Chorobil de Mariani also tells me that the significance of the house lies in its ability to speak about the death of Diana (and the four men who also died there), as well as the appropriation of her granddaughter for whom she continues to search.

Chorobil de Mariani: Bueno, como prueba también nos sirve para recordar a los militantes que murieron ahí. La casa es prueba de la muerte de Diana y desde ahí hago mis reclamos para mi nieta.

(Chorobil de Mariani: Well, as proof it is also for us a tool to remember the militantes that died there. The house is proof of Diana’s death and from there I make my demands for my granddaughter.) (Conversation, July 14, 2007)

Thus Casa Mariani-Teruggi stands as “material evidence of…pain” – “of wounds that demand justice” (Till, 2008, p. 108). Through guided visits it is meant to serve as a tool to teach about what happened in the past, to provide evidence in the trials, and to teach about loss. Walking down Calle 30, the street on which the house is located, Casa Mariani-Teruggi stands out among the other houses because of its physical signs of violence. It reminds visitors and passersby of the dictatorship and of the individual lives that once lived in that house. Similarly, though Luna did not explicitly speak about this, the photo exhibition in the former El Pozo has a similar function. Black and white photographs of disappeared persons who once lived in the province of Santa Fé (where the former torture centre is located) are displayed alongside notes written to disappeared individuals by their relatives, reminding us that the people who were detained there were not only militantes but also people who were loved and who are missed. Today sites of dictatorial violence are, in this sense, “places that connect the living to former, [present], and

\textsuperscript{156} I cannot identify the guide’s identity as this person did not give me permission to do so.
future lives” (Till, 2008, p. 109) and are thus significant to the task of learning to live with loss. 5.5 Neighbourhood Memories: Accounting for Individuals Lost and Individual Loss

In this section of the chapter I focus my analysis on the ways in which the particular practices of remembrance performed in individual neighbourhoods and by neighbourhood-based groups structure distinct forms of engagement in the work of learning to live with loss. The neighbourhood-based groups to which I am referring are those that constitute the collective known as Barrios por la Memoria. Based on my conversations with members of four organismos de derechos humanos that belong to this collective, their practices of remembrance aim to remember disappeared persons in the neighbourhoods where they were “born, raised, did their militancia, and/or worked” (Rosalia Castello, Conversation, August 25, 2007, Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro, my translation). Such practices are organized in the neighbourhood to which the disappeared person being remembered had a particular relationship and, in turn, for the residents of that neighbourhood (as well as others who may want to attend because of their personal connection to the person being remembered). Despite this primary similarity, there are also differences between each group’s form of public remembrance of the dictatorship. For example, like no other of these four groups the Comisión por la Memoria

157 Di Paolantonio 2008 notes that, despite commonly held understandings that sites of historical violence “speak for themselves”, it is important to consider how what is put inside of them – how they are reconstructed as sitios de memoria – “forge a particular pedagogical act of memory (sic) rendering collective meaning to the effects of highly charged memories that arise around [these]…sites” (p. 27). On the one hand, he recognizes that “emptiness” might function to put us face-to-face with the shock and thus the force of this site. On the other hand, he acknowledges that there are also many issues that emerge from the “emptiness” such as the paralysis – that is, an inability or unwillingness to respond to the horror and, rather, turn away – visitors might face in a “naked encounter with horror” (p. 34). Within the context of Argentina these issues are particularly significant because of the volatile political terrain on which the sites exist. Quoting Marcelo Brodsky (2005), Di Paolantonio writes: “‘emptiness is not project enough…for it leaves the building [the ESMA] vulnerable to future unknowns – to changes of mind and alternative social agendas that might be imposed on what are still politically volatile commitments” (p. 36).
Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro has designated a park for remembrance of the disappeared of these three neighbourhoods that is located approximately equal distance from the city boundaries of each. There are two locations within the park marked for remembrance – a mural painted on the wall of a residential building at the “back” of the park and a gravel path located at the “front” of the park that is lined by trees planted in remembrance of individual disappeared persons and that leads up to a plaque inscribed with the names of the disappeared from these neighbourhoods.

The square-shaped park in which these memorials to the disappeared are located (the murals, the trees/the path, and the plaque) is bordered by three separate streets and one six-story apartment building. The park is enclosed by a short fence (approximately 3 feet tall) with openings in two corners that mark the entrance/exit to/from the park. One of those entrances/exits sits at the “front” of the park and the other can be found diagonally across at the “back” of the park (directly adjacent to the apartment building). Entering from either the “back” or the “front” entrance one follows a gravel path that leads to the center of the park where there is a playground for children. On either side of both of these paths is lawn space used for leisure activities (e.g., napping, playing, picnicking). Since the mural is painted on the wall of the apartment building located at the “back” of the park, one immediately comes face to face with it when entering from the “front”. Importantly, other than the mural, the wall on which it is painted is bare (e.g., no balconies, no doorways). This mural spans the entire width of the wall and ends mid wall from the ground up. Specifically, it depicts buildings of the three neighbourhoods (mostly residential houses) and a large white headscarf (characteristic of both existing groups of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo) that is painted so as to appear to be hovering

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158 The space within the park where the mural has been painted is designated as the “back” of the park because here the park is closed off by an apartment building. In contrast, the rest of the park, though closed off to a certain degree by a chain link fence, still has an open view to the neighbourhood. Thus, because there is a “back” of the park, there is also a clearly designated “front” of the park.
above the buildings of the neighbourhoods painted below it. Painted within most of the buildings are blank white rectangles that mark a space where people can write (and have written) the name(s) of a disappeared person(s) or a message to a disappeared person(s). Further, painted within the white headscarf is a map of the area of the three neighbourhoods that marks the major streets that run through these neighbourhoods. This map is also marked by yellow circles that designate the approximate location of residence, work, or study of a disappeared person from one of the neighbourhoods. Below the map, within the white headscarf, are the words “ELLOS ESTÁN” (“THEY ARE HERE”).

Both the plaque in remembrance of the disappeared as well as the gravel path leading up to it are located in the corner between the two entrances/exits and thus sit at the “front” of the park. This area of the park is slightly more secluded from other park activity, in part because the memorial to the disappeared structures this space as such. Specifically, it does so because the trees provide privacy and the path itself, though leading towards the direction of the central playground, does not lead to an entrance/exit and is therefore designated for a specific purpose (i.e., visiting the plaque). The plaque itself sits raised on a four foot high pedestal. When I visited the park in 2007 the plaque contained approximately 60 names. Information about disappeared persons from these neighbourhoods was initially collected from the *Nunca Más* (1984) report and from personal accounts given by neighbourhood residents. However, every year new information surfaces of a disappeared person who once “lived, was raised, did her or his militancia, and/or worked” in one of the three neighbourhoods (this new information comes mostly from residents’ personal accounts)\(^\text{159}\). As the money to buy the trees is mostly collected

\(^{159}\) In fact, for all of the neighbourhood groups whose members I spoke with, information about disappeared persons from the neighbourhood was originally collected from the “*Nunca Más*” report and new information is continuously being gathered mostly from residents’ personal stories.
from residents’ donations, financial limitations dictate that the trees are planted for a number of
disappeared persons, rather than an individual disappeared person. Further, the trees themselves
are not marked to stand in remembrance of particular disappeared persons (i.e., there are no
individual commemorative plaques indicating for whom the trees were planted). As such, the
names of the disappeared of the three neighbourhoods (Mataderos, Liniers, and Villa Luro)
appear in the park in one of two places – the plaque at the end of the path and the mural.

Rosalia Castello of Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro (Buenos Aires)
has explained the significance of the annual event in remembrance of the disappeared persons of
the three neighbourhoods that is held in the park with reference to the possibilities it presents
people to engage in mourning rituals.

Castello: Nosotros queríamos llevarlos [a los desaparecidos] desde la Plaza a los barrios
donde ellos surgieron…donde nacieron, se criaron, militaron, trabajaron. Y tenemos una
jornada de homenaje anual y hacemos nuestra ceremonia en el barrio. Es tan necesaria esta
ceremonia, ¿no? Porque tenemos donde llevar las flores. Esto no se puede hacer en la Plaza
de Mayo….Y bueno, al nivel personal esto cura heridas. Pero bueno, hay heridas que no se
curan entonces esto ayuda a lamerlas.

(Castello: We wanted to take them [the disappeared] from the Plaza to the neighbourhoods
where they came from…where they were born, where they were raised, where they did their
militancia, worked. And we have an event to pay homage to them where we have a
ceremony in the neighbourhood. It’s so important that ceremony, no? Because we have
somewhere to take the flowers. You can’t do this in the Plaza de Mayo….And well, on a
personal level this heals wounds. But, well, there are some wounds that can’t be healed and
so this helps to ease the pain.) (Conversation, August 25, 2007)

The ceremony that Castello refers to here is the annual remembrance event during which time
the group plants trees in remembrance of individual disappeared persons, invites relatives and
friends of those individuals to speak (the general public is also invited), and adds the names of
those individuals being remembered to the plaque in the park. Within the context of Castello’s
comments about the function of these practices to “take the disappeared from the Plaza [de
Mayo] and return them to their neighbourhoods” we might consider how both the event and the
space allows individuals to “wrest… [the disappeared] from anonymity” (Robben, 2004, p. 142) – that is, from the anonymity of the nameless collective of 30,000. In that the space physically marks the presence of the disappeared (vis a vis the plaque and the trees), such practices also allow individuals to, at least partly, remove the disappeared from the anonymity of that unrepresentable and incomprehensible place of disappearance. The space itself also provides a place where relatives and friends of disappeared persons can return to “place flowers” – to engage in certain mourning rituals that allow the living a place to contain their grief. Staged through certain cultural frameworks that are often designated for the recognition of death, these practices might then also be understood as significant for the work of learning to live with loss because they literally mark a singular “death” 160. In this regard, these practices speak both to a desire to mourn and to the work of mourning underscored by the recognition that a death has occurred as part of the task of learning to live with loss.

Though I was unable to attend the annual event to which Castello makes reference, I was able to attend some events organized by Barrios por la Memoria y Justicia Almagro-Balvanera where plaques are placed in the sidewalk in remembrance of an individual disappeared person161. These individualized plaques are usually placed outside of the location where the person was disappeared, where she or he lived, worked, studied (went to school), or, alternatively simply on

160 The mural also positions the disappeared in the present quite explicitly through the words “THEY ARE HERE”. However, Castello did not mention the mural in our conversation and, considering that it is not as secluded as the space where the trees and the plaque are, it does not allow for the same kind mourning rituals. As I stated earlier however, it does allow for individualized remembrance.

161 Specifically, that the plaques are placed in the sidewalk means that the plaques are flush with the sidewalk – a hole is cut into the sidewalk by a city government employee (thus implying that permission from the city government is needed for this kind of remembrance practice), and the plaque is placed inside of it.
a busy sidewalk of the neighbourhood. Most of these plaques have a common inscription: a phrase that marks the significance of the location of the plaque in relation to the disappeared person such as “acqui fue secuestrada [nombre de personal]” (“here [person’s name] was kidnapped”), followed first by the date of disappearance and then the phrase “desaparecido/a por el terrorismo de estado de 1976-1983” (“disappeared by the state terrorism of 1976-1983”).

Drawing from my observations of events in which these plaques are placed in the sidewalk, people do place flowers on or around the plaque once it has been placed in the sidewalk. In fact, in one particular event, a young boy selling flowers who was walking by stopped to watch and, before anyone else had placed anything on the plaque, he did so himself with one of his own flowers. These events are thus understood to call for this kind of participation from the wider public (not just those who organize the event). In addition to the placing of the plaque in the sidewalk in remembrance of an individual disappeared person, the speeches given by relatives and friends of the person being remembered also structure such participation because they serve to express lament for the dead. The following excerpt of a reading given by the sister of Eva Esther Núñez Pereyra, for whom a plaque was placed in the neighbourhood of Almagro on July 15, 2007, serves as an example.

Maria: Me resulta muy difícil hablar de Eva. Yo la tengo en mi corazón, todos los días de mi vida. La recuerdo linda, inteligente, con una personalidad fuerte, muy buena alumna. Quería ser abogada….Siempre cumplía sus metas. Llegó a la facultad, estudiaba de noche en compañía de la radio y mi papa se levantaba a cebarle mates antes de ir a trabajar…. Siempre fuimos muy unidas, y mucho más cuando nos dio la noticia de que estaba esperando un hijo.. Quería criar a su hijo y, lamentablemente, no pudo. Quiero decir que estoy orgullosa de mi hermana Eva, mis padres murieron pensando en ella, que está en la memoria y en el corazón de mis hermanos y de mis hijos. Dejó un hijo inteligente como fue ella y, seguramente, desde el lugar donde esté mirando, estará orgullosa de la familia que él formó, de sus nietas y su nuera. Éva siempre estás con todos nosotros.

162 Alicia Le Fur explained to me that the group allows relatives of the disappeared person to choose where to place the plaque.
María: I find it very difficult to speak about Eva. She is in my heart, everyday of my life. I remember that she was beautiful, intelligent, with a strong personality, a very good student. She wanted to be a lawyer… She always accomplished her goals. She got to university, she studied at night always with the radio on and my father would get up to make her mates [tea] before going to work…..We were always very close, and more so when she told us that she was expecting a son… She wanted to raise her son and, unfortunately, she wasn’t able to. I want to say that I am proud of my sister Eva, my parents died thinking of her, that she remains in the memories and hearts of my siblings and my children. She left an intelligent son, like she was, and surely, from wherever she is watching, she is proud of the family that he created, of her granddaughters and of her daughter-in-law. Eva, you are always with us.

Such rituals thus allow opportunities for people to eulogize the disappeared. These experiences can support a process of “easing the pain” because they allow “mourners-in-waiting” (Di Paolantonio, 2000) to participate in a ritual of transition in which their personal loss is acknowledged as such – as personal and unique. The public recognition of one’s individual grief and loss, and the support one receives from those present at the event, might be important to alleviating the pain of the loss of a disappeared person in that it allows mourners-in-waiting to take steps towards transitioning to the position of mourner (albeit a transition that can never be fully completed). Nonetheless, while the varied events staged by different neighbourhood-based groups offer such similar possibilities, the physical marker of disappearance which each event is aimed at installing, functions quite differently in regard to easing one’s pain. The plaque and tree memorial erected in the park by Comisión por la Memoria Mataderos-Liniers-Villa Luro allow for the repetition of mourning rituals whereas practices such as the plaques placed in busy sidewalks do not. The park and tree memorial may certainly contribute to “easing the pain” since “rituals provide a vehicle for expression and containment of strong emotions [and]…their repetitive and prescribed nature eases feelings of anxiety…and provides structure and order at times of chaos and disorder” (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998, p. 698).

I am not including a last name for this person because I do not know it.
Beyond providing opportunities to engage in rituals that function to mark a “death”, these practices also aim to motivate an Argentine public to recover the struggle of the disappeared. Considering the importance of this particular aim of public remembrance as I have described it above, that individualizing practices serve this purpose is not surprising. An excerpt from my conversation with Alicia Le Fur from *Barrios por la Memoria y la Justicia Almagro-Balvanera* highlights how the plaques placed in the sidewalk serve this aim.

Le Fur: *La baldosa es como decir “aca estuvieron [los desparecidos], acá estuvieron presentes”. La onda que le damos nosotros [al evento en el cual se coloca la baldosa en la vereda] es humanizarlos [a los desaparecidos]. Eran seres humanos, como cualquiera. Eran hinchas de Boca, que se yo, uno tocaba el piano, otro escribía poesía…. Las baldosas marcan sus pasos que nos pueden motivar a rescatar la lucha de ellos. Pero tenemos que poner esa lucha al servicio de lo que pasa ahora porque ahora no es lo mismo que el pasado.*

(Le Fur: The plaque is like saying “they [the disappeared] were here, they were present here”. What we try to bring to it [the event in which the plaque is placed in the sidewalk] is the idea of humanizing them [the disappeared]. They were human beings, like any other. They were fans of something, of Boca164, I don’t know, one played the piano, another one wrote poetry….The plaques mark their steps that can motivate us to recover their [the disappeared’s] struggle. But we have to put this struggle in the service of the present.) (Conversation, July 11, 2007)

The individualized plaques focus on the everyday lives of the disappeared with the intent of “humanizing” them as well as highlighting their struggle for social change. The aim is to come to know the disappeared as human beings “like you and me” and to know their commitment to a particular *militancia*. Though Le Fur does not explicitly connect the notion of humanizing the disappeared to the aim of remembrance to recover their struggle for social change, Octavio Rampoldi of the *Comisión por la Memoria Chacaritas-Colegiales* does so in a way that asks the public in attendance at the remembrance event to identify with the disappeared.

Rampoldi: *La idea es poder contarle a los vecinos que en su barrio hay desaparecidos, que en su barrio actuaron los genocidas…Que en las cuadras que ellos caminan hubo gente también que militaba y tenian un plan, un proyecto muy distinto al plan que se*

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164 Boca is a popular local soccer team.
implementó...Tienen que saber que esto no pasó porque un día un tipo se levantó de mal humor. Sino porque estaban frenando un proyecto político muy distinto al que se terminó implementando...Y cuando se cuenta las historias de vida y que jugaba en esta plaza y vivía en esa calle, deja de ser un desaparecido, esa figura fantasmagórica, idealizada, y empieza a ser una persona de carne y hueso que tiene nombre, tuvo hermanos, tuvo una familia, trabajaba, hacia cagadas y cuando eran más grandes optaron por una militancia. Y uno dice, “ah, yo podría hacer lo mismo entonces”. ¡Tiene que ver con reivindicar la militancia.

(Rampoldi: The idea is to be able to tell the neighbours that in their neighbourhood there are disappeared persons, that in their neighbourhood the genocidas acted…That on the sidewalks on which they walk there were also people that were militantes and that they had a plan, a very different project than that which was implemented. They have to know that what happened did not happen because one day some guy woke up in a bad mood. Rather because they were stopping a political project that was very different than the one which was implemented…And when their life stories are told, and that she or he played in this plaza and lived on this street, she or he stops being a disappeared person, that phantasmagoric figure, idealized, and she or he starts being a person of flesh and bones that has a name, that had siblings, and a family, worked, made mistakes and when they were older they chose to participate in a militancia. And one says, “oh, I could do the same then”165. It has to do with recovering the militancia.) (Conversation, August 7, 2007)

Here Rampoldi is also referring to the individualized plaques that are placed in sidewalks.

Rampoldi articulates the purpose of this practice to tell the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared alongside stories of the disappeared’s life. The ultimate aim of weaving these two narratives together is to motivate those present at the event to identify with the disappeared both as “people of flesh and bones” just like them and through the everyday actions of the disappeared which are (perceived to be) the same as that of those in the present. This distinct purpose of remembrance emphasizes the struggle for social justice in which the disappeared participated as a choice – a choice that those in the present can also make. The focus on individual life stories then also functions to pay homage to the disappeared person being remembered and, told within the context of a larger narrative that accounts for the 30,000, it also pays homage to all of the

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165 Here, Rampoldi is referring to the ability of local remembrance practices to motivate those in attendance to participate in a militancia. When he says, “oh, I could do the same”, he is stating what he hopes the Argentine public who partake in neighbourhood remembrance events might express – a desire to struggle for social justice like the disappeared did.
disappeared. The example below of a reading given by Joaquin Careti whose brother was being remembered in an event on July 14, 2007 illustrates how some of these neighbourhood events are structured in this way.

Mi hermano nació el 17 de abril de 1954. Era el quinto de seis hermanos, cinco varones, una mujer. Era muy curioso...Leía mucho, escribía poemas...[y] era muy querido y admirado por sus amigos. Era muy cariñoso y siempre estaba a la escucha de todos. Cristian fue adorado por sus padres y sus hermanos y lo extrañamos todos los días. Pero también hay que recordar el hombre que dio su vida en hars de un proyecto político de cambio en nuestro país. Por eso ponemos esta baldosa que lo nombra y lo recuerda. Creo que entonces hay otro homenaje que hacemos, y es el que le hacemos al proyecto que llevó a mi hermano y a tantos otros a jugarse la vida.

(My brother was born on the 17th of April of 1954. He was the fifth of the six siblings, five boys, one girl. He was very curious...he read a lot, wrote poetry...[and] he was loved and admired by his friends. He was very caring and always available to listen to everyone. Cristian was loved by his parents and his siblings and we miss him every day. But we also have to remember the man who gave his life for a political project of change for our country. For this reason we place a plaque that names him and that remembers him. I think then that there is something else that we are remembering which is that of the project that lead my brother and so many others to sacrifice their lives.)

In practices such as the escraches and the commemorative march held on March 24th of every year to mark the beginning of the dictatorship, people carry large placards with black and white photographs of the disappeared. Similarly, in their weekly Thursday marches around the Plaza de Mayo the members of Madres-Linea Fundadora wear large photographs of their disappeared children around their necks. In these events, individual disappeared persons are remembered through remembrance of the 30,000. In contrast, in the neighbourhood specific practices, the 30,000 are remembered through remembrance of an individual person. This focus on the individual serves to account for personal grief and loss and to remember the disappeared as militantes that belonged to a family and a group of friends who loved them and continue to miss them. Neighbourhood-specific practices thus function to “help ease the pain” of loss and to remove the militante from the place in which they are idealized thus structuring militancia as part of the everyday. However, when situated within the notion of militancia as a commitment
measured by one’s willingness to sacrifice one’s life, both the militante – the disappeared – and militancia – the struggle for social justice for which the disappeared were disappeared – are anything but part of the ordinary of the everyday. In his explicit call to remember that those who were disappeared sacrificed their lives in their commitment to construct a “better Argentina”, Careti’s speech reminds us of the tensions inherent in simultaneously remembering the disappeared as “people like you and I” who, unlike “you and I”, chose to commit to a particular militancia. His speech calls on those in the present to participate in a similar militancia based on an identification with these human beings who are seemingly nothing “like you and I” (an issue which is of focus in Chapter Six).  

5.6 Public Remembrance of the Dictatorship as a Call for Public Formation

Understood as a process of inheritance, public remembrance of the dictatorship is a call to witness – to come to listen to and learn about stories of the violence of the dictatorship, stories of who the disappeared “truly” were, and stories of the ways in which the dictatorial past has effected Argentina today. However, witnessing does not end with this listening and learning. To witness is also to re-tell and to teach others about the past. Within the context of public remembrance of the dictatorship as it is organized by organismos de derechos humanos, the call to re-tell is articulated in different ways. Though perhaps not stated explicitly throughout my conversations, in its most basic form this re-telling and this teaching might be understood, quite literally, as telling and teaching others about the truth of why the disappeared were disappeared, of the violence of the dictatorship, and of the ways in which people presently live with the

166 Identification here means to recognize the similarities between one’s present everyday life and the everyday life of those that were disappeared. For example, as Rampoldi and Le Fur stated, to recognize that the disappeared played in the same neighbourhood plaza in which “I” play today and that some of those disappeared were fans of local soccer teams that “I” too am fan of.
effects of this violence. Often, public remembrance practices articulate a demand that this re-telling be enacted through participation in contemporary struggles for social justice as well as in political protest demanding memory, truth, and justice for the crimes of the dictatorship. In this sense, re-telling is structured through the embodiment of derechos humanos – that is, the ideals for which the disappeared were disappeared are embodied through participation in a militancia for social change. Public remembrance of the dictatorship is then very much about convincing an Argentine public of certain truths, for the responsibility to re-tell will only be assumed if the witness accepts certain narrations of the dictatorship and its present-day consequences as truth. However, participation in struggles for social justice cannot be merely understood as an alternative form of re-telling. Nor can remembrance of the dictatorship be understood exclusively as a matter of legitimizing the truth (as I have previously explained). At stake within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship is also the production and reproduction of a discursive framework through which an Argentine public can identify its common concerns and interests and create itself.

Michael Warner (2005) explains that a public “is a kind of social totality” (p. 66). It can only exist “by virtue of being addressed (sic)” (p. 67). The call for public formation thus assumes that that public can or does exist and that there are people who will be able to identify themselves as the object of that call. However, the address to the public to construct itself must be made to “indefinite others” (p. 85). In other words, the address to an already imagined public to come together and produce itself must be made to an already “known social basis” (p. 74) as well as an unknown set of strangers. This particular requirement of the structure of the address is necessary for the survival of the public. For a public to exist and to continue to exist, its members must then be able to understand themselves as belonging to that public – an understanding that comes from participating in the construction and continual enactment of the
public. “A public…unites strangers through participation alone” (75) – strangers that may never come to know each other but can imagine each other as involved and invested in that which requires the public’s formation and survival. Thus, it is not just a matter of recognizing one’s self as an addressee “but it is equally important that we remember that the speech was addressed to indefinite others” (p. 85). “We” are singled out for the address not on the basis of our identity, but on the basis of our participation in a struggle for social change. Certainly, a call for public formation is not an address made to any “stranger” – to all. “It appears to be open to indefinite strangers” (p. 106), and is seemingly all inclusive. However, the discourse that structures its formation and the address for its formation establishes limits on who can and cannot be addressed and who can and cannot belong (or rather, can and cannot be a member and, subsequently, participate)\(^\text{167}\). In this regard, a public is the self-organization (and thus not organized by some other entity such as the state) of “strangers united through the circulation of their discourse” (p. 86). A call for public formation is a call to assume the responsibility to assure the infinite circulation of its constitutive discourse – its endless reproduction to an endless number of (certain) people – in producing itself and to sustain its reproduction.

Within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship, public remembrance mobilizes a discourse of *derechos humanos* that constitutes the call for public formation and that, in turn, constitutes the public itself. The call thus purposefully and inevitably excludes the perpetrators of the dictatorship and those who supported and continue to justify the dictatorship as a “war” against “subversion” because this discourse speaks out against them (and, in turn, the discourses they mobilize) and because they would never engage in the participation required for

\[^{167}\text{In this regard, Warner writes that “public discourse circulates, but it does so in struggle with its own conditions” (p. 106). Thus, the call for public formation, and the very formation of that public, also struggles with its own conditions as it is dependent on its ability to address a limitless number of people that are distinctly defined through their participation – a limitlessness with structured boundaries.}\]
membership. Included are those who concede with the truth about why the disappeared were disappeared and particular notions of how the dictatorial past affects present-day lives – those who support the *movimiento de derechos humanos* in their struggle for memory, truth, and justice\(^{168}\). This support is demonstrated through a re-telling by participating in public remembrance events (in a specific construction of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship) and in a *militancia* for derechos humanos. Those called to form this public thus understand themselves as addressed by the discourse of derechos humanos – they identify themselves (their social and political concerns) through this discourse. As a hegemonic discourse that functions as the “coalescing symbol of a plurality of struggles” (“Hegemony & Socialism: An Interview with Chantal Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau”, 2007), the discourse of derechos humanos mobilized through remembrance of the dictatorship addresses a larger public than that constituted by those who assume the responsibilities of witnessing (as they are assigned through this remembrance). The various rights groups who “rearticulate” their specific claims through the discourse of derechos humanos identify their collective investments in transforming current state violence and constructing a particular Argentina through this discourse.

As I understand it, the call for the formation of this public that necessarily imagines it to already exist, structures this call as one of returning to who “we” were. That is, “we” can commit to derechos humanos because “we” once did (at least in part). Through public remembrance practices that remember the disappeared as a collective defined by its commitment to a particular political project and that call on a public to reconstruct itself in the image of this

\(^{168}\) With respect to those who supported the dictatorship because of the threat of persecution one faced in not doing so, drawing from those who argue that learning about the truths of the dictatorship can evoke a transformation in the self, I presume that perhaps those whose support for the dictatorship was the effect of being terrorized or being ignorant are invited to participate – that is, if they are willing to embody and reproduce the discourse of derechos humanos (though there was no explicit mention of this in my conversations).
collective, the 30,000 disappeared come to define who “we” were and who “we” could (or, should) be. Articulated within this call for public formation is thus a continual learning to live with the loss of particular individuals and of an Argentine “we”. In other words, this public formation is a form of learning to live with loss. Unlike Perelli (1992) who maintains that Argentines continue to grapple with the loss of their identity as “civilized citizens” living in a “first-world country” (p. 416), I am here arguing that the collectivity lost (as it is constructed by organismos de derechos humanos) is constituted by the “ideals” for a struggle for (non-violent) “revolutionary change” (Evangelista, 1998, p. xxi). Though some with whom I spoke expressed a concern that this reconstruction be taken up critically, the reconstruction called for nonetheless requires a commitment to a militancia for derechos humanos. Importantly, this call to commitment often seems to require the assumption of the responsibility of making reparation for this collective loss through participation in contemporary struggles.

The public convened on the landscape of memory includes the living and the “dead” (the disappeared). More specifically, the call for this public to construct itself is a call to bring forth the disappeared into the present and to attend to the ruptures initiated by their absence. This is thus the formation of a public committed to transforming social injustices, to ending continuing state violence (i.e., police repression), to demanding legal redress and verification of the death of the disappeared and thus, to repudiating state repression, and to acknowledging the grief of others and constructing spaces to participate in that grief and affirm one’s relationship with those no longer here. In coming to construct this public “we” engage in a learning that is not just the acquisition of knowledge but also “an acceptance of another’s…address as a possible inheritance, a difficult ‘gift’” (Simon, 2006, p. 196) – a gift because it offers possibilities and hope for change, and difficult because it necessarily disrupts and fractures one’s way of understanding their present and of relating with others “dead” and alive. The task of inheritance,
of public formation, thus engenders hope for transformation. However, the gift may not always be accepted and, even when it is, it does not inherently produce the particular transformation (of the self or of the public) that one intends. That both the knowledge and the responsibilities being passed down are difficult means there are risks involved in accepting it – risks which some may not be willing to take. Even though there are no guarantees on how the gift will be received, or if it will be received at all, it does matter how this gift is given, for some forms of giving – of inheritance – may offer more possibilities than others. In a continual aim to “learn from”, in the concluding chapter of this work I consider places of possibility in the landscape of remembrance of the dictatorship as well as what this landscape might foreclose.
Chapter 6: DRAWING A LANDSCAPE OF PUBLIC 
REMEMBRANCE OF THE DICTATORSHIP: REMAINING 
QUESTIONS AND COMPLEXITIES

6.1 Leaving the Landscape of Public Remembrance of the 
Dictatorship “Messy”

I began this work by explaining that the landscape of public remembrance of the 
dictatorship, though disorienting and seemingly chaotic, could not simply be described as 
“messy” because such a description discounts the context of loss on which this landscape is 
constructed, as well as the deeply affective and passionately contested political issues that 
motivate its construction. As I explained in Chapter Three, my concern with such a description 
was an issue of responsible writing. However, I did not intend to narrate this landscape as 
orderly, tightly bound by fixed rules and borders. In my aim to account for the ways in which 
calls for derechos humanos mobilized through public remembrance speak to a continual learning 
to live with loss, my purpose was to maintain the complexities of the production of this 
landscape and of living with loss. Grounding this purpose was my endeavour to foster 
possibilities for “learning from” my conversations with organismos de derechos humanos and 
the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. Throughout the work I have thus attempted to 
write about my conversations with organismos de derechos humanos in a way that would resist a 
mastery of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship and a privileging of certain opinions, 
thoughts, and conceptualizations articulated in the conversations over others. In this chapter I 
return to this notion of the “messiness” of the landscape of memory to examine how we might 
define messiness as something other than disorderly, and how such a redefinition might further 
thinking about derechos humanos and the work of learning to live with loss through public
remembrance of state violence. Thus, here, messy refers to that which evades containment and easy classification – that is, the seemingly comprehensible and incomprehensible and the consistencies and contradictions that exist simultaneously. To leave the landscape messy is then to close this study with a recognition of the limits and possibilities offered within it – within the comprehensible and incomprehensible, and the consistencies and contradictions.

My commitment to learn from my conversations with *organismos de derechos humanos* has implicated me in a continual rereading of the transcripts in order to listen to how the specificities of people’s articulations of the aims of remembrance existed in relation to each other – how they spoke to each other’s limits and possibilities, and how they functioned to legitimize and delegitimize each other. Throughout the work I have thus considered some of the problematics of certain conceptualizations of the presentness of the past and of the structure of certain calls to commit to a *militancia* for derechos humanos. However, in this chapter I deliberately juxtapose the possibilities and limits offered within the landscape of memory with the intention of initiating a rupture of our (my) understanding of this landscape in a way that evokes and leaves open further questions for thought. I embark on the task of writing this concluding chapter with worries about how my writing about the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship and the significance of learning to live with loss might read as a critique of the right and wrong ways to remember. I have nonetheless made a conscious decision to examine the places of possibility and of limitations within this landscape because not doing so risks the writing of a narrative that replaces an unsettling remembrance with an account that idealizes the continual work of learning to live with loss and those who engage in this work – an account that structures the continual work of learning to live with loss as a redemptive task of repairing loss and past violence.
By idealizing *organismos de derechos humanos* and thus the struggle for *derechos humanos* and for memory, we risk disappearing the complex realities of loss in which the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship is situated. Specifically, we risk disappearing the complexities, the contradictions, the diversity of experiences, and the difficulties constitutive of learning to live with loss. As I explained in Chapter Three, this erasure becomes for me an issue of responsible writing. However, it is also a problem of learning, for idealization elides the “frustration…ambivalence…anger, fear” and sadness (Britzman 1998, p. 120) that often meets the call to inherit a “difficult gift”. In other words, idealization jeopardizes the disruption of the familiar frames of reference used to understand the present and one’s relationship to the past – the implication in knowledge that is the substance of learning from. Though I close the study with this chapter, my thinking about the issues of focus raised throughout the work does not end here. I approach this final chapter with a commitment to continue my process of learning from public remembrance of state violence. In writing this concluding chapter, this commitment has been translated into revisiting my assumptions – what I think I know – about public remembrance of the dictatorship and about the function of *derechos humanos* on the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. More specifically, this commitment has been translated into a reconsideration of the landscape as messy and into leaving open questions for thought that resists the (my) urge to “wrap up” and neatly resolve this study.

This is not an attempt to write a “better account” of this landscape or of writing myself as “the heroine of my own story” (Lather, 2001). Rather, my purpose is to deepen our (my) understanding of the significance of remembrance of state violence and the psycho-dynamic dimensions of political issues, such as human rights, addressed through this remembrance. Here, I draw from Simon and Rosenberg (2005) who write that “if we are to deepen our understanding of what is at stake in practices of remembrance [of violence] and how and why they matter, there
is a need to look carefully at what organizes historical memory” (p. 68). In the case of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship this includes “looking” at the possibilities and limits. I believe that within a current international context in which remembrance of violence is often mobilized as a justification for further violence (e.g, the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan) this understanding and this looking is crucial to coming to examine how remembrance practices distinguish “who counts as human”, “whose lives count as lives”, and “what makes for a grievable life (sic)” (Butler, 2004, p. 20). Subsequently, this understanding and this looking has important implications for examining how these practices inform “our” social relations.

Throughout this work I have considered these issues with a focus on how calls to remember the dictatorship and to commit to a militancia for derechos humanos are structured by organismos de derechos humanos. In this last chapter, I have chosen to follow three lines of inquiry that allow me to explore how these calls have been taken up and how they have informed other public practices of remembrance of and struggles against systemic violence. First, I examine the role of the “second-order witness” (Simon & Eppert, 1997) within the construction of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. Drawing from studies that have centered on the problem of bearing witness to others’ memories of violence, my aim is to contextualize this landscape within the political and affective concerns that motivate those who have no personal memories of this past to invest in or reject the command to remember. Thus, my purpose is to open up a discussion that considers the experience of loss and trauma initiated by bearing witness as integral to this landscape. Second, I situated the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship within a larger landscape of memories of more recent instances of state violence in Argentina. A discussion about how these two landscapes exist in relation to each other allows me to consider how certain frames of cultural remembrance of state violence in Argentina are
produced and reproduced to call attention to a continuing legacy of state violence. This discussion also allows me to explore how these frames and, more generally, calls for memory become subsumed into the everyday, jeopardizing the urgency and legitimacy of these calls. Lastly, I return to Mouffe and Laclau’s theory of hegemony to continue to explore how *derechos humanos* as an “empty signifier” offers possibilities for the formation of a public bound by a concern for others’ suffering. That said, I also examine how the hegemonic function of *derechos humanos* risks “emptying” the significance of the specificities of others’ suffering and of particular struggles against systemic violence. Importantly, these three lines of inquiry offer new insights into how people engage in a continual learning to live with loss.

6.2 Coming to Witness: Possibilities for Learning and the Burden of Memory

The process of coming to bear witness to a witness is either initiated by the second-order witness who requests to hear the “first-order witnesses’” (Simon & Eppert) story, or by the first-order witness who asks that others listen to her or his stories. In either circumstance, the order of witnessing distinctly defines the knowledge each witness has of the past and how they

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169 I have chosen to use Simon and Eppert’s terms, “first-order” and “second-order witness” rather than “first-generation” and “second-generation witness” because the former are more telling of a witness’ position in relation to how she or he came to witness than those that identify a witness’ position based on their membership within a particular generation. The terms “first-” and “second-order” structure temporality differently than the terms “first-“ and “second-generation”. The terms developed by Simon and Eppert structure the time of witnessing as a matter of how the person came to witness – or rather, by whom they were called on to witness (or who they turned to to hear stories of the past). Though the terms “first-generation” and “second-generation witness” functions in the same way, they also identify the witness based on her or his time of birth in relation to the historical event. Thus, though a first-order witness is always a first-generation witness the same is not true in the reverse. For example, in 2006 I participated in organizing events in remembrance of the 1976-1983 dictatorship with a group of Argentines living in Toronto. In some of these events the first-order witnesses (the majority of the organizers) were of the same generation as those in attendance. In this case, the public could not be considered “second-generation”. Having heard some of the stories being told about dictatorial violence in Argentina and about disappearance for the first time from these first-order (first-generation) witnesses, they could be considered second-order witnesses. That said, as I am a second-order witness those who come to witness this past through my re-telling, are considered third-order witnesses (regardless of their generational relationship to me). In this regard, the delineation of witnesses by order rather than generation allows for the identification of a witnesses’ position in relation to the historical event based on who they came to witness from.
experience this knowledge and this past. Whereas the first-order witness came to know the
events of the past as present, the second-order witness came to know them once they were
already considered past. Thus, the second-order witness can never witness what the first-order
witness did (Baum, 2000).

In her discussion of “second-generation witnesses” to the Holocaust, Rachel Baum writes of
their struggle “to find their own place in that massive history” (p. 94) as a problem of “taking
on” others’ memories. She explains that second-order witnesses often come to and are expected
to “take on” the stories of the survivors as their own. Their belief of the “redemptive promise of
memory” (p. 92) to keep the dead and the survivors alive through this “memory transfusion”
(ibid) is informed by those survivors who ask second-order witnesses to “speak for” (ibid) them.
Within the context of Argentina, parallel expectations have been expressed by organismos de
derechos humanos who call on younger generations to carry on their struggle for derechos
humanos. For example, at a recent conference of “organisaciones populares” (“popular
organizations” which, for the purposes of this study can be understood as, other rights groups)
President of the Abuelas, Estela Carlotto, proclaimed that “nuestra lucha no termina con
nosotros; los jóvenes la continuarán” (“our struggle does not end with us; the youth [of
Argentina] will continue it”) (cited in “Estela Carlotto Dijo que los Jóvenes Continuarán la
Lucha por la Libertad” [“Estela Carlotto Said that the Youth Will Continue the Struggle for
Liberty”], 2008). Indeed, similar notions of how the struggle for derechos humanos will be
continued are also articulated through the assertion of the presence of the disappeared in today’s
struggle for social justice. While such statements mobilize a sense of possibility for change that
remembrance of state violence can evoke, they can also frame remembrance as an impossible
task.
In calls to remember, both the *organismos de derechos humanos* and the disappeared are sometimes positioned as martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the construction of a “better Argentina”. Amidst stories of horror of disappearance and torture, of missing children living unknowingly under a false identity and of sedated bodies being thrown into the ocean, such representations inscribe a sense of hope that perhaps mitigates the anger and sadness that comes with listening to these stories. Such representations call attention to a public through an appeal to a desire to want to “rescue” (Britzman, 1998; 2000) the disappeared from unimaginable brutality and their relatives from insurmountable loss. They perhaps also work to “rescue” the second-order witness from being overwhelmed by the horror, thus serving to stave off a rejection of the call to witness. In this regard, remembrance practices that focus on the sacrifice undertaken by the disappeared and *organismos de derechos humanos* might function to diminish the possibility of immobilizing the second-order witness – of leaving “the living in the breach of melancholia” (Simon, Rosenberg, & Eppert, 2000, p. 5). Hope might thus motivate younger generations and the Argentine public being called on through these remembrance practices to participate in the struggle for a “better Argentina”. Indeed, though not tied to particular representations of the disappeared and of *organismos de derechos humanos*, this sense of motivation was expressed to me in conversations I had with two students from the *Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo*\(^{170}\) and a number of elementary and secondary school teachers who were taking a course at the *IEM* on how to teach about the dictatorship\(^{171}\).

\(^{170}\) Recall from Chapter Five that this is a University, not accredited by the Ministry of Education, which is run by the *Asociación Madres* in Buenos Aires.

\(^{171}\) These conversations were not audio recorded nor did I ask the students and teachers to sign a consent form. Thus, in my re-telling of our conversations I am drawing from notes I made afterwards. Additionally, I do not provide these persons’ names.
On July 1st, 2007 I attended a lecture given by Hebe de Bonafini at the Universidad Popular\textsuperscript{172}. Here I met two students of the Universidad who, having told them about my research interests in public remembrance of the dictatorship, offered to meet with me to tell me more about their experiences as students at the university. A few days later, at a café in downtown Buenos Aires, we spoke casually about the coming of the end of their last year in high school and their anxieties about their quickly approaching university endeavours. They explained to me that they had begun taking classes at the Universidad one year earlier for the purpose of exploring interests that they might choose to focus on in the following year at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). They had chosen the Universidad Popular because it offered courses in journalism and in legal studies, both degrees which they had considered pursuing at the UBA. Primarily, however, they had chosen the Universidad Popular because they thought it could provide them with “alternative” ways of understanding their role as potential journalists or lawyers, and because they wanted to learn more about the Madres de Plaza de Mayo\textsuperscript{173}. These students suggested wanting to participate in an endeavour to learn about the Madres de Plaza de Mayo and, implicitly, about the dictatorship – a learning about that I presume included wanting to know more information about the state repression such as answers to why, where, what, and whom. In asserting an interest in learning “alternative ways of thinking” (about journalism and the law), they seemed motivated by a desire to reconsider their position in and responsibility to Argentine civil society. In this sense, they had begun to explore possibilities to participate in that very social transformation which the Asociación Madres and many other organismos de derechos humanos have attempted to foster.

\textsuperscript{172} This lecture was not part of a course but rather a public lecture that was advertised widely (see Appendix C).

\textsuperscript{173} More specifically, these students explained that they thought the Universidad Popular could educate them in “un pensamiento alternativo” (“an alternative way of thinking”).
Similarly, I met a number of elementary and highschool teachers in 2009 who had expressed a desire to learn more about *organismos de derechos humanos* and to learn both more information about the dictatorship (generally stated as such) and about how to teach their students about this past. As I discovered through my participation in two classes of a weekly semester course offered by the *IEM* on how to teach about the dictatorship, these teachers had decided to enroll in the course because they (generally) felt ill equipped to talk with their students about such “difficult knowledge” (Britzman, 1998)\(^{174}\). Neither the students I had met at *Universidad Popular*, nor these teachers, seemed burdened by the call to engage in a learning about the dictatorship and a learning of how to “live otherwise” – to “live more justly” (Derrida, 1994, p. xviii). Importantly, their incentive to partake in such a learning highlighted particular forms of remembrance as offering them possibilities to do so – that is, those practices of remembrance organized not for the specific purpose of remembering the disappeared but rather as participation in struggles for social justice. The two students and these teachers are thus participating, albeit implicitly, in what Petrini has called a “*memoria de acción*” (“memory of action”) (Conversation, July 20, 2007, *Asociación Madres*, Buenos Aires). Remembrance here occurs through the action in which those called to remember are involved – an action that I

\(^{174}\) I travelled to Argentina in 2009 primarily for reasons outside of this dissertation research. However, I did visit some sites of remembrance and participated in some events organized by *organismos de derechos humanos* during my stay from which I draw in this dissertation (see Appendix C). Here, I draw from my experiences in the course for teachers offered by the *IEM* to which I was invited to participate by Alba Pereyra Lanzilotto (one of the members of the *IEM* with whom I had a conversation for this study). This course had been advertised in the schools (those in which the Principal allowed it to be advertised) and in the magazine “*Diario del 24 de Marzo*” (“24th of March Newspaper”) published by the *IEM* and distributed at the annual remembrance march held on the 24th of March (in remembrance of the first day of the coup).
presume many *organismos de derechos humanos* would argue recalls traces of the struggle for a better Argentina for which the disappeared were disappeared\(^{175}\).

Reflecting upon my participation in remembrance events in 2007, I remember often feeling invigorated, motivated to continue my research and my own thinking about how I might participate in a learning to “live otherwise”. However, I also remember at times feeling overwhelmed by the sadness around me and the sadness I myself felt. I found myself needing a break from it and, in fact, once I returned to Canada I made a decision not to return to my conversation transcripts for quite some time. In her study of how “second-generation witnesses” to the 1976-1983 dictatorship attempt to “makes sense” of a history they have little to no memories of, Susana Kaiser (2005a) found that some of the participants experienced similar difficulties. In her analysis of participants’ reactions to reading the “*Nunca Más*” report she found that the “disturbing effects” of the testimonies often prohibited them from continuing to read. For example, one participant in this study stated the following: “I started reading it and had to stop. It’s very strong, very intense” (p. 171). Further, in Kaiser’s (2005a) analysis of participants’ reactions to a video of the 1985 “trial of the military”, many participants spoke of feeling helpless. For example, one participant articulated the following: “I cry every time I watch it. I feel impotent. The brutality angers and hurts me, how [the military] abused and killed everybody. I cry seeing how they killed so many people, who were taken away, disappeared….You feel impotent” (p. 175).

Such experiences are important to consider as they remind us that the task of learning to live with loss is a difficult and painful one. Though certainly different than the pain and suffering experienced by the first-order witnesses, second-order witnesses are also affected by the trauma

\(^{175}\) But only traces, because these teachers and students are not explicitly concerned with social justice issues.
and loss. That is, they experience their own trauma and loss (Baum, 2000). Drawing from Deborah Britzman’s (1998; 2000) analysis on the use of the diary of Anne Frank in schools, I wonder, how might narratives of hope and courage that foreclose “strong” and “intense” emotions subsequently foreclose learning from others’ memories of inexplicable violence and from “what has been lost in the self” (p. 32)? Though there are certainly risks to not expressing the hope for change and the courage of confronting injustices in the face of the danger of persecution, there might also be risks to centering a call to remember the disappeared and to commit to action for derechos humanos on this hope and courage? Here, I am not suggesting that the organismos de derechos humanos and many of those who were disappeared do not and did not have hope that social change in Argentina was possible, that their struggle was not courageous, or that memories of these struggles cannot or should not engender hope that the present can be transformed and motivate action to do so. Rather, I am asking, what are the risks to learning from such memories when second-order witnesses are inhibited from confronting their own feelings of shock, anger, frustration, helplessness and sadness and that which they cannot fully come to understand?

Examining one of her participants’ responses to the video of the trial, Kaiser (2005a) explains that though the video had taught him about “the horror”, he lacked “an understanding of its genesis” (p. 177). Jorge, who had been “exposed for the first time to the events of the dictatorship” through the video, had stated that the film had “shocked” him and though he had tried to understand why the military had taken people away he was unable to do so (ibid). Drawing from Britzman, I read Jorge’s statements as, not an inability to understand why the dictatorship occurred, but rather an inability to grasp it within his own frames of understanding the world around him. Thus, when horror and the emotions evoked from facing horror are foreclosed, so too are possibilities for reconsidering how one’s present has been changed through
bearing witness to another’s suffering. In this regard, hope and courage limits possibilities for “bearing witness to the relation one’s life has to others” (Britzman, 2000, p. 32). Importantly, in noting this I am not making a call to create a place where second-order witnesses can translate others’ memories of suffering into their own experiences of suffering. Rather, I am calling for a consideration of how learning from these memories can include both the acquisition of knowledge of past events and of the experiences of others, as well as a reflection upon how one has been changed by this knowledge and how one might thus come to a commitment to “live otherwise”. This is a learning that creates a place for second-order witnesses to shape their own militancia and contribute to the organization of public remembrance of the disappeared – a place that allows them to “take in” others’ memories of violence and “weave them into their own lives”, to be “shaped” by them without being “destroyed” by them (Baum, 2000, p. 93-94).

Undoubtedly, this is a difficult learning. Often asked to identify with the disappeared and to identify as having been affected by the dictatorship in the call to commit to the struggle for derechos humanos, the difficulty of this learning may be furthered by; a) the distinction between the “affected” and “non-affected” that privileges the experiences of some (the affected) over others (the non-affected) and, b) the contradictions between understanding the disappeared as the same as yet different from “you and I”176. Here, second-order witnesses are faced with an impossible task in which they can only come to approximate the militancia of those they are

176 Identification in this case is different than that which Rosenberg (2000) writes about in that it does not ask one to understand one’s self as a potential victim of disappearance (of the physical act of being disappeared) – it is not an “identification [that] is formed through substitution” (p. 81). Equally, this is not an identification that calls on people to imagine how they might have felt had they been persecuted, illegally detained and tortured (though it may function to do so). Nor can identification be defined here as an inability to distinguish between one’s own pain and the pain of another (Britzman, 2000). As I have previously explained, identification in this context is one’s recognition of the similarities between her or his everyday life and the everyday life of those that were disappeared. Specifically, the aim of this process of identification is to recognize that militancia is a possibility for those in the present. This aim is based on the notion that if second-order witnesses can see similarities between their daily lives and those of the disappeared, then they may subsequently come to realize that, like the disappeared, the second-generation witnesses can also choose to commit themselves to a militancia.
being asked to fully embody. They are also faced with the impossible task of coming to identify as “affected” through the identity of “non-affected” that allows one to only ever approach that (former) identity without ever arriving – without ever being able to identify as “truly” affected. If one perceives such an identification as an impossible task, accepting the call to witness might then be experienced as immobilizing and might ultimately be rejected.

The limits of identification, as well as idealization, also lie in what this call forecloses of the shock, and singularity of loss (Rosenberg, 2000). This is quite different than the “problem of idealization” expressed in some of my conversations. In these conversations the concern was that idealized images of the disappeared would prohibit second-order witnesses from noting their mistakes and thus avoiding them in the future. For some of those with whom I spoke, the solution to this problem is “humanizing” the disappeared and thus focusing their remembrance on their daily experiences. This meant offering frames of reference through which “we” could recognize and identify similarities between their lives and “ours”. However, here I am referring to how idealization (defined above) and this process of identification might preclude a learning from others’ memories of violence. Specifically, drawing from Rosenberg, “what is foreclosed…is the possibility of encountering and facing the very shock of” disappearance and of coming to learn about such incomprehensible violence – the “shock of the [unbearable] unknown”. In coming to identify with the disappeared as people whose everyday was similar to “mine”, the specificities of the past and present are forgotten. Similarly, calls to participate in a struggle for derechos humanos grounded in maintaining a continuity between the violence, the victims, and the affected of the past and present (albeit, a continuity that is impossible to maintain), erases the diversity of experiences of living and resisting violence and of living with loss. The inexplicability of the brutality and horror of disappearance and state terrorism is thus diminished through a remembrance that mobilizes; a) idealized images of the disappeared and of
organismos de derechos humanos, b) a call to identify with the disappeared and as affected, and c) a call to invest in the idealized outcomes for action articulated through narratives of hope. In such a situation the possibilities to learn from first-order witnesses are hindered as second-order-witnesses find it difficult to “find their own place” to explore the ruptures in their knowledge and understanding and to consider how they might contribute to remembrance and to derechos humanos.

In a similar vein, “the truth” leaves little or no room to understand the force of the past on “our” lives today or to decide what to do with the memories, the knowledge, and the responsibilities that have been passed down. Indeed, as I explained in Chapter Four, the truth of why the disappeared were disappeared – both its construction and the call for its remembrance and legitimization – is important for collective and individual reasons that are at once political and personal. However, it can also function to obstruct further inquiry and thought of what it means to “live otherwise.” Writing about the limits of the CONADEP and the Nunca Más report, Di Paolantonio (2000) maintains that truth-telling (within this particular context) precluded public debate in Argentina, “draining the democratization process of its broader political imagination while entrenching a facile, institutionally contained ritual for ‘coming to terms with the past’” (p. 167-168). Having rendered the horrors of the dictatorship comprehensible through a redeeming narrative of true and false, the Nunca Más report constructed the state terrorism as an outlier amidst an otherwise “normal” society. Similarly, distinguishing the dictatorship from other instances of authoritarian violence in Argentina as a genocidio also serves to identify the historical legacy of state violence as a part of that normalcy. Drawing from Di Paolantonio, the production of the truth as such establishes the conditions for Argentines to evade responsibility for this past, for as part of the norm they cannot not be held (or considered) accountable. In other words, Argentines can defer assuming responsibility for
the disappeared – for “their” “dead”. Further, as an indisputable fact, the truth limits “my” ability to “take in” others’ memories of the dictatorship on “my” own terms. The issue here is not one of verifying or discrediting the truth, of better representing it, or of dismissing the construction of the truth as insignificant. Rather, this is an issue of thinking about the ways in which a truth might be told to continuously challenge the limits of “my” understanding – of what “I” think “I” know, of what “I” am willing to know, and of what “I” will decide to do with that knowledge.

I imagine that many of those with whom I spoke would argue that this is, in fact, what the call to remember the truth functions to do – specifically, to motivate a transformation in the self that would ultimately manifest in a struggle for social change. Perhaps this is the case for some second-order witnesses. My aim, however, is not to prove or disprove the efficacy of public remembrance of the dictatorship. My aim is instead to consider the possibilities and limits it offers in an attempt to contribute to a discussion of how second-order witnesses might come out from “behind the scenes” of the construction of a landscape of remembrance of historical violence and of derechos humanos (and human rights). That said, I end this section not with solutions but with more questions. Is it possible to structure a remembrance of the dictatorship that speaks of hope and courage, and horror and brutality? Is it possible to participate in others’ suffering without being immobilized by it? In a similar vein, is it possible to face one’s sadness, anger, shock, and apprehension to assuming the call to witness without being immobilized by these feelings?
6.3 “Tragedialandia”: Too Much Memory or Possibilities for More Memories?

An editorial cartoon published in the daily Argentine newspaper Página 12 illustrates the Argentine landscape as a “Tragedialandia” (“Tragedyland”), marked by sites of remembrance of death and past violence. In her Master’s thesis titled, “Graffiti, Memory and Contested Space: Mnemonic Initiatives Following Trauma and/or Repression in Buenos Aires, Argentina”, Erin Kaipainen (2006) refers to this cartoon as an illustrative example of the “intense memory work” in Argentina which, she maintains, exists “because of a history of impunity and unchecked corruption” (p. 21). Thus, she argues that public remembrance in Argentina is staged in response to a legacy of state violence and the culture of impunity in the country. Though, as I have discussed throughout this work, such a response cannot be situated outside of the loss for which “memory work” attempts to account, her study is important to us because it speaks to a need to contextualize public remembrance of the dictatorship within a larger landscape of memories of violence.

The author of the cartoon identifies Argentina as a Tragedialandia through sites of memory that mark recent incidents of state repression, events not directly associated with state violence, and the 1976-1983 dictatorship. For example, with respect to contemporary police violence,
Puente Pueyrredón (Pueyrredón Bridge) refers to the place where police repression of a mass piquete (road block) in 2002 ended in the murder of two piqueteros at the nearby train station, Estación Avellaneda. Today, a mural painted below the bridge depicts the victims, Darío Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki, leading a march. The words “Trabajo, Dignidad, y Cambio Social – ¡Maxi y Darío Presentes!” (“Work, Dignity, and Social Change – Maxi and Darío Present!”) are graffitied beside the images in the mural. In regard to sites of violence not directly linked with the state, the banner bearing the word Cromañón names the former nightclub, República Cromañón, where 194 young adults died in a fire on December 30th 2004. Two memorials mark these deaths – one constructed largely by the relatives and friends of the victims and the other by the municipal government. Since the fire, the group Que No Se Repita: Familiares de Víctimas de la Tragedia de Cromañón (That It Not Be Repeated: Relatives of the Victims of the Tragedy at Cromañón) has been calling on the state to hold the owners of the nightclub responsible for the deaths of those who died there. In contrast to these two

177 The fire occurred during a rock concert at the club. As Kaipainen explains “the crowd had exceeded capacity, a nursery had been set up in part of the building and some of the exits were chained shut” (p. 175). The majority of those who died in the nightclub fire were young adults ranging from their mid teens to their early twenties. However, among the victims were children as young as three years of age.

178 I visited the mural at Puente Pueyrredón on June 26, 2007 (see Appendix C). However, I have not yet visited the memorial at Cromañón (or the memorials at Estación Avellaneda from which I draw below). Thus, I draw from Kaipainen’s study in the observations I make of these memorials. As Kaipainen explains, the memorial at Cromañón constructed by the victims’ relatives includes “graffiti, murals, stickers, banners, and belongings of the victims” (p. 176). The section of this memorial that has occupied and shut down the street in front of the nightclub includes canopies under which one can find piles of items belonging to the victims and a number of signs and banners created by the relatives. In contrast, the memorial constructed by the municipal government is “noticeably tidier” and “consists of a fenced off plaza, a long memorial wall and a small designated corner in which family members leave mementoes” (p. 178).

179 Kaipainen notes that Que No Se Repita is one of many groups constituted by relatives of the victims at Cromañón that organize demonstrations and remembrance events demanding justice. She does not detail however who these groups are. Here I draw mostly from Que No Se Repita because they are the group most accessible via the internet (www.quenoserepita.com.ar). According to the information on their website, before the fire Cromañón had repeatedly evaded regular fire code inspections because the owner of the nightclub had paid bribes to the fire department chief. Que No Se Repita has since been demanding for the trial and punishment of Omar Chabán, the owner, and Aníbal Ibarra, then mayor of the city of Buenos Aires (2000-2006). In 2006, Ibarra was impeached. In 2008 Chabán was tried along with a number of police officers and city officials considered responsible for the fire
examples, the 1976-1983 dictatorship is recognized in the cartoon by a banner that neither marks a particular building nor identifies a specific place, consequently noting the many widely known sites of remembrance of the dictatorship across the country (as well as, perhaps, the degree to which its effects were more widespread than the other two historical events mentioned above). Meanwhile, the man in the bottom right corner of the image drinks his typical Argentine mate tea and says, “And….one gets used to it all”.

Read outside of this man’s statement, a closer look at public remembrance of the events at Puente Pueyrredón and those organized by Que No Se Repita illuminates how practices commonly associated with the memory of the dictatorship have been taken up to structure public remembrance of other (more recent) histories of violence. However, read within the context of this man’s casual response to the “tragedy” and its public memory, we have to wonder, what are the implications of a remembrance of death and violence that has become so commonplace that it is now assimilated into the taken for granted landscape of the everyday?. On the one hand, when groups such as the piqueteros and Que No Se Repita use frames of cultural remembrance that have been made popular by organismos de derechos humanos, they are able to construct associations between the death of Argentines today and the disappearance of Argentines in the past. In this way, rights groups today attempt to legitimize their calls for truth and justice for the victims of past violence by framing themselves, and the victims for whom they seek retribution, as belonging to the same struggle as those who demand memory, truth, and justice for the disappeared. They contribute to the construction of a landscape of memory that speaks to

and the deaths for different reasons (e.g., impeding investigations and failing to assure the proper inspection of a public building). Ibarra has never been tried. In 2009 Chabán was sentenced to 20 years in prison and others who were also found guilty received variable sentences.
continuing death and violence, tracing a particular trajectory between past and present violence and victims that makes clear the legacy of impunity that is so often contested by *organismos de derechos humanos*. On the other hand, the use of such frames of cultural remembrance blurs the distinction between demands for past and present violence and victims and, seen seemingly everywhere, such violence and victimization becomes assimilated into the ordinary of the everyday.

Of note in the mural at *Puente Pueyrredón* is the way the presentness of Santillán and Kosteki is marked. Similarly, a graffití at the memorial at *Cromañón* constructed by relatives reads, “*los pibes de Cromañón PRESENTES, Ahora y Siempre*” (“The Kids of *Cromañón* PRESENT, Now and Forever”)\(^\text{180}\). As I explained in Chapter One, in many public remembrance events organized by *organismos de derechos humanos* it is common to hear cries affirming the presence of the disappeared in the same way – “¡30,000 Desaparecidos Presentes! ¡Ahora! ¡Y Siempre!” (“30,000 Disappeared Persons Present! Today! And Forever!”). Graffiti marking the memory of the disappeared on buildings across major cities in Argentina also often cite this call to name the presence of the disappeared. Further, many of the emails I receive from different listserves and email groups organized by *organismos de derechos humanos* end with this assertion. Though I cannot assume the task of tracing the points of emergence of this cry, my point here is that claiming the presence of victims of state violence as such is commonly associated with the memory of the disappeared. In this regard, I aim to note the similarities between the mural painted at *Puente Pueyrredón* and the memorial at *Cromañón*, and those

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\(^{180}\) *Pibes* is a slang term in Argentina used to refer to youth that can be translated into kids in English. Kaipainen notes that the repetitive use of the word *pibes* at the memorial constructed by the relatives of the victims is intended to highlight the young age of these victims and, as such, their “innocence” (as in the innocence of youth). In this regard, she argues that such calls to remember appeal to the notion that a young person’s death is more tragic and thus functions to capture the attention of passerbys.
practices of remembrance that function, at once, to insert the disappeared into the present and as a demand for an Argentine public to bring the disappeared forth into the present.

Indeed, this is not the only link drawn between past and present violence and past and present victims by *piquetero* groups calling for truth and justice for Santillán and Kosteki and by *Que No Se Repita*. For example, Kaipainen explains that at the memorial at *Cromañón*, friends and relatives of the victims have graffitied “*Ni Olvido, Ni Perdon*” (“Neither Forgetting, Nor Forgiveness”), a phrase “associated most strongly with the military dictatorship” (p. 187). Similarly, Kaipainen also notes that a graffiti in remembrance of Kosteki at *Estación Avellaneda* reads “*ni un paso atrás*” (“not even one step backwards”), a phrase made popular by the *Madres* (both groups). Specifically, “*ni un paso atrás*” is a statement of the unwavering commitment of the *Madres* to resist state efforts to “forget and forgive” the dictatorship and to struggle for memory, truth, and justice in the name of the disappeared. As the *Asociación Madres* (1997) have explained: “*el compromiso nuestro es ni un paso atrás, es no claudicar, no negociar, no perdonar, no olvidar, tener claro quien es el asesino y el amigo del asesino*” (“our commitment to not take even one step backwards, it’s not to falter, not to negotiate, not to forgive, not to forget, know who the assassin is and the friends of the assassin”) (p. 90).

Kaipainen argues that the use of the *Madres*’ statement about their commitment to continuously demand for truth and justice in this graffiti positions Kosteki, Santillán\(^1\), and other *piqueteros*, as participants within the *Madres*’ relentless struggle. However, I read this graffiti as an affirmation of the *piqueteros*’ commitment to never forgive their murders, never forget the police violence that culminated in their deaths, never forget their lives or deaths, and never stop

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\(^1\) Claims for memory, truth and justice for Kosteki are inherently claims made also in the name of Santillán, as Santillán was murdered when trying to assist Kosteki who had just been shot.
protesting against the state in demand for truth and justice. The link traced between the struggle for memory, truth, and justice for the disappeared and for memory, truth, and justice for Kosteki and Santillán functions to legitimize the latter in two ways. Situating claims for memory, truth, and justice for Kosteki and Santillán as similar to those claims made by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo lends credibility to demands for trial and punishment of the police responsible for their murders because of the association structured between this particular struggle and that of a group as revered as the Madres. In other words, this particular graffiti draws from the Madres’ privileged status within civil society to command attention to the injustices of today, as well as to the victims and loss resulting from those injustices. Consequently, this violence and this loss is contextualized within a legacy of continuing loss. Similarly, the graffiti at Cromañón that asserts Que No Se Repita’s (and other groups of relatives’) perseverance in their demand for justice and memory positions the loss of 194 young Argentines within a context of continuing death and loss resulting from an absent state. This graffiti thus also functions to legitimize the discourse of derechos humanos and drawing from this discourse in turn legitimizes Que No Se Repita’s demands for the state to assume responsibility for the deaths at Cromañón.

The way in which the boundaries of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship and of the landscape of memories of recent violence blend and coalesce undoubtedly have important implications for struggles against state violence, the struggle for derechos humanos, and the reconstructions of the relationship between the state and civil society. Nonetheless, it is important to consider how this blending and coalescing might risk certain possibilities for learning from the memories of those subjected to systemic violence. Specifically, this is a concern with questions about how we might come to learn from loss within a landscape in which this loss is prominently contained within the mundane of the everyday. Drawing from an excerpt from one of her interviews with a young Argentine, Kaiser (2005a) argues that younger
generations are bombarded with stories of horror. Though she primarily focuses on participants’ responses to the *Nunca Más* report and to the video of the 1985 trial, she also notes that the *Madres*’ weekly Thursday marches in Plaza de Mayo, while not explicitly highlighting the horror of the past, are nonetheless a reminder of it because the *Madres* are widely perceived as embodying the memory of this horror. One participant in particular had become so “used to” hearing about the dictatorship that stories about this past no longer “shocked” him. For example, with reference to how he felt reading the *Nunca Más*, Leonardo stated the following: “It’s horrible; some of the things it tells are horrible but they didn’t impact me because I had already heard a lot of things. One loses the capability of being shocked” (p. 171). Considering this statement within the context of an analysis of how the landscape of memory of the dictatorship constitutes a larger landscape defined as a *Tragedialandia*, we are reminded of the limits of learning from memories of violence when the shock of confronting horror is foreclosed. However, Leonardo’s comments tell us that shock is not foreclosed because of how the dictatorship is narrated (e.g., through idealized images) or because of what remembrance of the dictatorship calls on the second-order witness to do (e.g., to identify with the disappeared or as (non-)affected). Rather, here the ability to be shocked is diluted because of the proliferation of calls to remember. In this regard Leonardo’s comments point to the same issue that the *Tragedialandia* cartoon highlights – the issue of “too much” memory.

How might we conceptualize the issue of “too much” memory? Drawing from James Young’s (2000) analysis of monuments erected in remembrance of violence, I wonder if perhaps the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship, particularly when viewed within the larger context of the landscape of memories of violence and death in Argentina, might be doing “our” memory work for “us”. Monuments, graffiti, plaques, and former sites of dictatorial violence, now reconstructed into “*sitios de memoria*” (“sites of memory”), can only ever “rise up
symbolically against injustice” (Young, 2000, p. 135, my emphasis). Certainly, the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship is also constituted by the countless demonstrations and various events organized by organismos de derechos humanos that are anything but a symbolic stand against past and present injustice. However, perhaps because of the abundance of such remembrance practices some of those called to bind in a commitment to remember the dictatorship and to work for derechos humanos dismiss this call on the assumption that they do not need to engage in this work because the organismos are already doing so. Indeed, a participant in Kaiser’s (2005b) study expressed a similar notion in the following excerpt: “It’s a blessing that they [the Madres] exist because they’re the ones who keep the memory alive” (p. 185).

Similar to Young’s work and to comments made by second-generation witnesses to the dictatorship, Andreas Huyssen (2003b) acknowledges that forgetting may in fact be the consequence of the abundance of calls to remember violence. However, neither Young’s nor Huyssen’s analysis of the notion of “too much” memory ends with a concern for the potential risks involved in the proliferation of remembrance of state violence. Further, neither of them suggests that there is a need to halt calls to remember. Young, for example, highlights “countermemorials” as a possible form for a remembrance that resists “usurping the…will to remember” (p. 129-130). His focus on the “disappearing Harburg Monument Against Fascism and for Peace” constructed by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz (in Germany) (p.128) illuminates how the absence of memory can function as a call to remember. This “countermonument”, a “forty-foot-high,…pillar” (p. 130), was inscribed with a message to visitors to add their names to the pillar that would gradually be lowered into the ground to one day vanish completely. A primary assumption of this “self-consuming” monument was that, in realizing that the monument would not be able to do the remembering, visitors would take it
upon themselves to do so. Thus, in his discussion of countermemorials Young presents us with possibilities for navigating the thorny issue of “too much” memory in a way that does not preclude remembrance. To be clear, I am not suggesting that this specific countermonument should become part of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. I am particularly sensitive to the anguish and revictimization (redisappearance) that a disappearing monument of the disappeared might provoke. As well, I worry of the dangers of remembrance practices premised on “vanishing” the call to remember in a country where a volatile political terrain leaves memory “vulnerable to [too many] future unknowns – to changes of mind…that might be imposed on…commitments” to support and motivate public remembrance of the dictatorship (Brodsky, 2005 cited in Di Paolantonio, 2008, p. 36). Rather, my point is that Young’s analysis offers us a new orientation for thinking about the forms that learning to live with loss take in different contexts where “too much” memory and the desire to forget are also concerns.

In contrast to Young, though Huyssen worries about the “cultural obsession” with memory, he also argues that debates about “the surfeit of memory” ignore the globalized context in which memory discourses exist and the extent to which human rights activism in the international sphere depends on memory as a “global project” (Huyssen, 2003a, p. 95). He thus maintains that questions seeking to answer why the nature of memory (and forgetting) exists as such need to focus on how local memory projects intersect with global memory discourses in order to examine how people articulate political concerns and a “need for temporal anchoring” (Huyssen, 2003a, p. 95).

Importantly, however, both Young and the Gerzes recognized that the vanishing monument could not guarantee that the visitors would in fact assume this responsibility to remember. Further, it could not guarantee that the anxiety produced by its uncontrollable disappearance would not in turn initiate a proliferation of memory. With this in mind, when invited by the village of Biron, France to replace the town’s monument to the war dead Jochen Gerz proposed to restore the former obelisk and add to it “enamel squares with the engraved answers to what he called the ‘secret question’” he posed to all residents of Biron – “For what would you risk your life?” (ibid). Now titled “The Living Monument of Biron”, the obelisk is an “unfinishable work in progress” as the answers of younger generations are continually added (ibid).
2003b, p. 28). In this regard, his analysis of the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism in Buenos Aires illustrates its emphasis on the disappeared and on justice for this past (the local dimension) and the way in which it speaks to a global legacy of political activism and state repression. He writes:

We are remembering students and workers, women and men, ordinary people who had a social vision at odds with that of the ruling elites, the church, the military, a vision shared by many young people across the globe at that time, but that led to the imprisonment, torture, rape, and death only in a few countries in the world. Thus [the monument]…is more than a national monument. It is also part of the global legacy of 1968, together with the mass shooting of students in Mexico City and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. (Hussen, 2003a, p. 105).

Though the Monument does not directly reference this legacy, drawing on design elements of “two contemporary icons of memory culture” (ibid) – the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington – it opens its visitors up to a landscape that allows them to understand their roles as witnesses to the dictatorship within a larger context of global memory discourses and projects for social justice. Within the context of this study, his analysis might then be read as a discussion of the ways the Monument articulates a learning to live with loss that implicates the formation of an Argentine public in an international context of violence and loss for which it is also responsible for addressing through its commitment to remembering the disappeared and struggling for derechos humanos.

Though Young’s and Huyssen’s work have certainly provided me with conceptual tools to ask questions about the notion of “too much” memory, I think it is important nonetheless to acknowledge that asking these questions can be dangerous. This is not the case only because such questions dismiss the significance of local remembrance to international struggles against repression and for human rights (and vice versa), as Huyssen has noted. They are also risky questions because this line of thinking is used as a justification for the need to forget the past. As I have previously explained, within the context of Argentina these questions are particularly
dangerous because the constantly changing political terrain leaves the dictatorship and the disappeared susceptible to forgetting – to an abandonment of “our” responsibility to attend to others’ suffering and to reconsider “the relation one’s life has to others” (Britzman, 2000, p. 32). That said, it is equally important to acknowledge that in considering the notion of “too much” memory in Argentina I am not suggesting that people should stop organizing public practices of remembrance of state violence. As I have illustrated throughout this study, the landscape of memory of the dictatorship constructed by organismos de derechos humanos has been integral to the struggles of other rights groups demanding memory, truth, and justice, and to provoking people to consider how they live with the “dead” – a consideration that has important implications for how the living live with each other. I nonetheless ask questions regarding the notion of “too much” memory in an attempt to attend to Leonardo’s and the Tragedialandia cartoon’s comments about being oversaturated by memories of violence because these responses are also constitutive of that which organizes historical memory and of how people negotiate the task of learning to live with loss. With this in mind, I am left with the following questions: how do we take these comments into account while still supporting those who continually call on “us” to remember? and, importantly, how do we take up these two seemingly contradictory tasks without making prescriptions about the “right” and “most efficient” way to remember state violence?

6.4 Deréchos Humanos: A “Dangerous Hegemonic Victory”

As a hegemonic discourse derechos humanos functions as “the coalescing symbol of a plurality of struggles” (“Hegemony & Socialism: An Interview with Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau”, 2007). Through the discourse of derechos humanos rights groups – Indigenous rights groups, workers’ rights groups, piquetero groups, and organismos de derechos humanos – bind together
on the Argentine terrain of political resistance to articulate their specific demands. “While maintaining the incommensurability between universals and particulars” the discourse of derechos humanos enables “the latter [the particulars] to take up the representation of the former [the universals]” without erasing the particularities of each group (Laclau, 2001, p. 11). In other words, the particularities of rights groups’ demands are “rearticulated” through the discourse of derechos humanos (Howarth, 2004; Laclau, 2001; Laclau, 1996; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985a; “Hegemony & Socialism: An Interview with Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau”, 2007). As such, derechos humanos is rearticulated as an “empty signifier” – that which has acquired a universal function while still maintaining the specificities of that which it is always coming to signify. As I have illustrated throughout this study, the hegemonic character of derechos humanos has important implications for legitimizing and advancing different groups’ political demands. Rights groups mobilize the discourse of derechos humanos to situate contemporary state violence within a legacy of continuing state violence and a culture of impunity. Because of the privileged position of the discourse of derechos humanos and of the organismos de derechos humanos, the mobilization of this discourse by rights groups legitimizes the suffering from which rights groups make their claims. Their demands to have that suffering acknowledged as political are thus also legitimized. Subsequently, the links articulated by rights groups between the repression of the dictatorship and contemporary socio-economic and police violence reaffirms claims made by organismos de derechos humanos that the dictatorship has resulted in socio-economic injustices and that it aimed to implement a particular economic model (of which these injustices are a consequence). Similarly, contemporary social struggles function to assert the presence of the disappeared and the perseverance of their struggle for a “better Argentina”.

Among the many examples presented throughout this chapter, Sutton (2008) also tells us that the discourse of derechos humanos has been mobilized by certain groups to “foster public
understanding of racism” (p. 114) and to bring antiracist struggles to the forefront. For example, she notes that for the 2006 30th anniversary of the beginning of the dictatorship the Organización de las Naciones y Pueblos Indígenas en Argentina (ONPIA) (Organization of Indigenous Nations and Peoples in Argentina) “issued a declaration… suggesting a longer history of genocide: 1876-2006” (p. 114-115). In this declaration the ONPIA repudiated the military dictatorship as a “‘consolidation of a systematic genocidal process that victimized indigenous (sic) Peoples and Nations’” (ONPIA, 2006 cited in, Sutton, 2008, p. 115). Here, the link drawn between contemporary and historical human rights violations frames the ONPIA’s own objectives for “‘the restitution of indigenous (sic) lands…that were…given to private and foreign [holders] (sic) before, during, and after the dictatorship’” (ibid), as a signifier of derechos humanos (“in general”) (Laclau, 1996, p. 44). Similarly, the group Africa Vive (Africa Lives) calls attention to the legacy of racism in Argentina as an issue of derechos humanos through their claims that Afro-Argentines were “the first disappeared” (Sutton, 2008, p. 114). By drawing a “parallel between the erasure of Afro-Argentines and the disappearance of groups labelled ‘Others’” (ibid), Africa Vive presents its own aims as a signifier of derechos humanos, contributing to the reproduction of an “expanded” notion of human rights. In parallel to what I have demonstrated throughout this study, Sutton (2008) also examines how organismos de derechos humanos mobilize the discourse of derechos humanos to articulate their calls for memory, truth, and justice with regard to the dictatorship as a signifier of derechos humanos (“in general”). She explains that in 2005, in their support for immigrant rights' groups, Madres-Linea Fundadora wrote a letter to President Néstor Kirchner in which, “in asking for the regularization of undocumented immigrants, the group recalled his stated commitment to human rights, invoking the disappeared to lend greater authority to its claim:…..‘We support them because that’s what
the 30,000 [disappeared by the dictatorship] (sic) would have done’” (Taty Almeida cited in Sutton, 2008, p. 115).

Drawing from Laclau (1996), these examples might “in one sense” be read as a “hegemonic victory because the objectives of a particular group are identified with society, [or, more specifically, issues of derechos humanos] at large” (p. 45). “But, in another sense, this is a dangerous victory” (ibid). The examples of the ONPLA and Africa Vive illustrate how struggles against institutionalized racism are translated through a language that is today commonly associated with demands for trial and punishment of those who committed crimes between 1976 and 1983 (e.g., genocide and disappeared). In a similar vein, organismos de derechos humanos call for a public understanding of an expanded notion of human rights that includes “social and economic rights” (“social justice”) (Humphrey & Valverde, 2008, p. 86) and that accounts for past and present victims of state violence in the name of the disappeared – that is, through a language that continuously recalls the disappeared and the violence of the dictatorship. If the struggle for memory, truth and justice organized by organismos de derechos humanos “becomes the signifier of…[derechos humanos] as such, it also becomes the surface of inscription through which all (sic) [rights struggles]…will be expressed. In so doing, the chain of equivalences which are unified around this signifier tend to empty it” (Laclau, 1996, p. 45). As a consequence of the success of the “hegemonic operation” (ibid) of the discourse of derechos humanos, derechos humanos comes to mean everything and anything, blurring the distinctions between groups’ demands and concerns.

Importantly, I am not suggesting that the way in which the discourse of derechos humanos is mobilized to reconstitute the social fabric borders on or is analogous to “the totalitarian attempt to…deny plurality in order to restore unity” (Laclau & Mouffé, 1985b, p. 188). Rather, in my
view the call for public formation articulated through the discourse of derechos humanos within the larger context of Argentine political resistance (and in the binding of this public within this context) potentially obscures the differences between groups. However, this does not mean that the groups and the elements of their distinct struggles are established as equal. As we have seen, the organismos de derechos humanos and their specific demands for derechos humanos that are made in the name of the disappeared hold a privileged position within this larger context and within the larger landscape of memories of state violence. The “hegemonic operation” of the discourse of derechos humanos thus fixes the social order of the landscape of memories of state violence and of political resistance in a hierarchical relationship. Naming the victims of current socio-economic violence and police repression as “today’s disappeared” and naming the expulsion of Afro-Argentines from the Argentine “we” as the first instance of disappearance is not just an issue of “liquefying” or diluting the substance and significance of remembrance of the 30,000 disappeared (as some critics of such conceptualizations have noted and which I described in Chapter Four). Such naming is also an issue of “emptying” the significance of the specificity of struggles for the right to work, the contestation of impunity and police repression, and the struggles against racism and anti-Semitism.

Ignatieff (2001) identifies this as an issue of “rights inflation – the tendency to define anything desirable as a right” – which is, fundamentally, one of “eroding the legitimacy of a defensible core of rights” (p. 90). In response, Brown (2004) argues that his stated worry over the inflation of rights is more of a concern for securing “what markets need to thrive” (p. 457). Specifically, Ignatieff’s elimination of “second-generation” rights from his definition of human rights not only privileges the free flow of capital over the quality of life of individuals (and collectives), but it also creates a hierarchy of gravity of violence. In so doing Ignatieff defines those who are deserving of international (legal) protection, and those who are not. Thus, Brown
raises important issues for consideration regarding how governments frame wars as “development” projects through a discourse of human rights and how the discourse’s constitutive function produces those inside and outside of the discourse. Like Brown, I am concerned with the exclusion of second-generation rights from a definition of human rights and from debates about what it means to implement human rights. Generally, and also similar to Brown, this concern stems from a larger worry over the ways in which some governments and international institutions mobilize human rights to justify violence and the reproduction of more suffering. This has certainly been the case for Canada’s participation in the war in Afghanistan which, often celebrated as a humanitarian and civilizing effort (and success), dismisses the deaths of Afghani civilians (and, arguably, necessitates that we relinquish a concern for these lives and for this suffering). Within the context of Argentina, where the unemployment rate has increased from 17 percent in the 1990s to 36 percent in the 2000s (Villalón, 2007), the concern for the exclusion of social and economic rights is particularly important to consider.

However, I also recognize that in Argentina a discussion about what constitutes human rights is much more than a debate about how human rights should be defined. The demand to include social and economic rights is an issue that is deeply affective and strongly tied to a particular political project for the country that articulates a continual learning to live with loss. In other words, such demands are demands to bring forth the disappeared into the present and into the formation of a particular public. Thus, they are demands for “us” to reconsider how “we” live “our” lives with each other and how “we” might bind in a “vow to protect others and ourselves from the kinds of violence we and/or our loved ones have suffered” (Simon, 2008, p. 365). This is precisely why I also take seriously Laclau’s caution to examine the dangers of the hegemonic victory of empty signifiers – of derechos humanos. I am not then suggesting that second-generation rights should not constitute derechos humanos, but rather worrying about how
an expanded notion of human rights and, more specifically, how the hegemonic function of derechos humanos risks “emptying” struggles lead by the piqueteros (for example) of their significance to the task of learning to live with loss. Not worrying about the dangers of the hegemonic victory risks failing to recognize a particular context of loss and particular forms of living with loss. That said, in a similar vein to the questions I was left with at the end of the previous section, I am still troubled by questions about accounting for and attending to the limits of the hegemonic function of the discourse of derechos humanos without diminishing the possibilities the offers. What is at stake when we consider issues such as the hegemonic victory of derechos humanos as a dangerous one? Rather, who is at stake? And, can we ask these questions without dismissing those lives as lives that “count” and are “grieveable” (Butler, 2004)?

6.5 In Closing

This study has sought to explore how public remembrance of the dictatorship in Argentina speaks to a continual learning to live with loss. Investigating the significance of derechos humanos to this remembrance I have endeavoured to illustrate the simultaneously political and personal, and individual and collective work of constructing the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. In speaking with many members of organismos de derechos humanos my objective was to unravel an account of the proliferation of calls to remember the dictatorship as a political project to transform social inequalities and continuing state repression, always “carefully looking” (Simon & Rosenberg, 2005) at how this project was undertaken in the name of particular people – specifically, the disappeared. Focusing on how calls to participate in a militancia for derechos humanos grounded (and asked others to ground) the significance of the disappeared to the living, my aim was to explore how such calls functioned to resist images of
the disappeared as “subversives” and as disposable lives, to attend to the effects of the dictatorial past on the present, and to reconstruct an Argentine public committed to the struggle for social justice and for legal redress for past and present state violence. In so doing, however, I was also concerned with how these calls were made in the name of the victims of contemporary state violence. In other words, my purpose was to write a study that did not dismiss the concern for present-day victims, suffering, and loss as one that was in actuality a concern for the disappeared and with one’s own suffering and loss.

Within the landscape of public remembrance of the dictatorship, living with the loss of the disappeared and of an Argentine “we” bound by principles of solidarity and revolutionary change has meant attending to the suffering of those who live in conditions of poverty, of those who live under the constant danger of police repression, and of those who grieve the lives of the victims of present-day state violence. In this study I have attempted to frame an analysis of how remembrance practices organized by organismos de derechos humanos structure a call for an Argentine public to come to learn to live with loss in this way. I have explored the possibilities and limits offered by this call not as a critique of such practices but in an aim to forge an understanding of that which organizes the formation of a public who considers others’ lives – past and present – in their decisions of how to live their own lives. Questions about how people might consider their responsibilities to others and how such a consideration might be fostered through public remembrance of state violence are important within an international context in which such memories are recalled to rebind a public fractured by traumatic histories (whether these histories are considered inherently traumatic or a consequence of a process of “trauma creation” (Alexander, 2004)). Such questions contribute to discussions about how to honour the lives of the dead by affirming their value to the present without inciting more violence – about what an ethical learning to live with loss might look like. As I have illustrated throughout this
work these questions also encourage further thinking about political projects that unproblematically mobilize a discourse of human rights without an examination of how it might function to delegitimize other discourses and struggles.

My aim to revision a chaotic and disorienting landscape of remembrance into one consisting of deeply emotional and passionately contested debates, has been an attempt to understand how organismos de derechos humanos work to “hold a place for” both the 30,000 disappeared and a particular Argentine form of social solidarity. In this sense it has also been an endeavour to restructure my own ways of looking at this landscape – a restructuring that has had significant implications for how I listened and relistened to those with whom I spoke. However, more than this, the restructuring of vision undertaken in this dissertation has implications for how I will return to the landscape for future research projects.

In 2007, after I had returned from Argentina, I read an interview with Nilda Eloy, a former disappeared person who testified in the Etchecolatz trial. In this interview, titled “From ‘Disappeared’ to Regaining her Identity” (Vergili, 2007), Eloy described the events of the night of her disappearance and of the psychological and physical torture she endured while she was detained. She also explained the importance (the necessity) of re-telling her story both for contributing to the public remembrance of the dictatorship and for the prosecution of the perpetrators of “el genocidio” (Eloy, cited in Vergili). I had heard Eloy’s story many times before through other interviews she had given with popular news mediums. Additionally, I was not surprised to read her comments about the significance of sharing her testimony. However, there was one comment she made that not only surprised me but also disoriented my understanding of the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship. In her account of the circumstances of her disappearance Eloy said: “[I] was living with [my] parents and brother
while studying medicine and working as a surgical assistant [when I was disappeared]….I had never been an activist” (cited in Vergili). Specifically, this comment troubled my understanding of who was being remembered within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship and of the political importance of this remembrance. I could not dismiss Eloy’s experience and, in fact, it continuously returned to me as I was writing this dissertation. However, I did not know how to incorporate it into my understanding of how demands for derechos humanos mobilized within the landscape of the memory of the dictatorship articulate a continual learning to live with loss. In other words, though I recognized the importance of paying attention to the unsettling effect this interview had on me, I did not know what to do with this new knowledge.

Having completed this study (for now), I realize that the issue is not about placing this knowledge into my understanding of the landscape of memory of the dictatorship. Rather it is one of listening and relistening to Eloy’s interview (and others like hers) in my future research endeavours with a commitment to consider what I can learn a new about this understanding. Admittedly, I do not know how I would have conversations with organismos de derechos humanos that make reference to the disappearance of persons who did not identify as militantes. I worry that people might feel hurt and insulted and that they might turn me away. However, I also recognize that the work of learning to live with loss is constituted by the loss of these individuals and the loss that “I” encounter when I face them. Additionally, I recognize that facing this loss holds important implications for how “we” come to constitute “our”selves as a particular kind of public and, thus, for how “we” structure our lives with others and for what it means to attend to and account for others’ suffering. Though I am concerned about how such conversations might delegitimize calls to remember the dictatorship and people’s experiences of loss (and their work to live with that loss), I believe that considering stories such as those told by Eloy about her experience as a non-militante former disappeared person foster important
opportunities to learn from others’ experiences with violence – a learning that asks “us” to commit to a continual engagement with questions about how “we” are implicated in a construction of a just present and future.

I have a profound appreciation and respect for the people with whom I spoke and for the knowledge and experiences they shared with me. Our conversations challenged me to engage in a process of learning from them and the landscape of memory and to examine my resistance to recognizing how my study is situated within the context of loss. Further, our conversations have informed my commitment to pay attention to stories like Eloy’s and to understanding my responsibility to do so. I have attempted to communicate this appreciation and respect in my writing of this study largely through my intent to learn from our conversations. I close this project with a commitment to my responsibilities to continue my learning about and from the personally affective and the socio-political elements of living with loss.
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Appendix A: List of Human Rights Groups

*Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Abuelas)*: Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo is a human rights group composed of women whose daughters were pregnant at the time of their disappearance during the 1976-1983 dictatorship and whose grandchildren are believed to be alive today living unknowingly under a false identity. They are referred to as "of Plaza de Mayo" because during the dictatorship they protested in front of the Government House in Buenos Aires in the Plaza de Mayo. Today much of their work focuses on searching for their missing grandchildren. This group emerged in Buenos Aires but currently has branches across the country.

*Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos (APDH)*: The Permanent Assembly for Human Rights is a human rights group in the city of Buenos Aires that is composed of academics, lawyers, activists, and family members of disappeared persons. It was co-founded by Raúl Alfonsín during the dictatorship (who later became the first democratic President after the collapse of the dictatorship).

*Asociación Anahí*: The Association Anahí is a human rights group in the city of La Plata composed of former members of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* who left the group in the 1990s. They continue to search for the missing grandchildren.

*Asociación Ex-Detenidos Desaparecidos (AEDD)*: The Association of Ex-Detained Disappeared Persons is a human rights group that emerged after the dictatorship in the city of Buenos Aires constituted by persons who were temporarily disappeared during the dictatorship.

*Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Asociación Madres)*: The Association Mothers of Plaza de Mayo is a human rights group in the city of Buenos Aires constituted by women whose children were disappeared during the 1976-1983 dictatorship. This group was formed in the 1980s though the women were formerly part of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* created during the dictatorship (see below).

*Barrios por la Memoria (Barrios)*: Neighborhoods for Memory is a human rights group composed of people who have recently organized in neighbourhoods across the city of Buenos Aires in order to focus remembrance of the 1976-1983 dictatorship on individual disappeared persons in their respective neighborhoods.

*Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)*: Centre for Legal and Social Studies is a human rights group that emerged during the dictatorship composed of academics, lawyers, activists, and family members of disappeared persons who were disappeared between 1976 and 1983.

*Encuentro Memoria, Verdad y Justicia*: Memory, Truth and Justice is a human rights group in the city of Buenos Aires constituted by members of other human rights groups. It was created in 2005 in response to the upcoming 30th anniversary date of the beginning of the dictatorship.
(March 24, 2006) and was meant to serve as a collective under which all human rights groups could plan events for this anniversary date.

*Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas (Familiares):* Relatives of Disappeared and Persons Detained for Political Reasons is a human rights group composed of persons who are related to a disappeared person who was disappeared between 1976 and 1983. The group emerged in the city of Córdoba during the dictatorship and today has branches across the country.

*Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina:* Argentinean Foundation for Historical and Social Memory is a human rights group composed of relatives of disappeared persons who were disappeared between 1976 and 1983. This group was formed after the dictatorship and exists only in Buenos Aires.

*Herman@s de Desaparecidos por la Verdad y la Justicia (Herman@s):* Siblings of Disappeared Persons for Truth and Justice is a human rights group composed of siblings of disappeared persons who were disappeared between 1976 and 1983. This group exists only in the city of Buenos Aires and was created recently.

*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra el Olvido y el Silencio (H.I.J.O.S):* Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence is a human rights group composed of children of disappeared persons or persons murdered by the military during the 1976-1983 dictatorship. It formed in the 1990s and today has branches across the country.

*Instituto Espacio para la Memoria (IEM):* Institute Space for Memory is a self-identified (as well as such by other human rights groups in the movement) human rights group composed of representatives from a number of human rights groups, state representatives, and “persons with known commitment to the defense of human rights” (Instituto Espacio para la Memoria, 2006). It exists only in the city of Buenos Aires.

*Justicia Ya!:* Justice Now! is a human rights groups in the city of Buenos Aires constituted by members of other human rights groups and lawyers who recently formed the group in response to the current trials of those who committed crimes during the 1976-1983 dictatorship.

*La Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre (La Liga):* The Argentine League for Human Rights is a human rights group composed primarily of lawyers as well as academics and activists in the city of Buenos Aires. It is the only group within the movement that was formed much before the 1976-1983 dictatorship that is nonetheless considered a part of the movement because of its active role during the dictatorship providing legal assistance to victims.

*Madres de Plaza de Mayo:*, The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo is a human rights group composed of women who have a child or children who were disappeared during the 1976-1983 dictatorship. The group was formed during the dictatorship and are known as “of the Plaza de Mayo” because
during the dictatorship they protested the repression in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires. The
group split in the 1980s because of internal conflicts into the Asociación Madres de Plaza de
Mayo (see above) and the Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Línea Fundadora (see below).

*Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Línea Fundadora (Madres-Línea Fundadora):* The Mothers of Plaza
de Mayo-Founding Line is a human rights group constituted by women whose children were
disappeared during the 1976-1983 dictatorship. This group has existing branches across the
country.

*Movimiento Ecuménico por los Derechos del Hombre (MEDH):* Ecumenical Movement for
Human Rights is a human rights group that emerged before the dictatorship in the 1970s and has
associations to the Catholic Church. Thus many of its members are members of the Church (e.g.,
Priests) and identify as Catholic.

*Servicio Paz y Justicia:*) Peace and Justice Service is a human rights group that originated in
Argentina before the dictatorship in the 1970s and now exists across Latin America. It is
composed both by members who are considered affected and non-affected.
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Informed Participant Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project which examines the public memories of the 1976-1983 dictatorship. You are being invited to participate in this project as you have an important role as an activist dedicated to maintaining the memory of the 1976-1983 dictatorship in Argentine society. The intent of this research is to explore the significance of and objectives of remembrance of the 1976-1983 dictatorship as it is organized by your group. I, the principal investigator, am currently a doctoral student and the purpose of this project is a doctoral thesis in the Sociology and Equity Studies in Education Department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto in Canada. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Education Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto.

Your participation includes a conversation with myself in which the focus will be your understanding of remembrance of the 1976-1983 dictatorship as important and as necessary. Our conversation will last approximately one hour and will take place in a location and at a time convenient for you. With your permission these conversations will be audio-recorded. The purpose of audio recording the conversations is to assist me in recording everything said. The conversations will be transcribed and translated by myself during the data analysis stage. You may choose not to have the conversations recorded in which case I will take notes of what is discussed. My research also includes my participation in remembrance events organized by your group and by other human rights groups as well as my visits to sites of the memory of the dictatorship such as monuments and former clandestine torture centres. My intent is to record written observations about my participation in these events and my visits to these sites. The observations will be mostly about the purpose of the event or site, how the disappeared are remembered in these events or sites (e.g., through images or the use of certain words) and how other people participate in these events and within the sites. These written observations will be later analyzed by myself. Any materials distributed throughout the events will also be collected for analysis. Our conversations will help me better understand the observations I make and will help clarify questions. Our conversations and my participation in events and visits to sites of memory will take place between May and August of 2007. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate and you have the right not to answer any of the questions throughout our conversation. Also, you may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.

The probability and magnitude of possible risks implied by participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in those aspects of your role as a human rights activist in your daily life. In our present day world in which memories of historical violence are constantly being called up in defense of wars and increasing violence which are said to be necessary for the establishment and maintenance of democracy, this research will shed light on how memories of violence can instead question the violence of today being perpetrated in the name of democracy.

183 This consent form was given to those with whom I had conversations for this research in Spanish. However, I have here provided it only in English for the reader.
The real name of the group to which you belong will be used in the write-up of the data, as the position of your specific group as a human rights group within Argentine society is integral to the research. However, you may choose to maintain your individual anonymity and not have your real name used in the write-up of the data. If you choose not to have your real name used in the write-up of the data a pseudonym will be used and no identifying information other than the group’s real name and the province in which you do your activist work will be provided. The data will be reported in the thesis as well as presented at conferences and published in journals. Only myself and the thesis committee members will have access to the raw data. The raw data will be secured in an area accessible only by key or code. The audiotapes of the conversations, the observation notes, and the materials collected at the events will be destroyed five years after completion of the study.

If you have any questions you may contact me in Buenos Aires at 4432-1678 or via email at apauchulo@oise.utoronto.ca. In the event that you need to contact me once I have returned to Canada I may be reached at 011-416-702-6217 or via email. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or any ethical concerns you may contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 011-416-946-3273 or via mail at Simcoe Hall, Room 109 27 King's College Circle, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada M5S 1A1.

I allow the researcher to use my actual name in the write-up of the data.

I do not allow the researcher to use my actual name in the write-up of the data.

Please note that there are limits to your personal anonymity as the group to which you belong will be named in the write-up of the data. To maintain confidentiality you will have the opportunity to review the conversation transcripts and request that information which compromises your anonymity be omitted.
I have had the study explained to me and I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and understand that I can withdraw at any time without negative consequences. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement.

__________________________________    ________________________  
Signature of Participant      Date

__________________________________  
Printed name of Participant

__________________________________    ________________________  
Signature of principal investigator      Date

__________________________________  
Printed name of principal investigator
Appendix C: Events Attended and Sites Visited

Events:


5. June 23, 2007, Buenos Aires: Event organized by Herman@s de Desaparecidos por la Verdad y la Justicia (Siblings of Disappeared Persons for Truth and Justice) in remembrance of some of the siblings of members of the group. Advertised by mass email and by word of mouth.

6. June 26, 2007, Avellaneda184 (Province of Buenos Aires): March organized by a number of rights groups in remembrance of the murder of Dario Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki. Advertised by word of mouth and I was invited to attend by a member of Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Linea Fundadora (Mothers of Plaza de Mayo – Founding Line).

7. June 28, 2007, Buenos Aires: Weekly Thursday march at Plaza de Mayo organized by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Linea Fundadora and Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Association of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo). Advertised by word of mouth and known widely (as these groups have been marching every Thursday around Plaza de Mayo for many years).

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184 Avellaneda is a port city in the province of Buenos Aires and is connected to the capital city by several bridges – one of them being Puente Pueyrredón on which during a mass protest in 2002 the police shot at and beat the protestors. Dario Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki were two of the protestors at this march. They were eventually murdered trying to run from the police.
8. July 01, 2007, Buenos Aires: Lecture given by Hebe de Bonafini (President of Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo) at the Universidad Popular Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Popular University Mothers of Plaza de Mayo). Advertised by mass email and I was invited to attend by a member of La Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre.


13. July 19, 2007, Córdoba: Weekly Thursday march at Plaza San Martín organized by Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas. Advertised by word of mouth and known widely as this group has been marching at Plaza San Martín for many years.

14. July 26, 2007, Rosario: Weekly Thursday march at Plaza 25 de Mayo organized by Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Advertised by word of mouth and known widely as this group has been marching at Plaza 25 de Mayo for many years.


185: Attended two classes of a full semester weekly course at the Instituto Espacio para la Memoria (Institute Space for Memory). The course is for teachers who are interested in learning about how to teach their students about the dictatorship and is given by a member of the Instituto with prior highschool teaching experience.

Sites:

1. June 06, 2007, Rosario: Visit to former clandestine torture centre El Pozo (The Hole). I was given a guided tour by two members of Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas (Relatives of Detained Disappeared Persons for Political Reasons).


185 In 2009 I travelled to Argentina for reasons outside of this dissertation. However, I was able to attend these two classes during this time and have chosen to draw from my observations in this dissertation.


6. July 14, 2007, La Plata: Visit to Casa Mariani-Teruggi (House Mariani-Teruggi) maintained by Asociación Anahí. I was given a guided tour by someone who volunteers for Asociación Anahí.

7. August 19, 2007, Buenos Aires: Visit to former clandestine torture centre Olimpo. I was given a guided tour by a volunteer who works with human rights groups.


10. June 19, 2009, Buenos Aires: Visit to Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado (Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism)\(^\text{186}\)

\(^{186}\) In 2009 I travelled to Argentina for reasons outside of this dissertation. However, I was able to visit the Monument during this time and have chosen to draw from my observations in this dissertation.