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**Memory as a weapon: alliances, squatting, and the politics of re-existence after the
Social Outburst (Estallido Social) in Chile**

Paměť jako zbraň: aliance, squatting a politika re-existence po Sociální Explozi (Estallido
Social) v Chile

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Dedicated to Valeria.

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Abstract:

In 2019, students in Chile rebelled against a hike in metro fares, which evolved into massive protests exposing various aspects of life in a country where a free-market economy was installed through bombings, killings, and disappearances. This rebellion escalated into the “Outburst” (Estallido). Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2023 in the anarchist-popular squat Los Pies del Cerro, I aim to situate this event within the ongoing memory-politics battles of post-dictatorial and post-Estallido Chile. This work seeks to contribute to the scope of empirical cases in which memory activism plays a role in reclaiming contested spaces, practices, alliances, and ways of life. The analysis centers on three intertwined political registers: disappearance, as a mechanism of governance tied to state terror and erasure; appearance, as an act of counter-memory through which different political agencies resurface; and re-existence, as a process that reasserts practices and alliances as alternative ways of living and resisting erasure.

Key words: memory-politics, squatting, protest, counter-memory, Chile

Abstrakt:

V roce 2019 studenti a studentky v Chile povstali proti zvýšení cen jízdného v metru, což přerostlo v masové protesty, které odhalily různé aspekty života v zemi, kde byla ekonomika volného trhu zavedena prostřednictvím bombardování, zabíjení a mizení lidí. Toto povstání eskalovalo do „Výbuchu“ (Estallido). Na základě etnografického výzkumu provedeného v roce 2023 v anarchisticko-lidovém squatu Los Pies del Cerro se snažím zasadit událost do probíhajících bojů o politiku paměti v post-diktátorském a post-Estallido Chile. Tato práce si klade za cíl přispět na pole empirických případů, ve kterých hraje aktivismus spojený s pamětí roli při získávání zpět sporných prostor, praktik, spojení a způsobů života. Analýza se zaměřuje na tři propojené politické roviny: zmizení, jako mechanismus vládnutí spojený se státním terorem a vymazáváním; znovuoobjevení, jako protipaměťový akt, prostřednictvím kterého znovu vystupují na povrch různí političtí aktéři; a reexistenci, jako proces, který znovu prosazuje praktiky a spojení jako alternativní způsoby života a odporu vůči vymazání.

Klíčová slova: Politika paměti, squatting, protest, conter-memory, Chile

Declaration

I declare that I have completed this diploma thesis independently, that I have properly cited all the sources and literature used, and that this thesis has not been submitted as part of another university program or to obtain a different or the same degree.

Bc. Lucia Rončíková

In Sedlice, 07.01.2025

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Disambiguation terms

- **bacán/pulento**: awesome, great, fantastic
- **batucada**: originally a percussion/ rhythm group rooted in Brazil; here a group involved in pacing the marches and protests by drums and dance
- **Campamentos**: informal settlements, more formalized shanty towns
- **caídos**: “fallen”; a deceased or imprisoned person in resistance struggle
- **carabineros**: The official word for police
- **chiquillos**: a sweet, non-paternalistic way of referring to kids and the youth
- **combatientes**: combatants
- **compañero/a/x**: comrade (male / female / gender neutral form)
- **Concertación**: Coalition of democratic parties after the dictatorship
- **Cueca**: a traditional Chilean dance
- **DINA**: “Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional”: the secret police agency in Chile during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1977)
- **detenidxs desaparecidxs**: “detained and disappeared” (gender neutral form)
- **El Negro Matapacos**: “Black Cop-killer”, a dog which became famous in the Estallido Social
- **feria**: open street market
- **flaite**: slang with a pejorative connotation to describe individuals from marginalized urban youth subcultures, characterized by distinctive styles, slang, and behavior that challenge mainstream norms
- **FPMR**: “Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez”, Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front, a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla organisation (1983-1999)
- **Guanaco**: “Llama”, in Chile also used for an armored police vehicle with a water cannon
- **Imbunche**: a legendary monster from the Mapuche mythology
- **Junta de Vecinos**: neighborhood council
- **kiltro**: a mixed-breed dog, referring to the native Mapudungun language

- **Ley antitoma:** Anti-Squatting Law, officially “Ley de Usurpaciones”: Anti-Usurpation Law, also “Ley antipobre” and “ley maldita”: anti-poor cursed law, denominations by its oppositors
- **lucha:** “fight, struggle” - or in a long term the sense of a political struggle
- **malabares:** juggling, street acrobacy
- **Mapuche:** Indigenous inhabitants of south-central Chile and southwestern Argentina
- **MAPU:** “Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario”, Popular Unitary Action Movement, also MJL, “Movimiento Juvenil Lautaro”: leftist political party (1969-1994)
- **marraketa:** type of bread known for its crisp crust and soft, airy interior, commonly enjoyed at breakfast or with afternoon tea
- **MIR:** “Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria”, Revolutionary Left Movement, former guerrilla organization, then Marxist-Leninist party (since 1965)
- **octubrismo:** an ambiguous term referring to events, political stances, and processes sparked by the Estallido Social
- **olla común:** “common pot”, community kitchen
- **ocupar / okupar / tomar:** to squat
- **pasacalles:** marches or street parades, emblematic for Latin America's street protest
- **pasta base:** highly addictive and harmful smokable drug derived from the residual byproducts of the cocaine production
- **paco:** a derogatory slang word for the police
- **poblador/a/x:** Inhabitant(s) of a población
- **población:** low-income neighborhood
- **presente:** “present” or “here”
- **reivindicación:** vindication, act of asserting the presence of a deceased person in the political struggle
- **señora / Sra.:** miss
- **Wallmapu:** territory of the indigenous Mapuche people
- **weón:** slang for “guy”; can be connoted neutral, positive or negative, depending on context

- **Zorrillo:** “skunk”, also a rigged armored jeep to throw tear gas bombs and a vehicle in which protesters are caught
- **vecino/a/x:** neighbours

1. Introduction: Memory as a Weapon in Chile after 2019

“What I see is that people are numb, stuck in a daily survival mode without realizing that what’s hurting them comes from something that never really ended. In Chile, there was no real criminalization of those responsible. When the dictatorship ended, Pinochet became a senator for life. How is it possible that the dictator, after everything that happened, walked around as if nothing had occurred, even giving interviews on TV? I remember one where they asked him, what he expected for his old age, and he replied that he wanted to live peacefully in the south with his family, eating kuchen¹. Imagine that! After all the lives that were lost, how did we allow that? All of this happens because our memory is constantly being erased. It’s like we’re not allowed to talk about it, but you know. Not like it’s prohibited, but (...). People are not allowed to have this (...) ejercicio de memoria [memory exercise]. The same thing happened with the Estallido Social [Social Outburst]. It began on October 18, 2019, and I traveled from the south documenting everything until December.

[Luna, October 2023]

“The idea to recover a school [La ex-Ratonera, now Los Pies del Cerro] came from here, from San Judas Tadeo. Because they stole it from us. The military stole this from us. We were meeting there for many years. I told them [the anarchist group]: “I’ll support you so you can take it, not that I’m telling you have to take it, but you can take it.” It was important to recover this place. (C)hiquillos [a sweet, non-paternalistic way of referring to kids, guys] will defend this space so we can, if possible, recover it for everyone because those military thieves stole it from us. And so the chiquillos stayed there, making it a nice place. They are there for three or four years now. Yes.”

[Señora Luisa, July 2023]

“For me this place [Los Pies del Cerro squat] is a last grip of social struggle after the failure of the Estallido Social.”

¹ In Chile, people would refer to cake as “kuchen” as a remnant of German settler influence in the south of country since 20s century.

The aim of this thesis is to ethnographically describe the ruins of the *Estallido Social* —"the longest, most violent, and significant political event in Chile's history"²—and situate these within the broader context of Chile's memory battles.³ I do so while being based in the anarchist-popular squat *Los Pies del Cerro*. Based on the empirical case of *Los Pies*, as well as through participation in spaces of memory (Nora, 1989) such as marches or squares, I observe how memory resurfaces as both a realm for intentional attempts at "disappearance" and erasure (Trouillot, 1995) and as a weapon within the complex political struggles of countries in the Southern Cone of Latin America marked by the history of neoliberal dictatorships (Jelin, 2001, 2002; Salazar, 2000; 2002; Lira, 2011; Rajevic, 2020).

Ethnographically, this work is grounded four years after the *Estallido Social* (February – November 2023) and is informed by diverse agents, but primarily by the transient and permanent inhabitants of a *población*⁴ San Judas Tadeo in the commune of Peñalolén. Squatters with anarchist tendencies, *pobladorxs*⁵, ex-militants of revolutionary movements active during the dictatorship⁶.

The focus of the thesis oscillates between two political registers of action, occurring within neoliberal governance of the Chilean nation-state: the "disappearance" and "appearance" (Irazuzta et al., 2018; Panizo 2012). These are always at hand to reveal each others strategies. Pacing Abu Lughod's approach (1990) to traces resistance as diagnostics of power, I trace spaces of appearance to trace neoliberalism-led mechanisms of disappearance.

The melancholy as a concept and an experience underlaying the post-dictatorial social atmosphere in Chile (Richard, 2000), will be discussed, but this thesis, as it's agents, won't dwell in it. Melancholy can be understood as an affective, social, and political condition arising from the loss and disappearance of people, places, practices, and utopias

² Salazar, G. (2019, October 27). El "reventón social" en Chile: una mirada histórica. Chile: CIPER. <https://ciperchile.cl/2019/10/27/el-reventon-social-en-chile-una-mirada-historica/>

³ Referring to "The Battle of Chile", the prolific trilogy of documentaries completed between 1975 and 1979, written and directed by Patricio Guzmán.

⁴ Low-income neighborhood

⁵ Inhabitants of low-income neighborhoods. The letter "x" stands for gender inclusive language.

⁶ Such as MIR, MAPU and FPMR (see disambiguation page)

(Richard, 2000; Traverso, 2017) and this condition is not only a product of the dictatorship but can also be noticed in the aftermath of the *Estallido*. It manifests as a sense of deep sorrow [pena], failure [fracaso], defeat [derrota]. If melancholy is an unidentifiable loss that is impossible to fully mourn (Traverso 2017, Freud 1917, Butler, 1995; Fustinoni, Caniato, 2019), then the process of "un-mourning" requires recognizing, or more precisely, engaging with the objects and subjects of mourning. My ethnographic task in and beyond the *Los Pies del Cerro squat* was to participatively observe this process. This site is marked by the forced disappearance of activist and *poblador* Eduardo Zúñiga in 1974, as well as by the expropriation of the community's collective ownership during the civic-military dictatorship (1973-1990).

A vehicle for this process is rooted in counter-memory – “a concept (...) and agent of political subjectification that refuses the nationalist normativity of remembrance – as tied up as it is with monuments and ‘official’, canonized histories – while also attempting to forge temporalities attuned to the social movements and struggles of the vanquished (...) counter-memory can also be read as a method (...) (which can) recalibrate existing ways of seeing, ways of relating or experiencing time/space” (Tello, 2022: 390-391).

The engagement with the disappeared and their vindication – reassertion into struggle – is fundamental to the political struggle undertaken by activists and *pobladorxs*. By doing so, they create and participate in the spaces of *appearance*. It was only in later phase of writing this thesis that I found out, it was political thinker Hannah Arendt, who has coined this term, to describe spaces, where people (“I” and “The Other”) meet to act politically – “where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly“ (1998 [1958]: 198-199).

Spaces of appearance as described in this theses are also, in Arendt ‘sense, spaces of political encounter characterized by common visibility, which generates power (Marquez, 2012: 11). However, the use of this term is diverging, by demonstrating that it is not only “living men” who politically acts in in these spaces. This thesis wants to demonstrate, that spaces of appearance are sites of political activity, formed together with dead or disappeared.

Over the case of *Los Pies*, I argue that by dwelling and actively inhabiting these spaces, the political struggle transforms into a process of *re-existence* (Porto-Gonçalves

2005, Arruda, Fonseca 2018; Hurtado, Porto-Gonçalves, 2022) – concept, which goes beyond mere resistance to oppression; “It is not only a fight to resist those who kill (...) but also a fight for a particular way of existence, a specific way of life and production, for plural ways of feeling, acting, and thinking” (Porto-Gonçalves, 2005: 130).

1.1 Disappearances

The victims “disappear”. The invisible armies of the night carry out the task. There are no corpses and no one is responsible. In this way the bloodbath has the more impunity for not being "official," and thus collective anxiety is more potently spread around. No one renders accounts, no one offers explanations. Each crime builds horrible uncertainty in persons close to the victim and is also a warning for everyone else. State terrorism aims to paralyze the population with fear.” (Galeano, 1996: 281-282)

In Chile “to disappear” might refer to an act of being forcibly taken from one’s home in the early hours of a damp, misty cold morning, characteristic of bleak winter. This term might evoke an image of an abrupt and violent removal of a person from their day-to-day activities – working, making love, sleeping, walking from a bar, university or a meeting. The kidnapping could include the full view of ones spouses, husbands, children, neighbors, friends, or it might occur without witnesses. It might also be identified as a part of collective violence targeting communities meeting at *ollas comunes*⁷ (common pot) in which threatening and annihilating people are means to “make disappear” their communal practices or relegate them into fear and danger. Disappearance of places might also be tied to a bureaucratic arrangement of communal ownership into private.

⁷ “The *olla común* (common pot) consists of a community meal made entirely by volunteers with food donated or collected by members of the community. (...) It is generally carried out in a public space in the neighborhood, and it has a nourishing but also social role within the community. At different times in the history of Chile, there were situations that led grassroots groups to confront hunger, organizing themselves around *ollas comunes* in the contexts of earthquakes, political, or sanitary crises. (Bronfman, Soto García, 2023: 1-2)

Disappearance, next to torture and interrogation, was one of the main tools of the "Operation Condor"⁸ in Southern Cone of Latin America (Dinges, 2004). In Chile, the "state terror network" (Mcsherry, 2002) took different forms after a civic-military coup, what evolved into a 17-years long dictatorship (Crenzel, 2011; Dinges, 2004). At the root of the political-economic ideology that prioritizes free markets, privatization, and minimal state intervention, at the expense of social and public welfare, environmental sustainability and the dignity of the people (Harvey, 2020), lays the production of shock (Klein, 2007), fear, suspicion and "formular of erasure" (Trouillot 1995: 96) employed as a mode of neoliberal governance (Varas et.al 2020; Zepeda et.al 2014; Galeano, 1996; Gómez-Barris: 2009).⁹

1.2 Appearances and Re-existences

This thesis, however ethnographically stems from the spaces of "appearance". In general, but in the second chapter specifically, my aim is to contribute to a collection of empirical cases that illustrate how the "active absence" (Navaro-Yashin, 2012) of the deceased or the disappeared people, affects various areas of social life. These include personal relationships (Panizo, 2012, 2024; Despret 2021), politics (Ferrándiz, 2022), nation-building (Gordon 1976; Gómez-Barris, 2009) or revolution (Rudi, 2019). Presented thesis aims to locate this phenomena in the sphere of the political struggle. Furthermore, I aim to describe the way my research partners – activists with anarchist tendencies – relate to their deceased or disappeared, not by viewing them as martyrs, but by engaging with them as *compañerxs* [comrades].

⁸ "Operation Condor was a secret intelligence and operations system created in the 1970s through which the South American military regimes coordinated intelligence information and seized, tortured, and executed political opponents in combined cross-border operations. (...) (K)ey members were Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil, later joined by Ecuador and Peru." (McSherry, 2002: 38)

⁹ This form of governance aligns with the notion of "necrogovernmentality" (Franco, 2018; 2021) building on Mbembe's (2003) concept of necropolitics it is a mode of governance operating not only within the framework of "making die and letting live" (Mbembe, 2003) but also through the meticulous management of death itself. While necropolitics highlights governance as a technology of death, necrogovernmentality is discussed in context, when even "afterlife of death" is a political concern (Franco, 2018; 2021). This is apparent through the manipulation or "forced disappearance" of death records, documents, and burial practices, or the invention and broadcasting fabulated stories about the disappearance (Franco, 2018; 2021). The key point to emphasize when discussing this dynamic is that disappearance is not death, thus the necropolitical logic that aims to create and control death, remains incomplete and vulnerable to counter-memory practices (Islekel, 2019; 2023).

Supported by the ethnographic case of the anarchist-popular squat *Los Pies del Cerro*, which has been reclaimed in the height of the *Estallido*, squatter expose numerous cracks in described mode of governance, though which “appearance” and in some case “re-existence” (Porto Gonçalves, 2002) is possible. Although there were numerous scratches, holes, and burned marks in the neoliberal model long before 2019, one of the most significant cracks was revealed with the onset of the *Estallido Social*.

Exposure was simple. All it took was collective jumping of turnstiles to demonstrate that the increased ticket price as well and the system could be evaded¹⁰.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

In the first chapter, I describe the *Estallido Social* through the perspectives of my research partners, interviews, revised literature and the streets (graffiti and other physical remnants). I focus on how the *Estallido* is reflected four years later, situating it within theoretical discussions that frame it as an “outburst”—allying with the notion of a “critical event” (Das, 1995) with revolutionary aspirations (Holbraad et. al, 2020). I analyze how this movement, while successful in challenging system of domination sustained by imposed silence and the manipulation of memory (Gómez-Barris, 2009), became vulnerable to the very mechanisms it sought to dismantle.

In the second chapter, I explore the techniques, actions of counter-memory (some of which resurfaced in the *Estallido*), reclaiming public spaces through organized resistance against institutional memory symbols and institutions. I analyze these practices through the process of the “reinvidicación” [a concept used to refer to re-assertion of lives, names, demands for justice of deceased into a struggle].

In the third chapter, I examine the material, political, and affective recovery of a site expropriated during the dictatorship, where communist activist Eduardo Zúñiga was “detained and disappeared.” At this location, the anarchist-popular squat *Los Pies del Cerro* engages in a process of re-existence, reclaiming both the physical and symbolic space from

¹⁰ “Evade” was one of the emblematic cries of the movement.

the remnants of neoliberal and dictatorial repression. Through practices like organizing a community library, hosting events, food sharing and creating spaces of mutual aid, the squat re-exists within its territory, while the squatters attempt to critically engage with the memory of past struggles. Coalition-building, particularly with local leaders like Sra. Luisa, a *pobladora* and activist since the dictatorial period. This thesis is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) In the aftermath of the *Estallido Social*, how does the movement and its consequences—approached beyond the binary of "failure" and "success"—challenge and reshape the counter-memory practices, forge potential alliances, and reveal the tensions and possibilities of collective political action in the country, which is known for being the site of the first large scale experiment (Gaudichaud, 2016) in implementation of neoliberal system by “Shock”?
- 2) In what forms counter-memory practices, such as marches and direct actions, disrupt institutionalized memory frameworks, challenge state-imposed narratives of reconciliation, and create spaces of “appearance” within the socio-political context of the neoliberal governance in post-dictatorial Chile?
- 3) How does the collective of squatters at *Los Pies del Cerro* engage with the recovery and transformation of the 'ruin' of a former local school, which was expropriated during the dictatorship in the aftermath of the *Estallido Social*? What does the process of recovering and 'returning the place to the *población*' entail, and how do their engagements with memory as a political and affective construct shape political subjectivities, strategies, and tactics of collective struggle in memory activism?

1.4 Entering the ethnographic field

I arrived in Chile in February 2023 through a bilateral agreement between the Charles University of Prague and the Universidad de Chile in Santiago de Chile, as an exchange student at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

My original research proposal aimed to ethnographically engage with the student movement and their perception of the new constitution, as students were some of the key catalysts of the *Estallido Social*. In March 2023, I obtained a formal permission from a

smaller group of student activist to ethnographically document their activities for the purposes of this thesis.

However, as part of my university course *Social Movements and Resistance*, I participated in a group project analyzing the fundamental characteristics of a social movement. Our group focused on the collective reclaiming of *Cuartel Borgoño*, a former dictatorship-era torture site which is currently symbolically and materially reclaimed by survivors and the surrounding community. Following this project, I became affiliated with the space and its members. I joined their activities, supported it with small organizational tasks and enjoyed spending time with their members in my free time as well. While it was not my final research field, I conducted various semi-structured and structured conversations with some members of the collective. Through this engagement, I realized that instead of focusing on student movement, constitutional change or analysis of its failures, my research should focus on memory—how it is stimulated, how it persists, the forms it takes, and how it acts politically. It was during this time that I met Francisco, a 74-year-old former MIR [Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria: Revolutionary Left Movement] member who, found short refuge in Kladno near Prague, Czech Republic, before returning in Chile to join the resistance. This experience of international solidarity was one of the elements that brought us together as allies, and later as *compañerxs*. Throughout this research process, he was a source of support, a close intellectual partner, and a friend. Despite our differences in certain ideas, his genuine *compañerismo* influenced how I navigated the fields described in this thesis.

I resonate with Yael Navaro-Yashin, who argues that “anthropology is fruitful only insofar as the anthropologist is able to establish a relationality with the people whom she or he is studying. This is not possible just anywhere, for any one person or with any other person. The world does not wait for us out there to be the object of our science” (2012: xii).

For the first time, I visited the *Los Pies del Cerro* in mid-April 2023, when I participated in a solidarity action aiming to raise funds for puppies (the children of Guacha, a *kiltro* dog-inhabitant of the place, who were suffering from distemper). During this solidarity action, amidst concerts, political discussions, workshops, food, and other activities, I met Waki, a 24-year-old resident of *Los Pies* with whom I grew closer over the

following weeks. Together we attended *vigilias*—gatherings where people accompanied, mourned, showed solidarity, and, in some cases, other participants even rescued animals in front of butcher shops. It was Waki who first informed me about *Los Pies*' “grupo de memoria” [memory group]. Aware of my university studies and research, he introduced me to a group of eight people, four of whom were residents of *Los Pies*. This project delved into the memories of the site – a former school expropriated during the dictatorship and collecting testimonies of popular memory about it. Their focus spanned from the pre-dictatorship era to the years of popular resistance, including the life and forced disappearance of Eduardo Zúñiga for his political activism. More broadly, they aimed to document the stories of its former inhabitants, the site's various transformations, and the struggles associated with it, explicitly linking its historical significance to its present-day resonance and relevance. The group sought to create an amateur documentary film about the resistance in Peñalolén during the dictatorship, highlighting the role of the former school *La Ratonera* in those struggles by capturing the lives of the *detenidxs desaparecidxs* [detained and disappeared].

Waki presented me as a “persona de confianza” [trusted person] and Felipe, another squatter, invited me to their first session, where I introduced myself, my background, political affiliation and my anthropological investigation. I asked if I could join the team and participate—both in my anthropological research and as a member of the “grupo de memoria.” Initially, this was met with partial skepticism by some, while others said it was “pulento” [awesome] that I came. The skepticism was mostly based on previous experiences of students of social sciences who joined some other projects to write their theses but then disappeared (and although no-one articulated it, I felt the weight of my European passport and privileged position). It was also tied to the very intimate nature of the memory work—the community dwelling, long interviews with families and other members of the *población* who remembered the detained and disappeared, as well as other elements of the dictatorship. I do not include interviews which were made for purpose of the documentary in this thesis.

Shortly after completing the courses and lectures for my semester, I was accepted to move to *Los Pies*. I had already spent time in *Los Pies* before this, attending events, joining memory group and participating in activities outside *Los Pies* with *compañerxs* who lived there. The idea of moving in was discussed and eventually proposed by Carolina and Luna, and later approved during the common assembly. My decision to move to *Los Pies* was also

influenced by my financial situation. While I received a grant that covered one semester at the university and financial support from the SVV grant for a one-way ticket, I was unsuccessful in securing a research grant to fund the second half of my stay.

In *Los Pies* I researched, learned, and engaged in the process of recuperation by participating in the "memory project" as well as all the other activities tied to its functioning and existence.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology of my research is based on participant observation, interviews and walking methodology. I was engaged with the space and goals of political squat *Los Pies del Cerro* beyond the role of an ethnographer, thus my methods are intertwined with aspects of a militant ethnography (Juris, 2007), what I do reflect over the course of this thesis. This type of ethnography “involves a politically engaged and collaborative form of participant observation carried out from within rather than outside grassroots movements” (Juris, 2007:164) as it also „generates practical, embodied understanding“ (Juris, 2007: 166).

By engaging with the processes—not merely the outcomes—of recovery, I aimed to understand how these realities unfolded within and against oppressive systems. Following David Graeber, a prominent anarchist-anthropologist who is considered successful in translating anarchist practices to academic audiences, I align with his view that anarchists [how most of my research partners identified] “do not exist to allow some academic to make a theoretical point or prove some rival's theory wrong” (2009: viii).

1.6 Reflexivity and position of the ethnographer

My arrival wasn't entirely without challenges. The omnipresent suspicion towards newcomers was intensified by the experience of the *Estallido*, during which undercover

police, dressed as protesters, carrying Molotov cocktails, and Mapuche¹¹ flags—spied, detained, and persecuted individuals¹².

A European girl with long blond hair, nerdy glasses, asking trivial questions and carrying a tape recorder with her wasn't the most inconspicuous look one could have in this atmosphere. My *compañerxs* were interested in photos of my hometown, details of what I do back in Prague or Slovakia, what the mountains look like, what my hobbies are, and what my parents do. What felt at first like genuine interest was actually a kind of back-and-forth investigation, as I was later told. "*When someone new joins the group, you ask a lot of questions, ideally in an asamblea, where the person has to speak in front of everyone*" (Anteo). This strongly resonates with other ethnographic fields and the position of the ethnographer in them as exemplified by Navaro-Yashin: „The people whom we call our “informants” always study us back, allowing certain engagements and blocking others.” The research as a goal oriented practice is a myth, because “a positivist imaginary of research, which still survives in certain areas of anthropology, would only conceive of our informants as ‘objects of analysis’ rather than relate with them as subjects of their lives and of narratives about their lives” (2012: xii).

The atmosphere of suspicion gradually dissipated through day-to-day engagement, exposing mutual vulnerabilities, cohabiting, sharing thoughts and possessions, including computer, tape recorder or a room (which I generously inherited from a *compañera* who had decided to leave).

My roles – as a squatter and a researcher – through which I navigated the field, were in a continuous conflict with each other, and at one point, I decided to cancel my flight back to Europe and temporarily stopped writing field notes. It was a moment of strong contradiction within the „logic of academia“ (Juris, 2007: 164). An atmosphere of self-organization, perpetual suspicion of hierarchy, authority, and institutionalization influenced my perspective on academia, pointing at its limitations when it comes to activism and the recognition and inclusion of diverse forms of knowledge. After I cancelled my flight, I chose

¹¹ Indigenous nation located in the territory of Wallmapu, over which southern parts of Chilean and Argentinean nation states spread.

¹² Barraza Díaz, J. (2022). *Los intramarchas: cómo el poder se infiltró en el estallido social*. Vol. 15. Segunda edición. LOM

to engage solely with life in *Los Pies* and began to doubt my original intention to pursue my anthropological research further.

This position in the process of constant negotiation, as well as my role within the collective, shifted when these two roles—activist and anthropologist—actually fused in the process of recovery. This shift became evident during one critical moments when squat was under threat of eviction, and the negotiate with agents forging that process was necessary. It was then that I was recognized not primarily as a co-squatter but as an anthropologist. I was asked to defend *Los Pies*' cause before the committee responsible for organizing steps toward eviction.

At one point, in the assembly everyone was laughing, imagining how it would look. They looked at me, in my sweater full of dog fur, knowing me from the day-to-day activities and the memory group. Although knowing about my research, in day-to-day activities I did not feel treated, nor recognized as a 'professional' or 'academic.' Someone jokingly suggested I dress nicely—maybe even wear a suit or high heels. [More laughter.] Felipe added, 'Seeing a girl, an anthropologist from Prague, on our side will make them kneel. And the best part is, we already know you! We know you're a compañera.

[Field notes, August 2023]

I felt deeply uncomfortable with the metaphor of anyone kneeling before me and uneasy with the cliché of class and racial profiling now directed at me as the "privileged" and "educated European". This position, although acknowledged and reflected upon, haunted me throughout my stay as a label I did not find suitable, not only as a squatter, but also, based on my habitus, shaped by upbringing in a rural area of Eastern Slovakia in a family of five, living from one salary, slightly above the minimum income. I struggled with the notion of Europe as a homogeneous space of universally wealthy and privileged individuals across all sectors. Milos's verbalized my position as follows: "A girl like you—cops will ask for your Instagram, but from me, they'll want a criminal record going back three generations." I accepted the task to embrace my position as a Caucasian type woman with European passport backed by the University of Charles, although not without challenges. I carefully prepared a speech, and an argument about the historical and cultural

significance of this place. I dressed in a slightly oversized black casual dress I found in the sharing box and felt very nervous. The meeting was canceled once, but on the second attempt, I finally spoke with the delegates, where I was introduced as “an anthropologist from Prague, who is researching the significance of this place” (Lucho). At the end of my research and activist stay, my *compañerxs* took money from the budget of *Los Pies* to make a vegan empanadas evening as a goodbye evening.

Of course, I cried. To what co-squatter Milos reacted in a soothing tone „You see. You don’t want to leave, but I don’t want to stay“. This statement perhaps best captures the irreconcilable power dynamics inherent in ethnographic research— to be constantly scrutinized under suspicion, yet acknowledged and navigated throughout the process.

1.7 Ethics of research and reciprocity

Over the course of my research, I applied the procedural ethics and pertinent ethical codes, such as the guidelines under the Czech Association for Social Anthropology. I did make sure that the ethical compliance formed the foundation of my approach, especially in the context of militant research. The participants in this research were informed about the research project to be conducted, its purposes and methods. I obtained oral consent with use of an audio recorder during interviews and lead additional interviews even after returning to Europe via online communication. I also included an analysis of online platforms and social media related to the topic. The photos and audio-recordings are safely stored on an external hard drive. The access to the field of research came with the formal condition of a mutual agreement that the language of this thesis will be English. I have taken care throughout the research process, including in the analytical phase, not to harm my research partners, their integrity, or their anonymity. For this reason I changed the names of my research partners and the name of site where the research was conducted.

After my return to Europe, I stayed in contact with some of the *compañerxs*. I organized a solidarity fundraiser to support the community of *Los Pies* following their eviction in December 2023. Additionally, I published articles in non-academic journals to

raise awareness about the issues my *compañerxs*¹³ are facing. I also suggested letters of support from academics to advocate for the legal reclamation of the evicted space when its future was uncertain and sustained support with the recovery process.

¹³ I will refer to research partners from *Los Pies* as “compañerxs,” following a similar approach outlined by Firuzeh Shokooh Valle, (2021). This term encapsulates not only a relation to my co-squatters, which influenced this thesis, but also highlights my positionality as an ethnographer, while emphasizing the reciprocity required in ethnographic research. Like Valle (2021), I argue that becoming a *compañera* is a way of conducting this type of research while acknowledging, rather than evading, power structures. On one occasion, I shared with Luka my discomfort in navigating my dual role as ethnographer and activist, saying that I wanted to “give back” by “supporting the efforts.” Luka responded; “*We don’t need charity; we need compañerxs.*” This exchange shaped my position, although not without conflicts.

2. Beyond the 30 Pesos: The Estallido Social

„To me, the Estallido was just epic—nothing like that had ever happened before, at least not in my experience. It felt like we could have done so much, like a real revolution, like we could even take control over the territory because that's kind of what happened. The first march I went to was on October 19th. That day, I went out with friends, and after a few hours of marching, the cops just couldn't keep up. They had to leave, because we were just too strong so suddenly the city was ours. No cops, just us. It was surreal. People were angry, mostly because of the 30-peso fare hike, but it went way beyond that, to other historical things, but what really fueled the fire was a viral video from the 18th, showing pacos [slang for police] shooting a student in her leg. She was bleeding everywhere. It was shocking, and people hit the streets in response. And that moment felt beautiful. The city was like a carnival. People were smashing up churches, opening banks, burning right-wing newspapers, looting pharmacies, and malls—it was chaotic. Seeing a big retail store on fire was something extraordinary, it really hit me hard. But at the same time, people were sharing, looking out for each other. That's just how this city is—super communal, has a strong anarchist vibe. (...) At first, it was just the cops, which we were used to, but then the military showed up. I 'd never seen the military in the streets like that, trying to control the crowds. I remember standing there on the third day, watching lines of soldiers running towards us, fully armed. It felt like a civil war, because people were also getting ready—making shields, even making home-made weapons for the next day. It wasn't guns, but people were organizing to defend their neighborhoods from the cops and the military. It was real—like a civil war. I stayed there, and got involved throughout the protests, up until November 14th, when there was a march for a Mapuche man who had been killed [Camillo Catrillanca¹⁴]. That day

¹⁴ “Camilo Catrillanca, the 24-year-old grandson of a prominent Mapuche indigenous leader, was shot in the back of the head in November 2018 in Temucucui (...) His death – and a subsequent attempted cover-up by police officers – caused widespread public outrage and reignited deep-seated grievances over the Chilean state's treatment of the Mapuche.”

In: McGowan, (2021). *Chile police officer sentenced for killing Mapuche man*. The Guardian.

I lost my right eye. I was hit by a pellet—and I went blind instantly. I'd hear of other people with similar trauma, but it's something else when it happens to you."

[Milos, June 2023]

In October 2019, high school students in Santiago de Chile began hopping turnstiles to ska music as a form of protest against a public transit fare increase. A viral video of a female student being shot to her leg by a militarized police sparked a shared rage and materialized in nationwide demonstrations (Gonzalez; Morán, 2020). Soon other demands contesting social inequality followed such as the private health care system, education, the pension system, dispossessions, state violence and massive extractivism¹⁵. The protests reached a peak on October 25th, when 1.2 million people marched in defiance of violent police repression, marking it as „the biggest march of Chile”. People termed it “*Estallido Social*” – a Social Outburst. It evokes a metaphor of a prolific Chilean historian of Social movements, Gabriel Salazar,¹⁶ who likens the social struggles of people living in Chile to "thousands and even millions of microscopic, fragmented, and protean attitudes and actions" (2012: 383, my translation). Salazar's metaphor of "bubbling magma" (ibid.) captures this hidden, constant force—an underground "social monster" (ibid.) that quietly digs, connects, and tunnels beneath the surface, making its way towards eruption, which, although not inevitable, is always potentially eruptive. This metaphor, while appealing, should be revised to emphasize a key feature: a volcano erupts, often unexpectedly and without warning. However, this is observed on the surface, not deep below, where these signals originate.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/29/chile-police-officer-mapuche-killing-sentenced>

¹⁵ Estallido Social and its content were researched in detail. It even led to a boom is reflected in broad scope of social scientific research, including militant ethnographies (Salinas Valdés et al., 2020), causes rooted in inequality (Jiménez-Yañez, 2020), and ties to memory and longstanding demands (Santibáñez-Rodríguez, 2022; Thygesen, 2021), as well as the concept of the "multitude" (Rivera-Aguilera et al., 2021), have been well-documented. Much attention has been paid to the violence and its consequences, such as the severe impact of ocular mutilation (Durán Rojas et al., 2021) and more recently criminalization of the movement and state repression is researched (Riffo-Pavón et al., 2021; Kloss, 2024). A focus on political art (Figueroa-Bustos, 2021), and evolving political imaginaries (Bonivento, 2022) has furthered the discussion about the remnants of the Estallido.

¹⁶ Salazar, G. (2012). *Movimientos sociales en Chile: trayectoria histórica y proyección política*.

It is in the first days of the *Estallido Social*, when the today deceased president and billionaire Sebastian Piñera famously proclaimed war on people marching in the streets¹⁷, deployed militarized police, military and proclaimed a state of exception – for the first time since the end of the civic-military dictatorship (1973-1989). 34 deaths, thousands of hospitalizations, hundreds of cases of sexual abuse by police forces, more than 460 people with an eye trauma or complete loss of eyesight are a result of the deliberate strategy of shooting protesters in the face.¹⁸ My co-squatters Milos and Chena were two of them. This period was also marked by transnational solidarity and simultaneity of global protests happening during October 2019 (Huang, Delaporte, 2019).

Just a few days before the October uprising, Piñera boldly declared that amidst a „chaotic Latin America,” Chile was „an oasis with a stable democracy.”¹⁹ This statement reflects the notion of *Chilean exceptionalism* (Hutchison et al., 2013), painting the country just like that — as exceptional among the rest of Latin America — a „cold country with European features,” standing apart from the 'tropicalisms' of its neighbors and having transcended its „premodern past” (Larraín, 2014: 159). The *Estallido Social* shattered this idea. It exposed the myth of Chile fixed as „The English of South America” (Edmundson, 2009) in the 19th and early 20th centuries, or the „Jaguar of Latin America”²⁰ and „Economic Miracle” — terms coined by economist Milton Friedman to describe the economic transformation and rapid development of Chile during the late 20th century, particularly after adopting free-market policies and reforms (Klein, 2007). These descriptions, however didn't

¹⁷ “The President of Chile, Sebastián Piñera, stated this Sunday (October 21, 2019) that his country is "at war against a powerful enemy," during a public appearance on a day when there were at least five fatalities and 1,500 arrests amid unrest that is out of control.” In: Deutsche Welle. (2019, October 21). Piñera: Estamos en guerra contra un enemigo poderoso. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/es/pi%C3%B1era-estamos-en-guerra-contra-un-enemigo-poderoso/a-50910426>

¹⁸ Pinto Carrasco, M., & Cisterna Chavez, F. (2020). Nunca más: mutilaciones durante el estallido social de octubre (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano).

¹⁹ Publimetro. (2019, October 8). Piñera: Chile es un oasis en América Latina a diferencia de Perú, Bolivia y Argentina. Publimetro Chile. <https://www.publimetro.cl/cl/noticias/2019/10/08/pinera-chile-america-latina-oasis-peru-bolivia-argentina.html>

²⁰ “The newspaper *El Mercurio* coined the phrase "Chile is the jaguar of Latin America" to compare the strength of Chile's booming economy to the so-called "Asian tigers." In Relea, F. (1998, March 23). Reportaje: La otra cara del 'jaguar' de América Latina. *El País*. In: https://elpais.com/diario/1998/03/23/internacional/890607627_850215.html

manage to capture the lived experience under such economic transformation in diverse territories known as „Chile”.

Chile is a „laboratory state“ in various senses of the term (Gaudichaud, 2016). It is the first country where neoliberal policies were implemented on a large scale “by blood and fire”, in the context of the Cold War, as Francisca, a communist militant in her seventies, describes this, today predominant economic and political model. The experiment, which permeated all economic and social spheres of society, was a violent abandonment of “revolution flavored with red wine and empanadas”²¹. Such radical shift followed after the coup d'état on September 11, 1973. In the aftermath of the bombed palace, Salvador Allende, the first democratically elected socialist president, committed suicide. Augusto Pinochet then took his place and ruled for 17 years characterized by the criminalization of socialist expressions and widespread human rights abuses, along with free-market reforms that dispossessed the poor and deepened their precarious living conditions (Salazar, 2009; 2012).

„Look, the difference here is that your parents probably saw the introduction of capitalism as a symbol of democracy, but for mine, it was imposed under dictatorship, accompanied by curfews, raids, and torture,” Leni, a second-year sociology student, clarified a contrast between the countries where we grew up. *“I was there on that very day,”* she notes proudly, her voice rising above the chaotic cries coming from her phone, showing me a video of students running through turnstiles.

The neoliberal experiment in Chile was a change of an economic system, as it was change of the premises which society was creating thorough the years: „The military coup did not only materially destroy the continuity of the social and political order that sustained the democratic tradition of Chile. In so far as it unleashed a series of breaks and ruptures within the whole system of categories which had, until 1973, made possible a determinate understanding of the social based on shared rules of intelligibility” (Richard, 2000: 273). The abrupt social, economic, and political upheavals that followed such unexpected crises or disasters were not mere side effects of a military coup. Rather, they constituted a calculated and deliberate strategy integral to the installation of a neoliberal order in Latin

²¹ See also: Toso (2009). Salvador Allende en la perspectiva histórica del movimiento popular chileno. Utopías. Revista de debate político.

America and beyond (Klein, 2007; Valdes, 2008). This process has its own term coined by Milton Friedman: a „shock doctrine”²² – an exploitation or creation of conditions in the society that provoke psychological and social shocks, aiming to instigate radical economic or political adjustments under the guise of crisis management or recovery (Klein, 2007; Valdes, 2008). In Chile it was applied not only by witnessing military in the streets, but also by interrogations, random detentions, torture, experiencing house and *población* raids, disappearance of beloved ones, criminalization of usual communal practices such as food sharing, but also parallel swift in economic order, such as privatization of public infrastructures and services, tax cuts and radical deregulation. Francisca described the effect of these action as follows:

“What was the purpose of torture? It wasn't to extract information — they already had that information. The goal of torture was to paralyze people through terror. It made people think: 'If I say something or if I get involved, the same thing could happen to me.' They could arrest me, they could torture me. They could make me disappear. What is truly remarkable and worth saying also in your thesis is that, despite all of this, there was resistance to the dictatorship. And that resistance came with great risk.”

[Francisca, July 2023]

²² “Milton Friedman first learned how to exploit a large-scale shock or crisis in the mid-seventies, when he acted as adviser to the Chilean dictator, General Augusto Pinochet. Not only were Chileans in a state of shock following Pinochet's violent coup, but the country was also traumatized by severe hyperinflation. Friedman advised Pinochet to impose a rapid-fire transformation of the economy—tax cuts, free trade, privatized services, cuts to social spending and deregulation. Eventually, Chileans even saw their public schools replaced with voucher-funded private ones. It was the most extreme capitalist makeover ever attempted anywhere, and it became known as a "Chicago School" revolution, since so many of Pinochet's economists had studied under Friedman at the University of Chicago. Friedman predicted that the speed, suddenness, and scope of the economic shifts would provoke psychological reactions in the public that "facilitate the adjustment" (...) In the decades since, whenever governments have imposed sweeping free-market programs, the all-at-once shock treatment, or "shock therapy," has been the method of choice. Pinochet also facilitated the adjustment with his own shock treatments; these were performed in the regime's many torture cells, inflicted on the writhing bodies of those deemed most likely to stand in the way of the capitalist transformation. Many in Latin America saw a direct connection between the economic shocks that impoverished millions and the epidemic of torture that punished hundreds of thousands of people who believed in a different kind of society.” (Klein, 2007: 7.) Shock as a tool of rigorous planification of neoliberal policies was applied during times of crisis or disaster in many other countries such as Iraq, Argentina, Bolivia, Russia, Poland, South Africa, Iraq or United States. (ibid.)

By discussing these effects, my contribution does not seek to align with the social scientific analyses that strip individuals of their agency and perpetuate the idea that Chileans were merely immobilized by fear during the 17 years of dictatorship – a pattern exposed by Salazar (2009). Rather, my aim is to understand the fissures within the mechanisms of repression – based on premises that not only instill fear through forced disappearances but also seek to manipulate historical narratives by erasing the extensive resistance movements that emerged during this period. Salazar (2019) conceptualizes the *Estallido* as a vital critical political event in contemporary Chilean history, but as one of the most prominent intellectuals who investigates “counter-memory”, he highlights the importance by placing it next to other events of collective resistance against the neoliberal nation-state. For example, the mobilizations within *poblaciones* during 1983–1984 were described as the “explosion of the majority” (De la Maza & Garcés, 1985; Salazar, 2012).

2.1 Staying with the trouble of the *Estallido Social*

Following the multitude of voices of this acephalic movement, Christobal Bonelli and Marisol de La Cadena (2023) analyzed the *Estallido* as a revelation of the „historical wounds that the state – colonial and modern – inflicted on the Chilean territorial body as it made a nation on it” (2023: 301). This moment presented a significant challenge to the neoliberal foundation of the Chilean nation-state, engraved in the constitution which was written in the height of the dictatorship in 1980. A political deal was termed between the coalition and opposition in November 2019: The *Acuerdo por la Paz* (peace agreement). A proposed replacement was drafted by the Constitutional Convention, which took place between July 2021 and July 2022 by the convention of 155 elected members, including a notable number of independents, Indigenous people and representatives from various social movements who addressed various social, environmental, and economic inequalities within this draft (Nocetto, et al. 2024).

The process was widely celebrated by the liberal leftist press and sparked enthusiasm among many social scientists and journalists engaged with the movement at its height,

coining the term for this event “El Despertar Chileno” (Chile’s Awakening)²³ Extensive analyses fueled optimism, portraying it as a transformative moment. “You’d march and see people taking notes while running from the cops” , my anthropology classmate remarked, remembering the strong interest in the *Estallido* from international social scientists, political analysts, and journalists. Many of these analyses conflated the movement with concepts like liberation, emancipation, and revolution, portraying the new constitution as a tangible result of the protests and a key tool to alter the course of neoliberal history. Lawrence, 2020; Morán Faúndes, 2019; Ponce Lara, 2022; Moratalla, 2019). This approach resonated with the characteristic of revolutionary ethos which oscillates between „a desire for a clean break with the past, on the one hand, and, on the other, the past’s ability nevertheless to „haunt” the present and thus restrict the scope and character of revolutionary transformation” (Holbraad et.al, 2020: 20)

I too embraced this enthusiasm and decided for this thesis.

In my failed application for a research grant I wrote, that I want to research „The Aftermath of the *Estallido Social* and the Implementation of the New Constitution from the Perspective of the Student Movement.” However, as soon as I left Prague, it became clear that my research topic was in trouble. The new Chilean constitution was rejected on September 4, 2022. Despite considering to change my research topic, I decided to „stay with the trouble“ (Haraway, 2016) of the „failed revolution” and engage with it also as a „critical event” drawing on the work of Veena Das (1995). Das, similar to Martin Holbraad (2013) or Al-Khalili (2023), rather than viewing such upheavals through the binary of success or failure, anthropologically traces the emergence of „new modes of action [which] came into being [...] and] redefined traditional categories such as codes [...], meaning of martyrdom, and the construction of a heroic life” (Das, 1995: 6). I follow this approach.

²³ See also: Goecke, X. (2022). *El despertar chileno: Revuelta y subjetividad política*. Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales. <https://digital.casalini.it/9789878130941>

2.2 Post-dictatorial Chile: the neoliberal subject, melancholic society?

The implementation of neoliberal economic interventions, contested by the *Estallido*, are intertwined with the „subject-making” (Tucker-Abramson, 2018), which works to „unmake and erase faulty minds, then rebuild new personalities on that ever-elusive clean slate” (Klein, 2007: 29). A neoliberal order requires a „global citizen” – a rational, autonomous and responsible entrepreneur, positive and self-confident individual (Türken et al., 2016). Thus, a part of it is the implementation of fear as a mode of governance, targeted meaning that people are targeted by „promoting patriotic and conservative values, outlining an individualist body centered on the nuclear and binary family and on the acquisition of consumer goods.” (Adaro, 2022: 525). The persistence of neoliberal policies and the polarizing, erasing, and obscuring nature of memory politics are tangible remnants of the dictatorial pasts-continuous. Francisca, whom I met during a memory event, remembering the Operación Colombo²⁴ and agreed to meet me for an interview, introduced the complex political landscape from her perspective as follows:

„What happened to us in this country is that the end of the dictatorship was not a defeat of the dictatorship itself. It came through a negotiated agreement between three political parties that formed the „Concertación” [Coalition of democratic parties after the dictatorship] to make a transition towards democracy. This process included the participation of the coup-supporting right-wing and the military. As part of this agreement, there was also an implicit pact of impunity. Pinochet was never held accountable. He never spent a single day in prison. So, did the dictatorship really lose? Clearly not. The agreement also excluded leftist forces — the ones that had fought the hardest and most consistently against the dictatorship. Groups like the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the MIR (Revolutionary Left Movement) were all left out of the agreement. They were not considered, and this meant that when the „Concertación” came to power, their memory was also left out. (...) The official

²⁴ Operation Colombo was a 1975 disinformation campaign by Chile's secret police DINA to cover up the forced disappearances of 119 political opponents by falsely claiming they died abroad in internal conflicts. See also: <https://www.londres38.cl/1937/w3-propertyvalue-44278.html>

history that gets written is the history of the victors, while the defeated are erased from the narrative. And we were defeated. Those of us who took part in the resistance against the dictatorship did so with the goal of restoring a truly deep and meaningful democracy. But we didn't achieve that goal. As a result, our history was excluded. Unfortunately, the official history also excluded everything that Salvador Allende's government had truly represented. It took many, many years to begin to create space for these forgotten memories. It took years for us to start reclaiming these memories, to make them known. This meeting we are having now is also part of that effort — it's another step in that process. It has taken 50 years, but only now are we finally starting to share many of these stories. The parties of the „Concertación“ that came to power after the dictatorship had no interest at all in Allende's program. They adopted the neoliberal economic system that had been imposed by blood and fire with the coup and the dictatorship. That was the goal of the military coup: to bury once and for all the dream of social justice. And that's why it wasn't just about the coup d'état itself. It was followed by 17 years of repression. Now, some people try to separate the two issues. They condemn the human rights violations, but they justify the military coup, as if the two were not related. But they are not separate at all. Over the years, they have tried to push the narrative that Allende's government was a failed and negative one. But that is not true. If it had really been a failed and negative government, a coup wouldn't have been necessary — the government would have collapsed on its own. But the coup was absolutely necessary for them. It was essential to put an end to a process that was advancing and responding to the hopes of an organized people. The unions were strong, and in general, the people were organized. To impose a new economic model that was completely opposed to what had existed before, it was necessary to dismantle the unions, break apart neighborhood organizations, and weaken the local community movements. That is why the repression under the dictatorship was so harsh. This is why disappearance was necessary.”

[Francisca, July 2023]

Disappearance functions as a tool of neoliberal governance, embodying a form of "antipolitics" (Tassin, 2017), where "the production of the disappeared is nothing more than a methodology of domination" (Tassin, 2017: 99). This mechanism relies on "terror as a strategy to reorganize or reestablish order in society" (Irazuzta et al., 2018: 5) and from conversations with those who survived and returned from torture centers I heard stories of how physical terror was employed as part of a calculated logic of silence and implicit danger. Torturers would use electricity on areas not immediately visible, carefully avoiding methods that left bruises or drew blood. This ensured that those who encountered the survivors knew something horrific had occurred, but it couldn't be identified or shared immediately.

The result of this state combined with radical restructuring of the economic and social system, was by Michael Taussig compared figure of the *imbunche*²⁵. He describes Chileans after dictatorship as "isolated from each other, their means of communicating suppressed, their connections cut off, their senses blocked by fear (1987: 4). Similar description can be observed in the analysis of the „political trauma“, which according to Lira and Castillo, (1993), resulted in the „fear, social denial, self-censorship, isolation, passivity, resignation, powerlessness, skepticism, and the alteration of individuals' relationship with reality” – sentiments in stark contrast with the experience prior to the Coup d'Etat.

“Senses blocked by fear” (Taussig, 1987), „pena” (pity) and „isolation” which occurred abruptly led to a „sense of abandonment and lack of recognition that affects the subject of historical break when they no longer possess names and concepts that are sufficiently trustworthy to verbalize their experience” (Richard, 2000: 273). The lack of words, concepts and spaces where the post-dictatorial situation could have been collectively captured, mourned or shared, some argue, has evolved into *melancholy*. It is not only

²⁵ „There is an old story in the Chilean countryside (...) about what happens when a child is abducted by witches. In order to break the child's will, the witches break the child's bones and sew the body parts together in an abnormal way. The head is turned around so the child has to walk backwards, and the ears, eyes, and mouth are stitched up. This creature is called the Imbunche, and Dorfman feels that the military junta under Pinochet has done and continues to do everything in its power to make every Chilean and Chile itself into an Imbunche.” (Taussig, 1987: 4)

subjective and psychological phenomena,²⁶ but also social and political condition (Richard, 2000; Traverso, 2017).

The detailed genealogy of melancholy is described by Traverso (2017) condensed into sense of the “sorrow, lovesickness and resignation”, but primarily focuses on “loss and bereavement” (Traverso 2017: 39). The key, in this sense is the Freudian conceptualization of melancholy, paraphrased by Fustinoni and Caniato as „the loss is of a more ideal nature, when the subject does not know exactly how to identify what was lost, even often identifying the material object that was lost” (2019: 1).

In contemporary contexts, however, melancholy can also be explored as a socially and culturally embedded phenomenon, shaped by collective experiences and material conditions.²⁷ The melancholy I want to stress here, is the sense of “the loss of utopia” – frustration of leftist ideals and failure to achieve the dreamed society. Walter Benjamin (1994 [1931]) termed it „left-wing melancholia”. According to some, to dwell in the political melancholia is to live in an „intellectual straitjacket” (Brown, 1999: 24) – which, if unreflected, contains potentiality to resurface as “conservative and even self-destructive undersides of putatively progressive political aims” (Brown, 1999: 27). What is more, it can be a symptom of leftists „narcissism with regard to one's past political attachments and identity that exceeds any contemporary investment in political mobilization, alliance, or transformation” (ibid.: 20).

In Chile melancholy is tied to experience of post-dictatorship and loss of the world the organized people were creating (Traverso, 2017), but it is also framed as an experience of the families of the detained and disappeared (Panizo, 2024) and its collective and social transference across generations, what resurfaced powerfully in the height of *Estallido* – (Matamala 2023; Cuestas, Manzano, 2019;). The post-dictatorial art and literature is too

²⁶ Trauma, mourning and melancholy (the coup as trauma, mourning as the loss of the object and melancholy as the unresolved suspension of mourning) are figures that (...) ent their affective tone to the expression of post-dictatorship—an expression marked by the problematic character of a tension between loss of knowledge (of confidence in knowledge as a secure foundation) and knowledge of loss (the critical vindication of waste, of the remainder, as the condition of a thought of an ‘afterwards’ now irreconcilable with previous models of finitude and the totalization of truth).

²⁷ For example, Judith Butler's concept of „gender melancholy“ (2005) reframes melancholy as a social and performative dynamic, wherein loss is internalized through cultural norms and power structures, influencing identity formation and subjectivity.

described distinctively melancholic²⁸. After all, the prolific rallying cry of the *Estallido* sounded „Nos quitaron tanto, hasta el miedo!”²⁹ to capture this sentiment and through collective fiercelessness temporarily suspending it at the same time, as recalled this dynamics by Milos’ account in the opening vignette. In my field this sentiment oscillated between “pity” [pena] and “rabia” [anger]³⁰, which will be ethnographically explored in the following chapter. It is from this dynamics from which I want to contribute discussion over melancholy as a feature assigned to experience of Chilean post-dictatorship (Traverso, 2017; Richard, 2000).

Enzo Traverso, reinterpreting Walter Benjamin, contributes to scholar’ navigation between these registers. He proposes a more hopeful engagement with melancholia, which in his words, is “a transition from utopia to memory” (2017: xiv). Such move allows to “rediscover a melancholic vision of history as remembrance of the vanquished”. In other words, Traverso frames melancholia as a bridge between memory and action, while warning of attempts to „build a monument or write an epitaph (...). His engagement with the left-melancholy stems from exploration of a “multiform and at times contradictory memory landscape. Differently from currently dominant humanitarianism that sacralizes the memory of victims, and mostly neglects or rejects their commitments” Traverso approaches frustrated utopias as both a burden and as well as a “promise of redemption” (2017: xv).

Before highlighting aspects of the shifting power dynamics between these two registers, it is important to clarify a key point: the metaphor of an *imbunche*, as described earlier, is helpful in understanding the immediate effects of the dictatorship and the deeper logic of the neoliberal governance (Klein, 2007)—viewing Chileans solely as „disarticulated

²⁸ Most notably in the works of Roberto Bolaño, Eleuterio Fernández Huidobro, and Diamela Eltit, as well as films by Alejandro Agresti and Marco Bechis

²⁹ "They took so much from us, even our fear!"

³⁰ *We joined a local protest organized by pobladoras after a woman working in a pharmacy was assaulted based on her gender. Women from the población gathered at the crossroads and blocked the street. They displayed pictures from CCTV footage and the Facebook profile picture of the man who was identified as the perpetrator. We brought drums and contributed to the sounds from speakers during the act of funa and feminist solidarity. As we are returning, Luna asserted that for her the past can be approached either from "pena" (pity) or "rabia" (anger), and these "emotions" are not only side effects of memory work, but they are the motives, they the "why" one acts – “why one throws the stone or makes a mural”. She asserted that one must analyze these approaches and ask what does it entail? What is the result of pity or anger? “It is just so important to educate your anger” (educar la rabia), she concludes. [Field Notes, June 2023]*

imbunches, “blocked by fear and isolated” (as described by Taussig in 1985 and reflected by Celia Duperton (2019) through the experience of those born after formal end of dictatorship), would overlook webs of resistances that existed prior to the *Estallido*.³¹

Following the formal end of the dictatorship, disappearance shifted from direct terror to the manipulation of memory, turning it into a key site of political struggle. If neoliberalism operates through disappearance, then “the demand for the reappearance of those who disappeared is a political struggle. (...) This struggle is political not simply because it challenges dictatorial regimes but because it reclaims public space to demand the reappearance of the disappeared” (Irazuzta et al., 2018: 5).

It is this interplay through which I approach memory as a weapon. A weapon – vulnerable to be appropriated and powerful to defy, expose and weaponize. The call to explore this memory landscape as a shift from focus on melancholy lays at core of this thesis.

2.3 Creation of (counter-memories) of and during the Estallido

It is not only melancholy that is part of long *durée* of dictatorship, but also resistance which Francisca highlights, which resurfaces as counter-memory. Stemming from Foucault, (1977) counter-memory rests on defiance and opposition to three modalities of history: parodic (directed against reality), dissociative (directed against identity) and sacrificial (directed against truth, opposing history as knowledge)(160). To construct a counter-memory implies a “use of history that severs its connection to memory [which works] as a transformation of history into a totally different form of time.” (ibid.)

³¹ Let’s consider the *cacerolazos* during the first years of the dictatorship, which resurged strongly in 1982 at the height of the economic crisis stimulated by neoliberal reforms. (Salazar, 2009) We should also highlight the protests of the *pobladores* in the second half of the dictatorship, which significantly contributed to its eventual end. The political appearances of demands and memories resurged during student protests in 2011-2013, (Salazar, 2012) which blocked cities for extended periods while demanding a truly public education system and the elimination of profit-oriented schemes in education sustained by neoliberal model. It is impossible to overlook the massive mobilizations in November 2018, when people massively marched in the streets after the killing of a Mapuche person and an activist Camilo Catrillanca, while farming, by the „anti-terrorist” police, displaying that their memory is not included in the Chilean Nation State.

On March 8th 2023, I join the march through the city towards Plaza Dignidad³², surrounded by thousands of women chanting: Paco fascista, tu hija es feminista! („Fascist policeman, your daughter is a feminist!“). The energy is palpable as the crowd swells around the square, with high school students jumping and dancing on top of bus stops. The streets became alive with a new layer of graffiti, posters and stickers. Through the dancing comparsas (carnival-style troupes), I am swept into the collective body of the movement, moving away from Plaza Dignidad towards La Moneda (the presidential palace). Before we move I stare at the Plaza and mentally reconstruct the pictures of riots and Bengal fires enlightening it four years ago. In my ethnographic journal, I write that I am looking at the „remnants of the revolution,” but what I actually see is the foundation of a bust roughly painted over in plaster white, surrounded by freshly planted tulips, rapidly growing grass with help of fertilizers to change the landscape of the social battle into an urban park.

[Field notes, 08.03. 2023]



³² Renamed as such by the protesters from its previous name “Plaza Baquedano”, named after a general who led wars against the Bolivia, and Peru in order to annex them and expand Chilean territory.

Figure n. 1 Plaza Dignidad and the empty foundation, after the removal of the statue of General Baquedano. April 2023. Photo by the author.

Counter-memory can be seen as a method (Foucault, 1977). It can be enacted in marches, painted over and it can imply removal or addition. Generally it starkly resurfaces in different occasion as an effective element of resistance repertoire, not as immobile act of thinking the past, but as a tool to conquest the needs of the present (Radzobe, 2019). I see faint remnants of slogans from past events seep through the layers of white paint around the bust, which once held the statue of General Baquedano, identified as a colonial remnant (Bustamante, Olivares, 2023). Anarchists, autonomists, students, *pobladorxs* (inhabitants of poor urban districts), queer people, militant anthropologist and the Mapuche nation left their messages, statements and affirmations written there.



Figure n. 2: El Negro Matapacos replacing the statue of General Baquedano on the main square. 2021
Attribution: Rocío Aravena, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via
Wikimedia Commons

During the height of the *Estallido*, the statue disappeared, or rather, it was hidden when the city government had decided to protect it from uncontrollable and repeated destruction. Empty foundation opened a space for imagination. The most popular idea, envisioned through various artistic interventions, was to replace the statue of Baquedano

with a 3-meter-high statue of a deceased fellow protester, patron, and *compañero* (comrade): *El Negro Matapacos*, a black *kiltro*³³ dog who joined the student protests in 2011 and became famous for chasing and barking at police officers detaining students and following marches. *Matapacos* invited protesters and researchers to move away from „male and human-centric vanguardism” (Krøijer, 2019: 170) and prototype of a "revolutionary subject"—as a western, autonomous, rational, male subject who steers the course of history and reimagines it through universalizing ideals of progress and a better future. (Holbraad et.al, 2020; Krøijer, 2019; Aguilera et.al, 2023). In the context of the *Estallido*, however, it was a dog³⁴ that became a hailed as “leader” (Guzman Campos et.al. 2020) a symbol of resistance and unity³⁵ and a subject of anthropocentrism, calibrated by the animalization of humans (Aguilera et al., 2023) arguing, that the precarity and marginalization of Chileans refers to a position of abandoned street dogs (ibid.).

In the same square during the social upheaval of 2019, the Baquedano metro entrance was transformed into a site of torture, where protesters endured physical abuse. A sign reading „Aquí se tortura” [They torture here] was painted over the wall, echoing the signs painted by activists during the dictatorship to expose the secret detention centers such as

³³ A familiar form of this term is quiltro, derived from the native language Mapudungun, meaning a mixed-breed dog. The use of "K" instead of "C" or "Q" reflects the okupa movement's anarchist orthography, which symbolically challenges linguistic norms and resists academic hegemony. This counter-hegemonic practice reclaims language as a site of ideological struggle, as noted by Villarroel Torres (2019).

³⁴ Matapacos even inspired a more-than-human prototype of revolutionary politics based on improvisation: (During Estallido people were) „improvising (...) like a street dog, a *kiltro* skilled at crossing heavily trafficked streets because they know how to wait; willing to be afraid of what may poison them and to doubt what seems extremely appealing; accepting that their singular lives are with others. Albeit their skills, *kiltro* dogs do not know ahead of time: they always wonder where to go, where not to go, how to go, when and how to walk in a group, when and how to be alone. For a politics of improvisation engage in a practice of ecological reparation, the *kiltro* dog of Chilean streets is not only a metaphor, it is also a presence to learn from“(Bonelli, De la Cadena, 2023: 324).

³⁵ It is important to stress, that *kiltro* goes beyond mere symbolism and beyond a single figure of *El Matapacos*. *Kiltro* dogs roaming Chilean streets and some, participating in the political events are by some, engaged with as a *compañerxs* and approached as physical presences, fostering friendship, alliance or affinity. Rather than someone to look up to as a hero or inspiration for human politics. The canine presence in political contexts, such as squatting, can reconfigure the notion of politics, which together with *kiltros*, is a case of more-than-human politics (Kuřík, 2022; Bonelli, de la Cadena, 2023). This, based on my ethnographic research, will be argued elsewhere. However, for the purpose of my argument in this thesis, I want to emphasize that in critical events (Das, 1995) such as the *Estallido*, the element of “criticality” can be traced not only through institutional changes but also through the reconfiguration of the very understanding and recognition who can be a political/revolutionary subject.

Estadio Nacional or „Cuartel Borgoño” in the commune of Independencia, just a few streets from here. Eventually, this area was collectively renamed „Jardín de la Resistencia” (Garden of Resistance), where protesters cultivated art, plants, and a sense of political *compañerismo*. However, in 2023, it was taken over by the head of one of the wealthiest municipalities, Las Condes, to create an „official memory” honoring all the „victims” of the 2019 events, including the police and military. The place was sealed with concrete to begin adjustments to its appearance and the memory it carries. ³⁶



Figure n. 3: Jardín de Resistencia. Photo by the author. March 2023.

In February 2024, when I was writing this thesis, I saw online footage from Santiago de Chile, showing people dressed in black, covering their faces and announcing that Sebastián Piñera drowned after his private helicopter crashed into a lake Ranco.

In the following days, a three-day national mourning has been proclaimed. Ironically, politicians who rose to power by heavily criticizing Piñera's regime were now joining the official mourning, praising him as „a political leader who paved the way throughout his

³⁶ Polo González, A. (2023, January 19). '*Jardín de la Resistencia*': Peligra el espacio de memoria creado por manifestantes en Chile. Noticias Latam. <https://noticiaslatam.lat/20230119/jardin-de-la-resistencia-peligra-el-espacio-de-memoria-creado-por-manifestantes-en-chile--fotos-1134825854.html>

career for a modern, democratic, liberal right, open to dialogue and agreements for the greater good of Chile.”³⁷

The *Estallido Social* was not the first mass protest since the dictatorship, but it was the largest — not only in terms of the number of people involved, but also in the heterogeneity of demands and the scale of exposure of the “breach” it has opened in the neoliberal logic. The positions of power among diverse groups, as exemplified by Francisca’s narration were always starkly at place and the axis over which they move, is a memory – a capacity to of people inhabiting “different forms of time” (Foucault, 1977: 385) to shifting, fleeting, contesting it’s counterpart that erases, fights or manipulates.

2.4 Going all the way of revolution: Where to?

*(...) At some point, in the height of Estallido, I went back and there for the first time I saw a big sign on the obelisk of the Baqueano [main square] that talked about demanding the new Constitution and the crowd around was like „Sí! Sí!” [ironic high-pitched voice] But this demand didn’t come from „grupos de choque” [those who were in front lines of direct confrontation with the police] and I don’t know how those „citizens” [ironic], I don’t know how the conchesumadre [motherfu**ers] came to that conclusion drinking chela [beer] and smoking weed but... then I thought of this phrase that I like very much from letter of Malatesta about Constitution, that he wrote it in 1930 and says something like when the people rise up and don’t go all the way, it ends with tears of blood. Malatesta died seeing Mussolini. He died of old age, but he died seeing Mussolini rising. When I saw it I said, well, this wea [wea] is going to repeat itself, it’s going to repeat itself. Like if we don’t finish or we don’t get to the end, it will be repeated and we are going to speak with tears of blood with dead people and a much stronger counterrevolution is going to come. And four years later we are here: with these new republican assemblies that no longer*

³⁷Laborde, A. (2024, February 13). *El Gobierno de Boric intenta contener las críticas del Partido Comunista por su discurso en la despedida de Piñera*. El País. <https://elpais.com/chile/2024-02-13/el-gobierno-de-boric-intenta-contener-las-criticas-del-partido-comunista-por-su-discurso-en-la-despedida-de-pinera.html>

even want to put human rights in the constitution or whatever they think they are writing. What is happening is what happened to the Malatesta. Fascism is on the rise. Or actually it is fascism in the new edition.

[Chena, July, 2023]

Chena's notion of fascism in a new edition captures the omnipresent disappointment I encountered in conversation with people immediately after entering Chile. It appeared that this backlash relegated *Estallido* to the "dustbin of history" (Scott, 2014), a revolutionary event to be forgotten as a failure, as another reason for leftist melancholy to deepen. While I am unsure what Chena linked to the idea of an „end,” his critique – reducing revolutionary aspirations to mere institutional changes and re-assigning roles within the state – is an underlying principle from which anthropology as a discipline enters into discussion with the phenomena of a revolution (Holbraad et. al 2020, Al-Khalili, 2023). I, too, join this perspective and engage with the revolution as a matter of study, resonating with the critical event, as framed earlier (Das, 1995). I do mobilize this term because many of my research partners termed *Estallido* a “revolution.” I align with a position, that we, “as anthropologists (...) are happy to treat as a “revolution” any instance local actors conceive of as such—any political upheaval, that is, which, for variable reasons and in varied ways, participants brand as a “revolution” in their own terms” (Holbraad et.al 2020: 10). „When I saw the flag with ‘WE DEMAND A NEW CONSTITUTION. NOW,’ I knew the revolution was over,” he reflected further. „At some point we were burning the Chilean flag, and some guy jumped in to save it. A compañero yelled, ‘Hey, there's a patriot!’—and we almost got into a fight. Then some Greenpeace hippie came yelling, ‘We're all brothers! No violence!’ I told her, ‘Get lost! [*A la concha de tu madre!*]’.

These were some of the contradictions within what outsiders perceived as a united *pueblo* or a „mass” and the dynamic experienced by protesters. Chena never considered flags or constitutions part of revolutionary aspirations, nor did he go with the flow of mass as a coherent political entity. Chena's observation supports the anthropological work of Sian Lazar (2008) on the case of the Bolivian rebellion in El Alto. She emphasizes that in the context of Latin American revolutions, the anthropological perspective must extend beyond the traditional confines of party-based electoral democracy while arguing that the

anthropological approach asks for a deeper engagement with the concept of „civil society“ as something more substantive than merely a complement to established political systems and electoral politics (2008).

It is precisely unfulfilled institutional changes stimulated by the *Estallido* why from today's (2024) perspective the majority of people frames as a „betrayal“ or „lost opportunity”.³⁸ „If in December 2019, 55% said they had supported the protests, that figure is now just 23%, according to the survey by the Center for Public Studies (CEP) in 2024.”³⁹

The failed conveyance and weaponization of revolutionary ideas into institutional politics, mirrors Antonio Gramsci's concept of a passive revolution (Morton, 2007)—a top-down transformation in which the ruling class absorbs demands of the people to maintain control. Gabriel Boric's government might be a case of this phenomenon. Boric himself, a charismatic young presidential candidate with roots in the student movement, gained attention by using „Wallmapu”—the Indigenous Mapuche Nation's ancestral name—instead of the official term „Macrozona Sur“ preferred by state authorities and the military to highlight its annexation to Chilean nation state. Embracing bold, leftist ideals, he famously declared, „If Chile was the cradle of neoliberalism, under my presidency, it will be its grave.”⁴⁰ Yet, despite these progressive promises, his government ultimately fostered a

³⁸ The Political Aftermath of Social Unrest in Chile”(Nocetto, et al. 2024) examines how the *Estallido* led to a deepening mistrust of towards institutions and highlights the failure to address the demands expressed in the streets. The authors link the failure of the constitutional process and the *Estallido Social* with the rise of new political actors—whom they call „independents“. These are actors who entered the Constitutional Convention and „lacked—and did not develop—a national-level political organization. In turn, they lacked the ability to organize politics and channel demands”(p.9).

However, it is precisely the combination of these elements—new localized actors, the failed conveyance of revolutionary ideals into institutional frameworks, and the consequent profound mistrust of institutional politics—that comparative political science places at the core of explaining the failure or incompleteness of the *Estallido*, from which anthropological analysis stems. Instead of viewing these factors through the prism of failure, which risks erasing the positive or enduring aspects of the movement rooted in these very elements, an anthropological analysis would highlight the emergence of marginalized actors as political voices who reconfigured the very premises about revolutionary subjectivity, temporality and the agency. Their mis-fit position in the institutional politics might be an indicator of the situation, in which politics is relegated to another spheres of life, more relevant for tracing localized, lived experience of revolution.

³⁹ Castro, M. (2024, October 18). Chile cumple cinco años del estallido social con demandas vigentes, pero con otras prioridades. *El País Chile*. <https://elpais.com/chile/2024-10-18/chile-cumple-cinco-anos-del-estallido-social-con-demandas-vigentes-pero-con-otras-prioridades.html>

⁴⁰ Cambero, F. (2021, November 17). Former protest leader Boric seeks to bury Chile's 'neoliberal' past. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/former-protest-leader-boric-seeks-bury-chiles-neoliberal-past-2021-11-17/>

conservative modernization that blocked “majority” from leading a truly transformative process, what is a simplified definition of revolution with the “French Revolution” as a “myth of modernity” and a “a coherent image on which our [revolutionary] action can be modelled” (Lévi-Strauss, 1966: 254).

Boric’s transformative agenda has faltered two years into his presidency, partly constrained by a minority in Congress. Promises of institutional change have given way to repression. Boric’s government has militarized the executive of what he now calls „Macrozona Sur” invoked the State Security Law, and enforced the passage of 55 security laws contrasting to his earlier statements. Meanwhile, key reforms—on education, pensions, and taxes—have been sidelined. Controversial policies, such as Law 21.560 (known as Gatillo Fácil, or „Easy Trigger“) expanded police powers and led to further violence, including the death of Emilio Latorre.⁴¹



Figure n. 4: Graffiti close to Plaza Dignidad: “Law Gatillo Fácil: Genocide of the Poor”. Photo by the author. April 2023.

⁴¹ Contreras Jara, J. C. (2024, May 23). Las contradicciones que rodean el asesinato de joven en Puente Alto: INDH prepara acciones legales ante nuevo caso de gatillo fácil en Carabineros. *Resumen.cl*. Retrieved at: <https://resumen.cl/articulos/las-contradicciones-que-rodean-el-asesinato-de-joven-en-puente-alto-indh-prepara-acciones-legales-ante-nuevo-caso-de-gatillo-facil-en-carabineros>

Boric' government approved extension the state of emergency 45 times—more than any previous president (left or right-wing)⁴². The Anti-Squatting Law (among popular sectors known as „ley antipobre” [anti-poor law] has increased penalties for illegal occupations, leading to violent evictions without solutions, such as the removal of 180 families who constructed their homes over squatted vacant land [practice known as “toma de terreno”] “Toma 17 de Mayo” in Cerro Navia district during winter 2024⁴³.

Let's also take into consideration raids on *población* Villa Francia, including on the community kitchen of Luisa Toledo and the free radio Villa Francia⁴⁴, imprisoning social activists, artists, and *pobladorxs* without sufficient evidence exemplifies this crackdown and deepens the feeling of defeat after *Estallido*. This place is emblematic for its continuous resistance, through dictatorship up until today, as will be ethnographically introduced in the following chapter.

2.5 *Octubrismo* and the mechanisms of erasure

⁴² DW. (2022, July 12). Chile: Violencia mapuche y el fin de la ingenuidad del gobierno de Boric. DW. Retrieved at: <https://www.dw.com/es/chile-violencia-mapuche-y-el-fin-de-la-ingenuidad-del-gobierno-de-boric/a-62321418>

⁴³ “In the commune of Cerro Navia, in Santiago, the Toma 17 de Mayo existed for 5 years, occupying a vacant site of 11 hectares owned by the Guzmán Nieto family, the most powerful latifundium family in the western sector of the capital and main shareholder of the ENEA Ciudad Aeropuerto industrial warehouse project. This community of poor families faced the interests of large capitals and big landowners, their entire State apparatus and their repressive laws, developing in struggle and resistance for the right to decent housing and to unite the struggles of the homeless in different points of the country. Their eviction, carried out with an unprecedented police force, announces a new phase in the anti-people policy of the old reactionary State that today heads the government of Gabriel Boric.” Source: <https://redherald.org/2024/05/21/eviction-of-the-toma-17-de-mayo-they-wanted-an-exemplary-punishment/>

⁴⁴ Resumen.cl. (2024, July 12). *Allanamiento en Villa Francia: Arbitrariedad y falta de pruebas*. Resumen. <https://resumen.cl/articulos/allanamiento-en-villa-francia-arbitrariedad-y-falta-de-pruebas>



Figure n. 5: A variation of a posters: in the middle is an image of Gabriel Boric and remake of original photo taken of him during the height of the *Estallido Social* protests in Chile, where he originally wore a t-shirt featuring an image of Jaime Guzmán—an influential politician and intellectual who drafted Chile's neoliberal constitution under Pinochet's dictatorship and was later assassinated by members of the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla organization. In the poster, Boric is shown holding a t-shirt with a bullet hole in his own face, accompanied by the phrase: 'It wasn't 30 years, it was 30 pesos,' reversing the slogan associated with the protests. Photo by the author. May 2023.

In his book *Silencing the Past* (1995), Michel-Rolph Trouillot analyzes the case of the Haitian Revolution, focusing on how Western historians have attempted to manipulate or erase its importance discursively and factually. On one level, these narratives directly negated the reality of a revolution, what the author labels as „formulas of erasure” (1995: 96). „The second kind tends to empty a number of singular events of their revolutionary content so that the entire string of facts, gnawed from all sides, becomes trivialized. I call them formulas of banalization” (ibid.). In his discussion about the „formulas of erasure”, Trouillot evidences how historians, especially French ones, often avoid using the word „revolution” when referring to certain events, preferring terms like „revolt” instead. They also tend to attribute the outcomes of these events to factors like disease rather than

acknowledging the collective will and determination of, e.g., Black people fighting for their freedom. Regarding „formulas of banalization,“ he focuses on patterns of structural silence, where important historical events are trivialized by statements like „The Germans didn’t actually build gas chambers” or „slavery also affected non-Black people,” which serve to downplay the gravity and importance of these events (ibid.: 97).

In the context of the *Estallido*, these mechanisms clearly illustrate what I would expand on as 'formulas of vilification' or 'tactics of discrediting' employed by manipulation of memory. These involve a new set of legal frameworks aimed at framing the legacy and actions during the *Estallido* as part of a uniformly violent movement—something presented as both a threat to be prevented and a crime to be prosecuted, shadowing the governance by fear and memory battle: „Like children who see ghosts in the shadows of the night, we end up sheltering ourselves under the outdated and tattered blanket of the current Constitution.”⁴⁵

The atmosphere of disillusionment into which I arrived, exemplified by my discussion with a co-traveler on the airplane, was only deepening. This social atmosphere even received an own term: *Octubrismo*. It is a term heard in everyday discussions at universities, on the streets, but also made its way to political or scientific debates (Matamala, 2024; Leüpin, 2022). The term oscillates between being an insult and a label for perceived naivety. Right-wing factions have weaponized *Octubrismo* to discredit the protests and wider resistance communities, painting participants as advocates for violence and revolution instead of peaceful reformation. This rhetoric produces demonization of the protest by speaking of violence sparked by protesters, while conveniently ignoring the human rights violations committed by the state. Daniel Matamala (2024) identifies this denialism, banalization and sophisticated erasure techniques as a reflection of broader denialism reminiscent of Chile’s dictatorship era, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Octubrismo has different forms: for example, mainstream media narratives seek to vilify Matapacos and right-wing politicians seek to prohibit his name and image in public discourse or on the streets, labeling him and anyone associated with the kiltro dog (victims of ocular trauma as well) as a criminals and promoters of violence and aggression that has

⁴⁵ Matamala, D. (2024). *El hastío* (1st ed.). Editorial Catalonia.

allegedly led to the murder of police officers since 2019⁴⁶. In 2024, President directly denounced El Negro Matapacos—along with everyone associated with him, including those suffering from ocular trauma due to the protests. Boric stated that he had never celebrated, nor could he understand, the crude image of „that“ dog (with a face of indifference, even disgust), Matapacos.

However, I also encountered the term *octubrismo* among anti-authoritarian *compañerxs* at the *Los Pies del Cerro* squat. They used *octubrismo* to describe individuals who had been politically inactive before the *Estallido* but became „revolutionaries overnight“. One *compañero* remarked, „I mean, to me this is no sign of anything—you were there, but what did you do before?“ In other spaces, the term was used to label even those injured during protests, implying they lacked experience in protest tactics, such as handling Molotov cocktails or failing to mask their identities. It was also a term, which I heard to describe someone who demands reparation from the state for injuries or other human rights violations. „*He is such an octubrista! Asking the 'daddy' state to pay for his rebellion*“ [Anteo, co-squatter].

Phrases like „*Esto no es ninguna wea octubrista, esto ha sido de nosotros de antes!*“ („This is not some *octubrista* nonsense, this has been ours from before!“) were common when I asked about terms popularized during the *Estallido*, such as *kiltro*. Both anarchists and right-wing politicians employed the term *octubrismo* disparagingly what reflects the underlying atmosphere of this occasion – a harsh critique and revision of yet another of Latin American „failed or inconclusive revolutions.“⁴⁷ With the disappearance of pledges for a new constitution, emptied streets, and a repressive backlash, many analyses have framed this moment as a lost opportunity (Leüpin, 2022; Nocetto, 2024). However, anthropological

⁴⁶ Pezoa, Á. (2023, September 11). Columna de Álvaro Pezoa: Matapacos. La Tercera. <https://www.latercera.com/opinion/noticia/columna-de-alvaro-pezoa-matapacos/JHUBFUTBZNEEHGOF6O2RNEXCQ/>

⁴⁷ Demattei, C. (2024, July 16). *Crónica de la revolución que no fue: Chile a casi 5 años del Estallido social*. Confidencial. Retrieved from <https://confidencial.digital/opinion/cronica-de-la-revolucion-que-no-fue-chile-a-casi-5-anos-del-Estallido-social/>
Joignant, A. (2024, October 21). *¿Qué sabemos sobre el Estallido social chileno?* El País. Retrieved from <https://elpais.com/chile/2024-10-21/que-sabemos-sobre-el-Estallido-social-chileno.html>
Avendaño, O. (2024, October 17). *Estallido social en Chile, cinco años después*. Fundación Heinrich Böll. Retrieved from <https://cl.boell.org/es/2024/10/17/Estallido-social-en-chile-cinco-anos-despues>

lenses demand, to move beyond the main plazas as the main site of where the *Estallido* resonated.

2.6 Engaged withdrawal from the *Estallido*

Felipe started to speak of a frustration of the post-Estallido, questioning how, three years after the uprising, people were once again voting for a „fascist and Pinochetist government“. He said, that the reason it failed was because it had been appropriated by those in power, who mixed the discourses of catchy slogans and their political ambitions causing confusion among the public about „what one can even expect from the revolution“. Compañera Luna reacted to it: "I mean, the Estallido wasn't just about this constitution wea [thing], but look where we are now and what we are doing [in the dusk of Los Pies , after a workshop on memory and watching the snowed Andes]. [During Estallido] different spaces were raised and all that stuff. I met so many people back in the North for example. I feel also so much pity [pena] about it, but the sad thing is that now I have to wait another 20 years for a new Estallido or so, but sure it will come.

[Field notes, May 2023]

The criteria which creates a line between “successful” and “failed”, completed and frustrated revolutions, and the need for distinction between “revolution/rebellion/uprising” are tied to “a modern and conventional political idea of radical transformation according to which human action can deliberately change the course of history, erasing the past in the name of a better future” (Holbraad et. al, 2020: 4).

Such criteria for assessing the strength or significance of social change are closely tied to the specific aspirations and goals of each movement. One example of how revolution can be understood within a localized context is Axel Rudi's doctoral thesis (2019), in which he examines the cosmology of revolution in the Kurdish Freedom Movement. He outlines two key approaches for evaluating revolution as a generic phenomenon:

The first is the "Imperial Liberal Perspective," which assumes that revolutionary efforts are driven by a universal desire for Western-style modernization, suggesting that non-Western actors naturally wish to adopt Western norms and values, including ideas of

liberation, democracy, and progress. Rudi critiques this perspective for overlooking the specific contexts in which these Western ideals may not only be problematic but also irrelevant or inapplicable. Scholars such as Saba Mahmood (2005) and Lila Abu-Lughod (2013) challenge this framework by showing that practices like wearing the hijab or embracing traditional gender roles – seen as oppressive from a Western standpoint – can in fact be expressions of agency, resistance, and emancipation within their own contexts.

The second "Imperial Leftist Perspective," on the other hand, is rooted in Marxist philosophy and a dialectical approach, which recognizes "true revolutions" as processes that represent "progress toward Freedom" (Rudi, 2019: 23). This perspective suggests that systemic contradictions can be resolved through such revolutionary progress. He shows, that freedom may not necessarily align with the adoption of globalist, identity-free visions of a globalized world. The freedom and political action in similar occasion might also be found in a decision of the people not to participate in the movement. "One need not have an actual conspiracy to achieve the practical effects of a conspiracy. More regimes have been brought, piecemeal, to their knees by what was once called 'Irish Democracy,' the silent, dogged resistance, withdrawal and truculence of millions of ordinary people, than by revolutionary vanguards or rioting mobs" (Scott, 2012: 14).

Participation in the political struggle can also mean actively retrieving from it. Leaving the institutional demands and crowded places or wars, allies with the notion of "engaged withdrawal" as discussed by James Scott (2009, 2012). The application of a "theory of exodus" described by Graeber (2004) – is to leave the instead of confronting the oppressor directly. James Scott and David Graeber, both anthropology scholars of anarchy make empirical points, that such retrieval is not an act of cowardness, but a willing political strategy. More than escape is it historically evidenced relocation of struggle and positive affirmation of the political alternative: people leave, desert or found new communities (Graeber 2004: 60).

Similar political activity can be traced back to the height of the *Estallido Social*. While *Estallido Social* seemed to quickly center around reforming existing institutions (new political parties, constitution, laws) or altering the political order, many politicized sectors aimed to exploit a "moment of surprise" and organize around localized and concrete issues. This was possible due concentration repressive forces on traditional sites of protest (this does

not mean they were not present in poblaciones). To seize this moment, other sectors (*pobladorxs*, people with anarchist tendencies, and other agents involved in territorial mobilizations) were able to withdraw from the *Estallido*'s main square while revitalizing concrete political tools instead of advocating for reorganization of established institutionalized politics. These tools included squatting, territorial assemblies, popular kitchens, and local networks of care and solidarity stemming from the 20th-century mobilizations tied to pre-dictatorial times.

The massive resurgence of territorial assemblies was discussed by popular educators and academics Sebastián Guerrero Lacoste and Diego Cabezas Bravo (2023) who see their resurgence as a form of „collective catharsis“. Authors argue, that although the *Estallido* began by the shock of seeing the military for the first time since the formal end of dictatorship, people were able to transform this disbelief into organized resistance, and channel it into neighborhood assemblies and territorial assemblies (*Asambleas Territoriales*) in localized forms. Authors describe how this mobilization was accompanied by creation of solidarity networks, organizing protests, street blockades, and *ollas comunes* to ease fears of shortages and bring people together. These spaces, as argued, were reopening political discussion and “rebuilding community ties strained by years of dictatorship and neoliberal policies”⁴⁸. These spaces of territorial organization were organized by the people themselves in the streets, and although their convocation was spontaneous during the first days of the *Estallido*, they were “born out of the accumulation of years of struggles and learning”⁴⁹ (Guerrero Lacoste, Cabezas Bravo, 2023, my translation).

⁴⁸ Retrieved at: Guerrero Lacoste, S., & Cabezas Bravo, D. (2023). *Revuelta popular, Asambleas Territoriales y Educación Popular*. CLACSO. Retrieved from <https://www.clacso.org/revuelta-popular-asambleas-territoriales-y-educacion-popular/>

⁴⁹ In a conversation with Francisco (June, 2023) he recalled, that “(...) *here in poblaciones, in 70, we as a people, we witnessed so many changes. We were a society of ordinary people pobladores, young people, students, women, old people and children, who were learning that it is what gives rights, there are rights, but we were assuming that they were our rights. That they were that the human being, all human beings have rights. And, that in the what we seek as a society, as human beings is happiness. And that has to do with the cultural, social, political and economic things. So, of course, this was the product of possibly 80 years of struggle, since the first syndicates. We, the people of those 60s and 70s, had learned and assimilated the experience of so many years. So there was a level of organization? Community social policy, began to become a kind of life. Ordinary life was on the rise. For example, here a child, a relative could enter the house next door; the doors were always open as a League, a sign of trust, of closeness, of disposition to the other.*”

See also: Bruey, A. (2024). *Justicia y libertad: Luchas populares por los derechos sociales y democracia en Chile*. LOM Ediciones.

Los Pies del Cerro too emerged out of engaged withdrawal.

“We were thinking really big back then. We understood that the intensity of the Estallido wouldn’t last super long, so we organized quickly,” Lucho, a co-squatter, who during the same period, together with affinity groups, including some neighbors, squatted a former school and transformed it into a cultural and political center. He stresses not only cohesion and aspect of „collective catharsis“ but also fragmentation and frustration, which occurred from territorial assemblies. Though these grassroots political formations were organized as to be autonomous and suspicious of any political parties, individuals tied to lower levels of political representation eventually entered, leading to the fragmentation and of another withdrawal what led to emergence of *Los Pies*:

“I believe that in the territorial assemblies, the people began to fragment because there appeared people who worked in the municipality. Not everyone had clear ideas. From the beginning, there were four of us who initiated the assembly for this sector. We broke away because we realized that the assembly was useless, we only gathered in Avenida Grecia to do caserolazo [pot-banging] protests and superficial activities that promoted pacifism. You know what I mean? Instead of doing something real. What happened is that we already knew Mrs. Luisa, and when we left the assembly, we formed an organization called La Copa. You know what I mean – Comunidades Organizadas Peña Alto [Organized Communities, Peñalolén Alto]. And we came with this support from Sra. Luisa [a local resident and an activist both during dictatorship and now] during the pandemic and started to work. She is a compañera, really fighter, so we became affinity group⁵⁰ [nos afinamos]. We started sanitizing the streets with ammonia,

⁵⁰ Affinity groups are “small groups of people who feel they share something important in common, and decide to work together on a common project. The term itself derives from the Spanish grupos de afinidad which (...) originally referred to clusters of friends (a common synonym was tertulias, groups of drinking buddies or young people used to hanging out together in cafes), but which in the 1920 became the basic organizational unit of the Spanish anarchist confederation, the FAI. When the first large-scale consensus-based groups came together during the antinuclear campaigns of the early 1980s, the base unit was always assumed to be affinity groups. “ (Graeber, 2009: 288)

In the political context/actions, “Affinity groups are self-sufficient support systems of about 5 to 15 people. A number of affinity groups may work together toward a common goal in a large action, or one affinity group might conceive of and carry out an action on its own. Sometimes, affinity groups remain together over a long period of time, existing as political support and/or study groups, and only occasionally participating in actions.

we started throwing ammonia – it's like disinfectant, because the state didn't care about poblaciones during the pandemic. We started sanitizing the streets, and up there in Los Picachos, we started a WhatsApp group in the neighborhood. Why? Because it was also a strategy, as we already knew we are going to settle in the población and Sra. Luisa was offering us her house to set up the bakery. I don't know if you've seen pictures of that. And we set up the bakery and all that stuff. Then we ran the community kitchen and we had a small headquarters, but we had the space well organized. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the community kitchen operated; on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, the bakery operated. We had around 30 people working in all these different shifts. Then what happened? We had already seen the Los Pies before, we had already entered before the pandemic, you know, but what happened? They let it burn down. Well, I'm getting ahead of myself. But we left that assembly and came here, opened the Los Pies, and only then did they start notice us and take us seriously because about ten assemblies came here, we started meetings, started opening up space, and it was like... beautiful. But then the owners sent it to burn. And we didn't want to leave, but up there [pointing on the upper part, where two building belonging to Los Pies stand] were people smoking drugs and down here, we were figuring out how to keep La Copa safe, you know what I mean?"

[Lucho, July 2023]

2.7 Reclaiming the past: no ruptures no continuities

Sian Lazar's (2014) reflections on the "social experiences of time" drawing on Munn (1992) when exploring rebellions and upheavals (notably in Argentina and Bolivia) as temporal rather than spatial phenomena. She examines revolutionary "events" as collisions of differing temporalities, but these are not mere ruptures or dramatic moments creating a strict divide of discontinuity in social life, but rather, they act as mediators of diverse time

Graeber, 2009: 288, referencing ACT UP civil disobedience manual. Retrieved at: <http://www.actupny.org/documents/CDdocuments/Affinity.html>

experiences. It is a mediation between times is a vehicle of a social change - not a clear cut and separation. Lazar (2014) contrasts "historical time"—a narrative linking past struggles to future aspirations and „attritional time“, the mundane, persistent aspects of political life.

Lazar explores how, when these two temporalities collide, revolutionary movements emerge, often transforming attritional time into a moment of “historical time”. However, after the initial eruption, these revolutionary movements are reabsorbed into mundane political time. The collision of these two social experiences of time are not premised on “linear sense of time” (2014: 93) – resulting in collision and rupture, but rather work as “punctuation” of historical time, drawing on Guyer (2007). Experience of “punctuated time” – allows a contact between these two sense of time – releasing something from the past practices, feelings, hopes, and strengths, but approaches them critically from the present.

The interplay between two modes of time—historical and attritional—appear when the political field in which events like the *Estallido* take place. A student being shot in the leg (an attritional moment) is woven into a broader historical narrative, contesting 30 years of slow violence (Nixon, 2011).

The aftermath of the *Estallido Social* escapes definitions which could be placed over it ex-post and such a argument is also not a goal of this chapter, nor this thesis. However, based on discussions and observations, *Estallido* can be placed among other empirical cases testifying that “humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.” (Foucault, 1977: 151). *Estallido*, as the critical event (Das, 1995) resists the simplistic binary of "failure" and "success" judgments and as we move away from the main streets and discarded constitutions, applying anthropological lenses, it resonates in different forms.

The *Estallido* does not appear as a rupture. At least not a temporal one – as argued with Sian Lazar, Gabriel Salazar, Francisca, Chena, Francisco and Luna. But perhaps, it can be a rupture in a more spatial meaning of the word – as a crack or a fissure through which critical gaze towards the past is possible as a “positive or dynamic impulse towards escape, redirection, reconstitution and sometimes renewal” (Holbraad et al 2014: 1).

3. Memory for action

The first image I see when I pass through the arches towards the main corridor of the main cemetery is a modest tomb with a wooden cross, littered with debris. Behind it stands a marble wall covered in inscriptions, signs, photographs of the detained and disappeared, and slogans like "All bullets will return," "Murderer," and "Bastard." There are also some posters bearing the image of Luisa Toledo in a patron-like graphic (a mother of anarchists, as my co-squatters introduced her to me). I read the inscription "May memory not exist only in September", plastered behind the scene. The wooden cross is charred, with ashes scattered around it, and a small flame still flickers at its top. I pause to take in the details. Two people with their faces and bodies fully covered in black clothes, approach the tomb closer than others. They subtly lower their pants and urinate on it. When they finish, others follow suit, executing their biological needs and

political statement over the scene. A woman with an uncovered face spits on the tomb, while others kick the marble. I learn this is the tomb of Jaime Guzmán, the "architect of the dictatorship" and author of Pinochet's Constitution, who was assassinated in 1991 by members of the leftist guerrilla group FPMR.

[Field Notes, 10.09.2023]

Gabriel Salazar recognized that in Chile there is “memory of events” and “memory for actions” (2000: 3). The former refers to events remembered from the past, while the latter refers to events that ignite people to remember and act. In this chapter, I explore the tensions between these two registers. More specifically, I explore official and counter-memory landscapes as contested battlegrounds. Far from resurfacing solely from the *Estallido Social* the struggle is embedded in the multifaceted repertoire of local resistance and domination dynamics. I did not participate in the *Estallido* myself, but in this chapter, focusing on "memory actions" (or memories for actions) I engage with the underlying force that conveyed the *Estallido's* "outburst".

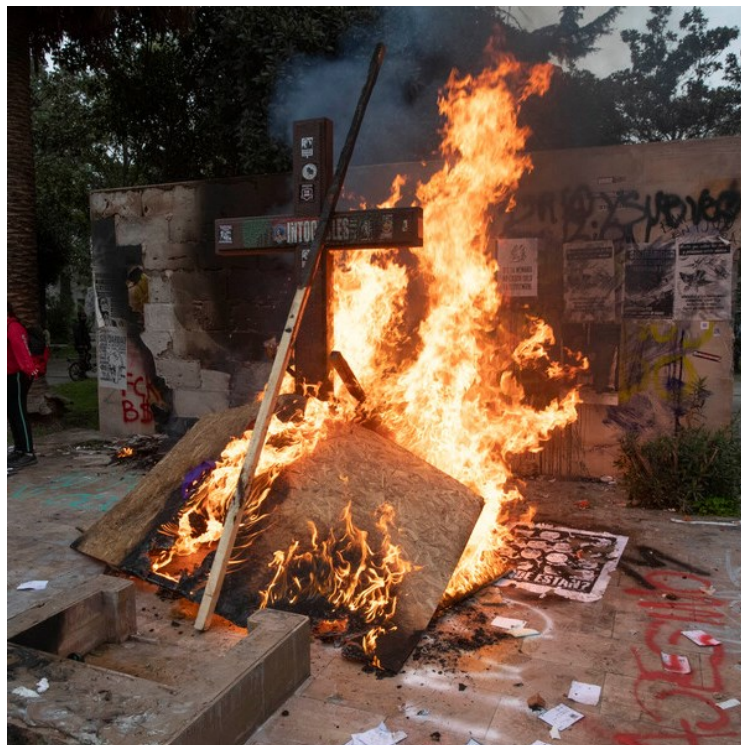


Figure n. 6: Tomb of Jaime Guzmán during Romería,⁵¹ 10.09.2023 - a day before evening before 50th anniversary of the Coup d'État.

Source: Ex-Ante. (2023). Galería de imágenes: Así quedaron el entorno de La Moneda y el Cementerio General tras los destrozos. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://www.ex-ante.cl/galeria-de-imagenes-asi-quedaron-el-entorno-de-la-moneda-y-el-cementerio-general-tras-los-destrozos/>

The political struggle for memory⁵² does not only concern “the meaning of what happened” (Jelin, 2002: 6), but also what different groups understand as “to work memory” (trabajar la memoria) (ibid.). Jelin speaks of memory as “work,” alluding a Marxist definition of the term as a “distinctive feature of the human condition,” placing “both the individual and society in an active and productive position,” where work is an activity that adds value. (ibid.). Thus, “referring to memory as 'work' incorporates it into the ongoing process that generates and transforms the social world” (ibid.). The use of memory *in* and *as* matters of political concern, is by my interlocutors – anarchists and anti-authoritarian subjects, rather than such Marxist-connotated notion of “memory as a work, that generates value and transforms” applied as a both a tool and a method of struggle, a way re-asserting voices and actions of deceased in the ongoing struggle.

I join memory march through población Villa Francia in the second anniversary of death of Luisa Toledo. I march through the streets, next to houses with small bungalows, and among the black bodies raising barricades and resounding speeches which would end with the cry “LUSIA TOLEDO!” PRESENTE!

⁵¹ Originally romerías are pilgrimages or religious processions, in my field this term is associated with political commemorations and memory actions.

⁵² The prominence of memory as a concept experienced massive emergence in social sciences in the 1990s through authors such as Pierre Nora (1989), Connerton (1989), Halbwachs (1992), and Aleida and Jan Assmann (1995). The vital contribution of these authors is disseminating the concept of memory not as an individual capacity to remember, but that “no memory is possible outside the framework used by people in society to determine and retrieve their recollections” (Halbwachs 1992: 43). This concept has grown so prominent that it often, though not unproblematically, replaces terms like identity and culture (Fabian, 1991). The postmodern critique of David Berliner (2005) paralyzed the use of this term for some time due to its lack of precision. He observed that memory had become nearly universal in academic discourse, functioning like broad, vague terms such as “love” and “hate,” and memory appeared interchangeable with terms such as identity, culture, or “habitus.” (ibid.) In this thesis, while aware of these critiques, the decision to engage memory as a conceptual framework rather than habitus stems from two key reasons. First, ethnographically, memory allowed me to understand participation in a struggle not as a function of background or class. This act, regardless of whether participants come from rural or urban, right-wing or wealthy backgrounds. Second, as discussed with my compañero Mauricio, who argued that concepts should come from the people and not be imposed over them, I choose memory as the most discussed and present emic concept to frame the course of efforts and events I describe. I also join the discussions on the contested field of memory work in Latin America (Jelin, 2002; Lira, 2011), where the appearance of memory in social sciences is more recent due to its political implications.

*AHORA! Y SIEMPRE! [LUISA TOLEDO! PRESENT! NOW! ALWAYS!]
(There is a small girl with her mom, holding a candle, who instead of “Y SIEMPRE” answers “DICIEMBRE” [December] or more precisely “DICIEMLE!”. I smile.) I see a banner stating*

“LA MEMORIA ES UNA HERRAMIENTA SUBVERSIVA”⁵³

A quote which turned to be an emblem after she uttered it in her speech. I turn to my compañero Lucas marching next to me. He is a historian whom I interviewed some time ago and I ask him plainly almost not expecting an answer „Es memoria una herramienta combativa?“ He answers unattentively „Sí, pero no por sí sola“ (yes, but not by itself).

[Field notes, July 2023]

My compañerxs would refer to the memory as a “weapon”, “power”, “subversive tool” or “tool of resistance”, a “drive behind actions”. This type of memory takes “refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories” (Nora, 1989: 15), but is not stored, nor only transmitted. It is used, installed and weaponized. I follow this battle from the perspective of counter-memory practitioners with anarchist and antiauthoritarian tendencies, who, engaging memory actions, create a space of appearance. Through employing the memory as tool, these people craft spaces where not only dead and disappeared, who are referred to as *compañerxs*, can act as political agents, but also, as illustrated in the opening vignette, where other dead remain adversaries to be reckoned with. Drawing from this perspective, I examine the practices in which the memory is “exercised” through direct action (Graeber, 2009). Such tangible enactments of memory are not only tied to the social and cultural dimensions which are shaped cognitively through communication and socialization (Assmann, 2011), but as Connerton (2011) insists, it is also a profoundly carnal experience, what is also a vital element for its transmission, as resurfaced

⁵³ “the memory is a subversive tool”

within the *Estallido*. These acts are verbalized as forms of “making justice” or engaging in “reinvidicación” (vindication), a term I aim to introduce in this chapter.

3.1 We walk with our dead: counter-memory marches in post-dictatorial Chile

We walk with our dead—and compañerxs abducted by various states around the world—in memory and with the black heart of their conviction, courage, and living integrity, reads the banner carried on the Day of the Young Combatant on March 29, 2023.

Commemorated throughout various territories over which the Chilean state spreads, this day honors all *combatientes* (combatants)⁵⁴ who lost their lives denouncing the terror of the Pinochet dictatorship, capitalist and imperialist policies and the lasting impacts of these issues that continue to shape the experiences of those known as Chileans, even after the transition to democracy. Although this date is a site of contestation between various agents and their claims (Rajevic, 2020) this date specifically recalls March 1985, when two brothers, Rafael and Eduardo Vergara Toledo, aged 18 and 20, both university students and *MIR* militants, were shot by a police patrol in the Estación Central sector of Santiago. The brothers were shot dead, while marching in memory of two other young militants—Mauricio Maigret (17 years old) and Paulina Aguirre (20 years old), members of the *MIR*—who were also killed on this day by the police in 1984.

The legacy of their lives and the denunciation of their deaths were taken up by their parents, Luisa Toledo and Manuel Vergara. In the years following the political murders, the Vergara family—profoundly Catholic—organized *romerías* (pilgrimages), traditional Catholic processions, as a form of remembrance (Rajevic, 2020; Aránguiz, 2014). Over time, these processions evolved into politically charged commemorative acts led predominantly by their mother, Luisa Toledo, and other young combatants with whom Lusía developed strong bond of support and *compañerismo*. These acts rather than victimhood were encapsulated by counter-memory rallying cry “Ni perdón, ni olvido” (Neither forgiven nor

⁵⁴ Also referred to as *encapuchados* (covered by hoodie) or simply *capuchas* (hoodies) for their black hoods, clothes, and covered faces.

forgotten), defying the reconciliation narratives, characteristic for Chilean institutional post-dictatorial memory politics (Salazar 2000; Aránguiz, 2014; Gómez-Barris, 2009).

“Nuestra memoria es rebelde y se propaga en la calle” (Our memory is rebellious and spreads through the streets) speaks another graffiti I spot on the bus stop, as I return from university, finding out classes are due this commemoration day suspended. Although it is not an institutionally recognized “day of memory” (as commemoration of Coup de état on 11th of September is), the state, the city, universities, and public institutions adapt to the battle for memory to which city turns on this day. Press even releases maps of the “critical zones” to be avoided.⁵⁵

“To remember the Vergara brothers, the new generation expresses the necessity to remember beyond the dictatorship’s time frame. They incorporate the process of political transitions and the continuity of a process of resistance that did not conclude at the end of the dictatorship.” (Badilla Rajevic, M. (2020: 197). To this effort, new faces and names of young people who died fighting (*cayeron*) or were killed in the confrontation with state institutions have been incorporated: *Sebastian Oversluij, Mauricio Morales, Claudia López, Johnny Cariqueo, Javier Recabarren, Luisa Toledo*. Anarchists, anarcho-vegans, anti-authoritarians. Protesters bring their memories, re-take their practices, visible their lives in these marches “situate memory” and relate to them in the shared realm of “space of experience’ in the present” (Jelin, 2002:13). These memories are in constant conversation with “new historical processes, new contexts, and social and political scenarios”. (ibid.)

This day among a significant counter-memory events, existing outside the official state calendar⁵⁶. The course of counter-memory “actos” (organized memory events), usually starting at places where the commemorated lived or died - mostly in the poblaciones⁵⁷, gather hundreds of people. The events begin with a speech, a cultural program featuring music, poetry, or theater, and continue with a march accompanied by evocations of the „presence“

⁵⁵ Meganoticias, & Aton. (2023, marzo 28). Día del Joven Combatiente: Estos son los puntos identificados como "zonas críticas". Meganoticias. Recuperado de <https://www.meganoticias.cl/nacional/409885-dia-del-joven-combatiente-por-que-se-celebra-29-de-marzo-28-03-2023.html>

⁵⁶ September 10th and 11th, the anniversary of the civil-military coup, as will be discussed further, is also reclaimed by anarchist and radical leftist groups and individuals

⁵⁷ I participated with my research partners in the poblaciones of Juan Antonio Ríos, Villa Francia and Lo Hermida.

of the deceased. During the march, various individuals spontaneously announce the names of the deceased, to which the crowd responds „Presente!“ (meaning „present“ or „here“). It follows with „Ahora!“ (Now) – Y siempre! (Forever!) „Ella luchó hasta vencer“ (She fought until victory!) to which the crowd responds „O morir!“ (Or death!).

Taking place in *poblaciones*, this commemoration includes moments of silence interrupted by chants, small talks, people from *botillerías* (liquor stores) also shouting with conviction in between sipping their beers. After the erection of barricades – made of parts of old furniture, mattresses, car wheels – they are set on fire, using Molotov cocktails, halting traffic and culminating in the arrival of the police and a direct confrontation with the protesters.

Badilla Rajevic (2020), who analyzed the Day of the Young Combatants based on several in-depth interviews, noted that during this type of commemoration, “a political organization is not essential, and anarchic and more individualistic perspectives are viewed positively” (p. 203). However, Chena an anarchist and a member of *Los Pies* collective, reflected on this notion in a slightly different light emphasizing ideological affiliations as matters, which to him are an obstacle to “feel” this day “personal” and have a “connection” with the vindicated combatants of Villa Francia:

“[...] So we will be there for all the fallen youth. It could have been us. But the MIR and the Patriotic Front claim them [brothers Vergara] so it doesn't feel as personal, not as much as... I mean, I have a much deeper connection with their mother, Luisa Toledo. She was present, next to us, she endorsed the violence (...) she was our mother [smile]. I couldn't go to the funeral. I regret it so, so much. I think I was working. But to me, she was... She was a very important figure for me, Luisa. I mean... She is our mom.” [smile]

Lucho also spoke of Luisa as mother "Yes, regarding Luisa... Luisa is our mother; she was an anarchist. The old guys [other militants active in resistance during the dictatorship] has always given us anarchists a hard time [nos tiraron pelá], on how we organize or not, and that kind of stuff. But Luisa never. She never did that. She is always present. Luisa's death had such an impact on the anarchist world, and when she died... it

was something very powerful, her funeral.” Anteo, a 24 years old anarchist reflected on gatherings with Luisa as follows:

“You could hear what she was saying [Que te llegaba lo que ella decía]. It made you respect her a lot because she lost not only Eduardo and Rafael but also Pablo. And she lost all her sons in the lucha. And she kept going. She raised her son's flag. She continued to carry it. So it's very cherished [rescatable].”

Luisa Toledo passed in 2021 and became *part of the lucha from another trench* [trinchera], as verbalized by my compañerxs. The theme of the death and the role of dead became more present in daily conversations after I joined active recuperation of *Los Pies del Cerro* where I learned about Luisa Toledo as the figure with patron-like power, being always present and is the mother of anarchists. People would tell they ask her for help before engaging in the direct action, or when feeling in danger. In the patio, where we spend the most of our time, was a big blue mural of Luisa Toledo. Once, we were sitting under it, painting a banner commemorating Macarena Valdéz,⁵⁸ where Luna nodded looking at the mural „*Luisa, SEMPITERNA. Siempre eterna*“ Lyra looks at me and explains „*uhm Sempiterna - something that has no beginning or end.*”

⁵⁸ Macarena Valdés Yem was a Mapuche woman, environmental activist who was murdered at the age of 32 for opposing the construction of a hydroelectric company that was going to stop the flow of a river in Gulumapu. Although her murder was framed (and still by institutions is) as a suicide, although the evidences and testimonies of long-term intimidation from the Austrian hydroelectric company RP Global, testify it was a corporate femicide. Latinoamericano. (2024, August 22). *Nación Mapuche: Macarena Valdés Yem, a 8 años de su asesinato, aún no hay justicia: La mataron por ser mujer Mapuche y activista socioambiental*. Resumen Latinoamericano. <https://www.resumenlatinoamericano.org/2024/08/22/nacion-mapuche-macarena-valdez-yem-a-8-anos-de-su-asesinato-aun-no-hay-justicia-la-mataron-por-ser-mujer-mapuche-y-activista-socioambiental/>



Figure n. 7: Mural of Luisa Toledo in *Los Pies del Cerro* observed by Runa and Ayen, kiltra co-squatters. Photo by the author. September 2023

Luisa Toledo attained her a status of a “patron” who *lucha junto a todxs lxs que luchan* (fight along all those who fight) as often portrayed of posters or graffiti. The experiences of listening to her, standing side by side during manifestations, or during community kitchens and different local political activities transformed the current look of anarchy practiced in territories covering the state of Chile. She accompanied the whole generation of *combatientes*, and they are the ones who keep re-vindicating Luisa dwelling in her presence even after her departure.

3.2 Memory politics in Chile: “Patch-band over our memories, which we don’t need”

“I think that the installation of memory museums is just a political orgy. That is, there is a left, the institutionalized left – socialist and communist, which identifies

within the constitutional framework. They polarize the left which is there, in poblaciones, doing what they can to resist and fight for dignity and those who are affiliated to political parties. Of course, that's why people feel betrayed by the left and withdrew during the transition. Anarchists do not trust them. Catchai ["You get it"]? That's why one can see, can go down⁵⁹ and can go to the museums of solidarity and it all seems so tidy and clean. They raise monuments only to their compañerxs, catchai? To their martyrs. But they do not recognize the famine there was, that occurred in the poblaciones, they do not claim it. Catchai? [...] So now, what do we see? We see a political class where there is a left and there is a right, but all feed the same system, the capital system, the savage neoliberalism. They also talk about human capital, they don't talk about vecinxs [neighbors], about compañerxs. They make memory another business. And this is always appearing also in those museums”.

[Felipe, June 2023]

The occurrence of the murder of young combatants in the población Villa Francia became an emblematic⁶⁰ counter-memory landmarks and resonates with the subaltern memories of the dictatorship, which were produced and maintained outside of a nation-state institutional framework, which Jacques Le Goff named a "memory-institution" (1991: 141). *Ejercicio de la memoria* (memory exercise) rooted in counter-memory represent an antagonistic principle, in engagement with the institutional memory production in Latin America (Álvarez Fabela, 2015: 145). Counter-memory is fundamentally „critical and rebellious” and “over generations—and even if only in veiled, partial, concealed, or sporadic ways—keeps alive the popular awareness that things are the way they are only at the cost of repressing and canceling other possibilities of history and other paths of historicity. (...) (It)

⁵⁹ Down means towards the city center as Peñalolen, where the interview is taking place is located in the the beginning of the Andes Mountain Range.

⁶⁰ I resonate with note of Yael Zaliasnik (2016) who distinguished the label "emblematic" as it was used in the post-dictatorship governments to prioritize certain cases of human rights violations, while ignoring others and instead she approaches them as "emblematic memories" and sets them into a context, where people find an anchor that organizes and enriches the meaning of personal experience and knowledge, which would otherwise float or circulate as rather disconnected individual experiences from collective experience.

reminds us that things can always be different, and that, while non-dominant pasts have been defeated, they were not completely eradicated. They remain there, crouched, waiting for the conditions of their possible resurrection” (Rojas, 1998: 49). It acts as a contestation of state mechanisms which allocate, classify and evaluate sacrifices, create victims and hide perpetrators. As Rosita Silva, a human rights and memory activist, points out: "We must understand the logic of this country, where deaths are categorized by class, just like social classes; there are first, second, third, and fourth-class deaths." (Rosita Silva in conversation with Yael Zaliasnik, 2016: 96).

The selection, politization and institutionalization of memories is inherently selective process at root of nation-state building based on choosing events, emphasizing certain qualities as heroic, ensuring that those celebrated as heroes appear "spotless" in historical accounts (Jelin, 2002). Macarena Gómez-Barris writes, that “(n)ation is a project that is always made, challenged, and remade through exclusionary practices as much as through inclusive structures of meaning. Just as nations create the desire to belong, they use violence to target who is cast as marginal in the national project of reconstruction” (2009: 14). Similar dynamics, as discussed in the last chapter underpins *Octubrismo* wave, through vilification of its participants on one hand, while preserving impunity under the pretext of “justice” on the other.⁶¹

This dynamic of domination over what and how is to remembered was vital after the formal end of dictatorship. The question appears to be: How to remake a nation, and maintain its economic infrastructure, once torture and disappearance of the opposition, is no longer a desirable or allowed practice?

⁶¹ Claudio Crespo, a police officer notoriously known for deliberately shooting into faces of various protesters during Estallido Social, including emblematic case of Gustavo Gatica, who remained fully blinded, remains in impunity even six years since the act (2025). What is more, he filed a protection appeal against senator and a survivor of ocular trauma during Estallido Social, Fabiola Campillai after she called him a "human rights violator". The Supreme Court declared this appeal admissible, and Crespo is seeking a public apology from Campillai. Source: Peña, V. (2023, September 22). Impunidad. Corte Suprema declara admisible recurso de protección del ex coronel Claudio Crespo en contra de Fabiola Campillai. La Izquierda Diario. <https://www.laizquierdadiario.com/Corte-Suprema-declara-admisible-recurso-de-proteccion-del-ex-coronel-Claudio-Crespo-en-contra-de>

As in other Latin American countries that experienced neoliberal dictatorial coups, reflections on the dictatorial past often emphasized the military's role as a "savior" from communism and a driver of economic progress, which despite some failures, managed to hand the power over through elections (Jelin, 2002: 42). But there is more to it. The Chilean post-dictatorial state not only emphasized certain elements to exclude others but, under pressure from those who experienced torture and those living in the active absence of their disappeared comrades, sought to weaponize some of these elements by incorporating them into a humanitarian discourse of reconciliation. This strategy aimed to maintain the neoliberal infrastructure, which is fundamentally built on the premise of violence, disappearance, and torture (Gómez-Barris, 2009; Richard, 2000).

"In its effort to rebrand the nation as a global capitalist player," the nation-state of Chile, after the formal end of the dictatorship, was solidified through "dead, damaged, and disappeared bodies," which "became the debris of capitalist restructuring" (Gómez-Barris, 2009: 17). The state "created new market subjects and citizens by erasing the memory and subjectivity of the dead, the tortured, and other survivors" (ibid.).

This solidification was possible through creation of so called "Truth Comissions", whose purpose was to evaluate whether claimed testimonies of violence are to be classified as tortures.⁶² The this institutional memory was accompanied by formation of other instances of evaluation of "grievable deaths"⁶³ (Butler, 2003).

Reports like the Rettig Report (1991) and the National Roundtable for Dialogue (1998) the first to appear. But it was not until 2004, that people were able to claim the reparation in the context of National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture,

⁶² As already explained by Francisca in the previous chapter, the memory was a highly political matter already during the years of "democratic transition" (1988-1989). Yet many of those, who fought against the dictatorship and were engaged in anti-dictatorial resistance were either still in prison, exiled or "disappeared" - thus expelled from the possibility to participate at the formation of the Chilean democracy. Many of those who stood in the country and witnessed these political transitions, were excluded by different political machinations and those who were considered, were rather than political actors transformed into symbolic bearers of grievances (victims), which served to solidify the transition. (Gomez-Barris, 2009:16)

⁶³ "Some lives are grievable, and others are not; the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human: what counts as a livable life and a grievable death?" (Butler, 2003, XIV-XV)

known as the Valech Report. This marked the institutionalization of memory—a fraught process of defining who "deserved" recognition as victim, what some understand as an act of reducing human suffering to a bureaucratic calculus of qualification and compensation.⁶⁴ With the words of Beatriz, militant of MIR who resisted in the torture center of DINA⁶⁵, known as *Venda Sexy* – a house on Irán Street 3037 in Santiago de Chile.

*“The term ‘victim’ is a label that to us seems brutally disgusting and does not represent us; it does not represent me because what should be represented in the ‘trabajo de memoria’ [memory work] is the resistance. We were tortured, and we were resisting. We resisted pain, we did not betray our comrades, and we resisted to collectively resolve, as much as we could, it was an unimaginable situation”*⁶⁶

Thus, the process of recognition of the torture is seen not as motivated first of all by “justice” but rather as a strategy of neoliberal regime to maintain the processes of economic liberalization while establishing a political democracy in better access to the international market (Gómez-Barris, 2009). The institutional memory itself is according some understood as a market - as is the case *Venda Sexy*. A very material part of this argument is that the house, used by the state to employ sexual violence as a form of interrogation, was declared a historical monument in 2016. However, it was owned by a private individual and subsequently sold to a real estate company.

This situation reveals much about the ongoing tension between official, institutionalized narratives and counter-memory strategies. It highlights how institutional memory, too wielded as a weapon, can manipulate and erase aspects of history, while commercial interests often disregard the historical significance of a place altogether. In the same interview, Beatriz reflects on this dynamic, stating: *“We deeply disagree with many*

⁶⁴ Victims of torture would receive what President Lagos had earlier called “austere and symbolic” reparations: a life-long pension for the victim of 112,000 CLP (188 USD) equivalent to 1.5 times the minimum pension; guaranteed access to continued studies; free health care through the Program of Reparation and Integral Health Services) and housing subsidies. Retrieved at : <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/emisferica-72/7-2-dossier/depths-of-the-present-state-violence-and-the-neoliberal-state.html>

⁶⁵ The *Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional*, or National Intelligence Directorate) was the secret police agency of Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship.

⁶⁶ Boche, R. (2023, October 8). Beatriz Bataszew, sobreviviente de *Venda Sexy*. *Revista Desbandada*. <https://revistadesbandada.com/2023/10/08/beatriz-bataszew-sobreviviente-de-venda-sexy/>

memory sites regarding the content of memory, regarding the whitewashing or neutrality of memory, but also regarding its organizational form.” (in Boche, 2023)

Out of 70 thousand people who testified between 2003 and 2004, only 10000 people could meet the requirements for reparation. (Gómez-Barris, 2009). Criticism of such form of evaluation, retraumatization and incomplete evaluation processes, established a deep suspicion and heavy criticism of the state memory politics and resulted in the creation of inofficial memories, described by Jelin as, “private memories” which, referencing James Scott were integrated into “clandestine resistance practices” (1992: 41). Report made by the Truth Commissions was heavily criticized by its exclusion of other forms of human rights abuses, namely torture that did not result in death, house raids (Han, 2012), sexual violence (Hiner, 2009). These documents created a “memory to forget” to paraphrase Emilio José Gordillo Lizana (2006).

Those who “entered” strict criteria of *Informe Valech*, were qualified as victims of the state violence and received lifelong pensions (approx. 180 euro a month), cash or free health care (Han, 2012). Others, disappointed with this scheme of evaluation, redirected their memory, to be exercised and practiced in different sites, discourses, actions, searches for justice, but also applying their right to forget and search for peace. It is a work against oblivion, suppression and controlled and institutionalized remembrance, which stems from impunity mechanisms for example, which have the resource goal of “amnesty, as institutional oblivion” (Ricoeur, 2004: 151). However, counter-memory is not only a tool of defiance of state-selected heroes – enacted in the situation from the opening vignette - but also a practice of creation and of re-connection among protesters as well as deceased, as will be discussed.

The dynamics between institutional and counter-memory, however is not linear, but rather is characterized by oscillation on the axis of “struggle-repression-resistance” (Álvarez-Fabela, 2015: 145). This struggle, has no winners, but presupposes the vital dynamics of mutual “substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals” (Foucault, 1977: 151), always having a potential to shift, erupt, outpower, dominate and reverse. Scales of these processes differ – it might imply control over city (like

in the case of the Day of Young Combatants or *Estallido Social*) or targeting institutional model of neoliberal infrastructure (for some it was a demand to change the constitution). It might also be intimate, long-term, private and subtle dwelling, through personal commemoration and small rituals (such as saying a little poem of a deceased *compañero* before important moments). It can also be recognized as a process of a recovery of a house of detained and disappeared as will be discussed in the following chapter.

3.3 Never, Never Again

“[I]n Argentina, the words “Never Again” are repeated over and over, like an incantation that is chanted to close the wounds of the past. The repetition of that invocation reveals the negation of the categorical sense with which it is spoken. It is the specters of the past, returning again and again, that explains that repetition. One of them, the specter of the disappeared, seems to echo another rallying cry, the cry voiced by the relatives of the disappeared and by activists in the demonstrations that remember them: Present, now and always!” (Crenzel, 2010:265)

The motto "Never again" carries different connotations within Latin American counter-memory contexts compared to its association with memory work in Europe, where it emerged in response to the Holocaust and other atrocities of the Second World War. As exemplified by the opening quote, as well as through the discussions with counter-memory practitioners, this motto evokes not only an end to those atrocities and horrors, but also a rejection of organization, resistance and struggle for political demands, which, too were targeted by systemic violence (Crenzel, 2010; 2011).

“You know that Villa Grimaldi was one of the places where many people were tortured and disappeared. And then with this phenomenon of the (political) transition and the deepening of everything that is the Pinochetist Constitution in this transition, which never ended, which changed its face but the meaning was the same, Villa Grimaldi appeared as a way to offend those who passed through there, those who died there, they named it Park for Peace. Our compañerxs were not in favor of this cemetery of peace. Our compañerxs were in favor of a classless society, and that was going to mean an enormous challenge. That's why

we reclaim having been passengers of torture centers, we vindicate the struggles of the comrades who in every torture center experienced pain, hunger, hopelessness, because they had a project and that project, that our dream is a dream that is still pending, because history always leaves unfinished business and we have to try to face it. For us, it is not a physical place but project that remains pendent. This is why we are extremely critical of all this factory of institutional memory, I mean [hesitant]... okay, we cannot be so arrogant as to deny the pain of the less politicized people for their loss, but there are also memory professionals who dedicate themselves to seeking the [sensational] material, isn't it? And they make a professional life out of it. Our side is memory with a sense of political challenge. We reclaim the political struggles of those who passed through these places and as a social organization we are trying to constantly embrace our ties with other social organizations. Social organizations that embrace each other, that come together for social demands, but that ultimately will not be resolved unless they are politicized. We believe that social organizations are a potential for politicization, so that's why it matters to us to embrace ties with them, we establish ties and try to share our point of view.”

[Francisco, May 2023]

In a different context, the fellow squatter and compañera Sol notes during our working group memory work when we engaged in a conversation about how the media is covering the topic of 50 years since the civic-military putsch:

“It's like Villa Grimaldi. I mean, there are a lot of people who passed through Villa Grimaldi, like the people from the MIR who don't agree. What... Villa Grimaldi is sold to you as the center of peace, Parque Por la Paz [Park of the peace], but for us, it never has been, and for us who were there, it never will be. It's like a band-tape on our memory, and it's a band-tape that we don't need.

Because it's a wound that has never healed. It's like they've done a nice job of recovery, but it's not the way."

[Sol, June 2023]

I want to highlight Francisco's emphasis on the emotions of those who passed through Villa Grimaldi, also known as Villa Terranova and their beloved ones. Like many places of torture after the dictatorship, Villa Grimaldi was slated for destruction and sold to a private corporations. It was only due to the pressure from local organizations that this process was halted and the site was declared a place of memory. Since then it has been extensively reconstructed, with some of the few remaining original buildings turned into a museum that educates about the torture at this site. The aforementioned critique of this place is not meant to hurt or undermine the feelings of those who suffered there. Instead, it aims to place it within a political realm, without which memory risks to be stripped away the implications that allowed the dictatorship to rise, persist, and influence current political matters.

Memories confined within institutional frames risk depoliticization. While the materialization of memory is, in many ways, essential for its transmission its reassertion into permanent objects—such as recovered houses, museums, memorials, or archives—carries the risk of solidification (Nora, 1989; Draper, 2015). Although intensive research on memory, particularly regarding those silenced for decades, and the continuous search for the *desaparecidos* are of utmost importance, these efforts, from the perspective of counter-memory activists, should not be stripped of the political subjectivity, dreams and intentions of the disappeared and dead⁶⁷. The legacy of the deceased, detained, and disappeared is not

⁶⁷ The distinction between the status of the disappeared and the dead lies in the fundamentally different ways their absence or presence is experienced and politicized. While the disappearance of individuals implies the absence of a physical body, leaving their beloved ones in an unresolved mourning, the dead—whose bodies were recovered, mourned during funerals, and placed in graves—allow for some form of closure. The presence of the physical body is crucial not only on psychological closure of the families, communities and larger society, but as we argued earlier, it has also an significant impact on nation building (Verdery, 1999) and particularly on the processes of democratic transition in post-dictatorial Chile (Gómez-Barris). Verdery suggests, that because once encountering the body, it is identified, and its scientific examination as well as symbolic status carries traces of past into present. While this distinction is crucial, in this chapter I will be shifting between these categories and discussing the agency of both by virtue of shared “mode of being,, (Latour, 2013), of those, without physically absent and their engagement in the political fabric. The disappearance in this sense implies not only the forced disappearance by abduction, but also a slow violence (Nixon, 2011); in this case,

condensed to a mere grave, but can be experienced as an ongoing co-presence (Panizo, 2012; Schindel, 2013).

3.4 Memory exercise without band-tape

The opening vignette of a burned cross and collective urination over Jaime Guzmán's grave is one of many facets of "memory exercises". Based on my observation, "memory exercise" encompasses speaking, acting, and creating zones that reclaim "past spaces of experience" in the present (Jelin, 2004: 13). This emic term implies the capacity of learning, recognizing and improving one ability in this activity. If physical exercise is about improving one's skills, then memory exercise, as Luna's words it in the opening vignette of this thesis, is a struggle against erasure. But it is not only about opposition. It is also about implementing memory and those who "dwell in it" (to allude Macarena Gómez-Barris, 2009).

The opening scene took place in the same day as following ethnographic account – during commemoration of 50 years since the coup d'état. This commemoration began by the families of the detained and disappeared, who marched towards empty graves of their beloved ones. With the transition to democracy, this commemoration day became implemented into official commemorative days. The march on 11th of September begins from La Moneda presidential palace, with thousands of people marching towards the General Cemetery. This official route, surrounded by police (this year there were also "peace keepers" dressed in white clothes), is not the only one. The counter-memory protesters create their own route, what implies various clashes with police until reaching the cemetery. I joined this branch as participant observer.

"When we arrive, the metro station La Moneda is already closed, so we get off station later at Los Héroes. We reach Alameda, the four-lane avenue, which is the main transport hub and cuts Santiago into two class universes – from the poblaciones with tin roofs to the glass skyscrapers of the shopping and business centers of multinational companies – is now free of cars, buses, carts with sopaipillas [fried pumpkin pastry] and street performers [malabaristas]."

we could recalibrate this term to "slow disappearance," which targets those who oppose the neoliberal system over an extended period of time.

Me and my compañerxs, whom I informed about my observation, rush towards the La Moneda, where I hoped to meet another friend. The city under a grey cloud merges with the smoke that rises 100 meters away – I can't tell if it's smoke from the barricade or a tear gas, probably both. Behind it, we see police metal barriers, dozens of heavy armed carabineros and a few zoomorphic armored vehicles. A „Zorrillo“ [skunk] is an armored jeep rigged to throw tear gas bombs and keep caught protesters, while "Guanaco" –meaning Lama, which in her natural environment, as a sign of irritation, spits on the disrupter, is a huge vehicle with a water cannon on the roof to disperse protesters. Obviously, neither we nor the other hundred or so people who is gathering along the barricades will be able to join the official protest march, where president marches. The situation begins to escalate and as one man tries to raise the barricade, he is hit from the side by a water cannon which spills over onto the line of protesters behind him. People shout in indignation.

*Lei, my compañera from the group with whom I march, opens up Instagram and indignantly comments that we won't be able to get into the march anyway because the organizers and political parties are demanding "credentials" for it. "Que rabia" [I'm so pissed] she says looking at the bulletproof bodies with guns. According to some reports⁶⁸, only families of detained and disappeared, registered movements and authorities from political parties were allowed to participate in the protest⁶⁹. The crowd of people is getting bigger and the fragmented groups are beginning to form a block of people, the tip of which begins to disappear into the street that leads to the main cemetery. The street begins to flow. Groups of nimble bodies in black clothes, groups with covered and uncovered faces, women with photos of *detenidxs desaparecidxs* hanging on*

⁶⁸ Comunicaciones. (2023, September 14). Ante las medidas tomadas por las autoridades en la marcha y romería hacia el cementerio general a 50 años del golpe de estado. 3y4 Alamos. <https://3y4alamos.com/2023/09/14/ante-las-medidas-tomadas-por-las-autoridades-en-la-marcha-y-romeria-hacia-el-cementerio-general-a-50-anos-del-golpe-de-estado/>

⁶⁹ El Porteno. (2023, September 8). *En escandalosa maniobra represiva, el Gobierno otorgará credenciales a quienes autorice para marchar en conmemoración a los 50 años del Golpe: ¡¡¡Esto es Fascismo!!!*. El Porteno. <https://elporteno.cl/en-escandalosa-maniobra-represiva-el-gobierno-otorgara-credenciales-a-quienes-autorice-para-marchar-en-conmemoracion-a-los-50-anos-del-golpe-esto-es-fascismo/>

*a string around their necks, a couple with a toddler, photographers, few English-speaking people, probably tourists. At the corner of the first street, people stop at an imposing work of mural art that depicts a crowd of *detenidxs desaparecidxs* in a triumphal constellation, marching in victory. I see people spray-painting "Claudia López Presente!" on walls.*

Someone starts chanting "We're not all here! The prisoners are missing!" "Liberar, liberar a las presas por luchar!"⁷⁰ And after a short pause "Guerra, Guerra, Guerra social – contra el estado y el capita!"⁷¹ After what someone starts to chant "Compañera Luisa Toledo" to what we answer "PRESENTE!" "AHORA – Y SIEMPRE!" "ELLA LUCHÓ HASTA VENCER – O MORIR!"⁷².

Police cars appear from the parallel street of the street in which the president was marching. They are trying to prevent us from crossing the river and joining the main protest or reaching the cemetery which is a traditional route of Romería, since the end of the dictatorship. There is a confrontation, police throw gas bombs and spits water from Guanaco on those who try to take and extinguish the gas bombs. We are able to escape pretty quickly [...] The cemetery is only a short walk from here. In ragged scrambles, we enter the cemetery grounds. Some people leave the march when reaching the entrance.

By entering, I immediately sense a different atmosphere. From the great avenues with the vast sky overhead and broad avenues offering numerous escape routes, where the sounds of the streets intermingle with our voices, blending the march into the cityscape, we now find ourselves in a gated cemetery. In private conversations, we speak softly, almost in whispers. The crowd's pace slows down and disperses. People wander to different places, different tombs, and mausoleums. Some are hanging banners, doing graffiti or stating their position by urination or destruction of symbols of dictatorship.

⁷⁰ Free, free the prisoners for fighting!

⁷¹ "War, war, social war – against the state and capital!"

⁷² "LUISA TOLEDO" - "PRESENT!" - "NOW – AND FOREVER!" - "SHE FOUGHT UNTIL SHE WON – OR DIED!"

I find myself surrounded by graves. A sense of something important, something crucial. I whisper or do not speak. I realize I walk slower. Something is touching me. Some gather rocks or carry flowers and banners, responding whenever someone shouts from the depths of their vocal range, “¡COMPAÑERA LUISA TOLEDO, PRESENTE!” (...)

Tombs, mausoleums, crosses, and monuments surround me. I see homemade defensive and offensive objects and preparations for the anticipated entrance by the Carabineros (...) I catch glimpses of broken windows, doors, and the interior of the mausoleum for soldiers and members of the Carabineros de Chile. We proceed to the cemetery's entrance from the north side. Several people attempt to close the main gate. Cheering and suggesting how to do it most effectively. We're walking back up the street that leads to the barricaded entrance when we hear the sounds of Zorrilo, and people alerting “pacos!”. There is a moment of high tension, with some people fleeing among the graves, up the steps leading to the mausoleums, using the tombstones as shields from the water dispersed by guanaco. A part of the people remain on the sides, ready to confront with stones and fireworks the armored tanks and policemen with the institutional legitimacy to kill with impunity under the patronage of the new law "La Ley Nain Retamal". The apparent futility of this image is overruled by the feeling of preponderance – in numbers, in control of the place in sense of unity or just fight. Why would they enter with a tank to cemetery? Whom do they protect? Whom do they target? There is a strong sense of unity between individualities, and collectives involved in the action against the police, and feeling of profound distaste and repugnation of people hiding, observing and helping the wounded and affected by the gas. Lei, who stood next me, disappears from my sight and I observe the event sheltered by grave from which I engage with the struggle... Objects, stones, liquid colors, shouts, and hateful, indignant stares assault the vehicle from different angles. I don't see or feel fear. Instead, I feel a visceral overwhelm as I reflect on the power of this image: the bodies of the living in resistance are tactically hiding behind the stones beneath which lie the bodies of the dead. The mutual experience of these bodies—bodies in black, fleeing briskly, defending

the zone with pride against bodies in gigantic cars, with the training and legitimacy to immobilize them. (...)

We hear screams, feel the stream of the water cannon and the shrill sound of the zorillo, which cuts sharply like an animal through the curves between the tombs. Suddenly, we feel the dissipating cloud in whose epicenter we stand. It reminds me of the sensation of falling into glass wool insulation as a child. I felt my body covered with sharp particles, invisibly embedding themselves under my skin. But it's not on the surface, it's inside of you. In your lungs. But you know it will pass soon, so you don't panic. You should never panic in such situation. My eyes water, I gasp for breath, and want to vomit. I can't see anything, but I start to walk. Hands reach out to me, "vamos compañera, arriba," someone says as they touch my face and spray a baking soda solution on me. I sit next to the grave with many flowers which I touch but can't smell nor see. Lei spots Violetta Parra's grave and says "Mira, (look), there's Violetta, I didn't know she was here. Aguante [keep up], Violeta." and repairs some flowers on her grave and sings lines from her song: "para mi tristeza violeta azul... [for my blue violet sadness] Just opposite of Violetta's grave is the Memorial de los Detenidos Desaparecidos y Ejecutados Políticos (Memorial to the Detained, Disappeared and Politically Executed). In the center is a gentleman with a basket of lemons; in my disorientation I absent-mindedly reach for the slit half he holds out towards me. He looks at me and I must look really bad as he says "I'll give you this one for free". Then I realize he has a cardboard sign between his legs saying "Lemon – 500 pesos". (The adaptability of the neoliberal market in Chile does not avoid either direct actions or cemeteries).

Someone sets up a barricade with sticks and wood in the alley that leads to the grave of Luisa Toledo. A person starts shouting "COMPAÑERXS EJECUTADOS POLÍTICOS" from the depths of their vocal cords, to which the crowd echoes "PRESENTES!" with the same intensity. I feel goosebumps and I'm surprised that I feel pressure in the corners of my eyes as if I was to cry. Instead I scream together with crowd. Then. I start to hear drums. I hear joyful music, full of

cumbia rhythms with an extremely catchy refrain. Some people are on the roofs of mausoleums spreading banners with the face of Claudia López, a young anarchist who was shot during the September 11th demonstration more than two decades ago. The feeling of joy which spread over contrasting sharply with the scene from half an hour ago. I immerse myself in the drumming. Rhythmic. Periodic. I join the dance. I see bodies in black, with faces covered, shaking their hips in cumbia rhythms and I'm confused by the joy that spreads over the place. In the intensity of the moment, I didn't notice who is holding the drum and where the sounds is coming from; the immersion is omnipresent when someone shouts the names of the deceased in the air. The crowd wholeheartedly responds, "PRESENTES!". The fire of the barricade is to refrain vehicle to pass to other sections of cemetery, but here, it appears almost cozy. I hear cheerful cries. Contagious. Resonating.

Suddenly, again, perhaps in the sixths round the police enters to wear protests down and then detain them, we hear a hissing sound and see the Carabineros invading from a gateway about 100 meters away. I reach the trench that separates the lawn, where are symbolic crosses bearing the faces of the detained and disappeared and a huge stone wall on which their names are engraved. The drums grow more intense as the sirens become more pervasive. I watch as the Guanaco blasts a sharp stream of water, cutting down photos of the detained and disappeared, which float on the soaking lawn. I hear Lei shouting, "The people in this country have no water to drink, and you use it as a weapon! Bastards!" Drums. Drums. Drums. The police advances, reaching the middle of the space where everyone was remembered and "present." The drums do not stop. I hear fireworks and shouts. My eyes are once again full of tear gas, and Lei and I are soaked wet. I see people holding onto graves, using them as shields or bases from which they throw stones on police car. The drums do not stop for the next minutes, and once the police vehicles retreat, someone continues with a loud

*afafán*⁷³ and is drumming cathartically. It will not stop until the sirens are silent. People are cheering as it was this ritual that stopped the sirens. "Wheeeey! Eee-e-e-e" celebration sounds go on for next minutes. Only then I realize the drumming has not stopped for the entire demonstration. A confrontation begins, which I estimate to last a few minutes, but after a while, I realize that almost five hours have passed since we left the subway. After the confrontation, I join a woman who has started to re-erect crosses and collect black-and-white photos of young, smiling people with fire in their eyes asking "¿Dónde están?" (Where are they?). I remember the graffiti I saw this morning which asked: "¿Y nosotros? ¿Dónde estamos?" (And we? Where are we?).

3.5 Reivindicar, no recordar (Vindicate, not remember)

"I appeal to the *revindicación* (vindication) and simply revenge as a method of struggle, *weón* [man]." comments Lucho the evening after the manifestation. "Obviously, it's crucial to revindicate the *caídos* (fallen) but it's one part of it. We have to take responsibility and do it for ourselves. We are the people who are currently suffering this repression. But of course with the clear idea of going with the dead, with the people who made the way [cuáles hicieron el camino]" answers Lobo, after a small pause in discussion.

The concept revindication, which I conceive crucial framework through which these events are approached by its participants was difficult to understand. It was not only due to its lack of a direct translation to my first language but also because its usage appeared in various contexts, evoked by people with different political tendencies or social experiences, what sometimes felt rather contradictory. While some perceived revindication⁷⁴ as tied

⁷³ The Afafán is a traditional Mapuche cry used in significant ceremonial contexts to invoke spiritual strength, protection, and guidance from the *Gwenche*, the creator god. Historically, it has been used to inspire and empower warriors before battle and to honor and guide the deceased in funeral rites.

⁷⁴ Etymologically, "revindicación" and "revindication" stem from the Latin verb "vindicare," which means to claim justice, avenge, or punish. The root of the verb is the same for both "vindicate" and "revenge." It combines "vis" (force) and "dicere" (to say, bless, contradict). The English verb "revindicate" relates to "act of avenging or revenge," originating from Old French "vindication" (vengeance, revenge) and Latin "vindicationem" (act of claiming or avenging)." Source: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/vindication>

rather to “revenge” as the only form of justice, as asserted by Lucho, other use the term where it was tied to “honor” and “respect” for the lives of those commemorated.

The place itself appears as a mediator between registers of counter-memory and institutional one. This thought could be supported by Kallianos, (2013) who ethnographically covered massive street protests in Athens between 2008 to 2012, transcends the dichotomy posed by Mitchell (2003) between spaces *of* representation and spaces *for* representation, by arguing, that in the protest the public space is constituted as a site for the “potential subversion of a normalized and alienated sociality” (Kallianos, 2013: 549). Although the present case differs in magnitude and general goals of the protest, his conception of the public space, which allows a non-homogeneous and freer form of interaction offers, something to presented case. He argues that “struggle for representation” can become just a spectacle for bystanders (Kallianos, 2013: 551), yet, in particular contexts such distinction is erased. This dynamics reflects the movement through the cemetery and the city, where everyone and everything is involved. From bystanders, protesters to graves, tombs and the dead.

In the context of memory marches, the materiality of the site—graves of perpetrators and *compañerxs*, police vehicles on-site, fire, acts of naming, drums, flowers, gas—intersected with the intensity of event and sensations as protesters engaged with them. This interplay produced a collective, which, however, preserved individual voices. This dynamic can be supported by some aspects of affect theory. Massumi defines affect as “prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution of the body’s capacity to act” (1987: xvi). Through this capacity—to move, shield, feel goosebumps, and scream or exclaim in a loud and fierce tone that escapes its use as a vehicle for communication—one can reflect on the affective states present during the protest.

This scene aligns with an argument from the previous chapter: in critical events, temporality and the social experience of time is shifted (Lazar, 2014). This temporal shift can collide with and punctuate the horizon of temporality in a historical sense (ibid.) through an attritional moment. Within the context of struggle among the graves, I think about Stine Krøijer’s exploration of how, in the protests and moments of intensity, protesters “organize

time and space” in such a way that they achieve a “temporal incarnation of another future”—what she terms “figuration of the future” (Krøijer, 2015: 32). It could be argued that, in the context of the memory actions described, the temporal horizon of the protesters evokes a “temporal incarnation of another past” – in which dead and disappeared are PRESENTES and past is punctuated by the defiance of the present. Protesters enter into relationship with the dead by exclamation of their names, protection of their graves, dance, and recitals of their poems, bringing their photos and placing them to denounce and assert, they have not left. It is the palpable presence, which is sensed as encouragement, and preponderance as it is rage and defiance, which is present.

In the presented context, I understand *reivindication* as a type of resistance and continuous struggle enacted as an alliance across different “modes of existence” (Latour, 2013), including the dead and alive. This alliance can be framed as the “instauration” of the dead in the struggle in a sense as Vinciane Despret (2021) uses the term coined by Souriau (2016). To instaurate, in the presented context, is an act of entering into a relationship with the dead as *compañerxs* and creating a space in which they can act. Despret argues that if we stop caring for the dead, “the dead die stone dead” (Despret, 2021: 5), but by creating a space for appearance, instauration might mean a mutual act of “extending their existence” (ibid.). To instaurate is not to “create,” nor does it entail bringing the dead into the present “out of nothingness” (ibid.), but rather, “it insists on the fact that bringing a being into existence engages the responsibility of the one doing the instauring, to welcome a request” (ibid.: 7). It is through protesters ‘bodies, voices and actions, that dead and deceased are not only “present”⁷⁵ and “appear” passively, but they keep defying the repressive apparatus directly. The care of living for dead, which here is a care to create a space in which dead can keep with their struggle, but also by entering the relationships of *compañerismo* can, according to

⁷⁵ The most apparent form of how “presence” of dead appears in this struggle is through discursive evocations. I think of Austin's publication "How to do things with words" (1975) in which the idea that an utterance can be judged as true or false without considering its context is challenged. According Austin, there is a difference between constative utterances, which describe, and performative utterances, which act. This form of exclamation which allows the very intensive and present contact with the dead, can be thought together with Judith Butler, who stems from Austin to explore speech act theory, in which she elaborates on the argument used in her theory of performativity, that “discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names” (1993:13).

Despret “understood in the sense of a biographical extension, a prolongation of presence” (ibid.).

The dead are part of vindication in a sense they keep embodying the defiance of the state that was to disappear and erase them, but appearing in the streets through fire, shouts and destruction of the symbols of power. They too appear as *compañerxs*, who present in the moments of joy, calmness. “Dead are not (...) passive legacies. (...), We help the dead to be or become what they are; we don’t invent them (...) We effectively know about their presence because of their potential to act, or rather, to give rise to action, through their capacity to affect us from the “outside” (2021: 7-8).

This dynamics is not only apparent in the protest, but it is also a part of day-to-day life in a more subtle and has different forms. However, this relationship is not based on some abstract, esoteric, or purely transcendental connection. It is often unacknowledged or automatized, and the dead do not appear as heroes or victims but rather as other actors within social reality, whose perception is too taken into consideration.

Carolina, is a 24 years anarchist and traveler, whom I met in *Los Pies*, where we became *compañeras*. In many conversations she explicitly said that she didn’t believe in spirits and didn’t give much importance to such phenomena, although she would refer to the feeling of “being stuck” or narrate her dreams, she would not emphasize them as something extraordinary. Her position towards the political action was rooted in active, practical tasks such as recovery of the space of *Los Pies* in a very practical matters. On one occasion, while hanging banners with names of detained and disappeared in front of *Los Pies* we got to talk about their lives and I asked, whether she thinks the disappeared are part of this struggle (directing to their political legacy of Marxists and communist tendency contrasted with anarchist tendencies) she answered “*well, sometimes I think about what they might think about all of this, perhaps some of them don’t want to fight anymore.*” We both were working on collecting materials for documentary about the memory of resistance during dictatorship in población San Judas Tadeo. In one occasion she would share a strong experiences of being part of the past struggles in different sense, then an observer:

Carolina had been feeling unwell all day— she had headache, a stuffed nose, and a rising temperature. [Los Pies had only plastic sheets instead of windows,

and part of the roof was only covered by old plastic advertisement banners. The last image I saw before falling asleep was the smiling face of a man from a toothpaste advertisement]. *She spent the entire day transcribing an interview with another local woman, who recounted stories of resistance during the dictatorship and the brutal repression that followed, especially against women. We would watch documentaries, and hear interviews and attend events in which women would speak of what it meant to “resist during dictatorship”. After I left, she stayed in Los Pies, and had a strange experience, she shared:*

"When I arrived, I was boiling, man. I arrived and I was crying, crying. I felt like it wasn't me. That I was one of the women from the dictatorship. Why did I feel that, man? I felt like I was part of the documentary. I swear to you, that's what I was thinking. I was hallucinating with fever. In my head, I was there. I was crying and couldn't stop. It was awful. Later, I went to the bathroom to wash my face, and when I looked in the mirror, I said, okay, it's me. That's when I calmed down."

[Field notes, May 2023]

Not all squatters had such vivid experiences. The personal relationship with the deceased is most commonly based on similarity of ideals, ethos or shared experiences of repression, as reflected by Chena:

"I mean, I was lucky that none of my comrades were killed, so I had that luck. But...But for example, Punki Mauri is always presente. I went to the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of his death, which is also part of hacer memoria [to make memory]. I went to that commemoration and there were comrades who had fallen in prison during that day. And it was powerful to think about Punki Mauri, we read his poems, they were so beautiful. In 2007, I was 9 years old and didn't know this generation of anarchists. Kevin is not as present as Punki Mauri, but he is still remembered. Mauricio Freire, is also one of the people present. Another important figure within anarchism is Claudia López (...) But about the motivation.. the truth is, my anger was with other things. Like a

compañero falling in prison, that was more personal anger than for the dead. Things that directly affected me were more my reasons for anger. Like being shot, you know, they shot me in head and I almost lost my eye, or when my compañerxs were imprisoned. I think that's where my anger comes from. But, undoubtedly they are always present because you see yourself in them. It could have been me.(...) Also, the issue of torture, those who went through that, feel identified. They are present on that ground.(...) Well, those who have fallen. Their presence is felt, one feels represented by them. You read poems, you listen to Lira Libertaria [band], they are very ingrained in the culture. And there they become present. And also the shouts. In the marches. In the fire.

Both in protests and in daily interactions between protesters and the dead, the deceased are not approached by my *compañerxs* only as victims to whom they should show piety, nor as heroes to be feared or uncritically revered. Rather, they appear as *compañerxs*, summoned in the fabric of continuous political struggle. Dead are not mere receivers of mourning, but they too shape the aspects of the *reinvidicación*.

From the perspective of the anarchists, the vindication is essential for “hacer la memoria” (to do/make memory). In words of Lyra, vindication

“is something like continuous resistance of those fallen in combat. They are a name of why one resists, not just a symbols. They are the why. They are living representatives of the daily struggle, people just like us, you know, with their convictions, with their ideals. Like everything that implies giving your life for your ideals (...). And sure, in the light of society they are perceived as delinquent or terrorist, that it's like something that always had to happen too, but it's part of the struggle (lucha), part of reinvidicación. Like it's important talking about all the reinvidicación of those fallen in combat.”

“But is “reinvidicación” something like vendetta?”, I ask.

“It's part of it, but more it is a resignification. A transformation. Obviously they're united, (...) in actions, in hands of other people, but it's different. Resignification is like creating culture and memory, isn't it? And besides, this is

tied to action in which you encounter the fallen, in some way. It's like the motive, it's like a clear effect, it's all like cause and consequence. This goes hand in hand, because the consequence of vindication is ... [hesitant] I mean, if you take revenge just to do revenge [vengar por vengar]. It's like justified hatred – just that. But if you reivindicate, it's like giving it a concept, you gave a reason to your anger, to your unleashed anger. Why are you angry? Think of it. Why are you angry? It's not just that I'm angry but it should have.. ehm to have like.. a concept. It's like educating your anger. Of course, it's a why of your rage because, it's easy to say "I'm angry", but that should go hand in hand with reivindicación. It's like destroying and building [destruir y construir]. It's not that easy, it's not that easy to be angry. If your anger is not directed well, because then your anger consumes you.”

3.6 No gods no martyrs – political alliance with the dead and disappeared

The anthropological "categories" used to conceptualize individuals—revolutionaries, fighters for liberation, kings or saints—largely resonate with the term "martyr." (Holbraad 2014; El-Khalili 2007; Rudi, 2019). According to Nerina Weiss (2014), to receive the status of a martyr implies a social transformation of the dead body. Furthermore, they are subjected to a ritual of passage, accompanied by ceremonies to honor and appreciate their life, struggle, and sacrifice, based on the idea that they share a common essence with those who honor them. Consequently, the deceased are reintegrated into the social order as martyrs (Bloch, 1982) and have a profound impact on it. Once belonging to the social order, they continue to communicate and guide matters concerning the decisions of the living (Evans-Pritchard, 1976). Similar questions about the agency of the dead and their afterlives as martyrs, ancestors or spiritual authorities in the world of the living stem from some of the most classical anthropological questions since the beginning of the discipline (Evans-Pritchard, 1976). Yet, the concept of martyrdom is tied to an ethos of self-sacrifice, appearing as „noble death“ (Heintz, 2003) for those who die for noble causes (as exemplified by the prolific case of Jesus Christ).

The concept of martyrdom deserves a more nuanced specification in the presented

case, involving those fallen in combat, disappeared and deceased which are neither commemorated by grand statues, nor being in the center of some sort of “cult of personality”. Although their action aligns a notion of self-sacrifice, not all of them are conceived as martyrs.⁷⁶ In cases of anarchists, to be conceived as “martyr” is an undesirable concept, due to an implied hierarchical position. Such a position also shed light on the agency, which perdures despite of the physical departure.

As we already discussed in the first chapter, engagement with the past is an inevitable part of the revolutionary reality. The traditional idea of sacrifice is the central element in any constitution of the given social order, be it a religion or nation state: the martyrdom of Saint Lucia resisting marriage to a pagan, Salvador Allende inside of La Moneda giving his life for the people or the troops of red army “liberating” Czechoslovak people. Axel Rudi (2019: 12) investigating the role of martyr in Kurdish revolutionary cosmology, stems from the argument, that an unconditional honor to martyrs is based on the fixity and immobility as honorable figures, which are to be looked up to as models.

Martyrdom, rooted in self-sacrifice, profoundly alters the reciprocal relationships among people (Rudi, 2019). In the context of the anarchist struggle—structured as to prevent authority, hierarchy, and heroic figures—the concept of martyrdom appears as a danger. According to Jacques Derrida (2005), the gift of death disrupts the balance of reciprocal exchange, making it permanently unequal. He thinks it is because, in the act of self-sacrifice, a person undergoes an ontological transformation that defies any attempt of classification or compensation. Derrida writes about the sacrifice is a total gift from the one who sacrificed themselves (ibid.). In the framework of non-hierarchical autonomous discourse, such an imbalance is viewed with suspicion rather than reverence. Counter-memory actions are not only grand processions to honor the dead; instead, they are reciprocal actions where both the deceased—through their resonant presence, messages, techniques, and ideas—and the living—through their actions and words—exert sovereignty (Rudi, 2019). This does not diminish the respect and merit earned by the deceased in their struggle; rather, it fulfills it, complying with the legacy that the fallen *compañerxs* ensured during their lives. It ensures

⁷⁶ For example, in Bolivia, the association of family members of people who suffered enforced disappearances or were victims of extrajudicial executions is named “Association of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared and Martyrs for National Liberation (ASOFAMD)”, highlighting the martyrhood of their beloved ones.

that they will not be turned into idols or untouchable symbols. These actions are not motivated by a feeling of "debt" in hope for the gift with a surplus (Mauss, [1925] 2002), which arises from the asymmetrical position between the "sacrificed" and the one for whom they sacrificed (sacrificing for a common ethos and struggle). Instead, it is an act of vindication—to make them present, to bring them into the context of the ongoing struggle, to meet them as *compañerxs*.

My *compañerxs* would refer to vindicated dead *compañerxs* as "they are the motor" (Lucho), "abyss of struggle" (Lyra), "those who paved the way" (Lobo).

"It's important talking about all the vindication of those fallen in combat. Like lifting their memory and never falling into martyrdom, not turning them into martyrs. But yeah. Keeping them PRESENT in every action, every fire. And I don't think it's just one concept. This goes beyond, I think. (Who they are) can't be explained just in one way, just as a martyr. It can't be explained just as a sacrifice, it's much more than that. Is it just as deep when a person dies in combat, like maybe, it's a defeat, too. It's a defeat. All the time. But I always feel like they're more than just that and you know, when it happens, it's not like crying over that, but vindicating it. Of course you are sad, but it's a transformation."
(Luna, July 2023)

As argued earlier here, the key difference is that dead in combat are not fixed⁷⁷ as monuments, tombs and mausoleums immobilizing infrastructures of memory politics (state-funded institutions, museums, names of streets, squares). Although the murals and graffiti are painted (predestined for short-term existence) and their names are given to social centers and popular kitchens (like Luisa Toledo or the *olla común* of Eduardo Zúñiga), they are present also in the daily life of people. Kissing a tattoo with the symbol of deceased *compañerx* before engaging in the confrontation, quoting Luisa Toledo in daily conversations or analyzing the political situations, trying to see them from the perspectives

⁷⁷ "Statues or monuments to the dead (...) owe their meaning to their intrinsic existence; even though their location is far from arbitrary, one could justify relocating them without altering their meaning." (Nora, 1989: 22)

of the fallen. The evolving relationship with deceased too entails criticizing machist attitudes of the fallen.

In the presented context of anti-authoritarian circles, the concept of martyrdom is not only not evoked but explicitly refused. Rather, the task is to “take care not to convert them into martyrs” (Lyra). Although, when asking for elaboration about why martyrdom is to be prevented, the answers were more indirect: “it is a strange concept”, “it doesn't fit”. I understood that the set of practices and discourses that accompany the way the dead are evoked and “present” in the struggle varies among different groups, political tendencies, and also the personal trajectories of the people. As exemplified in the ethnographic segment from September 11th and the counter-memory march, the struggle arises not only, but also between protesters (among them too!) and repressive forces, and also includes the dead as actors in this conflict. In addition to the demonstrative urination on Jaime Guzmán's grave, the interaction between the living and the dead is evoked in the moments of confrontation with the repressive forces. During lulls between police raids, the presence of those who participated in the same fight during their physical existence is invoked, summoned, announced. In a setting where the dead and their political ideals are not confined to nation-building monuments or the mainstream history books of “builders of the nation,” they play a central role in shaping the daily existence and internal logic and practice of political struggle.

In the current wave of *Octubrismo*, where symbols and legacies of the *Estallido Social* are being reshaped, vilified, and even persecuted, terms like “heroes,” “symbols,” and “martyrs” – such as el Negro Matapacos – find themselves in a precarious position. Once appropriated or institutionalized by any group, these concepts can be redefined, weaponized, and exploited. This dynamic challenges traditional notions of struggle, suggesting that some forms of resistance are regarded as more honorable than others, establishing hierarchies and creating divisions within various movements. The practice of *reivindicación* appears as a constant, lively engagement with the deceased – and I argue that the difference between *reivindicación* and *commemoration* is an effort not to turn them into martyrs. This opens space for their critique, opening questions about their decisions, discussing the repercussions they brought or thinking “how someone would act” as well as intimate relation with them. I

understand this effort as a part of a general anti-authoritarian ethos which the deceased defended and enacted during their life and coherence with their ideas as Lucho stated:

“They are the driving force, a motor. They are people who were consistent with their ideas. Yes, many people have died in a political context, but not all of them were consistent with their ideas. I believe that when people are coherent with their ideas, that is what marks the before and the after, if I remember someone bacán [cool, great] who did a lot for the organizations, for the lucha.. Or (...) if they remember you as bacán person because you did something bacán that contributed to the lucha, your fight persists and you too.”

Let us place this theory into account about active and concrete vindication of a Pato, deceased in the aftermath of *Estallido Social*. It is important to bear in mind that the Chilean state has never „fully“ compensated (is such a thing possible?) the victims of the *Estallido*, leaving those hurt, harassed and shot in the streets and their families without justice. Rather than facing the consequences of its failure to ensure basic human rights, the government—along with the press, politicians, mainstream media, and many citizens of Chile—has chosen to alter the memory of the *Estallido*, exemplified by laws and statements that vilify the protest. Immediately following the *Estallido*, the COVID-19 pandemic spread, and those who had suffered a trauma (both ocular and/or psychological) found themselves confined and isolated, with limited access to support. Self-organized groups such as the Coordinadora de Víctimas de Trauma Ocular emerged to provide some of this much-needed support. Nevertheless, the consequences of neglect were devastating, with four people who suffered ocular trauma, receiving no material or psychological assistance for their recovery, ultimately deciding to end their own lives. Many more have attempted to do so. One of them was a close friend of Milos, and he allowed me to narrate the story of the reivindicación of his friend Pato.

“And when it happened to Pato, we organized a march to gather people, and then during that march, we conducted a political action with other ocular trauma comrades. We entered the National Congress in Valparaíso and painted it with Pato’s name. We were arrested, but it didn’t matter. In the end, nothing came out of that investigation. (...) So, the action was successful for me because

ultimately we entered the congress, we painted the name of PATO and the only evidence they had was a piece of paper I painted, with '1312 PATRICIO PATO PRESENTE' on it. So we were detained. After a night in the calabozo [cell], we stood in the court and were interrogated. (...) and when the judge finally saw the name of Pato, who committed suicide, who died because some cop shot him in the eye, he had to read it out loud during the trial, both he and I. So in the courtroom, the judge read '1312, PATO PRESENTE'. And so did I, '1312 PATO PRESENTE'. So for me, it was a mockery of the state and also to make him present there, my friend, my compañero, who was dead. So I found some satisfaction in what happened and based on that, a little justice. That's my way of action, similarly, a few months ago another ocular trauma compañero, Jorge, committed suicide by jumping under the subway. He was anarchist, a tough one. And sure, then I made another painting action, but they didn't catch me. So somehow I'm planning another action, so what I'm aiming for is to feel with them, to make them present, to vindicate them, to leave their message [su legado]."

4. Squatting the Past: Reclaiming ruins to resist erasure in *Los Pies del Cerro*

July 20, 1974. The day when Turkey invaded the northern part of Cyprus. Troops of the Turkish army landing in the city of Kyrenia (Girne) killed, drove away and made “disappear” thousands of Greek Cypriots⁷⁸. Greek inhabitants were forced to leave their homes and personal belongings as they were raided. These items, homes and animals were later allocated to Turkish settlers, who were to appropriate strange belongings and made home over someone else’s active absence as I learned from the ethnography of Yael Navaro-Yashin (2012).

About a month later, on August 23, 1974, on a different continent, a similar manifestation of necropolitical mechanism (Islekel, 2024) surfaced. Under Pinochet's dictatorship, the *DINA* applied a parallel strategy. Agents abducted Eduardo Zúñiga from his home and workplace—a popular school and cultural center called *La Ratonera*, located on Baquedanos Street in Peñalolén Alto, Santiago de Chile. His act not only made his body disappear but also weaponized the memory of his whereabouts as a tool for domination, most starkly manifested in the expropriation of his home and its relegation to the military, marked as a “communist hub”. Eduardo Zúñiga became one of the thousands of “detenidos desaparecidos”⁷⁹ during the civic-military dictatorship.

49 years later, on a chilly evening of August 23, 2023, 14 squatters gathered at the gates of Eduardo’s former home — the very place from which he was dragged away in front of his five children and wife — to inhabit and reclaim it from the erasure perpetuated by the legacies of dictatorship. They named it *Los Pies del Cerro* (The Foot of the Mountain). At this point, I was one of them.

⁷⁸ Cassia, P. S. (2005). *Bodies of evidence: Burial, memory and the recovery of missing persons in Cyprus* (Vol. 20).

⁷⁹ There is a controversy over the official numbers. See: Sferrazza Taibi, Pietro. (2021). La búsqueda de personas desaparecidas en Chile: ¿necesidad de un complemento humanitario?. *Revista mexicana de ciencias políticas y sociales*, 66(243), 79-108. Epub 31 de enero de 2022. <https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2021.243.70276>

We attach photos of Eduardo and other desaparecidos, who were abducted in the same morning during the mass detention operation in the commune of Peñalolén⁸⁰ next to each other and fastened them carefully with tape. These pictures pose emblematic denunciatory question “¿DÓNDE ESTÁN?” (Where are they?) as a part of an incessant search for beloved ones, for justice, revenge or peace across post-dictatorial regions of Latin America. They include dates of birth and “disappearance” underneath.

[Field notes, July 2023]



Figure n. 8: *Reinvidicación* of detained and disappeared from the commune of Peñalolén by squatters of Los Pies del Cerro. August 2023. Photo by the author.

Under small banners with photos and slogans like “LA MEMORIA ES EL ARMA QUE NOS MANTIENE LUCHANDO HOY Y SIEMPRE” [Memory

⁸⁰ “His arrest was part of a mass detention operation carried out in the La Faena neighborhood, located in the current commune of Peñalolén. The operation involved personnel from the Army, Air Force, Carabineros (Chilean national police force), Investigations Police (PDI), and security agents. Among these agents was Osvaldo Romo Mena, better known as “El Guatón Romo,” an agent of the DINA (Chilean secret police), who lived in that neighborhood until September 11, 1973, and was a political and community leader. For this reason, he actively collaborated in denouncing residents to the authorities. During the operation, he was dressed in an Air Force uniform. After being taken out onto the street, all detainees were transported to a local sports field and later moved by buses and trucks to the Military School, where they remained until the following day when they were transferred to DINA detention facilities.” Source: <https://memoriaviva.com/nuevaweb/detenidos-desaparecidos/desaparecidos-z/zuniga-zuniga-eduardo-fernando/>

is a weapon which maintains us fighting today and always] we place candles funded by handfuls of small change, carefully earned on the streets through juggling, broad smiles during challenging acrobatic performances in front of audience in cars waiting for green light on the traffic light⁸¹, by assisting at the feria – the local market, or from Charles University’s mobility fond for study exchange program. Even people who live in Los Pies “de paso”⁸² (on the move) joined.

Milos brought a drum, which is typically during pasacalles⁸³. What usually sets the pace to determine joyful, decisive steps of cumbia rhythms is now transformed into an instrument filling us with a sense of importance, a strange melancholy, connection among each other and with the people on photos – whom most of my co-squatters address as “compañerxs detenidxs desaparecidxs” [detained and disappeared comrades].

Milos drums ritualistically, with long, heavy pauses. In the silences between beats, we stand in solidarity – some clasping, others folding their hands, smoking cigarettes, or awkwardly looking down at our feet and glimpsing at the pictures – a little uncomfortable with the seriousness that lingers in the air. We sit or stand, and for about 20 minutes, we gaze into the candlelight, or hold Ayen, 6-month-old kiltra dog, with whom we live. She is drawn to the warmth, glow, and the taste of the candles. This practice starkly contrasts with the usual daily rhythm of the place—when Los Pies is loud, vibrant, in constant motion. Normally, one recognizes this place by the chatter of people when repairing the roof, tending the garden, practicing acrobatics, running and playing alongside our dog as kiltro compañerxs, doing workshops, listening and creating cumbia and combative rap, or by participating in long breakfast discussions over the liters of maté people at place drink and longer night assemblies. Now, our bodies

⁸¹ this work is known as “hacer faro”

⁸² Compañera Lyra described them as “los que llevan su lucha en la mochila” (those who carry their struggle in their backpack) to capture a “weak compromise” with the struggle of recovery of the place and partial disinterest in political aspects of squatting.

⁸³ Marches or street parades emblematic for Latin America’s street protest, combining music, costumes, dances, elements from Indigenous rituals and political or festive banners reclaiming public space.

are still, and so is Los Pies.

I too find myself a little ashamed about what I feel. Sadness growing in my chest, materializing in the corners of my eyes feels improper. “You have your own people to mourn” could be the articulation of a feeling, which accompanies me as I ethnographically transit and affectively inhabit spaces of memory in Chile. (Whose voice is that?). Still, I am pierced by a collective sense of the strange intimacy with someone we never knew, yet we share a space with.

[Field notes, 23. 08. 2023]



Figure n. 9: Preparations for a memory event. “Memory is a weapon which maintains us fighting today and always! August 2023. Photo by the author.

4.1 Resisting Erasure – Re-existence of and with the space

In the following subchapters, I aim to introduce the anarchist-popular *Los Pies del Cerro*⁸⁴. I begin by comparing it with other cases in which the appropriation of the homes,

⁸⁴ I refer to *Los Pies* as such, due the orientation of the squat based on both the anarchist principles of the squatters and the participation of the neighbors, who are known as the “popular sector,” this term is also tied to the active effort to return what began as an anarchist squat to the *población* from which it was usurped. Another layer of why I chose to introduce this place as such is rooted in the very notion of anarchism that some members of *Los Pies* used to describe their political position as “flaute anarchism” or *política hecha carne*

which are marked by histories dispossession (Navaro-Yashin, 2012) or forced abandonment (Moralez Martínez et al., 2017). These cases exemplify diverse forms of home-making amidst the melancholy lingering in such places, and although different from each other, they all expose the vulnerability of state-led governance by disappearance. By introducing the multifaceted process of re-territorialization, I want to highlight its role as a remnant – a space where unexpectedly enduring political and affinity-based bonds of connection thrived, even in the face of efforts to fragment communities through political divides (Navaro-Yashin, 2017). In *Los Pies* this vulnerability of the mechanisms of domination is exposed by “re-existence” (Hurtado, Porto-Gonçalves 2022).

Much like abandoned areas in Cyprus, *Los Pies* is a “phantomic place”, linked to the material and affective presence of absences of those who once inhabited it (Navaro Yashin, 2012: 13) and much like matsutake mushrooms in Japanese forests, the re-emergence of *Los Pies* in a blasted political landscape after the *Estallido Social* allowed squatters to “experience ruin as a collective home” (Tsing, 2016 : 3).

Re-existence, which emerges from the interaction with the space is to be understood as a domain of those groups, which do “not only fight to resist those who kill” – (or disappear and erase) – “but also fight for a particular way of existence, a specific way of life and production, for plural ways of feeling, acting, and thinking” (Porto-Gonçalves, 2005:130).

In *Los Pies*, it is exemplified in the act of actively recovering by using the site, but also naming, investigating, recognizing, allying and creating *spaces for appearance* of what and who was intended for disappearance (people, infrastructures, relations and practices), as portrayed in the opening vignette. While preserving certain traits of *Los Pies*’s former form – *La Ratonera* - retaining both the practices, and the material remnants, squatter engage in new modes of territorialization and homemaking. A collective unexpectedly formed around this process of active recovery, brought together neighbors, young anarchists, travelers tied by affinity bonds, fostering critical conversations with each others ideas, pasts, and practices, what can be seen as a process of mutual political attunement based on affinity and *compañerismo*. This process is not only about returning the place to the *población*, from who

(“politics made flesh”), rooted in the politicization of the experience of life in *poblaciones* and marginalized zones of what is known as Chile through anarchist ideas.

it was usurped, but also about creation of a home of new-comers. Located in the post-*Estallido* atmosphere characterized by set of repressive laws, including “anti-squatting law” has impact on both strategies and tactics of political action tied to re-existence.

Re-existence, as explored in the works of Gonçalves (2002; 2005) and Escobar (2008) is usually referring to the processes through which mostly Indigenous groups reclaim territories, subjectivities, identities and histories that have been subjected to erasure and intervention by (neo-)colonial and extractivist violence. In the case of *Los Pies del Cerro*, this combination of resistance and positive affirmation of envisioned alternative, could also be framed as a case of prefigurative practice which is more common in analyses of such dynamics in other autonomous and anarchist spaces (Novák, 2021; Novák, Kuřík, 2020; Moskvina, 2022). Despite these similarities, I mobilize the concept of re-existence in my analysis of *Los Pies* as it more precisely highlights a key distinction: to inhabit the alternative is not the case only by virtue of challenging the established order while enacting that “another world is possible” (Maeckelbergh, 2011: 13) (as it is in pre-figurative practice), but also to affirm that “another world already exists(ed)” [otro mundo ya existe/ió]⁸⁵. It is in a critical conversation with the past, from which alternative is being co-constructed and co-figured.

While both approaches affirm and enact the contours of *un mundo necesario* (a necessary world)⁸⁶, they diverge in their engagement with alternatives, which are to be lived. Prefigurative politics, tied to practices popularized most starkly since the alter-globalization movement (Maeckelbergh, 2011), is an approach based on the creation of livable alternatives within the present, analyzing the failure and unsustainability of the past, while gesturing toward future *possibilities* yet to be realized. In contrast, re-existence, as contextualized earlier, co-creates the “other world” in close, yet critical, dialogue with the pasts where the alternatives of other forms of life than a capitalism were modeled, but violently interrupted or exterminated. Re-existence does not only resist the mechanisms of erasure, but actively

⁸⁵ As famously articulated by different collectives in territorial struggles, Indigenous communities and activists. For example: Camarena, C. (2021). *Semillas: Somos la regeneración, otro mundo ya existe*. Savanna Books.

⁸⁶ See: La Vía Campesina. (2013). *El Libro Abierto de la Vía Campesina: Celebrando 20 años de luchas y esperanzas*. La Vía Campesina. <https://viacampesina.org/es/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/05/ES-02.pdf>

reclaims and revitalizes suppressed legacies as repositories and tools of defiance and positive affirmation of an alternative order-in-formation.

The relationship with the past and its political implications is not about fetishizing it, striving for a “reverse prefiguration,” or reviving failed utopias in the present, but rather, it fosters a critical dialogue with the past. I will navigate through this argument in two ways. First, by describing re-existence in relation to territory and openness toward the población, and second, how re-existence is experienced through day-to-day practices of home-making, subjectification within the space and among the squatters themselves.

4.2 Reclaiming the site after the *Estallido Social*

“It always belonged to the población. So, when we make claims like this, we are saying that this belongs to the people—that is why they support us; that is why the población backs us. The same thing happened when everything unfolded with the Los Pies, all that happened around 2019 and 2020. Some of us, including myself, had nowhere to live during the pandemic, so I came to stay here; we stayed in this section. [Gazing at the walls of a room now used as a library, without windows and with a slightly leaking roof at a side without bookshelves]. We first activated the space here, cleaned it, made it safe, and then organized it downward. Around that time, there was a massive surge in the territorial assemblies in all of Chile, even after the Estallido. People from all the nearby assemblies were here, and four of us decided to take a space. Until that moment, we didn’t know everything about the history of this space. There was so much unknown in that story that we hadn’t discovered yet. Nobody believed in us at first [nadie nos pescaba]. But once we took over the space, the whole assembly joined us. The entire Territorial Assembly and all the organizations came here to work. We were organizing amidst the height of the Estallido and everything happening around us. And then they sent people to burn everything down. But we managed to recover it and have been here for three years.”

[Lucho, September, 2023]



Figure n. 10: Library of *Los Pies del Cerro*. September 2023. Photo by the author.

People who were at the beginning of the formation of *Los Pies*'s collective are forming an „accidental community of memory” (Malkki 1997: 91) – a community formed unintentionally through shared experiences of historical events including trauma and euphoria such as the *Estallido Social*. And while their entrance was more of a “right of necessity” (Mancilla, 2017), as Lucho reflects on the precarious situation of “having nowhere to go” during the pandemic, the gradual process of learning, allying with neighbors, especially Sra. Luisa, a local resident and an active feminist figure of resistance both during the dictatorship and today, the site became territorialized beyond the space to live, and the process of re-existence commenced.

The first aspect of re⁸⁷-existence of *Los Pies* is squatting itself.

⁸⁷ It is important to note that the underlying approach of this thesis is rooted in a critical engagement with the history of a dictatorial past through counter-memories. The genealogical engagement with the past, in which I situate *La ex-Ratonera* in the following pages, is based on the premise that “the purpose of history (...) is not to discover the roots of our identity (...) [nor] to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return (...). Instead, it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us” (Foucault, 1971: 386–387).

In the discussion about re-existence, the genealogical context is a necessary element for understanding the concepts of “re” (a link to the past) and “existence” (the present) in these efforts. In *Los Pies*, to comprehend the act of squatting in a house that once belonged to a person who was “disappeared” due to their political activities tied to Marxist ideals, it is important to locate the “re” that squatters vindicate. This “re” refers to a period of solidarity, communal politics, and life in the *población*, from which it enters the discussion.

Wishing to return, re-make, re-establish old practices is always at risk of romanticization, mythologization, or failure. The return to practices like squatting, has already occurred on different occasions. For example, by Chilean residents who, after having received social housing between 1980 and 2000, chose to return to informal settlements. Rodrigo Esteban Morales Martínez and his colleagues (2017) explore this transition. They argue that the decision to return to informal settlements (*campamentos*) is for people who were allocated to social housing process, not just a rejection of housing provided by the state, but it also involves political resistance and a melancholic attachment to life in *campamentos*. Author describe it as longing of proximity, solidarity and a sense of community. The will to return, is an act of exposure of the limitations of Chilean housing policies, not only in practical sense, but mainly because it separates the living conditions from the social networks that once fostered a sense of home and belonging in an informal settlement. Separation and allocation to installed houses is also a separation from the “the social relationships between the different territorialities [mode of living and inhabiting] that coexist in a space.” (Hurtado, Porto-Gonçalves 2022: 2).

The authors argue that returnees experience a persistent melancholy based on discrepancy between the promise of stability in social housing, experience of alienation and upon returning a feeling, that something has been lost. The authors termed it a "melancholic subjectivity" (2017: 71) accompanied by feelings as guilt, nostalgia, and missing of a community which upon „return“ to is lost. The inhabitation of allocated social housing felt improper so they moved.

Through the process of inhabiting these ruins, the appropriation of the site—characterized as a process of *making-and-believing* or *believing-and-making*—develops in diverse ways. (Navaro-Yashin, 2012: 6). While Turkish Cypriots are “legitimately using the site” as it is now part of their national territory, they still sense *maraz* (ibid. : 138) a melancholy rooted in a sense of not-belonging.

In *Los Pies*, the “existence” that follows the “re” is positioned within the anarchist ethos of the new generation of squatters in this chapter.

In contrast, squatters and some neighbors, labeled as illegitimate users or occupiers, by a person who “legally” owns the site he acquired through expropriation, emphasize the *lucha justa* (just fight) and legitimacy in their effort to return the place.

The "return" of *Los Pies* to the población differed, with anarchist youth reclaiming the space alongside some neighbors. As Lucho noted in an earlier quote, upon entering the squatters lacked detailed knowledge of the place's past, and the process unfolded organically, at times unexpectedly. Due to their anarchist ethos and diverse backgrounds connection to the territory took a distinct shape. The lingering melancholy did not stem from a failed attempt to recreate past relationships but was instead experienced affectively, through a slow process of learning and engaging with the past, in moments like described in the opening vignette or in the process of learning more about the site from neighbors, who, too slowly became attuned to new inhabitants of the squat. This process of engaging with the melancholic state was tied to the re-assertion of practices and the opening of space.

The strategy underlying the long-term and short-term goals of the Los Pies collective was primarily shaped rather than aim to make it a physically fully recovered, was encapsulated in idea, that to create a territory of re-existence “what is needed are good social relationships”(Echeverri, 2004: 275).

These three cases: *pobladorxs* returning to place which socially does not exist anymore, Greek Cypriots inhabiting what is legally theirs, but affectively feel like it doesn't belong to them, and squatters, who expropriated site with sense of home and legitimacy empirically challenge the state's “make-believe” arrangements as encoded in maps, property rights, and legal documents.

4.3 Home-making in the ruin

“(...) And then, I mean, Lucho told me like, "Hey, you know about this place?" They tried to take it over once, but, it didn't go well. (...) Then I remember we were in the pandemic and it had just burned down recently. And I remember one time we went in, there was rubble everywhere, literally everything. This library didn't have all these shelves, not even walls. It didn't exist. There wasn't even a roof here, after a fire. Everything that was the bathroom was disgusting; it was

full of shit in plastic bags and had been inhabited by people who smoked pasta base⁸⁸ (...). (T)he kitchen downstairs, was in the best condition so guys had to negotiate with the two junkies who were living there. And all of this was like full of, full, full, full, full to the top of rubble, like you couldn't get through here, it was closed off. (...) So we started to clean up there. I mean, it was necessary for me to stay and I remember Lucho stayed too, and we had talked with the others. We were at Anteo's house, talking with other comrades about cleaning this place. Anteo's compañerxs didn't help much, but I also talked with the head of the Cordillera Assembly and we came like twice to sweep with shovels. Hermana [sister], listen: it was UNINHABITABLE, this place was uninhabitable. There were like very large pieces of metal, probably from the roof here. There were also zinc sheets all over the yard. But how nice is it now. ” [Chena, September, 202] [Four years later, I look around on unfinished shelves, the dusty floor, a window which has a plastic bag instead of glass, colorful graffiti and the golden sun passing through the holes in the walls and I find it charming, cozy.]

If we were to pin re-existence into the day-to-day inhabitation of a place, which is recovered, we would observe how squatters engage with the ruin of the erased and its reconstruction to what can be. In Northern Cyprus, as described in the opening vignette, Turkish Cypriots were to make a home over a space left vacant after the violent removal of others, using the infrastructures and personal belongings that remained. Navaro-Yashin terms this a "make-believe" arrangement, where the state acted to rewrite maps and allocate this place to the Turkish nation-state. However, this arrangement was not experienced as such, and the new inhabitants failed to construct a sense of home, thus challenging the annexation of the territory. Instead of belonging, the Turkish Cypriots sensed illegitimacy and a form of melancholy, referred to as "maraz."⁸⁹ This sense of illegitimate use and the

⁸⁸ Pasta base is a highly addictive and harmful, smokable drug derived from the residual byproducts of the cocaine production.

⁸⁹ “Melancholy is the loss of the self, it is the loss of a sense of the self as clean and pure. This is a feeling of an abjected self, of the object inside the self, of subjectivized or interiorized object to the point where the object is normalized and no longer recognized as such. Melancholia, then, is both interior and exterior. It refers to subjectivity and the world of objects at one and the same time. Here, beyond paradigmatic shifts and wars, theories of affect and subjectivity, as well as of objects and symbolization, they demand to be merged. Social constructionism and an object-orientated approach, the linguistic and the affective turns may have

feeling that they "never warmed into their house" (Navaro-Yashin, 2009: 4) despite living there for decades persists, even with the appropriation of these spaces by the current inhabitants.

To analyze this process, Navaro-Yashin refers to Julia Kristeva's and Mary Douglas's work to analyze the situation. She discusses how a sense of symbolic "purity" is often seen as essential for maintaining social order (a clean and tidy environment as an element of home and belonging), as dirt and chaos is essentially a "matter out of place" (1966: 2). For Douglas, "dirt" is symbolic of disorder, and it is through the imagination of filth and practices of cleanliness that societies construct their organization. Then she engages with Kristeva's concept of the abject, referring to something that disturbs order and challenges boundaries. It is neither fully inside nor outside, but exists on the edge of the self. She writes, "The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to 'I'" (1982:1). It is something alien, yet familiar. It may provoke fear or disgust but also fascination – a state similar to the one of people with phobia to rats have, or when witnessing an open wound. However, Navaro-Yashin reinterprets Kristeva's theory, suggesting that the abject is not something external that challenges the social order from the outside, but rather something deeply embedded within it. In this case, the abject reshapes subjectivities as well as political realities of Turkish Cypriots and appears as internalized melancholy which they experience: "The abject is so much inside me now that I don't know who I would be without it." (Navaro-Yashin, 2009: 6)

It appears that Turkish Cypriots⁹⁰, while inhabiting physically clean spaces, live in symbolically and affectively "polluted" environments.

In *Los Pies*, this parallel differs on various grounds. People were not allocated to this place by the state; rather, they chose it. They were not uprooted from their homes to come to

been posed as antitheses of one another by the philosophers. But ethnography leads us to write against the grain of 'ruination' in being anti-, trans-, or multi-paradigmatic." (Yashin, 2009: 17).

⁹⁰ The relationship between Turkish settlers and the affective presence of the absences of Greek Cypriots is shaped by divisions rooted in national and ethnic belonging, is different as the relationship between squatters and former inhabitants (pobladorxs, Eduardo Zúñiga and his family are seen as allies). The main parallel I wish to draw focuses on how melancholy and abjection transform when the purpose and the relationship with one's environment, political affiliation, and community. In both cases, melancholy is an underlying experience, but the way of relating and transforming differs.

another country, and the affinity with the past dwellers (Eduardo Zúñiga or Sra Luisa) of the space was foregrounded. However, I want to highlight the contrast in the way of inhabiting it.

Here, physical disorder, chaos, and dirt—dust, leftovers, and untidiness—are foregrounded and embraced. Through living with these remnants and the chaos, a sense of belonging, dignity, rightful recovery, and even responsibility is co-constituted. Physical disorder and messiness became a platform for creativity, over which a home was constructed—built from rubble to create homes for dogs, DIY shelves, patched clothes, and different elements welded together for acrobatics. This process of recovery is, for some, even understood as an act of care and active resistance to its material disappearance.:

„But let me be clear about this, because is important to say, that 'Nobody is taking anything here,' and it's true. This place was a hub for drug addiction, an infection hotspot during the pandemic. What people are doing here is taking care of the space and cleaning it up. I've been part of it—we cleared out so much debris from here. This place was DISGUSTING [his face shows the emotion]. Full of shit and garbage. We cleaned it and take care of it.

[Chena, July 2023].



Figure n. 11: Evening in Los Pies del Cerro in front of a re-created kitchen. Photo by the author. June 2023

My co-squatters emphasized the sense of belonging, stating that "this place belongs to the población" [este lugar le pertenece a la población], and that "población belongs there". When meeting somewhere in the city, we would ask "when are you coming home?" but also on the very personal level, emphasizing that *Los Pies* is their "last grip of social struggle after the failure of the *Estallido*" [Chena], or recognizing it as a „home“ [Carolina], "refuge" [Lucho], or place of relief among the hardships of day-to-day life in the neoliberal city.

"As I was saying, I have nothing to hold onto—no family, no income, no home. You start thinking, 'What's going to happen to my life?' And then it's like I just want to give everything? You see how bleak the system is, and sometimes it feels like it's better to disappear. But sure, then, here (...) you realize that all those injustices—you're sharing them with other people. Like, don't you feel that it takes that strength and mobilizes you to something (...)? Like I feel that it finally happens. So lately I've been feeling really good since I come to this space, because I feel that things are happening for a reason, like everything is being ordered. It also has to do with the energy of the space, that is also something believe in sometimes. (...) We talk a lot about everything here. That for me has been like a good reception, because I was still a little bit in that... like sinking. The emptiness. Here, I don't feel that much."

[Luna, September 2023].

People would invite their family members and close friend and affinities, who would support the space, help with its reconstruction and care for it collectively and temporarily. Through that, they become part of outer the dynamics of the squat.

The sense of belonging is embedded in the materiality of the space and the infrastructure of care that defines it: the donated tiles, tools, and books; the omnipresent graffiti and messages of care and protest—cries and advice from the past and current inhabitants; the creatively repurposed holes and uneven terrain used as gymnastic obstacles; lovingly restored rooms with own poems on its walls. Many of my fellow long-term co-

squatters at *Los Pies* had small “Andean altars”⁹¹, each personalized. These included personal belongings of special significance, photos of the deceased, inspirational gifts, special rocks, small paintings, often tied to specific people, places, and life moments. This homemaking is also seen in the hand-made carpets, curtains pieced together from various textiles, and small corners where our dog compañerxs preferred to sleep.

The space also includes a podium and a training hall used for concerts and various community events, which people from the población organize and hold in *Los Pies* – such as *cueca* [a traditional Chilean dance], a bingo competition, and even baby showers.⁹² It served as a venue for workshops and acrobatics training as well. The grounds feature a garden and small greenhouses where herbs are cultivated for making tinctures, teas, or drying. (Before harvesting, some inhabitants ask “permission” (permiso) from the plants.) The doors of the library are covered by the names of those who were killed by the state (dictatorial and current) or lost their lives in the struggle for liberation, especially anarcho-vegan activists, as the space was in its beginning predominantly positioned as such. These are accompanied by an image of a large snail, bringing in the Zapatista approach to revolution which advances *paso caracol* (“the snail’s rhythm”: slow, but advancing).

⁹¹ Small altars made close to windows, next to beds, usually constructed from a wooden box and decorated with colorful textiles. Over the altar are personal objects, photos of deceased, special rocks, souvenirs, bits of hair. They usually include a small offering for the dead (cigarette).

⁹² Celebration held for an expecting mother to celebrate the upcoming arrival of her baby.



Figure n. 13: Paso Caracol. The library during early spring and door with names of deceased. October 2023. Photo by the author.

4.4 Popular squatting

Squatting in *Los Pies del Cerro* shadows both historical roots of this practice – squatting as a popular and common practice generally associated with seizure of errant lands or abandoned houses, as well as anarchist squatting movement (Pruijt, 2013). Generally in Chile “to squat” (ocupar/okupar/tomar) is not tied solely to the image of punk or anarchist enclaves, as it is often in Europe. When revisiting the literature on “squats” or “okupas,” as autonomous squats are known in Chile, the historical antecedents were almost identical in searching for roots in the genealogy of European squatting. Revised literature located the emergence of Latin American anarchist squats primarily through inspiration by Spanish Okupa Social Centers while overlooking a much longer history of occupation practiced in Chile (Ahumada, 2014; Monsalve Román 2013; Bloomfield, 2021 ; Solís, 2005).

The squatting movement in Chile, was primarily driven by families and workers, which has shaped both the territory and memory in areas like Peñalolén since the early 20th century. During the nitrate crisis of the 1930s, waves of rural families migrated to Santiago in search of industrial employment. In their pursuit of stability, families occupied lands (rather than empty buildings) through actions known as *tomas de terreno* (land squatting). These initiatives gave rise to *callampas* (shanty towns) and *campamentos*, which eventually evolved into *poblaciones* (low-income neighborhoods), including the one where *Los Pies* is located. (Castells, 1973; Mancilla, 2017)

“[Tomas de Terreno in Peñalolén] (...) sprouted like mushrooms, overnight, wherever possible, that is, in places of little value, public or abandoned: on riverbanks, canals with contaminated waters, ditches, garbage dumps, hillsides, wastelands. Most of the time, they were informal settlements, meaning they lacked any kind of legal sanction. [The housing was composed of] 'a single room in which the most varied materials were used: old cans, cardboard, wood, sacks, asbestos sheets, or demolition materials such as bricks or adobe, [and the sanitary services] were pit latrines, or simply the use of the nearby property, the river, or the neighboring irrigation ditch, while the garbage was deposited in a hole located near the settlement” (Garcés 2002: 57-58, my translation).

Squatting in Chile historically served as an effective political instrument emerging out of the popular sectors as a reaction to the lack of adequate housing programs. Together with labor parties, people organized for illegal land occupations, which became essential social and political spaces of those systematically marginalized and silenced from political discourses (Castells, 1973). What is characteristic of this form of organization is that what began as a necessity, as in the case of the *ollas comunes*, soon transformed into a political struggle so that the notion of 'campamento' soon evolved from designating a precarious housing situation to a space of “struggle” (*lucha*). (ibid.)

Peñalolén is built on such efforts of *pobladorxs*, who through their physical work, struggle, direct actions, protests, resistance, collectivity and some social arrangements⁹³ with

⁹³ Such as so called „CORVI quotas“ (Corporación de vivienda) was a system of adjustable payment plans, allowing beneficiaries to purchase homes through manageable monthly installments. The government program called “Operación Sitio” supporting *pobladorxs* in building their houses, the program provided low-income

the local administration came to life. In 1948, residents formed the housing cooperative, pooled their resources to purchase the squatted land 1953 establish the poblacion San Judas Tadeo (Corporación Cultural de Peñalolén, 2023). It was characterized by communal ownership, represented by the "Assembly of Owners" — consisting of workers, laborers, and the unemployed or poor. “According to the neighbors, the land was bought by more than 200 community members, which meant that “everyone was the owner of everything”, who came from different sectors of Santiago and from the same sector of Peñalolén. “They were working people with few resources” (Corporación Cultural de Peñalolén, 2023: 129). That is to say, workers, public employees and even children of the tenants of the sector. Sra. Luisa is one of them. Communal property, its redistribution, and the allocation of specific “paños” (land parcels) for families and communal spaces were vigorously debated in local assemblies and later formalized by the Municipality of Ñuñoa. Some land was designated for personal use, while other portions were set aside for collective use, leading to the creation of various community spaces like sports centers, youth or family centers and also a school – known as La Ratonera (ibid.).

4.5 From La Ratonera to Los Pies

“Before, Los Pies was a school, it belonged to the community. We called it “Ratonera” and the community took care of it.” Sra. Luisa shares as she is looking for a map of place among the hundreds of pictures of meetings, gatherings, protests, workshops with children and bunch of documents in a small room of Neighborhood Council center. From her rolling shopping bag she takes another bag and finally finds it – an original plan of the *población* from 1954.

families with small plots of land equipped with essential urbanization, including latrines, gravel streets, curbs, water supply points, and electrical wiring. Families could acquire these plots through affordable monthly payments and were responsible for building their own homes and promoting self-help housing development. (Garcés Durán, 2015).



Figure n. 13: Sra Luisa during interview, showing an original map of San Judas Tadeo población from 1951. September 2023. Photo by the author.

“In its early days, the school was built with the cooperation and dedication of the community, a modest building consisting of a classroom about ten by six meters. It was the only school in the area, lacking water, electricity and roads; there were only stones, rocks, and dust. Over time, it earned the nickname “*La Ratonera*” (The Rat's Nest) due to the presence of these animals under the floor. The wooden planks on the building's exterior were misaligned, the rooms had no ceiling, and the interior wall was not lined, allowing the wind blowing from the mountains to bring in dust through the cracks. Nevertheless, the building also served as a meeting center for various social and religious activities and as a distribution site for food from Caritas and the Alliance for Progress.” (Corporación Cultural de Peñalolén, 2023: 132).

Children from families who migrated to the growing metropolis due to industrialization have been educated here in mixed classes. During the day, it functioned as a school, while, as Sra. Luisa shared, in the evenings, local political groups, including the neighborhood council gathered there. Although, the cited document of Corporación Cultural de Peñalolén (2023) assigns the nickname “Ratonera” for the number of rats inside,

neighbors whom I talked, including a son of Eduardo Zúñiga, shared another reason for the name: children, like “ratones,” would gather here to receive redistributed milk as part of Allende’s food program.

The community was aware of Eduardo’s precarious living conditions (he reportedly lived in a self-repaired bus), his diligence, and his political commitment. People remembered him organizing *cacerolazos* through the población to convene local assemblies. In recognition of his dedication to the socialist revolution, the assembly offered him and his family a place to stay. Eduardo lived there, worked as repairer of outer part of cars (desabollador) and acted as the school’s unofficial guardian until his abduction. A co-squatter *compañera* created a handmade informative fanzine based on interviews with neighbors and family members. She introduced him as a *compañero, friend, father, husband, cheerful and beautiful friend*. We would share and distribute these fanzines during gatherings like *ollas communes*.

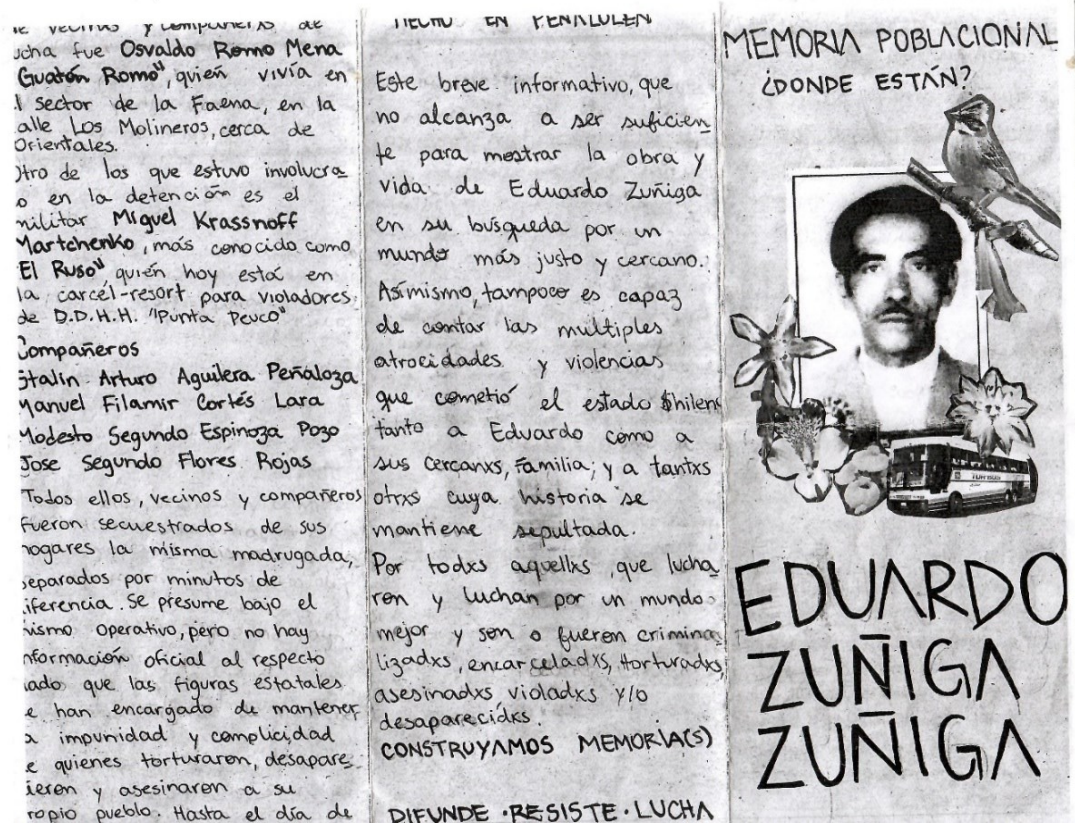


Figure n. 14: “DIFUNDE-RESISTE-LUCHA” (SPREAD-RESIST-FIGHT) Front side of fanzine made by Carolina. April 2023. Scan by the author.

During the dictatorship, *poblaciones* were key sites of repression (Salazar, 2009; 2012; Sáez Fuentealba, 2024). From discussions with *pobladorxs* and activists like Sra. Luisa, Mauricio, and Claudio, I learned that curfews were imposed, and communal practices, popular art and left-leaning political expressions were criminalized. Despite the repression, acts of solidarity persisted, though this territory was also marked by betrayals and suspicion, a general atmosphere fostered by the neoliberal putsch.⁹⁴

“When the military took control during the dictatorship, it remained the same. I mean, it was still functioning as a school, but it was run by the military. So, actually how could it remain the same? No. What happened was—let me explain—the situation changed over time. (...). It was very active during the period from around 1970 to 1973. It was also active because, in that time there was the black market, and prices went up. There wasn’t enough food in Chile; there was no flour, nothing. Sugar just disappeared. So people would gather there and get food too.”⁹⁵ That whole situation came in as a form of punishment of the poor when the right-wing had influence over people, especially those with less education who believed, that it is Allende and communists who are hiding food. But then, even my mother, who was working for rich people, a rich lawyer, she saw how the rich were locking up food (...). In the Ratонера people would gather and discuss.”

(Sra Luisa, September 2023)

In 1980, *La Ratонера* was expropriated through a fraudulent treaty and handed over to families of military personnel. It was Mrs. Luisa and the squatters who, through a collective

⁹⁴ For example, Osvaldo Romo Mena, better known as "El Guatón Romo," was known in the Peñalolén neighborhood until 1973 as a political and community leader and a militant in the Communist Party. After the Putsch, he actively collaborated in denouncing residents, including Eduardo Zúñiga.

⁹⁵ The Supply and Price Control Boards (JAP) were government-organized committees during Salvador Allende's presidency, whose objective was to distribute scarce goods, controlling prices, and fostering grassroots participation ("poder popular") as part of the broader socialist agenda. "They had a dual objective: on the one hand, to control inflation and shortages, and on the other, to carry out ideological work with consumers and small merchants. In the context of the 1973 crisis, these organizations were understood, in various ways within Allende's government, as practices of "popular power" (Cofré, 2018: 226).

effort, investigated this fact through archives. During this period, Chile experienced numerous large-scale resistance actions and protests against the dictatorship, many concentrated in Peñalolén. Alison Bruey (2024) argues that the *pobladorxs* were the central participants in the mass protests of the mid-1980s. She highlights how these groups sustained political awareness and activism rooted in their experiences for over half a century, despite being misrepresented by the political class and the media.⁹⁶

With the transition to democracy, *La Ratonera* did not return to its former owners – a “community of San Judas Tadeo” as Sra. Luisa referred to those who collectively owned the site. The resurgence of “*La Ratonera*” as “*Los Pies*” was made possible by the involvement of individuals like Sra. Luisa, whose support and will to remember and ally with young anarchists was vital to the recovery process.

“So, before, we would meet on the streets. We would gather in this plaza with the chiquillos [a sweet, non-paternalistic way of referring to kids, here referring to members of an anarchist batucada group], along with Lucho and others from the batucada group. I hesitated to participate in the neighborhood council [Junta de Vecinos] because the neighbors scolded and criticized me. But one day, the chiquillos were in a circle, singing, dancing, and protesting, and the sound of the batucada music caught my attention, so I decided to follow it. I arrived and joined the group where the chiquillos were sitting and discussing the Estallido. The plaza was full, bustling with people. Later, the girls prepared food and cooked an olla común. One day, I approached them and expressed my concern that it wasn’t safe on the street with the buses running and the risk of accidents. So, I suggested we move to San Judas Tadeo plaza, and we relocated everything

⁹⁶ It is also important to mention, that *poblaciones* and *tomas de terreno* are not Spanish-commune-like formations. Through listening to stories of solidarity and mutual care within the community, and my experience of living in Peñalolén in a very welcoming and solidaric atmosphere among the neighbors, I tended to romanticize *poblaciones* in the first months. Once, I shared this excitement with Lucas, a historian and friend who corrected this view. He told me that, although it is true these zones were built on resistance and communal sacrifices and were important for a socialist revolution spreading across Latin America, what happened after the coup d’etat is that these places became “radical perversions of neoliberalism.” Life in *poblaciones* is marked by the introduction of *pasta base* during the dictatorship; it was neoliberal reforms that “displaced responsibilities for care onto families and individuals, divesting the state of crucial responsibilities for the well-being of the population.” (Han, 2012: 5). It is also important to mention, that life in *poblaciones* is marked by the introduction of credit systems and consumer goods, which significantly disrupted communal social life and value systems, ultimately leading to the marginalization and stigmatization of *poblaciones* (Han, 2012).

there. Everyone, including the olla común, continued to enjoy the sounds of batucada and the chiquillos playing. From then on, the discussions and the batucada continued here [...]. There were groups of chiquillos coming from La Reina [población] with a batucada and we marched also to Villa Esmeralda with them. I was joining all the marches with the chiquillos, although I was getting old. But my heart was happy to be involved again. We went everywhere with the batucada. The older ladies criticized it, saying it was too loud and vulgar. But I didn't care, I'm from the community so we also had a lot of support. Lucho and the group helped, setting up lights and everything for the marches and the "actos políticos". We installed a popular bakery and an olla común in my house. But it all started by the young people, and I was supporting them, dancing and enjoying it."

(Sra. Luisa, September 2023)

The process of re-existence of this space can be placed in dialogue with Yael Navaro-Yashin's concept of "remnant" (2017) which she uses to analyze affect as something apparent in social relations. The remnant is what remains and "is residually left over against all odds, resisting attempts to politically divide and regenerating itself in new encounters, at times with strangers. The remnant, in the way (...) construe it here as a residual, relational affect with the potential for re-creation, is like a bud that shoots again in fissures that have been carved on purpose." (Navaro-Yashin, 2017: 212). While considering Navaro-Yashin's warnings against certain analytical oversights, this process might help to better understand the dynamics that shape *Los Pies* – as both a space and an affinity based collective – resisting not only outer forces such as eviction threats but also divides of communities. If the remnant represents a residual affect, in the words of Sra. Luisa it resurfaced as to "make her heart happy". This experience made her part of political struggle and recovery over *Los Pies* together with young anarchist. Despite the initial divides in political or ideological affiliation (Sra. Luisa was Christian, tied to communist political affiliation) and odds which her political participation alongside young anarchist could evoke in the eyes of neighbors, she became "compañera" (Lucho) but also "Mami" (Ale) to young anarchists. The bond was based on mutual support, care and political affinity:

“We paused a batucada⁹⁷—that’s why there are some drums here,” he points to the drums in the corner of the room. “And from that point on, since reclaiming Los Pies, we began extensive networking. About three years ago, around the time the pandemic hit, we decided to reclaim the Neighborhood Council, which had been inactive for years in the población. We learned a lot about this place and recognized that Los Pies is a space of memory⁹⁸, so we started immersing ourselves in knowledge. We realized we needed some sort of ‘legal’ framework to support our efforts, but none of us wanted to pursue official legal status (Nadie estaba ni allí con la weá legal). So we decided that the closest we could get to any institution was through the Neighborhood Council [Junta de Vecinos]. That’s why we proposed Mrs. Luisa as the president of the Council. We already knew her. She’s a compañera, a fighter—she’s 76 and even considers herself an anarchist now! We launched a big campaign for her, with all the kids here helping—organizing pasacalles, speaking with neighbors, all of that. And then we realized that a part of this process, like taking control of territory not through the municipality but through the Neighborhood Council, also meant reclaiming spaces we had taken back. Up here, we’ve managed to reclaim three Neighborhood Councils from the municipality. This council was directly recovered by us, and another council nearby was reclaimed by people who worked with us, with our support. We spread the word, distributed materials, and organized workshops.”

⁹⁷ Batucadas are musical groups that include all styles of percussion and can often be heard in protests. In 2019, during the social uprising, the anthem of the 'Chile Despertó' movement was created with batucadas. Retrieved from: "<https://elcafelatino.org/es/musica-instrumento-politico-en-chile/>

⁹⁸ The space of memory, as used by Lucho and other squatters to describe the Los Pies aligns with the notion of “Lieux de memoire” coined by Pierre Nora: “Lieux de memoire (realm of memory) are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are lieux in three senses of the word- material, symbolic, and functional. Even an apparently purely material site, like an archive, becomes a lieu de memoire only if the imagination invests it with a symbolic aura. A purely functional site, like a classroom manual, a testament, or a veterans' reunion belongs to the category only inasmuch as it is also the object of a ritual. And the observance of a commemorative minute of silence, an extreme example of a strictly symbolic action, serves as a concentrated appeal to memory by literally breaking a temporal continuity. (1989: 18-19).

4.6 Political attunement: between popular anarchism and anarchist popularization

The memory of *Los Pies* and the openness of the squat towards to población is more than a reference to post-autonomous approach (Maeckelbergh, 2011), tied to a political repertoire of tomas de terreno. Most of my co-squatters, such as Anteo, Milos or Lucho, with whom I led extensive talks arrived to anarchism through lived experience of life in poblaciones. For them, the emphasis was on connections with the población, creating a genuinely shared space, but they were also critical of terms and ideas like “pueblo” or “masa” associated with leftist terminology (not exclusively Marxist) which is a predominant political orientation in the sectors of poblaciones. For my co-squatters, however, “*el pueblo está muerto*” (folk is dead)⁹⁹. This connection was instead of coherent “ideology” is based on “affinity” – specific connections over concrete necessities and projects, of the broader community, while preserving anarchist principles. Squatters emphasize not to fall into “pacifism” (referring to the political inaction or very short-sighted action). While creating such a space was a challenging endeavor, strong ties with the community were essential to gain legitimacy, at times even superseding any specific political stance. The anarchism I refer to here—one that some members of *Los Pies* used to describe their political position—is emic term is “*flaite* anarchism” or “*política hecha carne*” (politics made flesh).

In Chile, “*flaite*” is a term used to describe certain groups within the popular classes, particularly young men known for flamboyant clothing and often vilified for perceived misfit behavior (Jordana, 2022). Originating in the 1990s and linked to Nike Fly shoes—symbols of agility (useful for fleeing) and material success—it reflects the influence of on marginalized groups and the resulting social insecurity (ibid.). While “*flaite*” typically lacks

⁹⁹ “For example, I also don't believe in the class struggle. For me, the class struggle is an obsolete issue, which does not mean that I think there are no classes. I don't believe in the class struggle and think it's obsolete because we are at a point in civilization where capitalism won—it massacred, I mean, it also thinks it won't win a war if the war doesn't end. Although deep down, I don't think the war has ended. But we are in a period of reflux where, through different historical periods, they systematically took charge of disarticulating, depoliticizing, and sinking the masses of different territories into the abyss.” (Anteo, September, 2023)

political connotations and serves as a derogatory marker of socioeconomic status, it has been reappropriated in a politicized contexts as a form which embraces and transforms this status into a political anarchist practice stemming from urban peripheries in neoliberal city. For some it was the moment of learning what “political expropriation” means, while for others it was a process of describing their practices and thoughts through anarchist vocabulary from people who passed through SENAME—the child welfare service originating from the dictatorship era, infamous for abuse and mistreatment of minors.

*“And, man... so many kids, I don’t know [...] from poblaciones or so, those who ended up in the SENAME, like, I don’t know, 15-16-year-old kids who are in jail now—they identify as anarchists. They call themselves anarchists. So it’s had an impact too, because when you’re marginalized, you feel connected to other marginalized people, you know? I feel that academic discourse doesn’t really recognize this.”*¹⁰⁰

(Meri, October, 2023).

This dynamic of merging the popular and anarchist elements, openness was not unidirectional While *Los Pies del Cerro* absorbed elements of popular practices, the people from población itself—through figures like Sra. Luisa—were also influenced by anarchism. Sra. Luisa, for instance, explicitly identified as “anarchist,” distancing herself from hierarchical organization, which had originally shaped her political formation and deepened her distrust of institutional politics. This shift was also evident in her active participation in

¹⁰⁰ These experiences and practices are what, according my co-squatters differed them from other, more formalized forms of anarchism. *“Some anarchists who came around used to look down on us because we were ‘flaites’—for all kinds of reasons. (...) We carry street codes with us, and they shy away from us because of that. ‘Flaite’ is a derogatory term, but there are plenty of anarchists who sell marijuana to survive. Some even engage in theft as a means of livelihood. Many outsiders, particularly those from Argentina, come here hoping to change the dynamics without understanding half of what happens on the ground. But we know the reality here: the police regularly target us, and we’ve seen comrades imprisoned. People can say whatever they like about this space, but it’s not a place for drugs, drinking, or passivity. When people first show up, they immediately start lecturing us on morals. Like many, those ‘self-proclaimed’ anarchists are very individualistic, moralistic, and stuck in their ivory towers, which I find kind of horrifying. But the main difference? See, we have different ways of practicing anarchism, you know? With them, it feels colder, more detached. But that’s not us. We feel things deeply—at least, I do. The process really matters to me; it keeps my mind constantly going (me quema la cabeza), you know?”* (Lucho, August, 2023)

hosting popular events inside *Los Pies*, like providing the space for Christian collective and even baby showers.

For the anarchists, ideological affiliation mattered less than Sra. Luisa's work and consistency. Her active involvement in the direct fight against the dictatorship and her continued solidarity afterward solidified her as a true *compañera*. In one of our interviews, she expressed disgust at the transformation of many leftists after the fall of the dictatorship, as they embraced institutionalized comfort, turned their backs on the poorest communities, and became yet another cog in the institutional apparatus. According to Sra. Luisa, her anarchism—as she came to understand it through “*her chiquillos*”—made much more sense to her.

“I knew that 'los secundarios' (high school students) were also influenced by the anarchists, but I had no idea what actually meant to be an anarchist or anything. But once I got more involved with them, I started researching, so I asked my friend Google and did some digging. That's when my mind began to open, and I thought, 'Well, this is good. I like it.' These anarchists aren't quite like they're portrayed in the press, as delinquents who just destroy buses or traffic lights, right? It's more than that (...) Still, it's the carabineros who are causing trouble [haciendo maldades], not the anarchists. Sure, anarchists are involved in all the mischief, and in all the marches they are loud, and they do acts of sabotage and all that. (...) But then I remembered – when I was young, the same thing happened in Mapu Lautaro, for example. It was the Mapu Lautaro who stole trucks of chickens and eggs and everything. The issue of redistributing merchandise, because the rich started to hoard food, hide it from the poor and MAPU just took it to share with the poor. And that's what I think of when I see chiquillos. (...) You have to read the History well.”

[Sra Luisa, August 2023]

While suspending certain divisions in favor of affinity and *compañerismo* with *pobladorxs*, other divisions, were necessary and even indispensable for *Los Pies* re-

existence. Political space as described the critical withdrawal from the territorial assembly¹⁰¹.

4.7 Tactics and strategy of squatting in the población

Chena proposed me to think about the recovery process of *Los Pies* as two intertwined strategies: "lo táctico" and "lo estratégico.", tactics and strategy. Tactics relate to questions of memory, such as how to effectively recuperate this place, remove it from the illegal ownership and return it to the community, with the institutionalization of *Los Pies* as an undesirable, yet debated option especially after the "Ley Antitoma" (anti-squatting law) came into effect, as will be discussed subsequently. Tactics, on the other hand, is about how this process unfolds. It is the everyday: operating the popular bakery, *ollas comunes*, proximity, wandering, making contact with neighbors, and settling into the población through webs of affinity.

"We were walking back from one assembly with Sra. Luisa, where we were discussing practical matters about how to keep the place going. As we were passing by one house, she said, 'Here lived the family of Eduardo Zúñiga, who was disappeared from Los Pies,' and we didn't know about this. So, in other

¹⁰¹ Although the historical memory of the site and disappearance of Eduardo was something, that became part of territorialization of the space, just later the memory was present in *Los Pies* also in different form. For example, in one conversation Felipe observed that, following the "disarticulation" of the *Estallido Social*, the abrupt arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent periods of confinement effectively stripped people of any communal space to process and reflect on what had transpired. He mentioned reading a book titled *Eros of Revolution*, which discusses the importance of collectively remembering the movement's height and creating a collective memory. He commented, "We didn't have any time to reflect, to spend time together afterward, remembering what was beautiful about it or what went wrong, so *Los Pies* was really a place where this was happening." It was within this context that *Los Pies* emerged as a refuge where people could gather to reconnect with the memories of the *Estallido*. Here, they could engage in lengthy, late-night conversations, revisiting the moments of intense violence and solidarity, recounting the highs of mass mobilization, discussing strategies, and renewing the memory. I resonate with this kind of analysis, while it also explains why much of my ethnography is rooted in conversations, nods, stories, and insights; it is a specific practice that shapes this community. Part of day-to-day experience in *Los Pies* is to spend hours and hours talking, remembering, thinking, philosophizing, historicizing, relating to global and local political issues. This process was essential to how *Los Pies* came into being and active talking, thinking through possibilities, remembering and sharing anecdotes, comparing them with other historical events and placing them into wider analysis of the current state of world-affairs.

assemblies, we kept asking and investigating. Some even told us not to open that topic, saying it could be uncomfortable or dangerous with all that right-wing wave after the Estallido. Around this time, Chena had proposed making a documentary about Los Pies and how it was becoming a squat reconnecting with the población. We realized there had been so little justice done for Eduardo and others who disappeared, so we decided to center him and the other detenidos of Peñalolén in Los Pies and the documentary. That is how Los Pies became a “espacio de memoria” (space of memory).

(Carolina, June, 2023)

In the aftermath of the *Estallido Social*, the squatters turned *Los Pies* into a space for memory. They discovered half-spoken and unfinished documents, recovered pictures, and contacted families—later inviting them to the space to share what was important about their lives. This allowed memory to flourish organically and politically. I entered *Los Pies* as both a researcher and a squatter, as I described in the introduction. The recovery of memory was a daily activity, tied to intimate practices like dwelling in the community, conducting long interviews with families and other members of the población, and reflecting on the elements of the dictatorship. Originally, the documentary was intended for the 50th anniversary of the military coup, but this was postponed due to technical and organizational challenges, as well as a collective decision to avoid the state’s timeline for celebrations. Instead, the group embraced compañero Felipe’s words: “To exercise memory is a daily task”. The process of creating the documentary became exactly that—a process, not a product. It sparked conversations and fostered connections with organizations, filmmakers, neighbors, and activists. Evenings and afternoons were spent in family archives, neighbors’ kitchens sipping maté, the gardens of ex-militants recording songs and poems, and painting murals. The memory work involved the families of the detained and disappeared of Peñalolén, who became friends and affiliates of *Los Pies*. The memory group named the *olla común* after Eduardo.



Figure n. 15: A banner in the *población* San Judas Tadeo, during an *olla común* gathering: „Living, Active, and Combative Memory“. Photo by the author. May 2023.

The *olla común* commenced by the squatters in an early stage of squatting next to squatting another re-existing practice. Let's consider, that, during dictatorship *olla común* “was synonymous with terrorism, and such communitarian action was prohibited because it was considered a political meeting” (Bronfman, Soto García, 2023: 1–2). I learned from conversations with neighbors of Peñalolén, that during the dictatorship, to cook more than what one family needed was suspicious. In order to organize this practice, different people had assigned different roles – some gathered ingredients, others (women) cooked, and others were watching out, to alert people to extinguish the fire when police approached. A common preparing of meal (although usually cooking was relegated on women), from collectively assembled ingredients, has deep roots in Chilean popular traditions, particularly in rural 1930s as *ollas de los pobres* [pots of the poor] and was mobilized as such in different periods of crises or political upheavals.¹⁰² By the 1960's this practice became politically connotated, as to meet around ollas comunes was not only a way to combat hunger, but also to discuss and organize political battles. This was the case especially in the context of land occupation movements (*movimiento de pobladorxs*), living on squatted terrains and fighting for housing,

¹⁰² Most recently in the height of Estallido Social and COVID19 pandemic, as mentioned in the first chapter.

where this practice served as both a symbol and practice of solidarity and resistance (Bronfman, Soto García, 2023).

Meeting around food became an opportunity to gather and discuss, and this practice endured in *Los Pies* throughout the entire existence of the squat. This micro-scale political practice, through which Sra. Luisa grew closer to members of the *batucada* group, soon evolved into a larger, long-term project: collective effort to recover *La Ratonera* as political and communal space, but calibrated with ideas and practices of young anarchists and this practice was sustained through the existing of the site.

Every Saturday, during the *feria*¹⁰³ happening in the street in front of *Los Pies*, we cooked 15-20 liters of soup for an *olla común* (usually legumes, dumpster-dived¹⁰⁴ vegetables, and soy flakes for affordability and nutrition) and head towards the Plaza San Judas. We set up a banner, toys for kids, and acrobatic equipment in Plaza de San Judas. Occasionally, a local evangelical group or an individual would bring a stereo and microphone to preach nearby. Carolina would sometimes borrow the microphone from one of the evangelical ladies to announce that we had cooked. "¡Olla común! ¡Vecinxs! ¡Venid! ¡Porotos riendo!" (Communal pot! Neighbors! Come! Beans are laughing!)

¹⁰³ One of the vital spots where this relationship was being fostered was during ferias (open markets). These markets are located on various streets and supply most residents of Santiago de Chile with seasonal fruits, vegetables and other essential items. Residents of the poblaciones usually prefer ferias over supermarkets because they provide local, cheaper goods and enable socializing with neighbors over beers *miceladas* or *completes*. In the street in front of Los Pies, the feria took place every Wednesday and Saturday, when people would bring their carts early in the morning to set up their stands.

¹⁰⁴ After Ferias, we would dumpster dive, engaging with another level of gastro-politics, which sometime might evolve into "conspiracy" (by sharing "abject capital" – food prepared from dumpster diving) (Giles, 2022). Dumpster diving is by my compañeros referred as "hacer reciclaje" (recycle) and means recollection of food which is not appealing enough for sale any more, but still edible, or intentionally left in accessible boxes after the markets. Until my research in Chile, I knew dumpster diving more from rather ecological and solidaric initiatives rather than out of real need for own subsistence. We would gather a group of people and go to recycle the food and according to findings or donations we would make common pot, or much enjoyed apple empanadas.



Figure n. 16: Olla común on the San Judas Tadeo Plaza. Saturday in May 2023. Photo of the author.

Monthly, this plaza also became the site of “Recuperación de la Plaza para la Niñez” [Recovery of the Square for Children], reclaiming it from being a space frequented by drug users. These events were collaborative, bringing together affinity organizations and hosting activities for children, while incorporating political content. We highlighted struggles in Wallmapu and Palestine, commemorated victims of femicides, and drew attention to local memory and the ongoing fight for justice. Many neighbors, moved by these events, shared personal stories, advice, and critiques, like the one, that “squatters did not experience the past” thus should not pretend they know it, what will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. The library at *Los Pies*, built with the support of various organizations, became another center for community activity. Workshops ranged from language classes (English, Portuguese) to bookbinding and audiovisual training. Books were loaned to the community and shared with popular libraries in the población and even female political prisoners. The collection covered history, political economy, fanzines, poetry, novels, and children’s books.



Figure n. 17: Food donated by neighbors and dumpster-dived vegetables for the "Recuperación de la Plaza para la Niñez" event. April 2023. Photo by the author.

4.8 Re-existing through affinity across political divides

"We head to the market to recycle. We walk through the remnants of broccoli, cauliflower, and people sweeping the floor. Milos is very bold, asking the stallholders, 'Don't you have anything to share, something you don't need?' One woman responds, 'You have to work to eat.' Milos replies without pause, 'One doesn't exclude the other. We are working,' and walks to another stand. His stance and the simplicity of his response strike me as brilliant. The market is almost over, and most of the vegetables have already been taken. It is a rainy day, and we are trying to find some leftovers. Then we arrive at a stall with artichokes. As we rummage through them, a woman in a hood approaches, rather shy, asking if there are any left. Milos picks up a large artichoke and, handing it to her, says, 'A flower for a flower.' (Una flor para una flor).

[Field notes, July 2023]

How can a collective based on diverse experiences, age, political affiliations organize around such ambitious act as recovery of a site by virtue of memory practice, if the points of reference of each are so diverse? It has to be taken into consideration that the re-existence is "a conflictual process involving multiple territorialities that contest the appropriation

and/or domination of the material conditions for the production and reproduction of life, with their own meanings (...) shaping the space.“ (Hurtado, Porto-Gonçalves 2022: 2).

The collective of *Los Pies del Cerro* navigated these dilemmas through webs of affinities. In this sense, the *Los Pies*'s tactics exemplify a post-autonomous approach, moving beyond the notion of political spaces as isolated "islands of freedom", which are often limited to collectives of individuals with unified goals and ideologies. Instead, these strategies encourage openness and engagement with the wider context (Böhmová, 2018; Moskvina, 2022). At *Los Pies*, this strategy manifested in fostering affinity-based relationships with the *población*, particularly through a collaborative relationship with Sra. Luisa. Although not a squatter herself, Sra. Luisa was a key ally, helping to communicate anarchist principles from the squatters to the broader community. This process unfolded gradually and was not without challenges. For example, some neighbors reacted negatively by tearing down posters or threatening collective members during the creation of a memory mural. Others believe, there we were a religious sect of a sort:

We decided to bake pizzas and sell them at the feria, to buy a new oven, because we always have to borrow it. To maximize our reach, we split into three groups: one near Los Pies, another at the crossroads, and the last one close to the plaza. The feria was bustling, with people coming from all over the area, and by the end of the day, we had sold almost everything. I'm sitting by the roadside next to a woman selling second-hand clothes and other miscellaneous items collectively referred to as cachureos. Luna soon joined me, rolling a cigarette as we waited for a fresh batch of pizzas to be brought over. We chat with a lady and she told us 'You know, my neighbor said there's a sect inside La Ratonera.' I couldn't help but smile and asked, 'A sect?' She nodded and replied, 'Yes, that's what she says. I have no idea where she got that from. I've known the chiquillos for some time. Sometimes they buy things from me or share stuff they've recycled.' We share two slices with her and laugh, who the main priestess of the squat could be.

[Field notes, September 2023]

Los Pies, both as a collective and a place, appears as a remnant resisting some divisions, while its re-existence depends on the fostering other. On one hand, squatters are

capable of recovering the space through new, unexpected encounters such as the one with Sra. Luisa. On the other hand, from the view of the squatters, separation from political frameworks which, in disguise of generic leftist claims, would enmesh the space into web of institutional politics. The condition for suspension of certain political divisions – as one with Sra. Luisa or the Christian collective which would later align with the space – was not based on ignorance or lowering ones political convictions, but what allowed it, was a connection based on affinity, rather than rigid ideological framework. This element is crucial for understanding how *Los Pies* was positioned in relation to its recovery – it was not the case, that people inside would suspend their political affiliation altogether in favor of “letting everyone in”, but people were willing to actively suspend ideologies in favor of affinity formations with people of diverse ideological affiliations (for example Christian collectives or neighbors who were merchants). To exemplify this dynamics I recall a day, when local Christian group join *Los Pies* to train *cueca*:

In Los Pies, the full moon is always an intense experience, because Los Pies is one of the last buildings before the vast mountain range of the Andes. We are waiting Cueca dancers. The room is full with anarchist symbols, posters, and stickers bearing slogans like "Death to God and the State." First, a woman from the collective came to “see the place” to determine if it was “fitting” for their needs. But it felt more like she was checking if the space was safe. She mentioned that people said many things about us, but seeing us bringing food to the plaza and speaking with Sra. Luisa encouraged her to ask if they could use the hall. We arranged for Tuesday evening. To respect their presence, we agree to keep the music low, refrain from smoking, clean up thoroughly, and generally “behave.” While the Christian group practice their cueca routines, some of my fellow squatters are training with malabares (juggling). Suddenly, someone calls us urgently. We rush to the patio and witness a massive, breathtaking moon rising behind the Cordillera—almost like a second sun. Runa, a co-squatter kiltra dog, ambitiously tried to climb a tree where one of our human compañerxs perched, watching the moon. She howls and barks in frustration, eager to join him. We help her to climb. Once she settles on a branch and gazes at the moon, she starts to howl. Long and deep. I join in, howling at the same moon with my full voice.

My compañerxs follow the suit. Our impromptu orchestra of howls lasted for several seconds until another human compañero came to hush us, muttering that we weren't animals and wondering aloud: "What will the neighbors think?" Meanwhile, the cueca dancers either had their music loud enough to mask our howling or assumed such things were normal here. In any case, they returned to practice again the following week.

[Field notes, September 2023]

In other instances, the affinity, rather than "ideology" even prevented organized eviction:

"They've already came to evict us four times—twice with about 10 bruisers, just random guys owners paid off the street. 'You're doing this illegally,' they say. There was a machine parked outside, ready to kick people out and destroy everything. But we defended ourselves, in half an hour our affinity people were here, resisting next to us. And the last time, they came with the owners. But all of them, those the guy paid, they are working people [trabajadores] and Lucho told them, 'Hey, I work just like you. You see this roof? It took us 3 months. You see the electricity?' They didn't enter and just left. So, this is what I mean by 'squat and resist'" [OKUPA Y RESISTE].

[Felipe, July 2023]

4.9 Navigating the Anti-squatting Law: Return is not transfer

The day-to-day life at *Los Pies*, as described in the previous chapter was interrupted or merged with special occasions, such as rituals, commemorations (as described in the opening of this chapter), or during heightened moments in political events. The *Ley de Usurpaciones* (Anti-Squatting Law), also known as the "ley antipobre" (anti-poor law) or "ley maldita" (cursed law). This legislation aims to regulate illegal property occupations by introducing stricter penalties and more efficient mechanisms for reclaiming occupied land or buildings. It includes penalties for both violent and non-violent occupations, with prison sentences ranging from 61 days to 5 years, depending on the circumstances.¹⁰⁵ In words of

¹⁰⁵ The law was designed to protect property rights, reduce land occupations, and address organized groups involved in these activities, which were portrayed in the media as "shielding against criminals." The historical,

Luna, “it means that they can hire 20 or 30 idiots to sacarte la chucha (beat you up), and they will go unpunished. They can come with dogs, with guns, with everything... and they’re going to go for it. They can do anything with impunity. They can sacarte la mierda (beat the crap out of you).”

Critics, including social organizations like TECHO-Chile¹⁰⁶, argue that the law criminalizes poverty by imposing harsh penalties on individuals and families who occupy land out of necessity, particularly in the context of a housing crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing economic instability. In this time, I saw footage of mobilizations, actions in temporarily occupied spaces, banners hung in protest, and people marching to oppose evictions—both in political spaces and among impoverished families. The coalition between these sectors has grown closer, as they support each other on social media and join activities organized by either group. At *Los Pies*, a large meeting was organized for all political spaces threatened with eviction, just a week after I left Chile in November 2023. Our walls were filled with banners calling for solidarity and resistance.

After the law came into affect, an “owner” (who acquired the placed by expropriation during dictatorship) took advantage of it: they bought the property of *Los Pies* through a treaty that appeared fraudulent to the squatters. Further on, the investor also cooperated with

social, and political aspects of popular squatting were also criminalized, using rhetoric similar to that of the second phase of the neoliberal dictatorship. At the time, it wasn’t clear if “Defensa legítima privilegiada” would be part of the law. In current version (2024) it is not included. This provision would mean that the “owner” could organize or pay paramilitary groups, who would have the same rights as the police in evictions. Sources: Resumen Latinoamericano. (2024, June 25). *Chile. Ley anti tomas viola DDHH y sólo beneficia a dueños del suelo*.

In: Resumen Latinoamericano. <https://www.resumenlatinoamericano.org/2024/06/25/chile-ley-anti-tomas-viola-ddhh-y-solo-beneficia-a-duenos-del-suelo/>

La Izquierda Diario. (n.d.). Gobierno propone multas y condiciona motivos violentos para encarcelar la pobreza y pueblo mapuche. La Izquierda Diario. <https://www.laizquierdadiario.cl/Gobierno-propone-multas-y-condiciona-motivos-violentos-para-encarcelar-la-pobreza-y-pueblo-mapuche>

¹⁰⁶ „According to the 2022-2023 National Camp Settlement Survey conducted by TECHO-Chile, there was a 39.5% increase in such settlements across the country compared to the 2021-2022 period, totaling 113,887 households, including children, the elderly, people with physical disadvantages, and entire families. Data from the Ministry of National Assets showed that, during 2022, the number of illegal and irregular occupations of public land exceeded 19,000 nationwide. This issue is further complicated by the fact that multiple occupations often occur on the same property. The Ministry indicated that this is a complex and long-standing phenomenon that intensified due to the pandemic and the related economic crisis. They pointed out that during 2018 and 2019, the number of occupations remained stable at around 13,000, but by 2020, it had risen to over 15,000, and by 2021, it had increased to 17,000.“

Source: Zecchetto Rocco, M. (2023, June). *Ley de Usurpaciones: Los detalles del proyecto y los cambios que introduciría*. Emol Social Facts. <https://comentarista.emol.com/2294117/26045307/Emol-Social-Facts.html>

a with a profit-driven leader of a *comité de allegados* (housing committee), who had been negotiating to build a housing project there, used the situation. These actors have been threatening and intimidating the *Los Pies* collective since they have reclaimed the space in 2019-2020. It was clear from the beginning, when the project was proposed, that the site was not suitable for such a project. In my field-notes I recall that particular day we learned about this plan:

*An older woman, Pula alongside Rua, perhaps my age, came with a letter, claiming they had bought this place from the owner and they are here to politely announce we have to leave soon. They, as representatives of the committee for housing, made a deal with the owner. Outside by the gate, several of us gathered. The woman started with a speech, saying they represent a committee which includes 34 families and elderly people, and that their goal was to build a social housing project here. Lucho and Luna confronted her—eloquently but forcefully. They stood at the door, letting her enter only at the door. It was a rainy, somber day. They told her that this place is a site of memory and that her proposal was both sarcastic and disrespectful. Luna said she should go and tell the children of the *detenidos desaparecidos* (disappeared detainees) from the territory, and those from whom this place was stolen, that it is now being taken without their consent again. The woman became defensive, as did the younger woman accompanying her. „We are here to discuss everything, we do care about people and the población, but coming here with things already settled, is not the way we handle things“ concluded Lucho in a respectful tone. The woman reacted in a paternalistic tone, nodding and agreeing on another meeting. I took pictures of the documents they brought on my phone, and we noticed that they were asking for less than half the price they had evaluated the property years ago. The squatters speculated that they had to lower the price because they knew this place was stolen and now try to seize the situation and sell the place quickly. To my co-squatters this was a familiar pattern—someone with good rhetoric comes in, pretending to "defend the interests of the people," but the real goal is to make profit for a select few, while the state and real estate claims the majority, Meri analyzed. „Why don't they evict the large private mansion just a few streets from*

here, but instead come after us? “ In the afternoon, the chiquillos went to another squat to support it because it’s supposed to be evicted at this day. They brought a bunch of materials and are continuing their work today. So, la ley has begun. We recreate Los Pies with the things saved from another squat. Old chairs, a radio, pallets. We take possessions from that squat and also host three ex-squatters, as they needed urgently place to stay, until they move to another place.

[Field notes, August 2023]

From this point on, the memory becomes a sharper argument and a way to „speak their language“. We had series of assemblies, activities for gathering money to gather money for search of the documents and prove, that this space can not be sold, because it was expropriated - a claim many places with similar history made, especially colliding with the light of anniversary of 50 years since the end of dictatorship. People had different tasks – some to cook and some to go to archives and search for documents. We painted a mural with the huge denunciatory question ¿DONDE ESTÁN? In front of our house. We felt the tension in the población.

[Some people threatened compañerxs at night, when painting the memory mural, stating they should not put their noses into stuff they don’t understand] [Field notes, August 2023].

In this context, the idea of claiming the space as a “site of memory” to secure some form of institutional recognition became a topic of heated debate. Although the squatters made it clear that the closest *Los Pies* would align with any institution was through the local neighborhood assembly, led by Sra. Luisa, the possibility of reclaiming the space legally—either by proving it had been stolen or by designating it as an “official memory site”—was actively considered and negotiated. There were people who contacted archeologists, lawyers (usually affined political people, students) to discuss this option. However, others were radically against it, highlighting the danger of depoliticization of “institutional politics” as discussed in the previous chapter:

“Personally, I reject the idea of institutionalization. It doesn’t interest me. I understand that in some cases, institutions are necessary, but that’s not my fight. I’m not willing to engage in a conversation about institutions because I think they operate in a way that contradicts our goals. They don’t align with the

direction we're heading. That said, memory is still a tool. When Pula first arrived, we have to talk of Eduardo, talking of the history of the space because it's part of the work we're doing here—it's not about the institution. If memory gets instrumentalized by institutions, that's their problem. We also draw on memory here, but I'm not going to tie it to an institution for legitimacy. Look, it's not the same—what Villa Grimaldi represents compared to what the people in the poblaciones have experienced. Villa Grimaldi has its place, but over time, it became a bureaucracy, a political tourism spot. That's what it turned into. Memory, for me, is not about victimhood. Memory should be used to fight, to resist or learn... I don't know. But not for self-serving purposes, like using memory to justify living somewhere for free. That's not what we're about. So yeah, I might sound a bit ambiguous, but that's where I stand. Now, to bring it back—what's the difference in the memory we're creating here compared to the memory of someone like Eduardo Zúñiga? It's hard to convey that to a housing committee. For them, Eduardo might just be another person, like many others. But here, his memory holds weight. At the same time, I can't claim Eduardo's story for myself. As much as I'm an anarchist and don't claim a communist stance, I can still respect and remember him as a person who was disappeared. Politically, though, it's complicated for me."

[Lucho, September, 2023]

4.10 Subverting the Archive

General argument of this thesis is, that memory is a double-edged *weapon*. Weaponization of memory renders it a powerful tool in many directions – for those who oppose the forms of erasure (Trouillot, 1995) as those who fabricate them.

Next to monuments, official memory sites, statues and graves stand archives as repositories which try to narrate and fix what is to be remembered. Stoler (2002) argues that archives are not mere repositories of facts or anthropology but should be approached critically, acknowledging their role as instruments of power. Archives, she contends, “represent neither material sites nor sets of documents. Rather, they serve as a potent metaphor for selective forgetting and collection—equally for the seductions and longings

embedded in quests for, and accumulations of, the primary, originary, and untouched” (Stoler, 2002: 94). Despite the tension, strategy of *Los Pies* collective to recover the site, also included search for documents, which would testify that the place was stolen.

After the last confrontation with Pula, atmosphere in Los Pies changed. The whole situation is suspicious. We are awaiting, next intervention soon, as some compañerxs heard rumors on feria. Lucho is very nervous, walking restlessly, consulting with affinity people studying law or talking to squatters from different territories and see what other options there are. He even broke his weeks long smoking abstinence. Others are also disquiet. I see Meri Thon the phone, with altered yet worried face, trying to think the situation through. Someone suggested there must be a breach in that process. “It’s odd, because Pula, who is also part of the housing committee, said when she came over, this purpose of soil was educational and now they want to make houses here? This process usually takes two years, not just a few days to change the land’s purpose. It’s too much bureaucracy to be that simple.”

We’re calling an assembly, making banners to directly oppose the situation. We’re cleaning up and planning how to confront the situation -who shall speak, how to react, what to avoid. The ethical conflict is clear – it’s neighbors, pobladorxs, people without own living who want to live here. Some know us from ferias and ollas communes and we always made sure, relationships in the población are based on respect and compañerismo. No one wants to get into conflict with them, and people perceive the situation as a classic strategy to divide the community while the wealthy profit from it.

[Field notes, September 2023]



Figure n. 18: A banner denouncing an expropriation in front of Los Pies: "This property belongs to San Judas Tadeo. In 1980, it was fraudulently acquired by a real estate company, secretly transferred by the housing and urbanization official appointed by the dictatorship, without the consent of the owners: the collective of property owners, currently the neighborhood board." September 2023. Photo by the author.

I went to my room and checked my phone. I received an audio message from Felipe, filled with triumphant emojis. He shouts excitedly into the recording: “¡Weón, lo hemos encontrado! ¡Que este lugar fue usurpado! ¡Lo robaron! ¡Encontramos el documento!” (“Dude, we found it! This place was usurped. It was stolen! We found the document!”). He explains that we could now prove the land had been stolen—that it was expropriated—and that the proposed social housing project was a disguise to cover it up. I run down to the kitchen, where everyone else was gathered. Lucho, who had been visibly distressed all day, looked up as I shouted, “Lucho! Luna! Listen to this!” I play the audio, barely containing my excitement. Carolina, Meri, and Luna came running, and together we erupted into cheers, shouting triumphantly: “¡Conchetumadre! Por esto lo quieren vender así de rápido, porque saben que no es de ellos” (“This is why they want to sell it so quickly—because they know it’s not theirs!”). It felt like a series of victories, one after another.

“¡Eduardo, presente!” someone exclaim.

To include document and archives into struggle, however does not appear as a simple one-way compliance with the bureaucratic apparatus. Rather, squatters skillfully navigated by understanding and appropriating the rules of memory politics created in the institutional frameworks of the state (like recovery as an option). Their navigation through this field might resemble the approach, that “Rules are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose.” (Foucault, 1977: 151) Collective of *Los Pies*’ ability to engage with the memory in the mode of bureaucratic, archival work allows seizure of these rules and their replacement with “those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules.” (ibid.)

In the process of recovering *Los Pies*, archives were engaged as tools to be appropriated, weaponized, and incorporated into the counter-memory struggle to resist the neoliberal system of erasure. These archives, however, were not the primary points of reference; rather, they served as strategic material documents that complemented what was already known through social memory. Squatters, guided by the shared knowledge of Sra. Luisa and oral narratives from neighbors, were able to identify where and what to search for. The focus was not on historical archives but on the *Bienes Raíces* (real estate database) archives, which contained records testifying to the dispossession of the property. These documents revealed that, during the height of the dictatorship, the property was resold, and the communal “owners” were given only three days to reclaim it—a window of opportunity that, in a climate of pervasive terror, no one dared to act upon.

4.11 Politics of return

This situation has sparked conflict over the purpose and the future of *Los Pies*. The first, was a question of ethical and political position of the place towards such offer, coming not from the neighbors directly, but from a person tied to low-level party politics. (Pula was a political candidate in 2024). Still, the conflict was appeared: “If this place belong to the población”, then providing it for construction of homes, might appears as fulfillment of what

the this “return” embodies. The situation places squatter in front of dilemma on what is function and role of a memory in face of material needs of the present. I addressed this issue in a tape-recorded conversation I had with Lucho:

Lucia: *"If they had come saying, 'We want to build a giant mall,' it would have a different value than when they come here, saying, 'This is where we're going to live.' It brings a real dilemma. Even though, yes, sometimes the intentions of certain individuals might not be just a disguise for other agenda, using the people as propaganda in the upcoming elections, we still have to ask: what does Los Pies offer in contrast to the argument for building housing?"*

Lucho: *"Sure, we have to engage with that critique—like someone was commenting something on Instagram in that sense, throwing crap on us [tirando nos pelá]. But look, there are big plots of land here owned by powerful people, just a few streets from here, and they don't claim that. Instead, they want us to argue among ourselves, vecinxs, people who should be united. I see it as a strategy. The challenge is to craft a coherent narrative that allows us to fight for the right things. We shouldn't get caught fighting over small scraps of land. What is happening here is a social and political project—that's something else entirely. "Yes, housing is important, and me, growing up in tomas de terreno, I know that. But Los Pies is just as important. It's about holding that collective vision. So I'm really surprised that people who grew up and fought over tomas de terreno would come and criticize what we do, teaming up with politicians. Because you see, people will get their house, their little piece of land, and then what? They'll be left managing their small plot, but the connection to others is lost—like what happens so often. It's easy for people to become isolated once they have their space. So yes, there's an ethical conflict in not letting people in, but once they have their house, they won't engage with anyone else."*

The alienation and division of communities, underpinned by the neoliberal politics of erasure and disappearance (Richard, 2000) is reflected in mechanism Lucho describes. “Returning the place to the *población*”, and re-existence of the site as engrained in tactics and strategies of *Los Pies* is not a simple task. For the collective, especially for Sra Luisa

who fiercely argument against this project, the “return” does not mean mere handing over of the keys to the space to who live in the zone. To return *La Ratonera* means to hand *Los Pies* as well. It is not only a question of material recovery and transaction, but is deeply rooted in a political effort of re-existence of territory as autonomous, yet communal and shared space preserving the traits of *La Ratonera* as well as *Los Pies del Cerro*. While the proposal to build social housing could be perceived as the highest purpose this place could achieve, by *Los Pies* collective it is approached as a part of a broader logic of erasure—erasure of relationships with the territory, the webs of care sustained by it, and the political resistance that defines communal spaces on squatted lands.

In December 2023, La Ratonera returned to being a ruin, while Los Pies del Cerro became a ruin for the first time.



Figure n. 19: A ruin and the Cerro. Photo by Simón Díaz Cuffin. January 2024. Published with the consent of the author.

In this landscape we can “end the story with decay and abandon all hope” as well as ask about “What emerges out of damaged landscapes, beyond the call of industrial promise and ruin?” (Tsing, 2015: 18)

5. Conclusion: re-existing by squatting the past

„I’m allergic to all those leftist narratives which try to talk themselves out of any failure”, a friend and the anarchist, raised in what is known as the Global North, commented, as I shared remarks on dynamics of disappearances and re-existences identified in this thesis. The range of events which I attended might appear precisely as such: a sequence of frustrated options for imagining and inhabiting another possible and necessary world.

The *Estallido* dissipated and the political atmosphere in Chile joined the global phenomenon of turning towards right-wing, populist and national-conservative politics (Barša, 2024; Fallon, 2024).

Those who, during the height of the *Estallido*, heard calls to witness the end of neoliberalism now face the evolving role of the Chilean nation-state as an even stronger mediator of globalized capitalism (Arboleda, 2020).

This is experienced as the disappearance of lands¹⁰⁷, people¹⁰⁸ and ways of life¹⁰⁹—some of which are exploited to contribute to the global energy transition (Dorn, 2022; Riofrancos, 2022).

The Chilean state’s institutionalization and commodification of memory takes on a new form with the *Plan Nacional de Búsqueda*, which allocated \$619 million USD through a direct agreement with the private company Unholster to search for the detained and disappeared. This move has been criticized by network of families of Detained and Disappeared for its lack of transparency.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Alegría Corona, V., Castillo, S., & Giannotti, E. (2024, June 4). *Desalojo y despojo: Crece la incertidumbre en los campamentos*. CIPER Chile. Retrieved from

<https://www.ciperchile.cl/2024/06/04/desalojo-y-despojo-crece-la-incertidumbre-en-los-campamentos/>

¹⁰⁸ Lillo, D., & Parra, M. del M. (2024, December 7). ¿Dónde está Julia Chunil? La defensora mapuche que desapareció tras negarse a tala de bosque nativo. *El Desconcierto*. Retrieved from <https://eldesconcierto.cl/2024/12/07/donde-esta-julia-chunil-la-defensora-mapuche-que-desaparecio-tras-negarse-a-tala-de-bosque-nativo>

¹⁰⁹ Berrios, F. S. J. (2022, April 21). *Vivienda y comunidad: Un nuevo enfoque de los campamentos*. CIPER Chile. Retrieved from <https://www.ciperchile.cl/2022/04/21/vivienda-y-comunidad-un-nuevo-enfoque-de-los-campamentos/>

¹¹⁰ Weibel Barahona, M. (2024, August 9). *Gobierno paga \$619 millones por trato directo a Unholster para desarrollar plataforma de búsqueda de detenidos desaparecidos*. CIPER Chile. Retrieved from

Los Pies del Cerro was evicted alongside numerous *tomas de terreno*, leaving its inhabitants in precarious conditions. Disappearance of the *kiltra* co-squatter Runa and death of Guacha due to the eviction broke the squatters hearts.

Ignoring these processes, or stating, that there is always something positive coming out of failures, would be ethnographically distorting and politically naïve. By reflecting the framework of the current development, losses and melancholy which these situations create, I would like to close this thesis by reflecting on re-existence as an unintentional method based on counter-memory. Through the description of the struggle over *Los Pies* I argue that to trace re-existences in post-dictatorial and post-*Estallido* Chile, is more than the means of “making excuses for ones failure”.

The process of re-existence, as described in my field, begins by identifying, proceeds with engaging, and allows the shifting of positions within the web of relations of domination and resistance. Such identification stimulates choices and allows for the emergence of strategies and tactics relevant to the struggle. This can be traced to the engaged withdrawal (Scott 2009; 2012; Graeber, 2004) from the main squares and demands for the new constitution to the territorial assemblies in *poblaciones* and from there, to autonomous spaces such as *Los Pies*. This process too, implies a skill to identify other power dynamics – such as analysis and the response to the situation between Sra. Pula, the owner, and those involved in the actions that left to eviction. (Even a year since the eviction is the place a ruin).

As discussed in the second chapter, on the scale of struggle-repression-resistance relations (Álvarez-Fabela, 2015: 145), the people excluded from the narratives crafted by nation-states appear in a position of failure – but only if we interpret “history as a competition.” (Galeano, 1997: 2).

However, the process of re-existence is complex to situate when tracing it’s temporality, or evaluating it through the lenses of the “success-failure” binary. When does re-existence begin and how to trace the dynamics between ruptures and continuities it implies? If in this process people do not “only resist amidst

<https://www.ciperchile.cl/2024/08/09/gobierno-paga-619-millones-por-trato-directo-a-unholster-para-desarrollar-plataforma-de-busqueda-de-detenedos-desaparecidos/>

conflicting power relations but are also in a constant movement of reinvention and reorganization, *drawing from the past*, tradition, and present struggles to invent the future” (Hurtado, Porto-Gonçalves, 2022: 5), my emphasis and translation), then where shall we locate “failure” in this framework? There are various approaches to it. For example, Eduardo Galeano wrote the following reflection on failure, in the year the Chilean dictatorship began (and since became a cornerstone of the Latin American leftist canon):

„We lost; others won. But the winners happen to have won thanks to our losing: the history of Latin America's underdevelopment is, as someone has said, an integral part of the history of world capitalism's development. Our defeat was always implicit in the victory of others; our wealth has always generated our poverty by nourishing the prosperity of others— the empires and their native overseers. In the colonial and neocolonial alchemy, gold changes into scrap metal and food into poison.“ (Galeano, 1997: 2)

If the resistance can serve as a tool to locate power (Abu-Lughod, 1990), can re-existence serve as a tool to locate disappearances? What could happen by exposing it?

The navigation through re-existence involves a gaze towards the past. Let's recall Benjamin's Angelus Novus¹¹¹, who advances towards the “progress” while looking backwards, facing the past, unable to turn from it? Some would even like to stop, pretend waiting or return. But that is not possible – as Jánoščík and Ondreička assert – “where all those populists, antimodernists and conservatives naively want” (2020: 12). The past seems to serve fundamentalists, traditionalists and political actors with fascist tendencies mobilizing it as a mythical time recasting the future (ibid.). What is more, the “nationalist ontology” which reinvents “the experiential reality in the terms of the mythical realities”

¹¹¹ A painting by Klee named ‘Angelus Novus’ shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been mashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress” (Benjamin 1970: 257-8).

(Kapferer 2012: 99) haunts the futures as well (Jánoščík, Onderička 2020; Quintana, 2020). But could the reluctance to engage with the past, due the “pollution of the term”, contribute to the mechanisms of erasure that function as to eliminate “the desire to transform the world by convincing us that there are no alternatives” (Quintana, 2022)?

The critical gaze toward the past, as argued in this thesis, is an act of reclaiming it by “squatting it”. It implies engaging with those encountered along the way, negotiating boundaries and forming alliances grounded in suspicion toward hierarchies, fetishization, and fixation of someone as a hero or an idol. This critical co-presence of the past resides within the practice of re-existence.

It emerged in *Los Pies*, which developed parallel to—and as a critique of—the mass euphoria in the main avenues that sought to “break with the past” (Koselleck, 2011: 108). Instead, it called for a reinsertion of „punctuated time“ (Lazar, 2014) of critical event (Das, 1995) into sites of memory as a strategy of political struggle. The “past” in my field surfaces through alliances with those who were meant to be disappeared (Richard, 2000), both physically and symbolically, reappearing in acts of subversion and defiance. Consider, for example, the situation narrated by Milos, who “made his dead friend present,” forcing the judge (and the state) to affirm this presence. Or think of the webs of counter-memory actions, such as the ones described during the march on September 11th, which continue to defy state-led efforts to “domesticate” and monumentalize memory (Tello, 2022).

These counter-memory actions can produce cracks and ruptures, slow or abrupt, through which the (dis)continuities of the past are visible.

Enzo Traverso, delved into similar dynamics, identifying that, those who were „proclaiming that ‘another world is possible’ (...) had to reinvent themselves—both their theories and their practices—in a world without a visible, thinkable, or imaginable future. They could not “‘invent a tradition’,” like other generations of “‘orphans’” had done before them. This shift from an age of fire and blood that, in spite of all its defeats, remained decipherable to a new time of global threats without a foreseeable outcome takes on a melancholic taste. This melancholia, however, does not mean a retreat into a closed universe of suffering and remembering (...) Neither regressive nor impotent, this left-wing melancholia should not evade the burden of the past” (Traverso, 2017: xiv)

Meanwhile, the memory is a weapon, which maintains us fighting – always.

Appendix:

Asamblea internacional del fuego: El sonido de los helicópteros (canción para Irene)

El descanso del guerrero¹¹²

Los muertos están cada día más indóciles.
Antes era fácil con ellos:
les dábamos un cuello duro una flor
loábamos sus nombres en una larga lista:
que los recintos de la patria
que las sombras notables
que el mármol monstruoso.
El cadáver firmaba en pos de la memoria:
iba de nuevo a filas
y marchaba al compás de nuestra vieja
música.
Pero qué va
los muertos
son otros desde entonces.
Hoy se ponen irónicos
preguntan.
Me parece que caen en la cuenta
de ser cada vez más la mayoría

Soldier's rest¹¹³

Each day the dead are increasingly unruly.
Before they were easier to deal with:
we'd give their stiff collar a flower
we'd praise their names in a list longer than:
the borders of the homeland
the shadows of the distinguished
the monstrous marble.
The corpse signed up to be remembered
returned to the ranks
and marched in sync to our old music.
But what now
the dead
have changed since.
Today they've become ironic
they question.
It seems they are more and more aware
they are the majority!

- Roque Dalton¹¹⁴

¿Dónde está Julia Chuñil?

¹¹² Asamblea Internacional del Fuego. (2017). *El sonido de los helicópteros (canción para Irene)* [Video]. Dialéctica Negativa. Directed by José Miguel Araya; Original idea by Emilio Fabar, Elias Hienam, & José Miguel Araya; Assistant director: David Morales; Edited and post-produced by Double AA Films. Andamios y Plataformas. Retrieved from <http://www.dialecticanegativa.org>

¹¹³ Translation retrieved from: <https://pionline.wordpress.com/2012/05/04/group-translation-project-roque-daltons-el-descanso-del-guerrero-continued/>

¹¹⁴ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8yevHvSYrA>

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