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Critical Geographies of Globalization: Buenos Aires and São Paulo in the 21st century

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in

Literature

by

Leonora Soledad Souza e Paula

Committee in charge:

Professor Milos Kokotovic, Co-Chair
Professor Luis Martín-Cabrera, Co-Chair
Professor John Blanco
Professor Alexandra Isfahani-Hammond
Professor Nancy Postero

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The dissertation of Leonora Soledad Souza e Paula is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Co-Chair

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Co-Chair

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EPIGRAPH

Spaces can be real and imagined.
Spaces can tell stories and unfold
stories. Spaces can be interrupted,
appropriated, and transformed
through artistic and literary
practice.
bell hooks

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CURRICULUM VITAE

2013	Ph.D. in Literature University of California, San Diego
2013-12	Teaching Assistant, Warren College Writing Program University of California, San Diego
2012	Fellow, Human Rights Center University of California, Berkeley (Brazil)
2011-12	Teaching Assistant, Warren College Writing Program University of California, San Diego
2011	Dissertation Fellow, Literature Department University of California, San Diego
2010	Teaching Assistant, Third World Studies University of California, San Diego
2010	Fellow, Summer Doctoral Fellowship Washington State University
2010	Fellow, Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies University of California, San Diego
2009	Teaching Assistant, Literature Department University of California, San Diego
2008	Teaching Assistant, Linguistics Department University of California, San Diego
2007-08	Teaching Assistant, Warren College Writing Program University of California, San Diego
2006	Research Assistant, Literature Department University of California, San Diego
2004	M.A., Comparative Literature Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
2003-04	Fellow, CAPES Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
2002	B.A., Letras – English/Portuguese

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

2000-02 Fellow, CNPq
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

Brazilian Literature and Culture
Latin American Literature and Culture
Latin American Social Movements
Globalization Studies
Urban Studies
Visual Culture

PUBLICATIONS

"Crisis and Revolution: Art Interventions in Neoliberal Buenos Aires." *Imprints of Revolution: Global Resistance, the Popular, and (Post)/(Neo) Colonialism*. Lisa Calvente and Guadalupe García (Ed). Forthcoming.

"Filosofia em quadrinhos: Diferença e Repetição em *Salut Deleuze*!" *Aletria*, No. 15. Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG, 2008.

"Imaginary Places and Fantastic Narratives: Reading Borges through *The Sandman*". *The Sandman Papers*. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2006.

PAPERS AND CONFERENCES

"Urban Housing Rights in Brazil: More Than Just a Roof and Four Walls." UC Human Rights Fellows Conference. UC Berkeley, November, 2012.

"The Global City as a Regulating Fiction: Representations of Urban Space in Brazilian Literature." Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA), Septmeber, 2012.

"The 28th São Paulo Biennial as a Metaphor of Globalization." Latin American Studies Association (LASA), May, 2012.

"Pixações, graffiti, and the writing of inequality on São Paulo's walls." Cross/words-Cross/roads: An Intersection of Language, Art and Culture Colloquium, San Diego State University, April, 2012.

"Urban Interventions in Neoliberal Buenos Aires: Stenciling the City Walls." Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies Symposium, University of California San Diego, November, 2011.

"Grupo de Arte Callejero and the Occupation of Neoliberal Buenos Aires." Conscripted Subjects Conference, University of California Los Angeles, March, 2011.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Critical Geographies of Globalization:
Buenos Aires and São Paulo in the 21st century

by

Leonora Soledad Souza e Paula

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Professor Milos Kokotovic, Co-Chair
Professor Luis Martín-Cabrera, Co-Chair

"Critical Geographies of Globalization" examines the transformations of urban space and culture in turn-of-the-millennium Latin America. More specifically, the study focuses on critical approaches to discourses of globalization as they appear in literature, art and other forms of cultural production in and about Buenos Aires and São Paulo. This study contends that recent Argentine and Brazilian literature and other cultural texts register a (re)organization of urban spaces and interpret its local effects by critically looking at the portrayal of the urban effects of globalization. This project responds to a vital need to attend to the study of Latin American cities as they provide

us with important sources for analysis of overarching questions of national identities, race and ethnic identities, gender identities, and class identities in Latin American societies from the perspective of culture. By working across disciplines and national experiences, my project contributes to the task of producing cultural interpretations focusing on critiques of globalization in two of Latin America's principle cities. There are four chapters that comprise this study, the first two chapters deal with discursive and territorial transformations of Buenos Aires with respect to experiences of neoliberal restructuring as seen in *Puerto Apache* (2002) by Argentine novelist Juan Martini and *Invasión* a live performance by the *Grupo de Arte Callejero*, staged in December of 2001. The third and fourth chapters look at São Paulo as a space of critical reflection that helps us understand the political and ideological impacts of the global city narrative as they appear in the novel *eles eram muitos cavalos* (2001) by Brazilian author Luis Ruffato and in the 28th São Paulo Biennial of 2008.

Introduction.

"Critical Geographies of Globalization: Buenos Aires and São Paulo in the 21st century" explores the transformations of urban space and culture in turn-of-the-millennium Latin America. More specifically, this study focuses on critical approaches to discourses of globalization as they appear in literature and other forms of cultural production in and about São Paulo and Buenos Aires. At the core of this analysis is a discussion of how a significant number of recent works of Argentine and Brazilian literature and art, critically register, interpret, and challenge urban effects of globalization. With that in mind, the works I have selected for the study are works that carefully interrogate the crisscrossing relationship between globalization, space, and culture in the context of the two cities.

São Paulo and Buenos Aires come together in my analysis as two extreme territorial experiences of globalization in Latin America that differ on some fundamental levels but that also share striking similarities.

Initially a small village with little political importance, São Paulo later became one of Brazil's most important centers of economic and political power. From the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, it was transformed from a rural town to the main coffee production site to Brazil's center of industrial production. Its political and economic importance was first consolidated with the turn-of-the-century massive wave of European immigration to supply the labor market, and second, with the project of accelerated industrial growth based on import substitution directed towards national markets, as part of an aggressive

developmentalist campaign led by the State during the 1950s[1]. From the 1950s to the 1970s, an influx of migrants from northeastern Brazil arrived in the city in search of jobs and better living conditions. They established poor communities on the outskirts of the city, primarily on irregular and illegal land settlements due mainly to the lack of public investment and infrastructure to adequately accommodate the new workforce.[2] As a result, in the 1980s, São Paulo was a city in which more than seventy percent of its housing could be classified as informal.[3] The deep economic recession of the 1980s, led by an unforeseen number of privatizations, resulted in high levels of unemployment and worsened the conditions of life of the working class.[4] As a response to the intensification of social violence, the elites that once had settled in the central areas of the city started migrating from the city center to areas that had until that point housed the working classes. The forced removal of entire communities to accommodate the

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[1] In the 1940s, São Paulo went through the first of several urban redevelopment plans that changed the city's built environment. Several times in the second half of the twentieth century entire areas of the city were torn down redimensioned, and re-built, demonstrating the city's total disregard for its historical heritage.

[2] São Paulo's motto *Non ducor duco* –meaning I am not led, I lead– adopted in 1917, epitomizes the city's adoption of a narrative of leadership, which was first legitimized by the prosperous coffee production era and later endorsed during the industrialization period and celebrated in Brazilian modernism. By the second half of the twentieth century, São Paulo had come to symbolize Brazil's modernity by concentrating the largest share of the country's industrial production and economic growth. However, the development of "São Paulo modern city" followed very disperse and exclusionary urban planning. According to Caldeira and Holston, "the center received improvements in infrastructure and the most obvious symbols of modernity: it was dominated by skyscrapers – increasingly of modernist design – that multiplied in a matter of a few years…In the periphery…the lack of any kind of state support, investment and planning generated a very different type of space" (150).

[3] It was only in the 1980s that state and municipal administrators started to borrow heavily to invest in urban infrastructure. By end of that decade, Brazil had become the World Bank's larger borrower in the area of urban development.

[4] During the 1980s recession that resulted mainly from failed economic plans developed by a series of economists recruited by the military regime, urban poverty rose dramatically. The strong social movement for urban reform that emerged in that period was instrumental in pushing for the inclusion of an urban policy section in the 1998 Constitution.

upper classes were accompanied by private interests eager to offer security services to these new fortified enclaves.[5] The reorganization of the economy and the worsening of work conditions during the 1990s did little to change that reality. Consequently, the structural transformations of the last two decades of the twentieth century affected almost every aspect of urban life in São Paulo, from the management of urban infrastructure to the organization of urban life. The São Paulo of the 2000s, argues Teresa Caldeira, "is a city in which the expansion of information technologies have promoted new forms of inclusion, but in which structural adjustment policies and different types of privatization have led to new forms of exclusion" (2008:74). Certainly, these new forms of exclusion reflect the consequences of free market economy in a city already structured around a segregationist model.

Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital and its largest city, has also been the locus of the country's most significant transformations. The city's provincial status throughout most of the nineteenth century had shifted dramatically by that century's last three decades when the city went through an exponential process of growth that resulted from a state led project aimed at combining urban modernization and European immigration. It was during that period that Buenos Aires gained the status of Latin America's most modern city and also when it became the center stage for an extensive program of rejection of the colonial past and implementation of a project of cosmopolitanism through internationalization –

[5] The current forced evictions occurring in several Brazilian cities as a result of preparations for the mega-events of the World Cup and the Olympics are discussed at length in this dissertation's conclusion.

a cultural program notoriously initiated in the presidency of Domingo F. Sarmiento (1868-1874). The waves of immigrants that arrived in Buenos Aires between 1880 and the first decades of the twentieth century helped shape Buenos Aires as a space in which the elimination of the conflict civilization/barbarism was part of the modernization project indented to launch Argentina in the economic international stage. From the 1930s onward, a massive wave of rural migration into the city that resulted from decreased agricultural production and increased industrialization started to transform "the most European of all Latin American cites."[6] This period marked the emergence of *villas misérias* in the city's outskirts where Argentine born immigrants as well as new migrants from the provinces settled. With the subsequent consolidation of the export-import model of economic growth, the city saw the expansion of the middle class as well as of working class organized labor. The extension of citizenship rights during the Peronism of 1940s and 1950s resulted in an intensification of the use of the city by the working classes. With the fall of Peronism in 1955, Buenos Aires became the "fulcrum of a new hegemonic project promoted by middle class sectors as they renegotiated their position in the social order" (Podalsky, 2004: x). Supported by the middle class, the cycle of military rule initiated in 1976 imposed a new project of modernization in which the poor were expelled to unattended projects in the suburban zones while concentrating new urban developments in the city's wealthiest areas. The Argentine structural reforms of the 1990s were some of the most aggressive in all

[6] Buenos Aires' reputation as the "Paris of the South" was mainly due to the late nineteenth century urbanization plan modeled after different European architectural styles. Even though the city's built environment has changed in the past decades, Buenos Aires has not gone through the numerous re-urbanization projects São Paulo has.

of Latin America. The most intense phase of neoliberal restructuring in Argentina was implemented by the Carlos Menem administration of the late1980s, which continued well into the 1990s as the country watched the economy collapse and inequality skyrocket. According to Beatriz Sarlo, "Buenos Aires is now a broken city: radiant in the northern neighborhoods, where tourists find a replica of globalized services and shops in an environment beautified by parks built in the early twentieth century; filthy and deteriorated in the southern areas, where no important public investments have compensated for the indifference of global capitalism toward the city as a social and urban totality" (2008:44). In other words, by the turn-of-the-century, Buenos Aires had become one of the most segregated cities in Latin America.

While evidently distinctive in their urban histories, the human geographies of São Paulo and Buenos Aires in the turn-of-the-century are not so different.[7] Common to both cities are certain transformations in the cityscape, such as newly built skyscrapers and shopping malls, waterfront renovation projects, and gentrification programs that forcibly remove lower-class communities to the city's undesirable sectors in order to house upper-class fortified enclaves. These obvious similarities tell us about how both cities have invested in new ways of organizing its populations by brutally expanding spaces of segregation. In addition, the two cities share a notion of space as a category that has been deeply affected by discourses of globalization, which allows for a far-reaching analysis of the multiple

[7] As defined by Doreen Massey, the main concern of human geography is to consider the role of "uneven development and interdependent systems of dominance and subordination between regions on the one hand, and the specificity of place on the other" (1984:9).

dimensions of their urban realities. But most importantly, the urban experiences of the two cities reveal some of the most fundamental contradictions of the globalizing era: they acknowledge that the post-industrial capitalist era functions of space are to fragment, to segregate, and to classify, but they also articulate unprecedented forms of participation that mark the contemporary city also as a territory open to struggles.

Because culture is one of the sites "where it is possible to gauge the shifting valences of culture in relationship to other political, social, and economic realities that globalization most commonly names," (O'Brien and Szeman, 611) it is critical to reflect on the intersections between space, globalization and culture and explore their products. With that in mind, this study aims at discussing at length the role of culture in enunciating and shaping the local urban imaginaries of São Paulo and Buenos Aires in the globalizing era. By working across disciplines and national experiences, my project aims at contributing to the task of engaging in cultural interpretations that focus on Latin American critiques of globalization. By looking at some of the works produced in that context, my goals are to examine how each of them deals with particular questions pertaining to their specific experiences and to understand how each individual experience speaks to a collective process shared by the two societies.

Globalization is understood here as the late twentieth century phenomenon of internationalization of capital by means of greater labor mobility and advances in communication technology. Deeply embedded in different political, social, and economic realities, globalization cannot be defined as a homogeneous experience,

but should be understood as a complex process with inherently different variables and consequences. According to Lisa Lowe, "globalization is not merely a contemporary stage, but rather the longer extended set of diverse processes that have linked multiple spaces through logics at once political, economic, and cultural" (2010:39). Therefore, as a wide-ranging process, globalization takes on several discursive expressions, some of them with the goal of supporting the illusion of a homogenous and integrated contemporary global existence. Embedded in theses discourses are attempts to legitimize nations' subservience to world markets and financial institutions, and to naturalize the worldwide widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. In addition, the language of globalization tends to promote a state of expectation around all the possibilities of a global society that is now more mobile, decentered, and deterritorialized. This sense of anticipation is accompanied by a disconnect from the past, argues Fernando Coronil, in that "discourses of globalization evoke with particular force the advent of a new epoch free from the limitations of the past." Certainly deliberate, these discourses operate "as if they were underwritten by the desire to erase the scars of a conflictual past or to bring it to a harmonious end, these discourses set in motion the belief that the separate histories, geographies, and cultures that have divided humanity are now being brought together by the warm embrace of globalization" (Coronil 351-2). Not accounted for in these discourses is how the essentially mobile nature of globalization makes room for different forms of control in a system of domination that, according to Gilles Deleuze, "has retained as a constant the extreme poverty

of three quarters of humanity, too poor for debt and too numerous for confinement" (1992:6).

The picture painted by Deleuze reflects the direst consequences of the implementation of late twentieth century neoliberal economics across the world. Often understood as a "modality of globalization," neoliberalism promotes the idea that a free market economy leads to a prosperous future, where all of the world's peoples can come together in a united, harmonious global village. Beyond seeking to deregulate markets, advance free trade and promote unobstructed capital mobility, neoliberalism also relies on discursive strategies that seek to position individualism, competitiveness, and economic self-sufficiency as incontestable virtues. David Harvey defines neoliberalism as a twofold project: in a first instance, as a political and economic doctrine guided by practices of market deregulation, privatization, and the relative withdrawal of the state from the public sphere. On a second level, neoliberalism encapsulates a particular logic that serves as the basis for social relations by promoting demobilization, such as that of organized labor (2005: 2-3). As doctrine and as a discourse neoliberalism has deeply affected how people relate to each other and to the space around them. Therefore, understanding the ways is which this new social-spatial dynamics happens in the terrain of culture helps us in an investigation of critiques of globalization in its various manifestations.

Of particular interest to this study are certain discourses of globalization that function as indisputable mandates used to determine the ways in which lives

and spaces are structured: the global city narrative and the neoliberal narrative of homogeneous harmony.

One of globalization's several fabrications, the rise of the global city model had various implications for the most diverse cities around the globe. As it has been noted, the global flow of financial capital, especially in the last thirty decades, has impacted economic, social, political and cultural forces worldwide. Arguably, the city is the site where the impact of these formations and transformations has been most intensely felt. Given that the city is seen as the privileged space for capitalist accumulation and circulation (Harvey, 1992), its identification as a production site for grounding and linking the world economy partially explains why much of the scholarship on globalization examines its dispersal from the perspective of urban space. The global city concept is derivative of that larger framework. Initially an analytic tool used to address the effects of globalization in certain urban landscapes, the concept turned into an organizing principle with enough weight to influence how cities in a "globalized" world are imagined.

While the earlier works in the field focused on the definition of world cities and the relationship of uneven development within or among cities (Hall 1984; Friedmann and Wolff 1982; Friedmann 1986), later works were more interested in describing how a worldwide network of financial capital helps establish a hierarchical relationship among cities. Saskia Sassen's *The Global City* (1991), arguably the most influential work produced in those years, examines the flow of financial capital and its impact on the formation of hegemonic classes in New

York, London and Tokyo. According to Sassen, the global cities should be understood as "highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy" (1991: 3). Later in that decade, a different cohort of scholars proposed the global city-region as a new approach to the topic, mainly basing it on the notion of city-regions (Soja 2000; Scott 2001; Fainstein 2001). Subsequently, the concept of "globalizing cities," developed by another group of scholars, favored a new reinterpretation of globalization as a continuing process, which allowed room for a more in-depth analysis of worldwide social-spatial relations associated with the interplay between class, race, and gender (Sassen 1998; Marcuse and van Kempen 2000; Robinson 2006).

It is within the latter framework that I situate my analysis of twenty first century Latin American cities. That is, in this study, globalization is seen as a diverse process of multiple experiences that produces new limitations but also new opportunities for different cities. In my critical reading of the global city concept I argue that one of the many problems with embracing the global city as a new urban paradigm is the fact that framed within that concept is a notion of space whose main characteristic is its pretense universal design; i.e. a blueprint of urban planning applicable to any city anywhere in the globe. In addition, I argue that this new image of cities as sites of overlapping networks of global economy undermines the historical conditions as well as the internal transformations those places have experienced before that moment, and implies that cities should be considered exclusively from the point of view of economic power. In that sense, the global city as a new theoretical paradigm is established upon the presumed

universality of the new economic global order, only allowing for a perception of cities as the materialization of global processes and the construction of a homogenizing narrative.

Jennifer Robinson argues that the global city as a concept should be understood as a regulating fiction since "it [the global city] offers an authorized image of city success (so people can buy into it) which also establishes an end point of development for ambitious cities" (2006: 8). Aside from being a remarkably astute observation left underdeveloped in Robinson's analysis, the recognition of the narrative of the global city as "regulating fiction" renders visible the fact that such a "desirable" model for urban life is in effect a sophisticated discursive mechanism of control. In other words, more than an ideal urban model that influences how the city is planned, the global city narrative has the power to determine how the city is lived and imagined.

Such is the case with São Paulo. As a city that has been promoted as a leading global city[8], São Paulo's sharp contrasting realities show otherwise. Evidence of that are the city's most recent urban renovation plans. On one hand, newly redeveloped regions, such as that of Marginal Pinheiros with its designer bridge, state-of-the-art corporate towers and luxurious apartments, are promoted as new zones of global economic transaction, and become recognized as the city's

[8] Such designation is based on the fact that São Paulo houses several of the largest foreign-owned companies in Latin America, the headquarters the largest commercial banks and foreign companies in the country.

post-card image. (25)[9] On the other hand, recent attempts to manage the city's marginal zones (and its practices), such as the Nova Luz renewal plan and its forced removal of long-established *cortiços*, ignore the very fact that different types of informal housing are structural elements in the historical formation of the city, not instrumental tools for gentrification projects.[10] Without a doubt, similar examples of partnership between public and private interests speak to the desire to fulfill the status as an emerging global city while overlooking the existence of other realities. As the most extreme example of the indiscriminate incorporation of an imported model as the blueprint for urban planning, São Paulo's most recent transformations reflect a pattern of exclusionary urbanism. In Ermínia Maricato's words,

> O urbanismo brasileiro (entendido aqui como planejamento e regulação urbanística) não tem comprometimento com a realidade concreta, mas com uma ordem que diz respeito a uma parte da cidade, apenas. Podemos dizer que se trata de idéias fora do lugar porque, pretensamente, a ordem se refere a todos os indvíduos, de acordo com os princípios…da raciolanidade burguesa. Mas também podemos dizer que as idéias estão no lugar por isso mesmo: porque elas se aplicam a uma parcela da sociedade reafirmando e reproduzido desigualdades e privilégios… A cidade ilegal…não é conhecida em suas dimensões e características. Trata-se de um lugar for a das idéias. (122)

Borrowing from Roberto Schwarz's critique of the disjunction between ideology and material reality in Brazilian society, Maricato argues that territories outside the

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[9] Mainstream media partakes in that by promoting the image of SP global city. In 1999, the newspaper Folha de São Paulo published a special issue on global cities adhering to the representation of São Paulo as Latin America's leading global city.

[10] "The Specific Urban Plan for Nova Luz proposes, among other actions, to restore "heritage" buildings, to significantly improve the public space in the area, to develop new green areas and leisure facilities, to develop new housing projects to serve the area's diverse population, and to renew the area's urban space. Upon completion, the Plan will define the basis for the future area concession to the private sector." Found online at: www.novaluzsp.com.br.

perimeter of the legal (global) city are also characterized as spaces situated outside of that idea of city. With that in mind, I argue that the narrative of São Paulo as a global city functions as another manifestation of a misplaced idea given that its material consequences reinforce an image of illegitimacy of the majority of the city's territory while endorsing as legitimate very small sectors within the city. Therefore, any characterization of twenty first century São Paulo whose basis of representation are isolated islands of transnational economic activity is essentially a discriminatory and partial image of the city that does not account for new and old forms of exclusion. Based on that, part of what motivates my analysis of representations of the global São Paulo is the need to shed light on ways in which the global city narrative is actively resisted and transformed by local actors and cultural producers.

As an economic project and ideological doctrine, neoliberalism has also been defined by scholars as powerful narratives, utopias, and metaphors that produce a totalizing and homogenizing view of the world (Harvey 2000; Coronil 2001). Lisa Duggan argues that neoliberalism should be understood as a discourse of "nonpolitics – a way of being reasonable, and of promoting universally desirable forms of economic expansion and democratic government around the globe" (2003:10). Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu sees neoliberalism as a "desocialised and dehistoricised discourse" that has at its core "a program of the methodical destruction of collectives" (1998:1). Intended as an all-encompassing program, one of the main characteristics of the neoliberal discourse is the disavowal of all political practices that do not subscribe to the dominant discourse of a free market

controlled society. It is then obvious that neoliberaism is by no means only an economic phenomenon, but also a political one that entails deep transformations in spatial relations. That is, whether directly or indirectly, neoliberal reforms have redefined how people relate to each other, to the state, and to space. In regards to urban space, one can argue that neoliberal transformations happen mainly on two coexisting levels: first, when the state presence is reduced by allocating decision making powers to the local sphere, which in many cases leaves the distribution of space in the hands of private and corporate capital. Second, when the spaces not occupied by the state or corporate capital are appropriated by social groups via alternative modes of mobilization. Therefore, any critical reading of the material effects of neoliberalism on space requires a carefully situated and contextualized analysis that takes these aspects into account.

Against the neoliberal discourse that "conjures up the image of an undifferentiated process without clearly demarcated geopolitical agents" (Coronil, 369), social movements across the planet have claimed political, ecological, and cultural agency in regards to their territory. In turn-of-the-century Latin America, descendants of African slaves have claimed ownership of long established heritage sites (Leite 2008), landless workers have challenged the legitimacy of oligarchy-led land concentration (Wolford 2012), indigenous groups have demanded the recognition of access to communal land (Postero and Zamosc 2004), and the list goes on. In late twentieth century Buenos Aires, groups of workers blocked roads to protest the high levels of unemployment and took over factories; other groups occupied the city with various forms of political protests. Collectives like H.I.J.O.S

(Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio) became known for carrying out a series of *escraches* – an act of denunciation whose main goal is to inform the public of the crimes of unpunished collaborators of the dictatorship. Enacted as a type of street performance, the *escrache* aimed not only at raising public awareness about crimes committed during the dirty war, but also at exposing the fact that the neoliberal economic policies in Latin America are a continuation of the status quo that allowed and supported the dictatorship in the 1970s.

The conscious recuperation of history to make sense of the present challenges a neoliberal narrative dedicated to "erase the scars of a conflictual past or to bring it to a harmonious end" as stated by Coronil (351-2). This re-activation of history appears in turn-of-the-century *porteño* cultural production in the most diverse ways. Nonetheless, each one of these different forms of cultural production engages in creating ways to disrupt the neoliberal narrative of homogeneous harmony. They produce different ways of symbolically mapping/questioning/challenging the impact of the changes brought about by neoliberal reforms, and are crucial sites for the expression of new ways of interacting with the city.

Ultimately, São Paulo and Buenos Aires are considered in this study not only as places that embody dominant discourses and practices of globalization, but also as critical geographies of globalization in which cultural practices create new ways of rewriting the urban experience. To address this dynamic process I employ a close analysis of literature and art produced in or about the two cites, which is

informed by more general examinations of notions of space as developed by social geographers and cultural critics such as Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Doreen Massey, Milton Santos, Beatriz Sarlo, and Raquel Rolnik. In general, my goal is to understand how the task of rewriting of globalization can be mobilized as a function of social-spatial relations birthed by globalization itself. Because cultural relations enunciate social relations, understanding how literature and art mobilize and are mobilized by urban spaces provides us with a vast repertoire of attitudes that effectively challenge celebratory stances towards globalization.

There are four chapters that comprise this study. The first two chapters look at São Paulo as a space of critical reflection that effectively resists and rewrites the global city narrative. In the first chapter, "*eles eram muitos cavalos*: Challenging the Regulating Fiction of the Global City," I contend that the formal experimentation offered by the novel *eles eram muitos cavalos,* by Brazilian author Luis Ruffato, registers how contemporary literature organizes the local urban imaginary vis-à-vis the global city model, a narrative that operates within wider discourses of globalization, as it interrogates and exposes the limits of that image. I argue that the novel's formal experimentation functions as a marker of the city of São Paulo as a space marked by the exacerbation of tensions in which the literary text functions as a critical interlocutor of an urban experience of violence, insecurity, and segregation.

In the second chapter, "The 28th São Paulo Biennial as a Metaphor of Globalization," I discuss the 28th São Paulo Biennial and argue that as a result of the association between the late twentieth century global production of culture and

the global city narrative, the 28th São Paulo Biennial inadvertently reproduced globalization discourses aimed at sustaining mechanisms of social inequality. I argue that an already highly controversial art show, due in large part to the fact that the second floor of the exhibition pavilion was left entirely empty, the Biennial was further problematized when, in the opening night, a group of *pichadores* or wall taggers entered the pavilion and spray painted the bare walls.

The third and fourth chapters discuss critical responses to the most recent transformation of Buenos Aires in light of the neoliberal narrative of homogeneous harmony. In the third chapter, "Grupo de Arte Callejero and the Occupation of Neoliberal Buenos Aires," I focus on *Invasión*, a symbolic occupation of downtown Buenos Aires carried out by *Grupo de Arte Callejero* on the eve of the 2001 urban upheaval. The performance, I argue, offers an innovative mode of popular political participation that challenges the neoliberal order and problematizes the discourse of democratic stability in light of the nation's recent traumatic past. The virtual "military" occupation of the city by toy soldiers intervenes in the mainstream discourse of democratic stability while the nation's recent traumatic past is brought back to the city's streets as a means to recover notions of the city as a public and collective space.

In the fourth chapter, "*Puerto Apache*: Narrating the Urban Poor in the Neoliberal City," I look at the struggle over urban space as figured by the land occupation represented in the novel *Puerto Apache,* by Argentine writer Juan Martini. In my analysis, I interrogate in what ways the fictional city complicates the neoliberal urban transformations of the 1990s. On one hand, I'm interested in

looking at how literature represents Buenos Aires at the turn-of-the-century. On the other hand, I'll observe how he lives of the urban poor living in the neoliberal city are narrated in the text. Ultimately, I'm interested in investigating how the transformations to the Buenos Aires' fictional built environment mirrors and at the same time rejects discourses of globalization.

Chapter 1.

eles eram muitos cavalos: Challenging the Regulating Fiction of the Global City

Introduction

Published in 2001, *eles eram muitos cavalos* by Luiz Ruffato has been critically acclaimed as one of the most important novels in contemporary Brazilian literature. Having won the 2001 Machado de Assis award from Biblioteca Nacional and been selected as best novel by the Associação Paulista de Críticos de Arte in the same year, *eles eram muitos cavalos* received in 2005 the fourth place among the most important 125 works of Brazilian fiction to be published since 1990. Taking place in São Paulo on May 9, 2000, the novel narrates a single day in the lives of people living in the city. Numerous anonymous characters are the protagonists of multiple stories that read as entries more than as chapters, and that do not build up as a connected longer narrative. Hence, the continuous shift in narrative voice and perspective announces various experiences that travel across class, gender, and race, ultimately unfolding a conjuncture of extreme social inequality.

Most of the excitement around *eles eram muitos cavalos* (*eemc*) in the years following its publication celebrated the novel's narrative style and format, namely its realist narrative approach as well as the unusual use of layout and grammatical experimentation. The realist style can be seen in the portrayal of the daily struggles of a multitude of poor urban dwellers in a way that challenges the normalized banality of their condition of marginality as a form of social criticism. The formal experimentation appears throughout the text in the constant use of incomplete

phrases, unanswered questions, partial lists, non-conventional punctuation, and unconventional layout.

Arguably, the most immediate question that emerges in *eemc* contends that there is a set of reasons for the occurrence of this form of representation in the particular context of late-twentieth century Brazil. To ask these questions is to think of how *eemc* favors modes of representation that resonate with ways of experiencing the world in a context of contemporary developments of globalization. As a critical space used to make sense of discourses and experiences of globalization, *eemc*, I argue, presents new perspectives on the problems and possibilities prompted by globalization. More specifically, Ruffato's work helps us reflect on the intersections between globalization and fiction and explore its effects by showing that literatures of globalization are not only narratives that partake in constructing fictions of a globalized era but also help exposing the fictions that globalization creates.

Globalization is understood here as the late twentieth century phenomenon of internationalization of capital by means of greater labor mobility and advances in communication technology. Deeply embedded in different political, social, and economic realities, globalization cannot be defined as a homogeneous experience, but should be understood as a complex process with inherently different variables and consequences. In view of that, globalization, argues Lisa Lowe, "cannot be represented iconically or totalized through a single developmental narrative; it is unevenly grasped, and its representations are necessarily partial, built on the absence of an apprehensible whole" (40). Similarly, Milton Santos suggests that

globalization should be understood in a triple sense. First, as a fable, insofar it is presented to us as a fantastic story of a network of economic-productive-technological future; second, as perversity while it has intensified a worldwide situation of unequal concentration of wealth; and third, as a possibility of emergence of alternative ways of interacting with the world (18-21). Santos' argument, much like Lowe's, acknowledges that deeply embedded in different political, social, and economic realities, globalization cannot be understood as a homogeneous experience, but should be regarded as inherently complex processes that affect different social spheres in different ways.

The global city concept, as discussed in this study, is derivative of that larger framework and speaks more directly to the notion of globalization as fable. In her seminal work on the topic, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Saskia Sassen defines global cities as strategic sites where global processes materialize (1991:5). These cities, according to Sassen, are the spaces where crucial political decisions are made and serve as the organizing centers of global power in the geography of globalization (1991:5). Initially a scholarly tool used to address the effects of globalization in the urban landscape, the concept of a global city turned into an homogenizing organizing principle with enough weight to influence how cities in a globalized world should be structured as well as imagined. At the core of such principle is an effort to define the global city as an objective reality consisting of essential properties of recognizable, if not formulaic characteristics. Such framework imposes not only a hierarchical order that establishes which cites are better suitable to be deemed global, but also a narrative

that promotes the transformation of cities into global hosts to international political and economic power.

While São Paulo has been promoted as a prime contender within the category of global city, its material reality marked by an unequal and segregated urban organization, says otherwise. Accordingly, the urban experiences portrayed in *eemc* do not correspond to the image of a city that is defined as a host of global power. Therefore, in framing my reading of *eemc* as a narrative in contention with main discourses of globalization, I am mainly arguing that the particular formulation of the text challenges the model of the global city as an organizing principle, while critiquing the notion of globalization in its perverse sense (Santos, 2000). More specifically, the novel offers a critique of the global city's homogenizing program via an articulation of lived experiences in its use of realist aesthetics and via a portrayal of lived spaces in its multidimensional configuration of the space of the city.

São Paulo and the legitimization of the Global City fiction

Critics have argued that rather than a model for contemporary urbanism, the global city concept is best thought of as a historical construct, a narrative that operates within wider discourses of globalization. Michael Peter Smith goes as far as arguing that the global city concept is part of the grand narrative of globalization, which in turn is a new version of developmentalist projects of modernization (379). Assuming that to be the case, it becomes clear that the concept's essential property – that of being a construct – has direct effects on

processes of meaning making, ultimately influencing the production of culture, as we see in *eemc* and many other cultural texts.

This is because even in its abstraction, such construct has material consequences that affect the social structures that inform how the city is imagined. Jennifer Robinson argues that the global city as a concept should be seen as a regulating fiction since "it offers an authorized image of city success (so people can buy into it) which also establishes an end point of development for ambitious cities" (8). Aside from being a remarkably astute observation left underdeveloped in Robinson's analysis, the reason why the notion of "regulating fiction" works in a critical assessment of the global city as a fable or fiction is because it acknowledges that such a desirable model for urban life is in effect a sophisticated mechanism of regulation. In ignoring historical specificity and operating outside the actual experiences of cities, such model, if and when adopted, has an enormous influence not only on how the city is planned, but also on how it is imagined by urban planners and city dwellers. In that sense, the notion of "regulating fiction" is an effective critique since it interrogates and exposes the limits of the fiction of the global city.

In order to understand why São Paulo has been promoted as a prime contender within the category of global city, and to comprehend the fundamental problems of such a campaign, it is important to look at the city's historical development. Surprisingly, São Paulo has only gained its status of being at the core of Brazilian structural changes in the early twentieth century. From the late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century, it was transformed from a rural

town to the main coffee production center, to the country's main destination of European immigration, to the nation's center of industrial production. It was only with the project of accelerated and sustained import substitution industrialization in the 1950s that the city became recognized for its political and economic importance. With a large wave of internal migration in the next decades, the city's urban organization was deeply affected and the irregular and illegal land occupations in the outskirts of the city exploded. As a result, São Paulo was in the 1980s a city where more than seventy percent of its housing was either irregular or informal. The 1990s reorganization of the economy and redefinition of the role of the state little did to improve the population's living conditions. In fact, for most of the 1990s, the city was administered by two politically conservative mayors of neo-liberal tendencies who invested heavily in an elitist program that involved defunding low-income housing programs, halting the improvement of public transportation, favoring private-car-friendly urban policies, and spending billions in the development and revitalization of already privileged sectors of São Paulo.[11]

The latter measures are clearly associated with discourses of redevelopment common to the global city program. That is, seeing that the global city has been promoted as the only urban model able to guarantee the survival of São Paulo within the context of economic globalization, this model was adopted by city administrators and private enterprises as the only acceptable option for the much needed urbanization of São Paulo. Following that project, urban developers and policy makers successfully channeled public investments to support the

[11] Paulo Salim Maluf served the 1993-1997 term, followed by Celso Pitta 1997-2000.

construction, for example, of business districts in the central areas of the city, thus re-directing resources away from public needs such as affordable housing and public transportation.

In a political system very vulnerable to finance, the *de facto* power of private groups interests has been able to overpower even the most progressive instruments of urban management, which is the case of the Brazil City Statute. Celebrated for its socially inclusive principles, the City Statute enacted in 2001, an amendment to the 1998 Constitution's articles on urban policy, introduced to the legislation the concept of the social function of property.[12] According to the City Statute, property rights are subject to its social function, which is to be defined in the municipally developed City Master Plan. The social basis of the federal legislation aimed at guaranteeing to all groups and individuals the ability to live in the city and benefit from its resources as well as the right to participate in urban management decisions.[13] The history of the City Statute goes back to the formation of National Urban Reform Movement in 1986, which succeeded in bringing together social movements, trade unions, NGOs, research institutions, and other members of civil society concerned with the by-products of the developmentalist-modernist urban policies of the previous decades, i.e. palliative urban policies that resulted in low-quality services and amenities in the more deprived areas. The movement later became what is today the National Forum for Urban Reform. Formed around the principle of rights to the city, the National Urban Reform

[12] The Ministry of Cities, created by the newly elected President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva in 2003, was set up to establish conditions for the Union, the states, and especially the municipalities to put the urban policy principles established by the City Statute into effect.
[13] For a collection of essays analyzing the Brazil's City Statute see Cities Alliance, 2010.

Movement was instrumental in pushing for the inclusion of an urban policy section in the 1998 Constitution and the subsequent creation of the 2001 City Statute.

In addition to promoting ideas of participatory citizenship, the Statute determined that urban development operations should be decided by public-private partnerships. Such alliance between public and private interests, less than a mechanism of shared responsibility for the production and management of urban space is in fact associated with the shrinkage of the state and the scope of its interventions. Contrary to the social function of property principle established by the Statute, the largely speculative public-private partnership gave way to an intensification of for-profit interventions in urban development. São Paulo, argue Teresa Caldeira and James Holston, is today a prime example of a city in which "private investors intervene decisively, sometimes with local government, to improve the areas of their investment with the objective of increasing significantly the value of their real estate" (2005:158). One clear example of that is the so-called *favela* "upgrading" program. First a shantytown build to house temporary workers that came to the city to build the Morumbi soccer stadium in 1960s, Paraisópolis *favela,* located in an upscale district of São Paulo and nowadays a community of more than 80,000 residents is situated in the southwestern part of the city, and occupies a significant part of the highly valued real estate district. In the 1980s, the Jânio Quadros administration (1985–1988) tried to eliminate Paraisópolis as part of large slum removal operations. Through the 1990s, various infra-structural improvements such as water and sanitation were implemented in the community thanks to the effort and organization of local residents. In the 2000s, with an

extensive program of land reform, the issue of land ownership started to gain more visibility. While initially promoting land tenure regularization, the legislation has been perversely used by the city administrators and private investors in measures that ultimately turn the collective effort of the organized community aimed at improving their living conditions into individual transactions.[14] On one hand, the inflation of the real estate value in Paraisópolis has increased rent and utilities forcing the local population to relocate to the city's edges; on the other hand, as new land owners, many residents when approached by the housing market, get taken advantage of by property speculators and end up selling their properties at prices below their real and increasing value. Consequently, Paraisópolis might be facing the inevitable purchase of well-positioned *favela* land by the private businesses.[15] The reality of the urbanizing measures is directly opposed to one of the main principles established by the City Statute, which foresees equal distribution of urban land ownership to guarantee the right to the city for everyone. Hence, rather than promoting the social function of property, what we see is the same ruling classes further shaping the city to their advantage, thereby reinforcing and extending the disadvantages and isolation of the marginalized (Harvey, 2008:23).

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[14] According to a new decree enacted in 2006, the city offers "two options to the original landowners: to donate the land to the municipality (thus avoiding any taxes owed) or to pay the outstanding urban land taxes and receive a certificate of permission for construction. In the first case, the municipality gives a certificate of ownership to the occupant of the property" (120). For more see Oyeyinka, 2010.

[15] Paraisopólis has been selected a test-site for an urban renovation project "curated" by the Municipality of São Paulo in collaboration with the 4th International Rotterdam Bienial. "The 'Paraisópolis Testsite' for urban interventions is a project committed to implement best practice projects and a new overall urban scheme for Paraisópolis." The project has been criticized as site of flagship urbanization catered to attend international demands associated with the two upcoming large-scale sports events: the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic games in 2016. Found online at http://www.iabr.nl/EN/program/meetings/urban_meetings/Paraisopolis-So-Paulo.php

Even though the Statute establishes a set of regulations that aim at protecting or preventing speculative capital from negatively affecting more vulnerable communities, it appears that the implementation of progressive legal instruments is insufficient to halt the predatory march of speculative capital into those spaces. The example of Paraisópolis partially explains why the real estate business sector, which had initially reacted strongly against the proposals for urban reform, chose to approve and support what could potentially contradict their interests. Thus, in order to maintain its status as an emerging global city while ignoring the increasing inequality surrounding the central areas, the private and public sectors actively participate in an unequal and unjust form of urban management.

If on one hand, the global city program has been developed through *favela* "upgrading" projects, on the other, newly redeveloped areas, such as Marginal Pinheiros, complement the effort. Located in the wealthy south side of São Paulo in the waterfront of the Pinheiros River, Marginal Pinheiros went through an extensive renovation project in the mid 2000s, which included the construction of a cable-stayed bridge (Ponte Estaiada) and the addition of corporate towers and luxurious hotels. Considered a model in recent Latin American urban renovation plans, the project successfully locates this part of the city as a new zone of global economic transaction, thus epitomizing the image of São Paulo as a global city and legitimizing the global city narrative.

The non-normative mapping of São Paulo in eles eram muitos cavalos

Given the importance of culture as a site through which social relations are registered and structured, the cultural productions that result from globalization processes provide us with essential tools for critically interpreting the changes and consequences of globalization. In that regard, as an expression of Brazilian economic and social realities, recent cultural productions tell us of the challenges in representing, mapping, and imagining an urban experience marked by inequality and segregation. They also warn us of the dangers of adopting misguided programs as blueprints for urban development. In the particular case of *eemc*, the novel prompts an awareness of how the global city concept has been used for manipulative purposes by those in power and offers a critical space for making sense of different interpretations of experiences of globalization.

Even though *eemc* has been celebrated by its realist narrative style, and despite the fact that the use of realism invites reading the novel as a true-to-life representation of contemporary urban life in São Paulo, the register of lived experiences and lived space in the novel offers possibilities for a critical appraisal of reality that goes beyond the use of straightforward description as a main narrative strategy. This is because the representation of lived experience and lived space in *eemc* is articulated in ways that while resembling realist accounts bring forth innovative portrayals of reality.

The notions of lived experience and lived space are anchored in an understanding of space as socially produced after Henri Lefebvre's space-centered analysis of social environments. At the core of Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*

(1991) is the idea that space should not be seen as a neutral medium or a container where humans and objects are located but as an integral part of human activity. As the result of social, political, and economic conditions, space is being constantly produced by the activities of those inhabiting it. As a continuous process of interchange and as social relationship, space is regarded as a product as well as a means of production (85). In view of that, the notions of lived experience and lived space are, according to Lefebvre, fundamental factors in any critical analysis of space. This is because rather than a passive locus of social relations, space exists as a product of social interaction; it exists less as an abstraction and more as knowledge and action (11). Based on that, I argue that the notion of lived experience conveys a certain corporeal knowledge of space whereas the idea of lived space is determined by different interactions with space. In order to understand corporeal knowledge as an expression of lived experience, it is important to keep in mind Lefebvre's assertion which states that one necessarily experiences and lives the space in which one exists. That experience is produced along with and in relation to one's perception of oneself in a given space. Lived experience is therefore located between body and space and involves movement of bodies in space (205).

In *eemc*, formal and narrative experimentation allows for extrapolating the limits of the text, which is in turn conducive to a corporeal, or out-of-text experience. In doing so, the text provides unique ways of interpreting the notions of lived space and lived experience while simultaneously avoiding the distant observer narrative common to the conventional realist tradition. Realism in

contemporary Brazilian literature,[16] as in much of Latin American literature, speaks to the tumultuous, uncertain, and frequently violent experience of urban life. Less of a homogeneous continental cultural response, the different forms and usages of realism differ widely in location, approach, context, and purpose. Stemming from a vast tradition of realist accounts, as in the nineteenth century canonical social realist narratives, millennial Latin American realism differs from the earlier versions mainly in its condition of focusing on representations of new spatial (urban and otherwise) realities. In order to express new these realities, new interpretations of traditional realist modes are required; as a result, forms other than verisimilar representations tend to emerge as alternatives accounts of "the real." As a mode of representation that is adequate for the global era, contemporary realism draws from diverse uses of language to generate a new way to talk about social realities. One strategy it employs is the reallocation of language from a referential to a corporeal use. That is, while maintaining the objectives of social criticism, the distance between experience and representation is reduced as the reader is asked to momentarily embody what is being represented. This "ability to suspend and defer some conventions that the reader is expecting to find (40)" argue Horne and Voionmaa, is one of the fundamental aspects of contemporary representations of "the real" in Latin American literature. For the authors, the novelty of these accounts exists in "a dislocation of the perspective, a viewing from an unexpected standing point: the reader, then, is able to 'discover' what has

[16] Flora Süssenkind refers to this recent tradition in Brazilian literature as "neo-documentary" works that are marked by an overlap between the ethnographic and the fictional, such as the novel *Cidade de Deus* (1997). For more see Süssekind, 2002.

always been already there" (40). Inequality and marginality, as conditions that have already been addressed in the traditional realist narratives, are now more uncomfortably felt rather than merely seen.

In referencing the narrative trend in contemporary Brazilian literature with which *eemc* is identified, Nelson Vieria argues that such new discursive form "desafia conceitos tradicionais sobre o Brasil… e revela menos dependência das supostas verdades genealógicas e geográficas porque é mais sensível ao poder das forças contingentes num mundo mais e mais instável e incerto" (2005:20). While challenging traditional notions about Brazilian society, these texts also demonstrate that in order to answer questions posed by new modes of feeling and experiencing the world in a globalized era, a new approach to the literary form is necessary. Such is the case in Rufatto's novel; not only the traditional form of the novel as genre and its model of representation are questioned, but also is the perception of the city as a representable totality.

In *eemc* the closer connection to "the real" happens via a textual representation of lived experience. The way in which the notion of lived experience is articulated in *eemc* compels the reader to see experiences of marginality from the perspective of the marginalized ultimately giving the reader access to not only to different ways the city is lived but also to distinct expressions of its several realities. Therefore, rather than being concerned with claims of authenticity of representation, several of the narratives in *eemc* open up windows to São Paulo's various realities by amplifying the textual focus beyond the empathetic reading experience. Such endeavor is achieved by stressing the

significance of oral discourse and by attenuating the reliance on written words while making use of silences, breaks, and interruptions to convey the corporeal experience of reading the text. In his analysis of *eemc*, Karl Schøllhammer argues that "a forma literária experimental de Ruffato, com sua aguda consciência poética de linguagem, mantém não só o compromisso com a realidade, mas procura formas de realização literária ou de presentificação não-representativa dessa mesma realidade (68)". In that sense, Ruffato not only acknowledges the existence of what is potentially unwritable/unspeakable but also ensures that what cannot be described in words is expressed physically.

Because the discursive register of written language seems to be insufficient, Ruffato uses other narrative devices to communicate meanings that the text alone cannot convey. These narrative devices result from "a different mode of narrative that can point at something exterior to the text" (Horne 243). In her discussion of narrative techniques employed in recent Argentine and Brazilian literature, Luz Horne argues that the use of innovative strategies generate a particular reality effect in which "the text meets its exterior, as the traditional realist themes are seized, albeit in a different form" (245). In *eemc*, formal experimentation, apparent in the unusual layout and grammatical experimentation is part of what allows allows for extrapolating the limits of the text, which is in turn conducive to an out-of-text experience; that is, the distance between representation and experience is reduced as the reader is asked to momentarily embody the text.

In Entry 34, entitled "Aquela mulher," a working class woman, resident of the Paraisópolis *favela*, who is left mentally disturbed by the disappearance of her

eleven-year-old daughter, roams the city in an endless search for an impossible answer. Perhaps counter intuitively, the third person narration suspends the reader's condition of spectator as it requests a level of direct involvement in making the narrative a viable one: "aquela mulher que se arrasta espantalha por ruavenidas do morumbi fala desconforme baba escumando no entrocamento dos lábios murchos olhar esgotado mãos que pendulam arrítimicas pernas desaprumadas" (70). The sentences with no punctuation blend into one another, evoking the character's senseless wandering, mumbling, and muttering through indistinguishable roads, streets, and avenues in a clear state of derangement. Moreover, an experience of mental and physical exhaustion is rendered tangible as the narrative continues without punctuation marks or the insertion of any elements that would help make sense of the constant rambling speech. In that sense, the reliance on orality helps the text to reach out to the reader, giving them a brief insight into the characters' lived experience.

Also effectively used in Entry 34 are pauses and interruptions that, like the lack of punctuation, uncomfortably give the reader a glimpse into the character's mental and physical spaces:

> uma noite
> bateram à janela, estão chamando, o orelhão, correu, pernas embaraçando
> o coração, alguém…alguma informação…talvez…ela?
> Filha?
> do outro lado o pranto
> o pânico
> ouviu a voz Filha? Onde…Onde está você? Filha! Onde?
> – ouviu vozes – silêncio (71).

Once the narration shifts to the conversation, a one-sided dialogue, it also renders palpable the experience of absence and uncertainty conveyed by the long pause as well as the feelings of disbelief and desire implicit in the question "Filha?" The answer, panic and despair, conveyed by unknown voices in the background, only lead to more uncertainty and uneasiness. The ambiguity of the word "silêncio," is only achieved as the distance between the voices she hears and the final silence is completed by a long pause. Was the daughter's silence forced by unknown voices? Or was the mother the one that simply could not say anything after hearing the voice(s) on the other end of the line? Such imprecision is maintained as the story ends with the mother's own disappearance into the indifferent space of city. The passage makes evident that the rendition of the character's state of mind would not be entirely achieved directly or solely by the use of words. The text's fullest readability is attained in its experiential quality.

In giving a corporeal sense to the experience of inequality, *eemc* avoids the perpetuation of a generalized system of classification of marginality but still manages to render visible pervasive conditions of invisibility and anonymity. Since mother and daughter are represented as bodies that are not merely gazed at, the reader is offered access to a different dimension of what it means to be excluded from society. That being so, exclusion is deemed to be corporeal and this materiality is precisely what exposes the limits of an urban discourse informed by a global city model that is promoted as all-inclusive. After all, the idea of a global city implies the presence of global citizens and the characters in Entry 34 show that they have not yet achieved a condition of being citizens, much less global.

Similarly, in Entry 35, "Tudo acaba," future and present tense are used interchangeably as one man's vision of an apocalyptic future is intertwined with his sensorial perception of a bleak present. Sitting in a decaying apartment in an undetermined part of the city, the character sees the end of all existence in the deterioration of the material world around him: …olhos cravados no teto de gesso rebaixado a televisão ligada desenho animado estará em ruínas esgoto escorrendo pelas paredes carpete arrancado podre paredes pichadas janela saturada… (72). The unclear distinction between what he sees on the ceiling and the images of an calamitous future being narrated invites the reader to see the images through the character, as if they were partaking in a visual projection of his psyche.

Also common throughout Entry 35 are gaps and pauses; devices constantly used to inform the reading experience:

para quê
se tudo acaba
tudo
tudo se perde num átimo
o sujeito no farol se assusta
atira
e o cara sangrando sobre o volante o carro ligado
o povo puto atrás dele
ele
atrapalhando o trânsito
e
o povo atrás dele
buzinando
buzinando
puto atrás dele (73)

Rather than simply observed, the everyday scene of a murder at a traffic light is transformed into a bodily experience as the reader is placed in the event, within the timeframe of its development. The pauses before and after the words "atira" and

"ele" mark the instants in which all a life is taken. At the same time, the way in which the sequence of drivers honking their horns behind the murdered man is textually constructed, gives a sense of movement and continuation, which draws attention to the collective indifference as well as to the impermanence of notions such as present and future. One of the reasons why the novel succeeds in presenting this up-close perspective is because *eemc* "recria o espaço urbano como experiência vivida, visões sobre espaços subconscientes… em que seres se expressam em relação direta, imediata com o espaço (2007:122)," argues Nelson H. Vieria. That being the case, the reader comes into contact with the ways in which the character experiences the space of the city, i.e. an expression of his lived experience.

In addition, Entry 35 makes clear that the individuals who inhabit the city in *eemc* fail to interact with one another and/or that interaction is mediated by a sense of detachment, which contributes toward an overall feeling of alienation. Into this atmosphere of indifference Ruffato injects an awareness of the city as a site of isolation rather than of integration. The lack of human connection in which people seem to only interact via electronic devices is intensified with the unavailability of personal contact as a sense of isolation seems to prevail: …passos de madrugada telefones tocam e tocam celurares interfones ninguém apenas portas que batem que batem que batem portas (72). The use of repetition and alliteration transmit a sense of permanent alienation given that the only sounds that mark the presence of other human beings in his environment are the phones that ring and the doors that shut. Once it is understood that the city is an environment that isolates individual and

collective subjects, it becomes clear that the bodily experience not only questions but also criticizes any allusion to homogeneity. Less a means of normalizing social relations that are defined by estrangement, the dissolution of social space in favor of private space articulated in the novel intervenes in the discourse of the global city by exposing the experience of alienation as an undesirable aspect of globalization.

Another example in which lived experiences are articulated in the text is found in Entry 18, "Na ponta do dedo (1)." In this short narrative the reader is given very little information. All one is able to capture is the experience of an anonymous character reading the classifieds as if looking for a job. That interpretation is made possible since the textual layout provides the details for what looks like a fragmented list of ads for jobs, almost all of them in the service sector, which could have been posted on a newspaper or in an employment agency.

> …
> LAVADOR de carros
> LIDER de limpeza e jardinagem
> LIMPADOR de janelas
> LOCUTOR animador
> LUBRIFICADOR de automóveis
> LUBRIFICADOR industrial
> MAÇARIQUEIRO – (Ah!)
> **MAÇARIQUEIRO** – 1º grau até 8ª série completa, expreiência de 24meses, idade entre 28 e 50 anos
> **MAÇARIQUEIRO** – (soldador), escolaridade não exigida, experiência de 12 meses, idade entre 25 e 45 anos (41).

Palpable in this passage is a certain uneasiness in which the familiar experience of searching the classifieds gains another dimension as a condition of unemployment is exposed. The absence of any sort of information that could lead to the

character's identity also suggests the ubiquitous nature of unemployment. But what stands out as an unmistakable rendering of a corporeal reading of the text is the reference to the "reading with the fingertips" experience typical of such a scenario.

Although the representation of exclusion and alienation has been inherent to contemporary Brazilian literature, Ruffato's novel offers a particular critical commentary on the state of near normality associated with the condition of unemployment. The framing of the novel in the period of a day, which could be read as a workday, as suggested by Lúcia Sá, indicates a reflection on what it means to be unemployed in contemporary São Paulo: "Indeed, there are few workers in the book, which is haunted by the specter of unemployment" (28). In a novel marked by job loss, the symbolic unit of the workday invites the reader to see the holes in the homogenous urban narrative of transnational capitalism embodied by the global city. The same condition is repeated throughout the novel, although in different ways, as if to remind the reader of the pervasiveness of that condition. As we read in Entry 26 "Fraldas", a recently laid off young father is caught stealing diapers and other baby items for his newborn; in "Rua" Entry 66, a former doorman-turn-beggar observes the residential building from which he was laid off just months earlier; in "Nocaute", Entry 59, a father agrees in advance to lose a major boxing fight in exchange for two months of groceries for his family. Clearly, the constant reference to unemployment in the text highlights how the dismantling of organized labor transformed the experience of living in the city.

The rendering of exclusion, alienation, and destitution in *eemc* articulates a critique of the homogenizing discourse of the global city on a fundamental level.

This is because the use of certain narrative devices makes possible an embodiment of lived experiences that renders impossible the insistence on accounts of economic success while favoring the enunciation of a collective experience of dispossession. The diversity of lived experiences, despite being of a socio-economically underprivileged multitude, prevents the uniform portrayal of a harmonious global existence. That is, the novel intervenes in the homogenizing program of the global city by addressing the reader form the point of view of the multitude. Also, by highlighting the urban in the lived experience of the several characters, *eemc* invites the reader to see the holes in the homogenous urban narrative of transnational capitalism; it points to how socio-economic inequality and subsequent marginalization mirrors geographical displacement.

While immersing the reader in the characters' lived experiences, Ruffato also places them in the lived space where the experiences occur. This is achieved by giving the reader access to different ways the city is lived. The very structure of the novel, organized in entries rather than chapters, offers different ways of viewing the city and its life. The entries suggest multiple ways of entering, seeing, and reading São Paulo as each one of them marks a different space of representation and a different perspective about the city. The multiple points of entry not only mark the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the space of the city, but also reveal holes and limits in a global city model whose essential property is that of presupposing a totalizing conception of cities that should adopt a formulaic

character of universal applicability.[17] For Michael Peter Smith, the over-ambitious nature of this model is represented by its "effort to define the global city as an objective reality operating outside the social construction of meaning" (378). That is, its homogenizing project presumes the rejection of any knowledge of space that emerges from socio-spatial interactions that are not inscribed in the constructed notion of "objective reality".

It is in its critique of the global city narrative that *eemc* creates a spatial experience that speaks to the notion of lived space. Lived –or representational– space, as defined by Lefebvre represents actual experiences of space in everyday life; it is the space of inhabitants and users: "When compared with the abstract space of the experts (architects, urbanists, planners), the space of everyday activities of users is a concrete one, which is to say, subjective" (362).

Lefebvre's emphasis on subjectivity indicates that the intersection between lived experience and lived space is the matter of everyday life. Lived space is not abstract space and therefore not the place of universal models and urban planning – as articulated by the global cities discourse. Consequently, the constructed notion of objective reality, as it appears in the global cities discourse, is exposed as a clear articulation of abstract space, which does not allow room for lived space. By paying special attention to subjective socio-spatial interactions, Ruffato's work deems the lived space a strategic location from which to engender new interpretive

[17] Keeping in mind that the global city as a concept and as a model is a construct of globalization, its association with the idea of abstract space becomes clear given that, according to Lefebvre, "abstract space is a product of violence and war, it is political; instituted by a state, it is institutional. On first inspection it appears homogeneous; and indeed it serves those forces which make a *tabula rasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them –in short, of differences" (285).

possibilities for reading the several social realities of São Paulo not accounted for in the global city narrative.

In particular, the use of ambiguity in *eemc* functions as a critical element in its articulation of the impossibility of a total representation of the city, which in turn renders unattainable the universalizing project of the global city. In Entry 21, "ele)", the continuous rumbling of the anonymous office worker speaks of his everyday feelings of apathy and indifference in face of another frustrating workday: "Dia havia era assim, um desassossegamento, lugar algum bom, formigamento excursionista, pernas mãos braços, por tudo desisnteresse, pessoa nenhuma, nem conversa, cavar um buraco…" (46). The sense of estrangement to the surrounding environment of the city, spoken from the perspective of inside the "caixa de vidro fumê" are expressed with ambiguity and certain incredulity:

> e o dia?
> eh bonito o dia?
> faz frio?, faz calor?
> ?o vento embalou as nuvens no céu ou elas regaram mansamente o asfalto?
> ?um motoboy se esparramou na faixa-de-pedestres?
> ?um executivo espancou um menino-de-rua com o laptop?
> ?um cobrador impediu um assalto?
> ?o mundo, o mundo acabou? (47).

As if curious to know about what could be happening outside, his questions not only enunciate common scenes in the city's daily life, but also ask whether these realities are at all possible. Certainly, the recurring catastrophic prediction about the end of the world and the portrayal of widespread violence through the novel suggests a commentary on the harsh experience of living in São Paulo. But the representation of lived spaces also speaks to everyday relations often overlooked

by the global city model: the constant brutality directed at the homeless children, the hundreds of motorcycle couriers that are killed in traffic every year, and the everyday street violence are examples of daily events that are perceived as inconvenient and thus deemed unrepresentable by official discourses of globalization. For that reason, the social spaces portrayed in the novel serve less to sustain a perception of the city as a deteriorated space to be fixed by a certain urban model and more to draw attention to fundamental aspects of social inequality that cannot be solved via urban management alone. More importantly, *eemc* succeeds in avoiding a shallow fatalist tone because Ruffato "emprega um método que evita uma temática ou um discurso repetititvo *ad nauseam* sobre a "decadência catastrófica" da cidade, apesar de o leitor certamente perceber e sentir a decadência…. Porém sua abordagem visa mais inventar os espaços precários e as práticas micróbias e cotidianas que um projeto urbanista não calculou," argues Nelson H. Vieira (2007:123). That is, *eemc* challenges the homogeneity of representation by, on one hand, deliberately placing –but not overplaying– inconvenient realities at the center of the narrative, and on the other, by asking how to responsibly represent those same realities.

Furthermore, *eemc* questions the homogenous program of globalization and the global city by escaping the limits of representing an immediately recognizable spatial totality. In Entry 45, "Vista parcial da cidade," the multiple narrative voices focus on different individuals inside a bus at the end of a workday:

> sacolejando pela Avenida Rebouças
> o farol abre e fecha
> carros e carros

mendigos vendedores meninos meninas
carros e carros
assaltantes ladrões prostitutas traficantes
carros e carros
mais um
terça-feira
fim de semana longe
as luzes dos postes dos carros dos painéis eletrônicos dos ônibus
e tudo tem a cor cansada
e os corpos mais cansados
mais cansados
a batata das minhas pernas dói minha cabeça dói e (96).

The individuals inside the bus share an experience of weariness as an old woman with a nervous gaze sits next to the dozing teenage clerk who dreams of a future in higher education, while standing up, a construction worker nods off worried about bills to pay. The initial question that opens the entry, "O que é São Paulo?" is answered in the portrayal of the bleak experience of the working class as seen in the description of uncomfortable long hours spent in daily commute. Likewise, an answer is provided with the acknowledgment of a certain "color of weariness" that paints the pervasive urban misery seen in the images of the exterior cityscape, a landscape of constant movement and chronic inequality. Moreover, while the title underscores that the city can be only represented partially, the pervasive question of Entry 45, "(São Paulo é o lá fora é o aqui dentro?)" verifies a certain condition of inter-dependence between the cities different spaces. More than that, it offers a commentary on the condition of being a city that can only be represented in light of its immeasurable qualities. In addition, the re-creation of lived space in this passage lies in the blurred distinction between the interior and exterior spaces; that is, between the subject and the city. The indistinct transition from city to individual

back to city suggests that the material space is determined by the subjective space and vice-versa. The inconclusive word "and" that ends the narrative seems to interminably extend the sense of weariness that marks how that space is lived. The novel's insistence on the impossibility of these accounts ever representing a total city is a manifestation of the multidimensionality required to adequately represent a society under the effects of globalization.

Ruffato's novel also uncovers the regulating fiction of the global city by exposing the mechanisms that are used to promote such narrative and the structural inequality upon which it is built. One of the most provocative markers of São Paulo as a space of exclusion and not as a global city is found in Entry 16, entitled "assim:." In this passage, the main voice is that of a businessman flying over the city in his helicopter as he comments on what he sees from the vantage point of privilege. The racist and elitist discourses present in the passage identify the city as a place contaminated by air pollution, traffic jams, social decay, and extreme spatial segregation, descriptions always followed by the adjective "podre" (filthy), marking the condemnation of a city that has not been able to fulfill an unrealistic promise of full urbanization and total inclusion in the global cities circle. Along with the executive's perspective are multiple discourses, as seen in the typographical variation that recognize the several power structures at play in contemporary Brazilian society:

> – não sou insensível à questão social irreconhecível o centro da cidade hordas de camelôs batedores de carteira homens-sanduíche cheiro de urina cheiro de óleo saturado cheiro de a mão os cabelos raros percorre **(minha mãe punha luvas, chapéu, salto alto para passear no viaduto do chá, eu, menino, pequenininho mesmo,**

> **corria na)** este é o país do futuro? deus é brasileiro? onde ontem um manancial hoje uma favela onde ontem uma escola hoje uma cadeia onde ontem um prédio do começo do século hoje um três dormitórios suite setenta metros quadrados (37).

The image painted in the fragment clearly reflects transformations that are visibly associated with processes of globalization. The rise of informal economy and informal housing as well as the increasing levels of incarceration and gentrification is the result of global processes that not only affect the city's structure and organization, but create new levels of urban violence and social exclusion. The fact that the city's transformations are lamented vis-à-vis the absence of urban infrastructure and the visible presence of a population of the socially and economically excluded emphasizes the correlation between socio-spatial dynamics and global economic restructuring. Thus, the representation of lived space in Entry 16 engages in a particular organization of reality that reconfigures rather than reproduces a representation of homogeneity, thus disarticulating the global city narrative as the obligatory framework for reading São Paulo. This is because, "se, por um lado, vemos o privilégio da classe alta sobreovando as vias congestionadas da urbe, por outro lado, nos encontramos com o influxo de seres subalternos que, com sua presença e sua miséria, são percebidos como uma ameaça pelos setores abastados (86)," argues Leila Lehnen. Or as Lefebvre reminds us, "to picture space as a 'frame' or container into which nothing can be put unless its smaller than the recipient, and to imagine that this container has no other purpose than to preserve what has been put in it" is an error. "But it's error or ideology? The latter, more than likely. If so, who promotes it? Who exploits it? And why and how they do

so?" (94). Without a doubt, the narrative voices in Entry 16 answer these questions as they convey the "indignant" social commentary voiced by the elite.

Conclusion

Fundamentally, *eemc*'s representation of the city as a space that can only be read in its multidimensionality, as well as a space that reproduces structural inequality speaks to representations of lived space that challenge the totalizing project of the global city. This is due to the fact that the novel engages in a different kind of representation of São Paulo, one that offers a contrasting vision that implies the opposite of the cohesive model of the global city; one that addresses what goes unspoken in the global city narrative and writes about what is written out of that narrative. The novel, argues Marguerite Harrison, challenges the reader's easy interpretation of the city's multiple realities since, "the arduous process of reading *Eles eram muitos cavalos* matches the insurmountably strenuous – or at the very least uncomfortable, or inconvenient –lives the novel's survivors lead" (159). As a matter of fact, the horses in Rufatto's title stem from an intertextual conversation with Cecília Meireles's poem *Romanceiro da Inconfidência* (1953).[18] Purposely written in lowercase, the horses in Rufatto's novel establish a direct connection to the spaces of invisibility and anonymity occupied by a mass of socially and economically underprivileged that, like the horses carrying the rebels in the battle for independence as portrayed in the poem,

[18] "Eles eram muitos cavalos,
mas ninguém mais sabe os seus
nomes, sua pelagem, sua origem . . ."
The poem draws its subject from the first colonial attempt at Brazilian Independence, in Minas Gerais in 1789, and centers on the leader of the uprising, Joaquim José da Silva Xavier.

bear the weight of the transformations promoted by grand narratives. Ultimately, the characters in *eemc* are the unrepresented multiplicity left out of the fiction of the global city.

In conclusion, *eemc* broadens the debate that recognizes that the understanding of largely underrepresented urban realities requires a liberation from what Saskia Sassen calls "dominant narratives of globalization" (273), that is, it requires a liberation from a description of global cities whose only reference are the elite circles of society. In its own project, the novel seeks to engage the reader, imaginatively and actively, in the construction of a narrative that destabilizes rather than stabilizes discourses and forces of globalization. Above all, *eemc* reclaims the political dimension of space for "space is not only the space of 'no', "it is also the space of the body, and hence the space of 'yes', of the affirmation of life" (Lefebvre 201).

Chapter 2.

The 28th São Paulo Biennial as a Metaphor of Globalization

Introduction

The 28th São Paulo Art Biennial that took place in 2008 proposed a format different from its previous editions. Rather than featuring a considerable selection of well-known names of national and international art, like the traditional art exhibition format, that edition of the Biennial intended to rethink the model of seasonal art shows by offering a platform for reflection about the culture and system of Biennials within the international art circuit.

The organization of the 28th São Paulo Biennial, entitled "In Living Contact", was structured around the following components: On the ground floor of the Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion, a 'Square' section was created as a kind of public plaza following Oscar Niemeyer's original design for Ibirapuera Park in 1953 proposing a revision of the relationship between the Biennial and its surroundings – the park, and the city. The second floor of the pavilion was left empty. This 'Open Plan', aimed at offering the visitors an immediate, unobstructed experience of the Oscar Niemeyer design, and the opportunity to re-examine the purpose of the art show. The third floor hosted a 'Plan of Readings' divided in three sections: auditorium, library and exhibition.

The exhibition's title, "In Living Contact", places the 2008 show in direct conversation with the first São Paulo Biennial that took place in 1951, the second oldest art biennial in the world after Venice (in existence since 1895). Behind the two editions of the São Paulo Biennial (1951 and 2008) was a desire to create the

conditions for an immediate interaction with local as well as worldwide experiences of art. In the words Lourival Gomes Machado, the São Paulo Biennial's (SPB) first curator, "by its own definition, the Biennial should fulfill two major tasks: place Brazil's modern art not merely in confrontation with, but also in living contact with the art of the world while simultaneously seeking a position for São Paulo as a world art centre" (Cohen and Mesquita, 3). In a similar fashion, curators Ivo Mesquita and Ana Paula Cohen introduced the 28th SPB as a project whose objective was "to respond to the demands and challenges that present themselves to the institution in the 21st century and to place the Bienal de São Paulo once more 'in living contact' with its history, its city, its peers, and its age" (1). The exhibition model proposed by the 2008 SPB expected to function as a mediator between the audience and the production of cultural knowledge rather than offering a comprehensive display of contemporary art, thus intending to promote a critical debate about the current conditions of production of art and culture as well as about the current state of the SPB itself.

The interactive experience promised by the curators of the 2008 show was called into question in the opening night when a group of *pixadores* or wall taggers entered the pavilion and sprayed the empty walls on the second floor with tags similar to those typically found in the city's streets. Subsequently, one of the *pixadores,* the only female tagger who participated in the action, was arrested – remaining imprisoned for more than 50 days – and the space was quickly painted over. After the episode, the curators declared the intervention a criminal act of vandalism against the city's cultural heritage and set up a heavy, post- 9/11 airport-

like check point that would be in place for the entire nine weeks of the show's duration.

In view of that, this chapter presents a critical reading of the 2008 SPB and its conceptual program vis-à-vis the *pixadores* intervention. On one hand, I argue that the apparatus of criminalization employed against the *pixadores* – black and brown youth who come from areas in the periphery of the city and who most likely grew up under conditions of significant poverty, lacking access to resources such as education and regular employment – exposes a social paradigm of discrimination and control pervasive in contemporary Brazilian society. On the other hand, I argue that the empty floor, a potential metaphor for the limits of the globalizing experience in Brazil is converted into a space where political, racial, and cultural projects of globalization are ultimately enabled.

While promoting a critical debate in regards to the system of cultural knowledge production was the main focus in the curators' conceptual project, there were other reasons behind the curatorial decisions. With numerous expenses from last edition yet to be paid, the 2008 show was approved with a budget of $3.5 million as opposed to the initial $12 million, and had less than a year to be organized. The financial crisis coincided with a crisis of credibility involving the São Paulo Biennial Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to preparing and organizing the exhibition. The crisis culminated with the reelection of Manuel Francisco Pires da Costa as president, despite serious accusations that he had violated the Biennial's rules by hiring relatives, borrowing money at higher interest than market rates, and publishing a magazine unrelated to the event using Biennial

funds.

Generally speaking, more than a self-reflective exercise, the institutional crisis faced by the SPB was seen by artist as a platform for critique of the current state of Brazilian art and cultural production in its relationship to transnational capital. Several artists saw in this act of suspension of the global flow of art, as expected of one of the largest contemporary art exhibition in the world, an opportunity to reflect over the market control created by a globalized cultural market. Yet, when the objective of engaging in institutional critique was challenged, via the *pixadores*' intervention, the SPB failed in giving an adequate response that resonated with its proposed "in living contact" theme.

Fundamentally, the (budget-motivated) experience of crisis articulated by the 28th SPB was on the local level, result of a larger process of disarticulation of institutions dedicated to the promotion of culture, and on a larger instance, of flexibility of modes of production typical of processes of economic integration associated with globalization. With that in mind, I argue that in spite of the critical approach to the current market-oriented system of cultural production, the 28th SPB's project ultimately complied with larger discourses of globalization, including the global city narrative, thus serving the instrumental purpose of responding to the cultural and financial interests that enabled that same system. Ultimately, examining the relationship between the production of culture and the global city narrative helps us understand how discourses of globalization sustain mechanisms of racial inequality in contemporary Brazilian society.

(Re)situating the São Paulo Biennial

First, it is necessary to locate the 28th SPB within the larger framework of a system of production of capital in cultural form that is managed by capital's own regulatory systems on national and global levels. In considering that, we can unravel the institutional need the place the 28th SPB in relation to "its history, its city and its age," and uncover the place occupied by culture in the legitimization of globalization discourses, more specifically, the global city narrative.

Like other cultural forms of production, contemporary art exhibitions have indubitably adopted models of organization grounded on the globalizing order. The worldwide proliferation of this kind of large-scale art show, argues Carlos Basualdo, reveals a project of symbolic cultural exchange guided by transnational markets.

The international biennial circuit, for instance, "is organized around size, that is, the size of its budget and the number of works included which reflect the institutional framework from which events like these are generated. The consumable spectacle as a motif in the late 20th century art and entertainment is in tune with a project o global circulation of culture" (157). While the consumable spectacle is the model that currently controls the production of culture, the ideologically subsidized production of culture is nothing new.

The discourse behind the creation of the SPB in the 1950s reflected a worldwide discourse of democracy and freedom in a post World War II era, locally promoted by the Brazilian state. The construction of Brasília (inaugurated in 1960) was the ultimate project designed to create an image of a modern, democratic

Brazil, one that aspired to be recognized as one of the world modern centers and that had employed the internationalization of Brazil's modernist art as a utilitarian strategy.[19] At stake in that move was the insertion of Brazil in the international scene as economic power. That would be achieved through the alignment with United States' policies of endowment of the arts and post-war cultural diplomatic principles. The ideological approximation between Brazil and the US was epitomized by Nelson A. Rockefeller's direct involvement and investment in the creation of art museums, namely the MASP-Museu de São Paulo and the MAM-Museu de Arte Moderna, as well as other cultural programs (Lima, 3). Due to the fact that modern art had by then become synonymous with modernity, and by extension, freedom and democracy, the sponsorship of culture turned out to be an important agent in the aggressively promoted US agenda in the post-war. An agenda supported with fervor by the political and intellectual elites of Latin America. Needless to say, Rockefeller's direct participation in the promotion of cultural programs proved that modernization and democracy figured as the US ideological plans for Latin America and modern art became part of a program of exportation of American values as means to overcome the influence of European culture and the circulation of the red scare.[20]

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[19] In regards to the production of culture, it is important to make a distinction between the program of the Semana de Arte Moderna de São Paulo of 1922 and that of the 1950s' period, when the first Biennial took place. Different from the (US influenced) modernization program of the first Biennial, the artists and intellectuals involved in the 1922 event were invested in promoting and supporting the creation of a Brazilian modern art with a distinctive, unified national cultural identity. That is, at the core of their project was the quest for the cognizance of a sovereign national culture, which had been struggling to overcome the center-periphery dynamic in place since the colonial era (Schwarz, 2001).

[20] For more on cultural imperialism, US hegemony, and art patronage during the cold war, see: Oliveira, 2001.

Very similar to the ideologically driven modernization program of the 1950s, the institutionalization of cultural programs also works as a tool used to consolidate the dominant ideology supported by national and international elites. To Michael Peter Smith, the origins of the contemporary ideology of globalization are historically linked to the developmentalist project for "they constitute efforts by powerful social forces to replace the developmentalist institutional framework of the 1960s and 1980s, premised on modernization theory, with a new mode of economic integration of cities and states to world market principles" (379). Considering that to be the case, if in the 1950s, the production of modern art in Brazil was explicitly tied to an ideological influence over culture, in the 2000s, contemporary art has become a key player in the market-oriented experience of cultural production.

Revitalization projects and the instrumentalization of culture

The challenges faced by the SPB in the twenty-first century suggested by the curators, that is, "to respond to the demands and challenges that present themselves to the institution…and to place the Bienal de São Paulo once more 'in living contact' with its history, its city, its peers, and its age," are symptomatic of processes of globalization of economic and cultural relations. The deep economic restructuring put into effect by globalization, argues Francisco de Oliveira, came about as a severe "whirlwind of deregulation, privatization and restructuring under the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration (1995-2002) – and with it, the dissolution of the industrial working class created during the developmentalist era –[that] torn up all established relations between economy and politics, classes and

representation" (5).[21] In the sphere of culture the main changes were the defunding and de-structuring of institutions dedicated to the promotion of culture, mostly by way of reduced budget allocation and cultural incentive laws as by the instrumentalization of culture to serve private interests.[22] That is the case with São Paulo as illustrated by the city' strategic investment in "global" cultural events.

In São Paulo, the instrumentalization of culture is clearly represented by newly instituted cultural events geared toward the legitimization of its global city status. As a consequence of the reduction of state participation in public life, the municipal administration, together with private enterprises took over the state's responsibility for cultural governance and geared it towards galvanizing the city's attributes in order to place it as a prime contender within the category of global city. Virada Cultural, arguably the city's most significant new cultural project, is an event created by the administration of the mayor José Serra (2004-2006) in which a series of music shows, theater, and art events take place in dozens of sites, in the period of 24 hours, chiefly downtown, following the model of Paris' Nuit Blanche. In place since 2005, this entertainment-oriented event explicitly aims at attracting a middle class audience to reoccupy the city centre, a space previously left to deterioration by the public sector. The preparation of the city centre as a stage for cultural consumption accompanied by the social cleansing in the form of

[21] Oliveira argues that the same model was adopted in the ensuing administration of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) despite its overt criticism to the implementation of economic globalization of the previous cabinet.

[22] Generally speaking, cultural policy at that time was based mostly on the incentive laws that relied on few private investors. The best example is the Rouanet Law, a fiscal/cultural incentive law that allows any individual or corporation to pay 4% of its owed income tax to finance cultural projects. It has been the main mechanism for cultural financing since its implementation in 1991. Inadvertently, the law has become the model for and cultural financing and has inspired state and municipal governments to establish their own Leis de Incentivo (Laws of Incentive). For further information see Chauí, 2011.

the physical removal of local street populations, reveal the role of this kind of event within gentrification processes typical of urban policies tailored to attend the demands of a new system of global economic flow. Moreover, despite Virada Cultural's discourse of multicultural approach and attention to diversity, evident in the management's overly publicized selection of artists, the event's spatial distribution reveals the administration's (historical) problematic policies towards racial equality. The sites assigned to the rap and hip-hop performances in the 2008 edition, for instance, were conveniently situated in the old downtown area of Parque Dom Pedro, a deteriorated and far off area isolated from the activities happening in the more central sites. In addition, the city surrounded the area with a higher than usual number of policemen, who engaged in random searches of "suspect individuals." Evident in the episode is the fact that cultural productions associated with the low-income, black and brown populations were placed in the geographic and symbolic periphery of culture. That is, the spatial transaction of bodies in the city was regulated by the allocation of undesired territories to unwanted groups while the prime areas hosted activities commonly associated with the middle-class, such as classical music concerts, museum exhibitions, and drama performances. Not only that, by isolating the periphery in the very city center, the event became an opportunity for state control and surveillance, evident in the considerably larger allocation of security forces, including a check point, into the rap and hip-hop site. According to Leila Blass, Virada Cultural is a clear example of a cultural project that is in direct connection to discourses of globalization: "Esse acontecimento artístico-cultural reflete…um tempo presente marcado pelos

processos sociais da globalização que diz respeito à convivência com as diferenças. A Virada Cultural torna-se uma oportunidade para se desvendar quem são seus protagonistas e as ambigüidades dos discursos dominantes que orientam práticas sociais" (43). In view of that, it becomes clear that the example of Virada Cultural speaks directly to a project of controlling the regulation of the city space, in this case the central area, by enacting a number of directives that operate at a local level while responding to larger structural global demands. Not only that, the event's inclusive agenda, a priority to the city administration in the quest for the global city status, masks new and old practices of racial segregation and control.

Gentrification and other urban development plans designed after the global city model also benefit form the instrumentalization of culture. The "revitalization" of São Paulo's historical city centre has gained the attention of financial interests in the last few decades mostly because the central part of city comprises a large network of businesses, services, and commerce[23] whose redevelopment has been benefiting a new real estate market that boomed in the 1990s, very similar to what has been done in Buenos Aires' Puerto Madero[24].

Since its creation, Associação Viva o Centro, a non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of the downtown area, founded in 1991 by Bank Boston in association with representatives of real-state market, and other sectors of

[23] Ten large districts that are widely occupied by formal and informal trade, businesses, and public offices form São Paulo's central region; 45,4% of the facilities are used for services and 18% for industrial activities. The centre's infrastructure had been underutilized at night due to the high rates of homelessness and criminality that resulted from the complete abandonment by the public sector date as early as 1940s. Nowadays 25% of downtown inhabitants live in *cortiço*s (collective rent houses); while people are living in precarious conditions, 40o buildings are completely empty. For more see Lima and Pallamin, 2010.

[24] Buenos Aires' urban transformations under neoliberalism are discussed in the next chapter.

civil society, has accumulated a certain level of political power in order to push for an intense process of gentrification of the city center. Lima and Pallamin observe that

> [T]he different members of Viva o Centro legitimized their intentions and activities by announcing that the historic downtown was semi-defunct, violent and physically deteriorated, an idea that was largely absorbed and broadcast by the press. To counter this urban decay, the association advocated the need to transform São Paulo in a world city with strong and well-articulated center with large investments in projects for capital accumulation. (48)

Their agenda builds upon the notion that the city center should be a space used for the concentration of information, wealth and power.[25] Viva o Centro has been explicitly promoting these changes as part of the project of creating an image of São Paulo as an inevitable global city. So far, the association has succeeded in attracting influential cultural institutions such as private universities, museums, and theatres to the area. However, the implementation of cultural activities in the city center caters mainly to the middle and upper classes, which access these places through security systems that effectively segregate the population. A phenomenon common to several Latin American cites, this kind of privately financed cultural policy, argues Néstor García Canclini, "is internally driven but at the same time related to new modes of subordination of peripheral economies and to transnational restructuring of markets" (7). Following such logic, the association between public

[25] Alternatively, Fórum Centro Vivo represents one of civil society's few responses to the most recent changes in the city center. Movements such as labor and student unions, NGOs, cultural, and human rights groups formed the forum in the 1990s as a counterpoint to gentrification programs such as those put forward by Viva o Centro. The group was created mainly as a response to the intensification of evictions of low-income groups in areas of increased real-state value in the central districts. Recently, more and more vacant buildings have been occupied to pressure public authority in finding a solution and in improving housing shortage in the area. However, in spite of several successful struggles carried out by the coalition, the programs put forward by financially and politically powerful agencies, such as Viva o Centro have overpowered the resident's demands for social housing.

and private interests, exemplified by Virada Cultural and Viva o Centro, have been successful in promoting the idea of São Paulo as a global city with an attractive, active and profitable city center suitable to host global economic power.

The 28th São Paulo Biennial: cultural productions in geopolitical peripheries

If we take into consideration that representations of the global city are never neutral, São Paulo's search for distinction in the world stage functions as a clear affirmation of globalization. The focus in being connected to a global (cultural) network replicates a pattern of socio-spatial inequality grounded on residues of colonial domination and neo-colonial forms of racial segregation. That being the case, São Paulo's experience demonstrates that cultural projects based on the global city model, such as that of the 28th SPB, place entire communities into suspect if not criminal status.

As already mentioned, the 28th São Paulo Biennial curatorial decision of leaving the second floor of the Ciccillo Matarazzo pavilion unoccupied was a rather risky move. If in principle, the idea was to draw attention to the "economy of art" and allow a reflection on the public dimension of art, the curators' response to the intervention by the *pixadores* rendered the initiative altogether frustrating and incoherent. The inconsistency between the Biennial's discourse and practice was even more evident when confronted with its initial goals of "offering a platform for observation and reflection upon the culture and system of biennials, taking its own experience as a case study" (Cohen and Mesquita, 2).

The counter-cultural expression known as *pixação*, or the tagging of one's made-up name or alias on the city's walls, originated in the low-income areas

(known as *periferias*) of São Paulo.[26] Having emerged in the mid-1980s among the black and brown youth living in those areas, *pixação* became an effective way to render visible the individual and collective identity of these groups. The origins of these wall inscriptions can be traced to the style of hip-hop graffiti tagging that emerged in New York in the 1970s and 1980s, which became more popular in Brazil with the loosening of censorship regulations that came about with the end of the dictatorship in 1985.

It is said that São Paulo's *pixação* has developed its own unique typographic style made of vertically elongated letters using straight lines believed to have been inspired by São Paulo's tall buildings (Caldeira, 2006). Usually done in groups, the main idea behind *pixação* is to inscribe the tags in the most impossible and risky spots such as roofs and tops of façades.[27] From abandoned factories to office buildings and residences, in the center and other areas of the city, *pixadores* writing on the city's walls forcefully marks their presence in a space characterized by the anonymity and invisibility of lower-class and non-white populations. Frequently illegible and carrying no immediate political demand, the political meaning of these inscriptions lies in the pervasiveness with which they appear in the city. [28] In other words, in an attempt to negotiate their participation in

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[26] In São Paulo's context, *periferia* is a term used to identify vast areas of habitation and settlement outside the central zones of the city, where low-income and non-white populations have been historically concentrated.

[27] The culture of tagging is about finding risky and physically challenging places to tag. This element of risk evokes Ulrich Beck's concept of risk society in which globalization is one of the principle determinants of risk-producing behavior. According to Beck, the current world or global risk society is marked by an overwhelming mistrust in globalization's promises of rationality and integration, which in turn is conducive to risk-producing behavior. For more see Beck, 2006.

[28] The term *pixação* is purposely spelled with an 'x' to distinguish itself from the inscription of political protest also commonly found on the city's walls.

spaces other than the peripheries, *pixação* is a way for the urban excluded to have their voices heard in a city that consistently denies them their most basic rights, including the right to the city. By individually and collectively branding their names on the walls, the taggers are making themselves visible and acknowledging the existence of those who have no names in the public space of the city.

One of the critical functions of these interventions in the urban landscape is to operate as a measure of difference, enacting the streets' function as a site for negotiation between the privileged and the marginalized. According to Agnaldo Farias, "a pixação em São Paulo é uma manifestação visual que traz, embutida nas práticas e imagens criadas sobre muros e edifícios, uma visão de mundo que não cabe nos acordos que regem e limitam a vida urbana. A pixação fala de algo que de outro modo não seria visto e que, não fosse justamente por meio da grafia aparentemente cifrada, dificilmente seria ditto" (15). In that sense, the inscription of *pixações* on São Paulo's walls questions the city's official culture and cultural politics. That is, the city's planned culture is questioned by a form of intervention that calls attention to an unauthorized activity that is also part of its cultural landscape but that is often dismissed as such while being criminalized in the city's official discourse.

As gestures of transgression, *pixações* use the city's walls to intervene in the public space and call attention to the systematic economic and racial inequalities that shape society and its cityscape. The reproduction of gender inequality associated with the culture of *pixação*, however, is not so transgressive. In a patriarchal society like Brazil, social space, like urban space is marked by

socially constructed boundaries designed to position women and men in different spheres. In most cases, these boundaries serve to keep women out of urban/public life, limiting their space to the private sphere, with the exception of overexposed women's commodified and sexualized bodies. In a male dominated counter-culture that allows little room for female participants, *pixação* ends up reinforcing a system of gender inequality with the pretense that such activity is too risky and unsafe for women. In not allowing the participation of female taggers, with a few exceptions, women are not only prevented from participating in the life of the city, but also denied the right to assert their presence and demands in the plea for visibility associated with *pixações.* Therefore, if we consider tagging as a strategy for social recognition in a space in which the marginalized have few other forms of belonging, the exclusion of women, if not their deliberate removal, like the case of the arrested female *pixadora* in the 28th SBP opening night, leaves them not only unnamed but also unseen.

Despite the problematic gender dynamics enacted by the taggers, the undesirable *pixações* function as an important instrument for the articulation of demands for social inclusion. Often seen as an affront and associated with decay *pixação* is regarded by society as an illegal and criminal activity. In fact, the constant process of discrimination of taggers has just been recently reinforced with the issuing of the May 2011 legislation prohibiting the sale of spray paint to persons under18 years of age, further criminalizing the practice of *pixação*. As of that date, the spray cans must include a visible and distinct warning sign stating that the tagging of walls is a crime. The new law elaborates on an earlier

legislation of February 1998, which foresees penal and administrative sanctions for *pixação* for it is considered an activity harmful to the environment.[29] At the same time, the new legislation decriminalizes and authorizes the practice of graffiti, which is associated with street art, thus carrying a cultural value attribute. For instance, in the case of public property, the painting of graffiti is not considered to be a crime when done with the permission and in compliance with municipal ordinances and rules of preservation of historical and artistic national heritage. As opposed to graffiti, *pixação* is an activity that does not seem to be easily transformed into commodity, and therefore is not accepted as a marker of local cultural authenticity. In other words, as an expression of a very particular territorial identity, even thought these inscriptions have become expressive of the city's local cultural production, they have not been incorporated into the city's official culture. Conversely, given the art status assigned to street art in the contemporary international circuit, graffiti has been used by São Paulo's administrators in several redevelopment projects as some sort of city brand.[30] That is, often, the symbolic capital represented by the local graffiti culture is transformed into a gentrifying tool that is used by renovation projects, which incorporate them as a manifestation of local authenticity that adds cultural value to the redeveloped area, ultimately increasing rent and property values. While recognizing the political and aesthetic

[29] Source: LEI ORDINÁRIA Nº 12408, DE 25 DE MAIO DE 2011. Altera o Artigo 65 da Lei 9.605, de 12 de Fevereiro de 1998, para Descriminalizar o Ato de Grafitar, e Dispõe Sobre a Proibição de Comercialização de Tintas em Embalagens do Tipo Aerossol a Menores de 18 (dezoito) Anos. Found online at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2011-2014/2011/Lei/L12408.htm

[30] São Paulo graffiti art has become internationally acclaimed and several local artists are nowadays well known names in the international art circuit. Os Gêmeos, perhaps the most famous of them, have been contracted by corporations as well as city administrations, and museums to display their work in several cities in the world.

value of street art as legitimate forms of reclaiming the public space in an increasingly privatized city, the assimilation of graffiti into the city's official agenda is in direct conflict with the reminders of social inequality expressed in *pixações.*

Symbolic of the escalation of the tensions between what is seen as legitimate art and what is considered criminal activity, the confrontation at the 28th SPB's opening night is symptomatic of a social paradigm of discrimination and control explicit in the use of heavy-handed repressive apparatus. Typical of a discriminatory elite ideology that capitalizes on the place occupied by art in the discourse of dominant culture, the rendition of the taggers' intervention as a criminal act of vandalism against the city's cultural heritage is an expressive mechanism of the preservation of a sanitized discourse of law and order in which impoverished black and brown youth do not seem to fit.

While attempting to negotiate their participation in spaces other than the peripheries, *pixadores* "take the whole city as sites of intervention. All types of walls, public and private, increasingly become canvases for these urban painters and writers," Caldeira has observed (2006:154). It is worth noting the dissonance between Caldeira's favorable analysis of *pixações*, which appeared in the catalogue of the previous edition of the SPB entitled "How to live together," and the 28th SPB curatorial conduct towards the taggers. Perhaps anticipating the tensions to occur in the next edition, the 27th SPB, "How to live together," proposed a reflection on the construction of shared spaces by following the globalizing

narrative of dissolution of the nation-states into an international network of linked political economies.

In fact, the SPB's decision to deploy such an excessive security apparatus to restrain the taggers in the opening night and the ensuing use of checkpoint at the pavilion's entrance are a clear manifestation of the state-sanctioned racial violence in which "security architecture is becoming the primary mode though which it [the state] engages its economically dispossessed black and brown populations" (213). Although referring to the recent army occupations of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*, Denise da Silva's discussion of racial violence as a regulating tactic in which the unwanted bodies of black and brown youth are an uncontested dimension of contemporary global existence reveals how global security mandates function as new configuration of the global political scene. She writes,

> Whether a 'global society' (cosmopolitan or fragmented) or a new empire describes the present global configuration, there is no question that, in the past 20 years or so, states have been busy assembling the neoliberal juridical-economic program that governs all of them. The directives of this 'global contract', or the global mandate…have instituted the global free marketplace economic reforms (de-regulamentation, elimination of trade barriers and stimulus to private investment); inclusive democracy (measures that expand citizenship rights through mechanisms that promote the inclusion of women, people of color and other socially excluded groups, and the protection of human rights); and security architectures (such as Plan Colombia and the Merida Initiative, which includes military [financial, personnel, weapons, and intelligence] aid). (225-6)

That being the case, the taggers that intervened in the SPB opening night brought to the forefront the problematic that questions which bodies are allowed to partake in the constitution of the "global society" – and therefore the global city – while reclaiming for the marginalized visible spaces of representation and participation.

Yet, the security apparatus employed to guard the "cultural void" succeeded in preventing those who lack the sanctioned cultural capital commonly used to produce "legitimate" forms of cultural knowledge to access the site. The security forces used the tagging as an opportunity to institutionalize brown and black youth in a deliberate practice of biopolitics. That is, the use of security mechanism accounts for the state's regulation of the occupation of the territory of the city based on bodily differentiation and discipline (Foucault, 1995). Such as system of inequalities, argue João Vargas and Jaime Alves, "shows how Afro-Brazilians experience state-sanctioned violence, not only by its most 'peculiar institution', the police, but also by the social and institutional mechanisms, embodied in schools and hospitals, for example, that perpetuate relative disadvantages for blacks" (613).

Globalization, argues Lisa Lowe, "promises universality through the social, political, and economic interconnection of the worlds" (55). However, while attempting to promote universality through interconnection and integration, its representations are "necessarily partial, built on the absence of an apprehensible whole" (40). Due to the impossibility of representing globalization through a single, totalizing narrative, states Lowe, the metaphor is seen as a critical way of reading globalization's conditions because it "states the irreducibility of what it tries to represent" (42). Representing a "metaphor for globalization" itself, *pixação* marks the irreconcilable promises of total interconnectivity by highlighting the widening and intensification of center/periphery tensions in all its variations. In that sense, the SPB's reaction to the tagger's intervention illustrates the

irreconcilable promises of total interconnectivity in its use of segregating measures while attempting to promote integration.

Fundamentally, just as the SPB managed to reinforce globalization discourses, the tagger's intervention effectively placed the Biennial 'in living contact' with globalization' several fabrications. That is, the art show left the totalizing discourse of cultural globalization intact given that the empty floor, a potential metaphor for the limits of the globalizing experience in Brazil, became the epitome of the political, racial, and cultural project of the SPB. Once criminalized, the *pixadores* were marked as the racially different who lacked the literacy or education to partake in discussions about art and were rendered a threat to the project's security. The potentially prolific opportunity to question the privileges of a city experience based on a system of structural inequality was missed out as black and brown young men and women, in a daily situation of escape, challenged the blatant dissonances of globalized cultural and urban practices. After all, the registering of one's name on the walls of a space that was not projected for their use in a city historically marked as a segregationist speaks to their also historically subdued individual and collective identities. In addition, as a city dedicated to having the global city brand attached to its image, São Paulo makes a point of not tolerating public expressions that operate outside that constructed narrative.

The SPB's apparent adoption of a critical assessment of globalized cultural production by means of temporarily suspending the global flow of art and artists concealed its complicity with larger discourses of globalization and its ideological

constructs. Moreover, the same mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion used in relation to the geopolitical periphery were reenacted by the SPB's use of excessive force and surveillance. As per Lígia Nobre, the disproportionate response from the part of the curatorial office reveals the SBP's elitist discourse. While "onlookers frantically shot future YouTube videos as the taggers were violently evicted by the Bienal security guards, education guides, and apparently even by Cohen herself, was seen running after them. The next day, the Bienal labeled the taggers 'criminals', and Cohen dismissed them as 'those people from the periphery' during a press conference. (1) Clear in Cohen's rampage is the centralizing and discriminatory and yet irreconcilable project of the SPB. The space of the Biennial, as well as the city, as privileged sites for knowledge production and consumption, not to be accessible to the residents of urban popular sectors (*periferia*), becomes a mechanism of validation of the same exclusionary discourse, and overlooks the fact that the beneficiaries of the project of cultural (as well as political and economic) globalization are rarely found in the margins. Suggested in the curator's discourse is the idea that criminals, "people from the periphery," and, by extension, the non-white population were not only unwanted visitors in the art show but, to an extent, also antagonists in the construction of the global city narrative.

In an attempt to appease some of the criticism that the institution received in how they handled the *pixadores* in the 28th art show, the 29th São Paulo Biennial invited some *pixadores* to contribute to that edition of the show with photographs and videos of their "work." The 29th SPB's title, *There is always a cup of sea to sail in*, a verse taken from Brazilian poet Jorge de Lima's major work *Invenção de*

Orfeu (1952)[31] attempted at serving as a metaphor for the exhibition's ambitious theme: art and politics. Similar to the 28th SPB, the discrepancy between the show's theme and the exhibition realities could have not been greater. By inviting the *pixadores* to participate in the show with photographic registers, the Biennial, under the pretense of being inclusive of all groups, once again excluded the marginalized from a legitimized space of representation. That is, while carefully selected images of *pixações* were allowed to enter the pavilions and were exposed to the gaze of thousands of visitors, the *pixadores* themselves remained invisible. As already noted, rather than a distant representation of a form of street politics that, while recognized as such, is disavowed of its political claims, the political force of the *pixação* exists in its corporeal presence. Therefore, the mediated presence of the *pixadores* in the 29th SPB, a presence that did not represent any threat, was not only welcome but also celebrated by the SPB and its patrons.

Conclusion

In short, the intervention carried out by the *pixadores* in the opening night of the 28th São Paulo Biennial directly challenged the fairness of a system that replicates a pattern of socio-spatial inequality, thus threatening the overplayed notion of interconnectivity promoted by the Biennial. As an alleged site of "encounter and exchange," the art show ultimately manifested the antithesis of promises of universality and integration. In fact, the SPB's response to the

[31] Associated with the modernist movement of the 1920s, Jorge de Lima is considered one of the most important authors of twentieth century Afro-Brazilian Literature.

pixadores rendered visible the dominant political, racial, and cultural structures shaping Brazilian society.

Ultimately, if on the one hand, by intervening in the segregationist and elitist program, pervasive in the space of the exhibition as well as in the city terrain, the *pixadores* threatened the totalizing construction of a city that should be conceived as the site for global economic transactions run by global modes of political regulation. On the other hand, the episode makes clear that the racial projects of the state, operating at the street level, succeed in redeploying, naturalizing and re-configuring discriminatory criminal justice practices.

Chapter 3.

Grupo de Arte Callejero and the Occupation of Neoliberal Buenos Aires

Introduction

In the afternoon of December 19th of 2001, just hours before the popular uprising that took over the city, downtown Buenos Aires was taken aback by an unexpected military occupation: ten thousand plastic toy soldiers in parachutes descended from the sky, disrupting trade and traffic in the financial center of the Argentine capital. While bystanders observed the scene attempting to make sense of such a sudden interruption, others responded to the incursion by trying to grab a hold of the toys falling upon them. Drivers and commuters stopped for a moment to look at the sky; office workers halted their activities and went to the window to watch the rose-colored cascade unfolding in front of their eyes; when the last soldier reached the ground, the streets were temporarily paralyzed and the quotidian time suspended.

This scene describes the final phase of the remarkable intervention carried out by the Buenos Aires based Grupo de Arte Callejero (Street Art Group). The first stage of the intervention, executed in the week prior to the parachute launching, involved the making and pasting of stickers displaying military imagery on consumer products and posters advertising mainstream media and transnational businesses. On each decal, the image of a soldier, a tank, or a missile was juxtaposed to a blank target. The decals were placed on a variety of products such as Marlboro cigarette packs and *El Clarín* newspaper announcements. During that entire week, the stickers were systematically pasted on commercial ads as well as

on bank and office windows in the area surrounding the location from which the parachutes were to be launched.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how by engaging in a symbolic occupation of downtown Buenos Aires, GAC's intervention, rightly named *Invasión* (Invasion), renders visible the intersection between space, capital, and control in an era of implacable neoliberalism. Intervention is defined here as a socio-political strategy used for creating spaces that momentarily interrupt structures of normalcy. In the urban setting, these interventions are usually tied to anti-establishment politics and to the growing urban resistance to corporate takeover, enclosure, and segregation. Marina Vishmidt argues that as cultural responses to deteriorating social structures contemporary urban interventions are concerned with "fracturing an image of domination" (450). As disruptive propositions about the urban space, the purpose of interventions is to "counter the dominant codes of urbanism" and to engage in a creative social production of the space. On that account, urban interventions are not grounded through a particular spatial strategy but function as relational and contextual experiences that may promote the creation of networks among different social groups. It is a socio-spatial strategy that is understood in action.[32]

The most extraordinary aspect of GAC's intervention was the fact that it not only anticipated the popular riots of December 19th and 20th, 2001, but also that it culminated with the symbolic military assault of Buenos Aires just hours before

[32] For more information about art collectives and social movements in Latin America and worldwide see Mesquita, 2011.

the declaration of a country-wide state of emergency ensued by a declaration of martial law, followed by the resignation of president Fernando de la Rúa. More than an instance of fortuitous timing, the intervention was exceptional because of the explicit allusion to a military takeover conveyed by the deliberate use of war codes that critically engaged the recent Argentine past with its most dire present. In that, *Invasión* was precise in exposing the relationship between state violence and the neoliberal economic program initiated during the dictatorship years (1976-1983).

GAC's awareness of Argentina's pervasive state of crisis is representative of the widespread collective sentiment of betrayal and disappointment that so visibly marked the last days of 2001. In the evening of December 19th, the population took the streets not only to protest against the situation of mass dispossession afflicting the entire country but also to demand a substantial change in the failed political system, as eloquently expressed in the collective claim of the popular revolt, "¡Que se vayan todos. Que no quede ni uno solo!" Less than a statement announcing the "end of politics," as asserted by Ernesto Laclau, the popular claim manifested an acute awareness of the need for a new way of doing politics. Laclau's claim that the "¡Que se vayan todos!" could lead to "the end of politics" is based on an interpretation that implicit in the popular demand is an invitation to authoritarianism: "Porque decir '¡Que se vayan todos!' es decir que se quede uno, porque alguien tiene que reglamentar la sociedad. Contra el mito de la sociedad totalmente gobernada, el '¡Que se vayan todos!' es el mito de una sociedad ingobernable, que necesita de un amo que restablezca el orden." Laclau's

main argument is that once ousted, power has to be rethought or reorganized, and since the social movements offered no alternative wide-ranging project,[33] the reorganization of Argentine society could once again fall in the hands of totalitarian forces. Yet, what the popular slogan demonstrated and GAC symbolically articulated was the fact that Argentines were aware that a different form of authoritarianism had been already in place. According to Sebastián Carassai, "it is difficult to conceive that the demonstrators who raised that claim in December 2001 believed that a country may be governed by 'nobody'; it is more plausible to assume that, by demanding the impossible, they were radically contesting those who (un)ruled them." He continues, "perhaps what should be emphasized in this process is less the impossibility of what was demanded and more the fact that it was possible to demand the impossible" (52). Embedded in the demand for general resignation was a radical contestation of the alliance between the political class and economic forces that had depleted the country in the past decades. Driven by the rejection of a corrupt political system and characterized by a strong anti-neoliberal position, the popular uprising of December 2001 targeted the dominant economic model as much as the conjuncture that allowed the systematic abuse of the Argentine population to take place.

[33] Even though they were successful in temporarily organizing themselves separately from the traditional institutional channels, only a few months after the uprising, the expectations opened up by these initiatives had lost force. The remarkable solidarity generated during the crisis faded gradually in the post-crisis. As stated by Carassai, "savings holders went back to the banks; the citizens to the ballot boxes; one part of the *piqueteros* formed an alliance with the governing party, and the other persisted in its confrontation not only with the government, but also with the middle class that no longer felt any sympathy towards them" (56).

Reclaiming the streets in the neoliberal city

The consequences of free market practices reflected in the neoliberal Buenos Aires of the late twentieth century serves as a critical example of the most aggressive neoliberal structural reforms in all of Latin America. The Carlos Ménem administration forced extreme measures into the Argentine economy such as the peso-dollar parity, extensive privatization, the re-structuring of the labor market, and other measures of deregulation (Bonasso 2002; Vezzetti 2002; Harvey 2005). As a long-term consequence of the continuous cutbacks in state investments into social infrastructure while favoring private investments, the country's economy collapsed. By the end of the twentieth century, an astonishing number of homeless and a mass of unemployed workers roamed the streets of Buenos Aires re-collecting garbage. The economic crises aggravated the crisis of state legitimacy, which culminated with the unforeseen scale of mass protests in the capital in December 2001.

Already in the 1990s, Buenos Aires was the scenario of innumerous interventions carried out by different groups reacting to the deterioration of working and living conditions. Workers blocked roads and overtook factories to protest the high levels of unemployment while garbage collectors trying to make a living out of scavenged material invaded the city's streets (Svampa 2005; Klein 2004). Other groups occupying the city were art and activist collectives that, together with the other political actors, were contesting the decline of Argentine society. Among the groups formed in that period was H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio. Sons and Daughters for

Identity and Justice Against Oblivion and Silence), a collective formed by the children of the political dissidents disappeared during the dictatorial regime.

GAC was first known for partnering with H.I.J.O.S. in preparing and executing the *escraches* –acts of denunciation or public shaming that inform the public of the crimes of unpunished collaborators of the dictatorship. *Escraches* aim at raising public awareness about crimes committed during the dirty war and exposing the fact that the neoliberal economic policies in Latin America are a continuation of the status quo that allowed and supported the dictatorship in the 1970s. In a typical *escrache*, the group and its supporters take over the street where former agents of state terrorism live and expose their identities to the public via speeches, satirical theatrical performances, and musical acts. GAC's role in the public education campaign that usually precedes the *escrache* involves designing and posting informative street signage in the area where the act will occur. An example of a street sign hung on a street lamp in the city center and used in one of the *escraches* reads: 500 meters ahead, ASSASSIN, Luis Juan Donocik, Ave. Honório Pueyrredon 1047, first floor. A former military police commissioner, Luis Juan Donocik was accused of crimes against humanity during the dirty war but walked freely at the time of the *escrache* (2003). Later he was tried, found guilty and jailed for life (2010).

In addition of being an act of public shaming, the collective effort that characterizes the *escrache* effectively adds a public dimension to the plea for truth and justice that comes with popular mobilizations demanding trial and punishment

for the agents of the dictatorship[34]. In fact, the manifestations carried out by H.I.J.O.S. and its supporters as well as the ongoing protests carried out by the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo enact a culture of production of political memory[35] that have greatly contributed to human rights efforts attempting at bringing to justice those responsible for killing and disappearing thousands of Argentines.

As active participants in the social condemnation of military repressors, GAC, H.I.J.O.S. and other groups that emerged in the 1990s also participated in anti-neoliberalism struggles, always reminding Argentine society that the two processes, although occurring in different historical moments, shared undeniable similarities.

In Argentina, as in most of Latin America, the combined processes of military dictatorship and the application of the neoliberal[36] model acted together throughout the 1970s to facilitate the transfer from state capital to free market capital. The most brutal repression was used to discipline and control the

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[34] It is worth mentioning that aside from being a claim for justice, the *escrache* operates on the level of collective consciousness, since it requires the direct participation of the population. According to Colectivo Situaciones, "el escrache es un procedimiento práctico de producción de justicia… el nace como una forma de *autoafirmación*. En lugar de confiar en la justicia representativa, se inauguran formas directas de 'hacer justicia' sin esperar mediaciones de ningún tipo…los efectos del escrache no son sino secundariamente una denuncia a un funcionamiento inoperante del poder judicial. El escrache no trabaja 'presionando a los jueces para que actúen', aun si, eventualmente esto también ocurre. La marca del escrache sobre el cuerpo social es mas profunda e inquietante. Remueve toda una cadena de cumplicidades que hicieran possible el genocidio y convoca – para hacer justicia – a miles de personas, particularmente los vecinos de lo genocidas, que son quienes toman en manos la tarea de ejercer la pena" (206). For more see Colectivo Situaciones, 2002.

[35] The political memory of a traumatic past is evoked by these groups as social and cultural responses to the legalized impunity normalized by the 'forgive and forget' discourse of post-dictatorship Argentina. For further information see Vezzetti 1-7; Taylor, 2003.

[36] Neoliberalism, as defined by David Harvey, is a twofold project. In a first instance, it is a political and economic doctrine guided by practices of market deregulation, privatization, and the relative withdrawal of the state from the public sphere. On a second level, neoliberalism encapsulates a particular logic that serves as the basis for social relations by promoting demobilization, such as that of organized labor (2005).

population while a substantial part of public resources was being handed to private capital, aiming at a complete restructuring of the Argentine state.[37] Essentially, "the dictatorships' raison d'être," argues Idelber Avelar, "was the physical and symbolic elimination of all resistance to the implementation of market logic" (4). Therefore, it only makes sense to talk about the process of re-democratization in Argentina in terms of the configuration of a democratic state that had as basis its authoritarian predecessor. The marriage between democratic principles and neoliberal economy is evidence of a process of continuation that started in the authoritarian past and was carried on in the democratic present.

The various narratives of neoliberalism, however, tell another story. They talk about individual freedom, liberty, personal responsibility, and evoke a strong belief in the free market, placing an entire economic and political order under the sign of homogeneous harmony (Bourdieu 1988; Harvey 2005). While appealing, the concept of homogeneous harmony is used in the neoliberal discourse as means to protect the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital, argues Harvey (7). That is, disguised as a principle supporting a homogenous and integrated contemporary global existence, the rhetoric of homogeneous harmony serves to ensure that the practices of market deregulation, privatization, and the retraction of the state as a guarantor of rights

[37] According to Harvey, "the restructuring of state forms after the World War II was designed to prevent a return to the catastrophic conditions that had threatened the capitalist order" (2005: 9), and neoliberalism was the central guiding principle that would guarantee the continuation of that system. In Latin America, the response to a thriving political scene in the 1960s in which alternative models to capitalism were being shaped was an era of military coups. Among the coups, the Chilean (1973) and the Argentine (1976) were the most overtly supportive of the neoliberal state formation, which was led by the fiercest defender of capitalism, the United States.

are declared legitimate strategies for the continuation of concentration of power in the hands of few. As one of the main discourses of neoliberalism, the notion of a harmonious and homogeneous world is used to "favor severing the economy from social realities and thereby constructing, in reality, an economic system conforming to its description," states Pierre Bourdieu (2). In that sense, this discursive operation of constructing a new reality adds its own symbolic force to already existing relations of power and ensures its continuity.

With that in mind, I argue that *Invasión*'s synthesizing force lies in the precision with which it underlines the association between the 1970s regime's program and the readjustment of the 1990s, thus challenging the legitimacy of the neoliberal narrative of homogeneous harmony.

The making of the neoliberal city

The more recent history of the Argentine capital abounds with accounts that illustrate the relationship between repressive and economic forces. The different architectural landscapes of downtown Buenos Aires explicit in its built environment, where zones of financial capital coexist with symbols of old colonial power, underline that long-term association. The example of the Galerías Pacífico illustrates the city's most recent urban development plans in which the construction of indoor shopping centers is intended to replace the city's public spaces. Modeled after the Paris Bon Marché, the galleries and its intersecting streets and glazed domes were designed by architects Francisco Seeber and Emilio Bunge in 1889 and opened in 1895. In 1896 part of the building was transformed into the first home for the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, and in 1908 the

British-owned Buenos Aires and Pacific Railroad acquired part of the building for its offices and renamed it Edificio Pacífico. In 1945, the building was restored; the arcades were separated from the offices of the railroad company and murals and frescos by social realist artists such as Antonio Berni and Juan Carlos Castagnino, were incorporated. After years of abandonment, the galleries were again remodeled and reopened in 1990 as a shopping mall. Today, Galerías Pacífico is "the crown jewel of Buenos Aires's shopping district, evidence of its arrival as a globalized consumer capital. Vaulted ceilings and lushly painted frescoes frame the vast array of brand-name stores, from Christian Dior to Ralph Lauren to Nike, unaffordable to the vast majority of the country's inhabitants" (Klein 2007:142).

Symbolizing "the victory of a market imaginary" argues Beatriz Sarlo, the mall appears as a space in which history is given a subservient role and becomes banal decoration. The transformation of the galleries into a center for consumption while preserving the murals and frescos treat the socially engaged past as a "souvenir rather than as material support of an identity and a temporality that would set off some conflict in the present" (2008:80). Moreover, as a seemingly public but in reality a private space, the mall establishes implicit rules of inclusion and exclusion in a built form. In that sense, each transformation in the cityscape, each newly built skyscraper, corporate movie theater complex or shopping mall tells us about new ways of organizing the city's population and its relationship to that space. Each addition contributes to the reduction of the public space and the expansion of spaces of segregation. As a direct result of the structural adjustments

implemented during the 1990s in Argentina, the contemporary spatial organization of Buenos Aires is defined by disintegration.

Yet, the most appalling example of the intersection between capital and control appears as the use of the galleries by the military regime is exposed. In Naomi Klein's words,

> One of the most graphic connections between the political killings and the free-market revolution was not discovered until four years after the Argentine dictatorship had ended. In 1987, a film crew was shooting in the basement of the Galerías Pacífico…and to their horror they stumbled on an abandoned torture center. It turned out that during the dictatorship, the First Army Corps hid some of its disappeared in the bowels of the mall; the dungeon walls still bore the desperate markings made by its long-dead prisoners: names, dates, pleas for help. (2007: 142)

Keeping in mind that nature of space is often less physical than it is social and situational, the use of the mall by perpetrators of state violence renders visible another side of the close relationship between political and economic forces. Hence the need for revealing the country's traumatic history through a critical assessment of its urban spaces is verified when symbols and landmarks are emptied of the conflicts and tensions upon which they were built. Therefore, a critical perspective that engages oppositional interventions, such as that of GAC, delve deeper into the core of what is at stake when celebratory narratives of homogeneous harmony conceal a project of domination. Through discursive spaces such as those offered by GAC, one can grasp the processes through which these triumphalist narratives are socially constructed and, more importantly, how they affect people's lives.

Grupo de Arte Callejero: a new generation of political activism

The political, social, and economic turbulence that marked Argentina's passage to the twenty-fist century had transformed the urban landscapes and opened up spaces for the articulation of several forms of oppositional interventions. In those years, Argentine cities, Buenos Aires in particular, became stages for the eruption of diverse forms of social mobilizations, such as *piquetes* and factory takeovers that aimed at questioning the local experience of decline vis-à-vis global and neoliberal processes.[38]

This moment of intense criticism against the 1990's neoliberal shift implemented during the Ménem years is the context in which GAC appears. In early 1997, the teachers' union CTERA (Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina) installed a large white tent in Plaza del Congreso and went on a hunger strike in protest against the increasingly precarious state of public education, the extremely low wages, and the appalling conditions of teaching and learning. They demonstrated against the terrible consequences of the education reform; the Federal Educational Law (Ley Federal de Educación) that had been imposed in 1993 and was funded by foreign capital. As Zappa-Hollman et al. argue,

> The LFE was sanctioned under a national government administration that was associated with corruption and with a neoliberal economic agenda that favored the private sectors, thus broadening the divide between the rich and the increasing poor population in the country. In addition, funding for the reform was provided by…the World

[38] Having emerged in the early 1990s, in light of the growing unemployment brought about by the Ménem administration policies the *piqueteros* movement main strategy of protest was to block roads; meanwhile, laid-off industrial workers refused to let their factories close and took over managing the factories themselves.

> Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, which played a significant role in outlining the direction of the LFE. Consequently, the reform was also seen as representing the triumph of oppressive external globalizing forces whose aim was ultimately to control rather than provide autonomy to the nation's institutions. (617)

GAC's founding members, a group of four female students of Visual Arts in the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Prilidiano Pueyrredón, seeing themselves affected by the changes in education, took out to the streets in support of and in solidarity with the strikers and against the dire state of Argentine's public education and the teacher's deteriorated working conditions. It is in that context that GAC's first intervention took place. Entitled "Docentes Ayunando" (Starving Teachers) the action involved painting empty white smocks on the walls in different parts of Buenos Aires. The white smock[39], a symbol of democratic public education, was deliberately left empty as to mark the absent bodies of teachers and students signaling their lack of participation in educational policy decision-making. Evoking the 1983 *Siluetazo*[40] – the collective tracing of the bodies of *desaparacidos* on the city's wall – in the demand for the "reappearance" of dissident's absent bodies, the empty white smock questioned the democratic practices of the Argentine state that, like in the repressive years, continued to punish supporters and active seekers of social justice.

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[39] The white smock in the context of Argentine public education is worn by teachers as well as students. The uniform code was implemented in the late nineteenth century by the Argentine state and carried a discursive element that articulated a direct association between smocks and signs of democracy, hygiene and morality. Such homogenizing discourse promoted a form of abstract equality as well as the concealing of class differences for it implied the erasure of the markers of difference. For more see Sarlo 187–191; Dussel 179-195.

[40] Discussed later in this chapter.

In this context, the urban interventions done by GAC, H.I.J.O.S, and other groups demonstrate that by the end of the twentieth century, the city of Buenos Aires had become a stage for the articulation of very clear social demands, not a site for reconciliation with an unforgivable past. The visible presence of these demands within the urban space inscribes the city as a privileged space for the organization of a new form of public action. Characterized as collaborative in nature, the new forms of collective organizing emerged from the need to reevaluate the old hierarchical political model in favor of the more context-sensitive experience of political transversality. Transversal politics, states Doreen Massey, is "an attempt to find a way of doing things which is neither the imposition of a single universal claim which refuses to recognize that there really are 'differences', nor the retreat into those differences as tightly-bound, exclusivist and essentialist identities" (1). The multi-dimensional approach took by this "new way of doing politics" sees in the heterogeneous claims made by different peoples and cultures, valuable sources of political imagination that should inform the articulation of new forms of participation.

Weary of traditional forms of political affiliation and aware of the exhaustion of the model of vertically structured organizations, the new social movements assume that re-evaluation of political practices is a direct, although probably inadvertent, result of the neoliberal restructuring of Argentine society. Consequently, a new social protagonism, as stated by the Buenos Aires based Colectivo Situaciones, came out in a context in which

> la vieja sociedad estatal/disciplinaria ha entrado en crisis y sus

> dispositivos de dominación, aun sin desaparacer, han sido rearticulados por las formas de domino de mercado … Al interior de esta forma de dominación surgen nuevas modalidades de resistencia que ya no son estrictamente políticas en el sentido que no tienen como prioridad la resistencia contra un estado central, sino que sus preocupaciones se amplían y se vuleven heterogéneas en simultaneidad con la desestructuración de las representaciones del mundo del trabajo fordista. (12)

Amidst this climate of profound social changes that resulted from the implementation of a free market economy a new urban consciousness unfolded, one that, aware of the relationship between the worsening of – already unequal – working and living conditions under neoliberal, saw the necessity to rethink forms of political participation.

This new generation of political activists that participated in art/activist interventions was invested in the re-evaluation of political practices and the organization of new forms of bringing public debate up-to-date. As another form of visual activism, wall stenciling emerged in Buenos Aires as a post-crisis culture that began as a pre-crisis response to structural changes. The culture of stenciling Buenos Aires walls appeared in a time of political uncertainty and as a consequence of the structural crisis in which the traditional channels of political participation and representation were being intensely questioned. One of the functions of the stencil, states Ana Longoni, is to produce counter-information within the public space of the city by promoting different ways of interpreting the local culture (1). By intervening in public information, stencils enact a sort of exposure protest similar to the *escraches*. That is, stenciling like the *escrache*, intervenes in the dominant discourse by virtue of giving it an alternative meaning,

thus offering to the city dweller the possibility of political detour.[41] Stencils were and still are found throughout the city but more prolifically in Buenos Aires' central areas, its more economically active space and the main target of gentrification programs. The presence of stencils in those spaces serves, on one hand, the purpose of questioning the construction of the city's official culture and cultural politics. That is, the city's planned culture is questioned by a form of intervention that calls attention to other unauthorized cultural productions that are also part of its cultural landscape but that are often criminalized and rendered invisible in the city's official discourse. On the other hand, because they have become expressive of city's local cultural production, stencils have been incorporated into the city's official culture.[42] Nevertheless, the culture of stenciling indicates the appropriation of the urban space as a central factor in the development of what has been called "a new Argentine social movement."

Operating within a system of alliances, GAC, like other groups in this new social movement were directly involved with several forms of social action such as

[41] As an example, a commonly found stencil during the mid 2000s in Buenos Aires was the close-up image of a policemen in a point shooting position directing the handgun at the observer, followed by the following caption: "Estamos para cuidarte" (We are here to protect you). This stencil offers a critique, via ironic commentary, on the numerous killings of city's poor youth in cases of police brutality, summary executions and trigger-happy police.

[42] The art status assigned to the stencil in the international circuit becomes part of the cosmopolitan image the city administration promotes. Street art then, becomes a force of gentrification when renovating programs incorporate them as a manifestation of "local flavor", adding cultural value to the redeveloped area, ultimately increasing rent and property values. In that sense, the symbolic capital represented by the local culture is transformed into a commercial strategy used for cultural tourism promotion policies. The return to the local supported by the official culture is used in the formulation of policies that ultimately re-value real estate capital in certain areas of the city, often not offering alternatives to the negative effects of the social-spatial dynamics transformations they help create. The infusion of new capital into once deteriorated areas of the city, often displaces residents who cannot afford the higher living costs. Moreover, the new patterns of consumption introduced into the city by processes of gentrification and redevelopment appear as direct consequences of the imprint of structural and discursive neoliberalism in the city's landscape.

popular assemblies, pickets, factory takeovers and bartering clubs. In May 2003, to protest the eviction the Brukman female workers from the occupied textile factory, several groups assisted in the organization of the *Maquinazo* (Sewing Machine Action). In that action, the female workers installed dozens of sewing machines on the street just steps away from the factory – at that time empty and surrounded by a police fence – and donated all the garments they sewed to the victims of province of Santa Fe floods, thus ratifying the investment in practices of solidarity. GAC participated in the protest by designing and displaying in the surrounding area a street-like sign with the image of arms-linked female figures followed by the subtitle "obreras trabajando" (women at work).[43]

While infused with an acute critical gender approach in regards to social-spatial relations, a closer look into their practices reveals that the group's politics is informed by rather then defined by that particular identity. Having started as a group of female artists, GAC's first action clearly demonstrated how women's cultural imaginary articulated responses to the system of oppression in place. After all, the painting of empty white smocks on the city's walls not only aimed at protesting the unjust, neoliberal nature of the educational reform, but also exposed ways in which relations of domination were concealed. In that sense, as a platform for plural identities, the group aimed at, since its formation, to become a space for the creation of fluid identities intentionally challenging modes of identification

[43] The purpose of hanging the signs, states GAC, was to "visibilizar dos elementos: la fuerza de trabajo de las mujeres y el espacio del acampe, ambas reunidas en la exigencia de un trabajo digno" (2009: 326).

constructed or authorized by the *status quo*.[44] Such self-determining principle gave room to the formation of an overtly feminist branch. In 2003 some members of GAC founded the Mujeres Públicas (Public Women), a group that protested gender oppression using the streets as the main stage. Their main goal was "to report, make visible and trigger off reflections around the variety of oppressions that women are subjected to, along with de-naturalizing sexist discourses and practices, from a feminist perspective."[45] Their urban interventions, clearly informed by a critical gender perspective, also sought to denounce associations between different forms of domination.

With that in mind, it is safe to say that GAC's interventions, *Invasión* in particular, while maintaining a critical gender perspective, succeed in mobilizing categories of masculinity to illustrate how, rather than a gender neutral model, the logic of neoliberalism is grounded on a masculine, patriarchal model. By revealing the masculine nature of this model, – represented by the use of the toy soldier as well as warfare language – they succeeded in denouncing the exclusion of all

[44] "El GAC se planteó, desde sus inicios, ser un lugar de creación de un espacio más allá de las identidades impuestas y propuestas por el sistema para reconocerse como de tal o cual sector, movimiento o corriente. Intentamos permanecer en ese estado de movilidad, de los sujetos individuales y colectivos" (2009: 175).

[45] "Combining visual strength and communication strategy, our posters try to address the passer-by with enigmatic images and provocative texts, turning the urban environment into a field open to visual, political, social and poetic reflection, coexisting at the same time with traditional political propaganda and commercial offer. By appropriating the streets, not only we enter at a discursive level into the public sphere, but we also question one of the basic régimes of bourgeois morals, the culture-experimenting device that consists of keeping us away from the street. This approach of revitalizing public space is also opposed to contemporary political coercion, based upon a sophisticated technology of domestic privacy, that leads to the abandonment of the urban hubs towards supposedly safer and obviously more controlled places." Paper read at the European Social Forum, Sweden 2008. Found online at: http://www.mujerespublicas.com.ar/

disempowered groups, including women, from the neoliberal paradigm, thus exposing one of the fallacies of the neoliberal discourse of homogenous harmony.

Much like the protests initiated by the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in its politically charged and gendered occupation of space, GAC's intervention demonstrated how a patriarchal urban environment constitutes not only gender, but also other forms of social relation. In both cases, they have established a presence that simultaneously exposes and opposes that dynamics. In the case of the Madres, they persistent appropriation of the Plaza de Mayo[46] – a focal point in the political life of Buenos Aires and a space that under the military regime symbolized fear and control, as dictated by the patriarchal ideology – called attention to the gendered logic of the regime. In a similar fashion, the members of GAC inserted themselves into the public space, in this case by means of intervening in the daily routine of the city, with a clear attempt to render visible the close link between the equally oppressive neoliberal and the military regimes.

Another point of intersection between the two groups is the marking of the urban space with visual codes infused with anti-establishment meaning. Besides occupying the Plaza with their bodies, the mothers also inscribe their emblematic kerchiefs in white paint on the pavement around the square's perimeter, which renders that space incomplete without their presence. Likewise, the space of the city is GAC's primary site for their interventions as seen with the white smocks and the altered street signage that appear within and beyond political sites such as

[46] Each Thursday afternoon, for the past 25 years, the women have met in Plaza de Mayo to repeat their plea. Week after week in the Plaza de Mayo, the Madres have accused the military of disappearing their children and demanded that they be returned alive (*aparición con vida*).

the Plaza.[47] Ultimately, the urban interventions carried out by GAC takes on a dynamics of collaboration across sites, connecting different forms of knowledge and practices that are mobilized as alternatives modes of organizing oppositional stances against neoliberalism and its predecessors.

Another dirty war

The urban interventions done by GAC engage with a notion of the cityscape as a space visually charged; a space in which the language of mass media helps construct and disseminate a language of dissent. In their words:

> Our working methodology mostly revolves around the subversion of the institutional messages in place (for instance, the highway sign, the advertisement, the aesthetics of TV shows, etc.), covering from graphic intervention to performative action, always taking into account that codes work differently in each place, for each community has their own cultural features. (2008:1)

Evoking the 1960s Situationist International strategies of subversive intervention in the urban space in which the hijacking of commercial images (*détournement*) sought to shed light on the capitalist ideology embedded in the daily consumer experience as well as the aesthetics of everyday life, GAC's works also seek to destabilize the urban experience through a reorientation of the spaces of the city. The appropriation of street signs and their re-signification into a form of political signage stresses the importance of the city as a legitimate space for demanding social justice.

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[47] GAC's street signs are also found in the Parque de la Memória, a memorial dedicated to the victims of state terrorism along the coast of Rio de la Plata. The group's contribution to the memorial is entitled "Carteles de la Memoria" (memory signs). The memorial, a collection of sculptures and installations, has since its creation in 1998 received severe criticisms for functioning as a site for the aesthetization of memory in a way that "interrupts the process of reflection, filling the void left by the abuses of state power with images that rise like phallic symbols, signposts in a theater organizing the staging of memory and its experience for the spectator"(158). For more see Tandeciarz 151-169.

With a strikingly aware sense of history, the warfare imagery used in *Invasión* exposes a contemporary version of a dirty war of sorts taking place in Argentine society in the turn-of-the-century. Although the images of soldiers, tanks, and missiles stamped on advertisements, during the first stage of the intervention, had not been gone for too long from the collective consciousness of Argentines, their presence in the mainstream discourse is revealed as the other side of consumer capitalism. This is because with *Invasión*, they are arguing that the institutions of political-economic control and the military apparatus have been operating together in the creation and preservation of structures of domination: "the tank stands for the financial power of the multinationals while the missile represents mass media ideologies, and finally the soldier refers to the repressive forces needed to sustain the neoliberal order"(2009: 123). Not surprisingly, the intervention employed the same symbols used by repressive forces that in the 1970s had waged a cultural war against the "threat of the Marxist guerilla" and called for a reorganization of Argentine society and the reinstitution of the nation's "traditional Christian values." Thus, more than a mere allusion to a familiar discourse with high impact potential, GAC's use of war codes critically evokes the battle over two irreconcilable cultural projects and reminds Argentines that the struggle for control is also waged in the space of culture. It is with that in mind that, GAC's put forward a cultural agenda that seeks to "to infiltrate the language of the system and from there to provoke ruptures, glitches and alterations and unmask or reveal, through denunciation, games of power relation" (2008:1).

Therefore, the recuperation of warfare imagery demonstrates how the re-signification of these codes inserted in a different discursive space invites a break from the neoliberal dominant discourse and encourages a reflection on the concealed relationship between control and capital. More than a mere suggestion, the juxtaposition of war codes and consumer products makes a clear reference to the extent to which the neoliberal order is woven into everyday routines. Not only that, the intervention employs a visual and discursive vocabulary typical of authoritarian regimes to denounce the fabrications of a stable state of the current democratic regime. What is more, *Invasión* successfully articulates the mutual functionality of market strategies and military tactics in the reenactment of a contemporary version of the dirty war. This is because "la homologación de las imagines militares que acompañan las definiciones de tres agentes [tanque, misil y soldado] o entes responsables de implementar y desarrollar enconcreto el modelo neoliberal muestram de manera concreta el peso descarnado de un genocídio económico silencioso" (2009:123).

The invasion of the parachutes, in the second part of the intervention, if not made explicit in the first stage, clearly manifests parallel strategies used by both the dictatorship of the 1970s and the 1990s democracy. With *Invasión*, downtown Buenos Aires was altered by the temporary transformation of everyday economic transactions and consumption into a site for the articulation of a discourse contesting the coalition between capital and control. The re-organization of the city center corporate occupied territory, for that matter, was fundamental to the execution of the intervention. The invasion of Buenos Aires by symbols of

domination stamped on ten thousand toy soldiers in parachutes not only exposed the overwhelming experience of "economic genocide" to which Argentine society was subjected but also anticipated the uncontainable popular reaction to happen just hours later. The uprising of 2001was nothing less than was a popular revolt against contemporary deregulated capitalism and the same political system that in the previous years was responsible for killing and disappearing over 30,000 people.

Fundamentally, *Invasión* generated a collective form of political action in which the city's occupation by the military is revisited, this time with an unconcealed critical function. GAC's discursive framework, as of much of the grassroots critique of present injustice in Argentina, argues Brian Holmes, has as its foundation a historical consciousness of the way the country has developed over the past decades, "with a sharp awareness that the same classes that had profited from the dictatorship could always reassert their power, if their impunity was simply accepted and their crimes left unremembered" (6).

Clearly influenced by the political art project known as *Siluetazo*, undoubtedly the most important work of collective political art in the social history of Argentina, and a work of great influence to the interventions of the late 1990s, *Invasión* engages in the recuperation of history to make sense of the present. The *Siluetazo* was held in Buenos Aires on September 1983 with the support of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo and other human rights organizations and involved tracing the outline of a human body lying flat on a large piece of paper and stamping them on the city's walls. The traces of the *desaparecidos* that temporarily invaded the streets exposed actions that occurring behind those same walls to

public scrutiny. With the *Siluetazo*, the city as a private place and a space for impunity was revisited as the public space where justice, political and social, was once again possible.

In a similar fashion, the use of military imagery by GAC can be read as a warning sign alerting Argentine society against a *coup d'etat* of sorts disguised as economic development. The military occupation of the city by toy soldiers intervened in the mainstream discourse of democratic stability and neoliberal homogeneous harmony. The recent traumatic past was brought back to the city's streets as means to recover a notion of the city as a public and collective space undermined by capital and control and as a reminder that, as stated by Idelber Avelar, "the neoliberalism implemented in the aftermath of the dictatorships is founded on the passive forgetting of its barbaric origin" (2).

Conclusion

Concentrated capital, as argued by Beatriz Sarlo, "does not defend cities; it defends business done in and with cities. Market forces, unfettered by public control and indifferent to the material landscape they temporarily occupy, consider the city only as an opportunity for development projects that, in the long run, will prove unsustainable. They have no local cultural conscience" (2008:80). Arguably, local cultural conscience combined with an extreme experience of social deterioration were fundamental for the mobilization of grassroots movements that ultimately offered an effective critical examination of the institutions of political-economic control in turn of the millennium Argentina.

While the analysis of cultural imagery is pertinent to the immediate experience of the 2001 crisis, it also indicates its reinsertion in discussions about space in the new Argentine social movements. Ultimately, publicly challenging the local agents of the repressive forces that had ushered the first phase of neoliberalism as well as more contemporary forces of neoliberal power, *Invasión* offered alternative strategies of reading space thus asserting that new political practices have the ability to refunctionalize existing urban spaces in favor of the reshaping of the city and its social relations vis-à-vis a logic of social justice.

Chapter 4.

Puerto Apache: Narrating the Urban Poor in the Neoliberal City

Introduction

The economic and political circumstances of turn-of-the-century Argentina, marked by social turmoil and on the brink of the greatest financial default by any Latin American nation, provided a backdrop for intense spatial transformations and for the enactment of strategies of resistance against the same transformations. By 2001, the overplayed narrative of "unlimited opportunity for all" promoted by various discourses of globalization was unattainable for most Argentines. As a matter of fact, the neoliberal narrative of homogeneous harmony, – derived from the discourse of and inevitable homogenizing experience of globalization – one of the most overstated discourses of globalization to permeate public life in Argentina, was already coming apart in the previous years, as demonstrated by the high level of discontent expressed by the Argentine population.

As an example of the effects of the market logic on Argentine literature, the novel *Puerto Apache* (2002) by Argentine novelist Juan Martini reflects on the tensions dealt with by literary works produced during the neoliberal years. Taking place in Buenos Aires in 2001, a definitive year for Argentina in terms of the consequences of neoliberal structural transformations, to recognize *Puerto Apache* as a narrative of crisis requires us to look at the ways in which the transformations to the Buenos Aires' fictional built environment mirrors and at the same time rejects discourses of globalization, in particular, the neoliberal narrative of homogeneous harmony.

As part of the turn-of-the-century argentine literary tradition, the themes discussed in *Puerto Apache* situate the novel in a context of cultural production that is interested in reflecting about the consequences of the disastrous experience of globalization in Argentine society. It can be said that narrative written in late twentieth century Argentina focuses its attention on the country's contemporary socio-economic context by means of representing the transformation in the urban landscape in a globalized era and reflecting on the process that led to the impoverishment of a large number of the Argentine population. The publication of works like *El aire* by Sergio Chejfec (1992) and *La Villa* by César Aira (2001), verify the interest and perhaps urgency in trying to make sense of the conditions that allowed for such an intense transformation of Argentine society. One of the main preoccupations in Argentine cultural and social life, the redefinition of concepts such as the center and the margin, is a central theme commonly found in these works. The proliferation of spaces of poverty, for instance, often appears in texts that, concerned with narrating the recent social transformations in Argentina, opt for a narrative focus that is informed by representations of public (or social) space rather that private space. According to Nicolás Quiroga, the argentine literature of the 1990s narrates this new condition of poverty by focusing on representations of *villa misérias* as a space that epitomizes the contemporary urban landscape (2004). Certainly, the subject of poverty is not a new topic in late twentieth century Argentine literature, however, the increase in levels of poverty, marginality, and violence as consequences of neoliberal economic practices pose new reflective questions cultural productions have been asked to examine.

The Argentine neoliberal structural reforms of the 1980s and 1990s were some of the most aggressive in all of Latin America. As a long-term consequence of the continuous state cutbacks in social infrastructure, while favoring private investments, the country's economy collapsed. By the end of the twentieth century an astonishing number of homeless and a mass of unemployed workers roamed the streets of Buenos Aires re-collecting garbage. The economic crises aggravated the crisis of state legitimacy, which culminated with an unforeseen scale of mass protests in the capital in December of 2001.

By the end of the twentieth century, Argentines saw a new spatial reconfiguration of their national capital vis-à-vis an influx of the new poor into shantytowns but also into wealthy areas of the city. As the wealthy migrated to country clubs and private neighborhoods surrounded by shopping malls and convenience services, the number of people living in *villas misérias* multiplied.

It is within this context that my argument recognizes the literature produced in the turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires as a space of critical reflection that identifies discursive and territorial spaces as mutually informing experiences. In that sense, I'm interested in looking at how the material consequences of neoliberalism affected not only the space of the city but were inscribed in the literary terrain where the concept of social space was activated as an effective critique of narratives of neoliberalism.

Crime Fiction and the Neoliberal City

Taking place in 2001, *Puerto Apache* is narrated from the point o view of El Rata, a courier of sorts for a businessman, El Pájaro, who uses his restaurant and

nightclub businesses as façade for his drug dealing actives. El Rata, the narrator and protagonist, sees himself involved in a criminal plot when he is accused of failing to deliver an order and of keeping to himself the money that belongs to his boss. In order to survive, he must investigate what really happened and try to prove his innocence. As he goes around the city trying to figure out who framed him and why, the reader is exposed to an image of Buenos Aires that is far from that of a harmonious city. One of the settlers in the urban land occupation known as Puerto Apache, El Rata's perception of the city is framed by his experience of constant struggle as someone forced to survive in precarious working and living conditions. Puerto Apache, a fictional built area in Buenos Aires, is a recent informal settlement located on the Ecological Reserve, an ecological park that stands side by side with the upscale development of Puerto Madero, on the eastern edge of the city. Even though the occupiers of Puerto Apache live in abject poverty, the reader learns that the terrain where the settlement is located is disputed between environmentalists, urban developers, and obviously, its occupants.

In addition to narrating new spaces of poverty, the obvious elements of crime fiction in *Puerto Apache* function as a point of reference from which critiques of neoliberal narratives can be easily accessed. Traditionally, the late-twentieth-century Latin American crime fiction criticizes the effects of free market capitalism imposed on those societies by acknowledging the space of the city as the main territory where socio-economical transformations and its violent consequences take place. As a literary response to the rapid growth of cities and its dynamics of urban fragmentation and disintegration, the texts considered crime

fiction partake in a critical examination of the intensification of income inequality and social deterioration of the 1980s and 1990s. According to Persephone Braham, several Latin American writers have adopted the genre "precisely because it permits a critical scrutiny of their social institutions in light of modern liberal principles and their late-twentieth-century manifestations in the ideological narratives of neoliberalism and globalization"(xv). This cultural reaction to catastrophic structural changes reflects on the severe crisis in public services epitomized by the significant decline in number and quality of public services for the lower classes and the fortification of middle and upper class enclaves.

In addition, these writings find in the genre tools that contribute to a critique of the insufficiency of totalizing conceptions of law and justice – a genre convention – when observed in the Latin American societies. This can be partially explained by the sentiment of disillusionment that took over the region in the post-dictatorship period. The defeat of the democratic rule of law in the 1960s and 1970s anticipated a great disbelief in the power of the 1980s post-dictatorial state since its policies, for the most part, failed to hold the state accountable for the extreme violence of the military years. In view of that, the democratic state is portrayed in these works as a main source of criminality and corruption. In addition, an almost absolute attitude of distrust in justice is inherent in these narratives. More often than not, crime in these texts is narrated as an endemic aspect of society; something that cannot be solved. Thus, the expectation of the restoration of the social order is often left unanswered, reflecting the lack of credibility and accountability of the categories of justice and law. For that reason,

the narration of the experience of violence, rather than the solution of the crime, is usually the central topic in these writings. Rather than providing a resolution in which the order is restored and the outlaw is punished, which assumes a type of violence that is tamable, the Latin American crime text breaks with such convention and renders the harmony order/justice/law impossible. Therefore, if in the Anglo/European hard-boiled tradition, the narration of crime implies the existence of a legal order that is disrupted by the criminal, in Latin American crime fiction, known as *novela negra*, that legal order is not based on the relationship between law and legality but in the inadequacy of that model as means to make sense of the deep-rooted system of illegalities (Amar Sánchez, 2000:60). It makes sense, then, the fact that the conventional figure of the detective is often de-centered and their position as representation of order and justice is relocated to the margin. In other words, the detective in these works, rather than the mediator between middle class anxieties and urban crime, is portrayed as an individual that is subject to corrupting forces as much as the criminal. By repositioning the figure of the detective, these texts favor the portrayal of cynicism and skepticism, as well as the anti-resolution conclusion, offering a direct commentary on the absence of an idea of social order.

In Argentina, the hard-boiled model, popular in the first decades of the twentieth century, was replaced by the *novela negra* tradition as a new generation of writers, namely Manuel Puig, Juan Jose Saer, and Ricardo Piglia became interested in critically engaging the genre with the local environment. A product of the political alienation, state violence, and economic restructuring, crime narrative

in that moment represented a reaction to the reorganization of Argentine society and the cultural and social reproduction of an ideology of conformity. In addition, the disintegration of urban industrial capitalism and its supporting structures occupied a central place in many crime narratives written in Argentina. For Piglia "there is a mode of narration in the *novela negra* that is linked to what I would call a materialistic treatment of reality. One need only to think of the place that money holds in these narratives…The only enigma that the *novela negra* proposes —and never resolves —is that of capitalist relations: the money that legislates morality and sustains the law is the only "reason" in these stories in which everything is for sale" (2000:116-17).[48] Well known for being the country with the oldest tradition of crime fiction production in all of Latin America, Argentine crime fiction, for the most part, engages with critical representations of the country's social, political, and economic contexts.

The same approach can be verified in *Puerto Apache*. According to Natalia Jacovkis,

> En los últimos veinte años parece haberse dado un boom de la novela policial negra a nivel latinoamericano… coincidente con la implantación en el continente de políticas económicas neoliberales y sus consecuencias en el incremento de la pobreza, la marginalidad, la corrupción y la violencia en las sociedades latinoamericanas…[Como] una de las novelas que se inscriben en esta tendencia, en *Puerto Apache* la utilización formal del género sirve como herramienta de crítica social al programa neoliberal hegemónico. (2)

As a turn-of-the-century *novela negra*, *Puerto Apache* is interested in a critical

[48] Piglia's *Plata Quemada* (1997), a critical account of criminality, mass media, and post-industrial capitalism in Argentina, is one of the most widely read *novelas negras* written in Latin America in the 1990s.

interpretation of the neoliberal order by focusing on the direct relationship between these new spaces of poverty, marked by the stigma of underdevelopment and the new spaces of wealth, seen as a sign of progressive future. From this intersection comes the title of the novel. On the one hand, we have Puerto Madero, site of an ambitious development plan in the 1990s in which abandoned spaces in the city port were transformed into exclusive private residences and business sites, making the area one of the most expensive in the city. On the other hand, there is Fuerte Apache, a *villa miséria* on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, known for its high crime rate. More than a wordplay that tries to conciliate two irreconcilable spaces, *Puerto Apache* exposes the negative consequences of neoliberalism by intervening in the imaginary of the city.

Puerto Madero: urbanism on demand and the neoliberal restructuring of Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires, the capital and the country's largest city has been the locus of the most important structuring efforts in Argentina. From a simple village in the early nineteenth century, by the 1930s Buenos Aires had grown exponentially and gained the status of the most important city in Latin America. Resulting from a state project that combined urban modernization and immigration, the city was, in the first decades of the twentieth century, the country's center stage for the erasure of the colonial past and the consolidation of its profile as a cosmopolitan city. From the 1930s onward, Buenos Aires saw the emergence of slums in the outskirts of the city. The slums grew rapidly as a result of internal migration into the city, a direct consequence of decreased agricultural production and increased

industrialization. With the subsequent consolidation of the export-import model of economic growth, the city saw the expansion of the middle class as well as of working class organized labor. Feeling threatened by the social programs of Peronism of 1940s and 1950s, the same middle class supported the cycle of military rule initiated in 1976, which imposed a new project of modernization where the poor were expelled to unattended projects in the suburban zones while concentrating new urban developments in the city's wealthiest areas.

The development of Puerto Madero serves as a case in point. Built in the1880s with the intention to represent "a cultural testimony of modernity, " Puerto Madero, says Adrián Gorelik, was conceived as the place where *porteños* could witness the spectacle of progress with its steamships, trains, novel machinery, and large warehouses. By the first decades of the twentieth century, the "Project for Port Promenade and Water Recreation Area" developed a recreational park in the waterfront, which would remain mostly unchanged for the next few decades (Liernur, 40). Following a development plan program led by the military government of the 1970s, an international bid was organized with intention to "develop Puerto Madero into a land business" (Gorelik, 2007:64). Guided by the principle of modernization via destruction, the renovation projects of the 1970s focused mainly on the demolition of large sectors of the city, the elimination of old installations, and the construction of highways. Influenced by an appreciation for the area's architectural patrimony "The creation of the Corporación Antiguo Puerto Madero, formed in 1989 under the Ménem administration, was responsible for a plan for the renovation of the port (Puerto Madero Operation) whose main

goal was to “capitalize on the richness of the obsolete industrial landscape” (Gorelik, 2007:68) and create a postcard image of Buenos Aires for the twenty-first century. Representing the urban development phenomenon known as gentirfication, the renovation of Puerto Madero in the 1990s was made possible with “the participation of important private capital initiatives” (Gorelik, 2007:72) that would change the face of not only the port but also the city.

Clearly, urban development projects such as the revitalization of Puerto Madero, the proliferation of high-rises and gated communities, and the construction of roadways that link the city to the private enclaves common during the 1990s appeared as direct consequences of the imprint of the neoliberal model in the city’s landscape. The infusion of new capital into deteriorated areas of the city usually resulting in higher property values displaced residents who could afford the higher prices. Moreover, the new patterns of consumption introduced into the city by processes of gentrification took advantage of abandoned old industrial districts transforming them into convenience centers catering to the urban upper classes.

Granted, renovation projects are usually preceded by relocation programs that work to increase segregation in the most underprivileged sectors and intensify class polarization by forcing the working class into the neglected edges of the city. Such is the case with the housing project known as Fuerte Apache. Built in the outskirts of the city, the neighborhood of Ejército de los Andes, named Fuerte Apache after the local soccer player Carlos Tévez “Apache”, the project is nowadays known for extreme deprivation and high crime rates. The district was built during the Juan Carlos Onganía years in the1960s as part of the offensive to

eradicate shantytowns known as Plan de Erradicación de Villas de Emergencia (PEVE), whose aim was the removal and relocation of families living in *villas misérias*[49], but whose real consequences were the almost absolute negligence from the part of the state, leaving the families unassisted. Certainly, these relocation projects anticipate the economic and social reorganization of Argentine society put in practice in the subsequent years. For Beatriz Sarlo, this process of urban modernization represents an apparently irreversible shift in the city's landscape.

> During those terrible years, the military imposed technocratic policies that led to a new chapter of authoritarian modernization of Buenos Aires: they expelled the poor form the city, moving them, through compulsory relocations, to the worst suburban zones; they consolidated material differences that divided the rich form the poor; they technologized the city grid and services, abandoning, at the same time, what had been a balanced pattern of distribution, transportation, and access; they sorted out the traits of communications and urban profile that responded to economic globalization and followed, without interference, the interests of concentrated capital. (2008:43)

Less an aesthetic plan than a project of social organization, these policies functioned then, and they do now as sanitizing measures to contain and control the presence and participation of these populations in the public space of the city. As pointed out by Sarlo, the already dire conditions in those spaces deteriorated even more in the late 1990s with the process of deindustrialization in which thousands of workers passed from factory work to informal jobs, rising to skyrocket levels under and unemployment rates. Against a narrative that celebrates integration and homogeneity, the real reduction in the proportion of the population employed had

[49] Present since the 1930s, Buenos Aires' *villas de emergencia* grew rapidly in size during and after WWII for a number of reasons. Migration from the provinces into the city intensified as a result of decreasing agricultural production and increased industrialization, primarily in factories around the city, which offered new employment opportunities. For more see Podalsky, 2004.

spatial consequences with less people able to afford formal housing joining the forces of thousands of informal settlers and homeless families.

"Somos un problema del siglo XXI": the (in)visibility of urban poverty

As a socio-geographic formation that questions an urban design that seeks to render urban poverty invisible, Puerto Apache, the land occupation, imprints on the city's map the differences between the concentration of capital and the impoverishment of the working class. In doing that *Puerto Apache*, the novel, engages in a cultural critique that destabilizes the neoliberal narrative on homogeneous harmony. It does so by narrating a version of the recent changes in the city's life that is entirely different from the triumphant discourse of neoliberal success. *Puerto Apache*, argues Ana María Amar Sánchez, like many Argentine narratives of the time "appear to 'retell the facts,' after a period of disillusion and defeat, yet, they also suggest forms of resistance, and are perhaps the discourse that most clearly challenge, though imaginary courses of action, a world marked by triumphalism" (2007:78). These narratives provide imaginary solutions to the real question of how to live in a society marked by crisis. As observed by Mary Louise Pratt, "the neoliberal order creates…conditions it cannot make sense of: vast sectors of organized humanity who have only the tiniest access to either cash or consumption, and whose task is to make livable, meaningful lives by other means" (2005:284).

"Somos un problema del siglo XXI" – the squat slogan printed on a billboard over the west entrance to Puerto Apache, and the problematic that opens and closes the novel – reveals a current preoccupation in which the invisibility of

urban poverty figures not only as concern of the past but whose increasing presence predicates a ghost of the future. The dark picture of the twenty first century city, whose urbanization without growth has brought up increasingly precarious and segregated conditions, appears here as an inevitable consequence of the shift from an industry based economy to one based on the service sector. In a commentary about what to expect of the future, Toti, one of El Rata's friends and a resident of Puerto Apache declares:

> — Todo en este país va a terminar igual. O peor.
> — ¿Y qué van hacer los bacanes?
> Lo que hacen siempre. Se van a ir. Los que ya están hechos se van a ir a Miami. Y los que todavía tengan cuentas para cobrar…se van a barrios privados, ciudades privadas…cuando terminen de afanar, cuando ya no quede nada, nada de nada, entonces ellos también se van a ir. Y en los barrios privados, las ciudades inviolables, los palacios amurallados los únicos que van a quedar son los peluqueros, los personal trainers y los dílers. Entonces todo se va a llenar de mendigos, de ladrones, de putas y de putos" (122).

Projected with alarming accuracy in the novel, the social-economic crisis that culminated with foreign capital fleeing the country in 2001 presents an image of an inevitable future. Perhaps also as a prediction, the fact that Puerto Apache is located in the center and not the margins of the city/society, marks the time when *villas misérias* escape the spatial confinement (re)imposed by the neoliberal order and get into, this time to stay, the fragmented configuration of Argentina's urban/social fabric. Accordgin to Gorelik, the city "se monta con comodidad sobre el fin del ciclo progresista, en la decadencia económica y la retirada del Estado, porque es la avanzada de una ciudad que...trabaja sobre el contraste y la fragmentación" (Gorelik 2004:200). In other words, the imprint of neoliberal

program on the urban landscape places Buenos Aires in a leading position among the most socially fragmented cities in the world.

Another aspect of neoliberal transformation, new consumption models were introduced in the city by development projects that take advantage of the prime location of old abandoned industrial districts and transform them in upscale areas. Aware the manipulation of the city's historical past, while investigating the details of the criminal plot in which the sees himself involved, El Rata ends up exposing how neoliberal urban development plans exploits the city's history:

> Dejamos el auto de Cúper en una calle con árboles, a una cuadra del boliche preferido del Pájaro que no es el primero sino el último que abrió, una mezcla de restaurante y bar que hizo construir en una vieja imprenta de anarquistas que antes había sido una fundición. No sé si será verdad porque estos tipos te tiran cualquiera a la hora de inventarles algún pasado artesanal o progre a sus locales reciclados, a los techos altos, las vigas de Madera, las columnas de hierro. (99)

Such transformations in the urban space reflect a discursive mode in which the restructuring of space is committed to a rewriting of the past vis-à-vis a program of commodification of working class political consciousness. The history of organized labor is replaced by symbols of status to be consumed by the upper classes in a newly gentrified sector of the city, as made clear in El Rata's description. In this context of de-politization of the past, argues Beatriz Sarlo, "la historia es paradójicamente tratada como *souvenir* y no como soporte material de una identidad y temporalidad que siempre le plantean al presente su conflicto" (1994:80).

Moreover, past, present, and future appear in the novel as the extension of one another. Garmendia, a community leader in the occupation, acknowledges the

impossibility of dissociating the economic structural reform that resulted in the dismantling and demobilization of the working class from the military regime's economic policies and its continuation in the post-dictatorial state:

> allá por 1971, 72, todo iba bien en el taller [mecánico]…hasta que llegaron los militares, por un lado, y el ministro de economía de los militares, por el otro…en 1979 ya no se podía arreglar ni una goma pinchada…en la década del 80, fue el hijo mayor que también perdió todo, y entonces el garrón se hizo más jodido, vertiginoso…un día terminaron en la Capital y en la calle, más adelante, llegaron a Puerto Apache. (69)

Clear in Garmedia's speech is the fact that the fragmentation of the social fabric was used as a strategy to implement the neoliberal economic program, first with reorganization of Argentine society under the dictatorship and later with the dismantling of essential labor structures, leading to a state of social inequality never seen before.

The demobilization of working class consciousness, however, made room for a new urban consciousness to emerge; one that was aware of the power relations at work and that was willing to intervene in the project of legitimizating inequality. According to Maristella Svampa, because of the fact that the neoliberal reform had such a devastating impact on the working class, the new forms of social relations that were created as a consequence of the shrinking of the role of the state were particularly configured around notions of participatory citizenship and the political value of the territory. As she states,

> el proceso de individualización que acompañó el retroceso de la ciudadanía impulsó el desarrollo de redes de sobrevivencia dentro del empobrecido mundo popular, lo que fue configurando un nuevo tejido social, caracterizado por la expansión de organizaciones de carácter territorial. Estas nuevas redes territoriales hoy se

> constituyen el locus del conflicto, pues aparecen como el espacio de control y dominación neoliberal (76).

The process of redefinition of the notion of citizenship under neoliberal inspiration identified by Svampa neutralizes the principle of citizenship as political negotiation and representative participation while retaining its symbolic power. According to Evelina Dagnino, "in a context where the state progressively withdraws from its role as a guarantor of rights, the market is offered as a surrogate instance of citizenship" (2478). Under those circumstances, to be a citizen is to be integrated in the market as a consumer and as producer. Moreover, the traditional definition of citizens as bearers of rights is substituted by the idea of "acquired citizenship" in which the previously considered minimal access to rights is transformed into a commodity to be negotiated in the market. Within this context, the notion of citizenship as the most basic form of political participation is transformed into a consumer product. Such a transformation gives rise to an inversion in which "the recognition of rights seen in the recent past as an indicator of modernity is becoming a symbol of "backwardness"…that hinders the modernizing potential for the market" (2479). The dissemination of a neoliberal notion of citizenship, therefore, affects how the demand for rights is articulated. In Argentina, the new social movement that appeared in the context of the crisis saw in the recuperation of the notion of social space the potential to establish new modes of citizenship, thus offering the opportunity for a critical examination of the urban environment of Buenos Aires in the neoliberal era.

As an alternative form of participatory citizenship organized around principles of territorial rights, Puerto Apache constitutes a political entity whose very existence asserts a political practice that challenges the dominant order that dictates which spaces of the city should be assigned to which groups. Not only that, as a new territorial experience, Puerto Apache embodies the contradictions of two social formations integrated in the same space: new high-end developments and old low-income housing projects, each one an enclave in its own way. In fact, Puerto Apache's contradictions evoke the tension civilization/barbarism by questioning its recurrence as an organizing principle promoted by dominant neoliberal discourses that invariably favor the dominant sectors of Argentine society associated with the notion of civilization. Thus, the invisibility of marginalized populations, considered a representation of barbarism by the upper classes, is problematized in the text via their inclusion in the debate about notions of citizenship and about legitimacy of modernization projects that occupied the city in the first place. That is, the present state of exclusion of vast sectors of the population is discussed from the point of view of a story that repeats itself: "Nosotros vivimos acá desde el siglo pasado," states Garmedia (54). Nevertheless, the mutually reinforcing processes of gentrification and ghettification represented by Puerto Madero and Fuerte Apache come together in Puerto Apache as an experience that challenges the disassociation of the historical causes of the disastrous urban development of Buenos Aires.

The actual Ecological Reserve where the fictional Puerto Apache stands was formed as a result of demolition debris, product of urban highway

development projects initiated in the 1970s. The demolition debris was dumped in the river off Costanera Sud Avenue where, after years of abandonment, an area of great ecological diversity spontaneously developed. Located on a large plot of land attached to the Rio de la Plata and in front of Puerto Madero, the Reserve is and the product of an environmental disaster, so to speak. Ironically, the reserve was declared an environmental protection area in the 1980s and became part of the official recreation and tourism circuit in the city of Buenos Aires. Inadvertently, the intersection between widely distinct social and environmental territories that constitutes Puerto Apache become the battleground for political disputes between their residents and other parties interested in finding ways to delegitimize the occupation's struggle for social justice.

In the novel this becomes apparent with the fact that, while conscious of the discriminating discourse that suggests that marginalized populations, lacking any sort of environmental awareness, will destroy the valuable environmental refuge, the new urban actors insist on claiming the legitimacy of their endeavor: "No entramos acá para reventar nada. Entramos acá porque la gente necesita un lugar donde vivir. Somos legales nosotros. Tenemos fulerías, como todo el mundo, y por necesidad. Pero somos legales," declares El Rata (17). He continues, "No somos intrusos, no somos okupas. Esto es nuestro. Gente, somos" (17). Through a direct criticism to the discriminating discourse that renders illegal the condition of the occupation, El Rata recognizes the very existnce of the settlement as a direct result of the destructive development of previous decades. Moreover, the insistence on the "legality' of its residents challenges this same discourse and reveals the

cityscape as a civic space in constant crisis. The different layers of territoriality represented by the struggle for legitimization reveal how in Puerto Apache every action carries the potential to have broader socio-spatial implications.

In addition to representing an obstacle to development, the settlement obstructs the erasure of the past by insisting on making visible accounts of social decline, displacement, and illegality. That is, if these are the new subjects of the structural transformation of the Argentine society, it is due to the monetary value recently attached to that territory. At the end of the novel, El Rata decides to leave Puerto Apache and initial mystery of who kept the money is rendered irrelevant in face of such abundant account of social injustices. Meanwhile, the occupation faces the intrusion of political and business sectors interested in exploiting the Reserve in order to install modern real estate developments and shopping centers.

> La única idea que los presidentes y los empresarios y los capos tenían para la Reserva era quemarla. Todos querían quemarla, declararla inútil, yerma, se dice, evacuada por la fauna, y hacer negocios. Mover guita. Toneladas de guita. Poner bancos, restaurantes, casinos clandestinos, hoteles, quilombos, emprendimientos así. Esta ciudad no puede imaginar otra cosa. (17)

The invasion of Puerto Apache by paramilitary forces and the violence perpetrated against its residents at that point anticipate the eviction process to occur as the novel ends. If not yet made clear, the subjugation of Puerto Apache by the market logic at the end of the narrative sheds light on the novel's central theme that contends that monetary interests are what ultimately govern urban life. In that sense, the structural crime that frames the novel, that is, "concentration of privileges, wealth and impunities democratizes misery and hopelessness" (Harvey,

2000:73) remains unsolved, and justice is not achieved.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the experiences narrated in *Puerto Apache* contend that while capital progressively privatizes public space and governments manage it as an exclusive property, social groups provide new possibilities of imaging the world. The fundamental questions that *Puerto Apache* raise help us understand how literary discourse can function as a realm that can produce answers that, even though imaginary, speak to what is at stake with current socio-spatial conflicts. In other words, the novel recognizes discursive and territorial spaces as mutually informing experiences that serve as the stage upon which strategies of control as well as tactics of resistance are enacted. To Josefina Ludmer, this is because, as a general rule, late twentieth century Latin American literatures

> salen de la literatura y entran a la "realidad" y a lo cotidiano, a la realidad de lo cotidiano…Fabrican el presente con la realidad cotidiana y es una de sus políticas. La realidad cotidiana no es la realidad histórica referencial y verisímil del pensamiento realista…sino una realidad producida y construida…Es una realidad que no quiere ser representada porque ya es pura representación. (151)

Thus, if on one hand, the novel avoids a reconcilable resolution, on the other, the text suggests the continuation of the struggle of marginalized groups and the potential of transformative socio-spatial practices carried out by them. In essence, *Puerto Apache* challenges the narrative that a free market economy leads to a prosperous future, where all of the social groups can come together in a harmonious, conflict-free city experience. On the contrary, in rewriting the urban

experience of Buenos Aires, *Puerto Apache* engages in creating ways to disrupt the neoliberal narrative of homogeneous harmony.

Final Considerations.

On March 22, 2013 Rio de Janeiro riot police forcibly evicted a group of more than 20 indigenous people that had been occupying the de-activated Indian Museum, next to the Maracanã soccer stadium, to make way for a 2014 World Cup construction. In 1953, the nineteenth century historic complex became Brazil's first official site for the preservation of indigenous culture, then directed by the anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro. Abandoned in 1978 after the relocation of the Museum, the building and its grounds were occupied in 2006 by multi-ethnic indigenous families who renamed the area Aldeia Maracanã. The group reclaimed the area for its historical significance to indigenous peoples of Brazil and formed a small community dedicated to preserving indigenous history and culture, with the long-term goal of transforming it into a cultural center. Aldeia Maracanã has been the focus of an extended legal battle between the indigenous groups, who claim the site should be used to promote indigenous culture, and the municipal authorities along with the FIFA and the World Cup organizing committee, who plan to tear down the building as part of a renovation project that is supposed to build a sports-themed museum in the area.

The recent removal in Rio highlights the tension over forced evictions in areas scheduled for development, in which entire communities have been relocated to make room for highways and other infrastructure projects in preparation for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. In São Paulo, one of the 12 World Cup host cities, an increasing number of "accidental" fires in *favelas* located within or near areas with skyrocketing real estate values are another example. In

2012 only, more than 34 fires were recorded in São Paulo's *favelas*[50]. UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik, claims that the dramatic increase in land value near the incidents is not a coincidence[51]. Likewise, housing movement activists suspect the "accidental fires" are being covertly orchestrated by profit-oriented public-private partnerships to destroy *favela* communities in order to capitalize on the land people are forced to vacate. More

For nations and cities, hosting sports mega-events represents a significant boost of international investment and provide an important platform for economic globalization via the penetration of transnational capital that invades the country. The legitimization of this process is done with the assistance of global media, which focuses its attention on the host cities, dedicating to these spaces a lot of visibility in the media circuit. Global media coverage constantly inscribes images and representations of the host cities with scenes of busy airports, cosmopolitan atmospheres, effervescent culture, and state-of-the-art infrastructure. In order to be

[50] The fires gained international attention after the September 17 2012 blaze in Moinho, a *favela* located in a high-valued area of the city center, and home to an established community of 1,600 people. One person died in the flames and 320 families were rendered homeless. With no place to go and scant options afforded by the city's insultingly low $150 rent-aid check for a period of three months, Moinho residents attempted to return to the area in order to rebuild their houses only to discover that the city had declared the whole area unsafe for use. However, to their disbelief, only one week after the incident a private parking lot was being built in the adjacent terrain. An escalation of mass evictions as part of attempts to "beautify" the city at the expense of poor residents also presents a troublesome trend. According to Observatório das Remoções, a project run by researchers at the University of São Paulo in conjunction with local housing rights organizations, there are 486 *favelas* in the city currently facing forced eviction as a result of questionable development projects. For example, thousands of families were evicted to make way for a project known as "Água Espraiada," which will connect two of the city's major roads. Developers say that Água Espraiada is a necessary addition to the city's highway system, but critics argue that the project will do more harm than good. Projects like this focus on infrastructure development that favors São Paulo's growing car culture and diverts resources away from projects that could benefit the majority of the population, such as desperately needed expansions to a deficient public transportation system.

[51] Rolnik, Raquel. "Incêndios em favelas de São Paulo: está mais do que na hora de prevenir e investigar." Found online at: http://raquelrolnik.wordpress.com/2012/09/06/incendios-em-favelas-de-sao-paulo-esta-mais-do-que-na-hora-de-prevenir-e-investigar/

inserted into global media representations of what a host city looks like, the cities invest vast amounts of resources in beautification plans. Such pressure to look "first-rate" provides an opportunity for massive urban renewal and restructuring, environmental remediation, and major infrastructural developments. It also provides the elites an opportunity to restructure the cities according to their interests, given that the "top-tier" image is used to promote and justify economics programs such as tax incentives to foreign companies and business friendly policies to transnational corporations. In other words, the games are an active moment in the consolidation of a global city image through the dissemination of ideas and practices associated with the global city status. They provide an opportunity to "make" a global city.

The episode in Aldeia Maracanã serves to prove the role taken by Rio as a host city whose main goal is to secure its inclusion in the global cities circle, rather than to take responsibility for some of the consequences of the destructive march of predatory globalization intensified by the demands imposed by the world's largest sports mega-events. It also serves to show the importance of the role of culture as instrumental to the recuperation of space as a site for the articulation of modes of destabilization of discourses of globalization. That is, the transformation of the Museum's vacant site into an active space for the indigenous presence in the city is made possible through the mobilization of the category of culture, in this case indigenous culture. On the level of space, the intersection between the site's historical value and the presence of indigenous bodies in a space dedicated to the preservation of the indigenous culture functions as counter-space, to borrow from

Henri Lefebvre. This is because, "when a community fights the construction of urban motorways or housing-developments, when it demands 'amenities' or empty spaces for play and encounter, we can see how a counter-space can insert itself into spatial reality". The counter-space, argues Lefebvre, acts "against quantity and homogeneity, against power and the arrogance of power, against the endless expansion of the 'private' and of industrial profitability" (1991:381-82). Therefore, the occupation of a building whose historical value is directly associated with its importance to indigenous movements nationwide legitimizes the need for the recognition of spaces where other forms of knowledge can exist without the threat of displacement.[52]

The importance of mobilizing culture as a terrain upon which anti-homogeneous uses of space are enabled speaks to an understanding of the category of the cultural as "constituted by culturally and historically shaped interactions between human communities and the material world," argues Mary L. Pratt (434). The category of the cultural allows for an analysis of "patterns of consciousness" that while unique to its context are commonly activated in the terrain of culture. "Patterns of consciousness" says Pratt, "can be reflected on as part of political culture, as key, for instance, in making violent and unequal orders meaningful to people, in securing their resignation or compliance, and in defending alternative and resistant ways of being" (435). Whether in Rio, São Paulo, or any Latin American city for that matter, groups and individuals with a shared sense of

[52] In the past few decades, indigenous groups have migrated from the northeast and northern parts of the country escaping land conflict and violence associated with territorial disputes, as well scant economic opportunities. Their presence in the city calls attention the lack of public policies dedicated to attend to the needs of that population in urban as well as rural areas.

consciousness are defending alternative ways of being by engaging in critical cultural practices that intervene in the fissures in the homogeneous model of globalization. Even if not always waged in the urban setting, these alternative campaigns tend to eventually take their claims to the cities where, if anything, their struggles gain more visibility.[53] The intersection between culture and space is, therefore, a crucial site for understanding not only how social and historical processes unfold, but also how alternatives social processes come forth, as the sense of consciousness of marginalized communities is mobilized.

Another instance of alternative ways of being resisting the dominant order appeared in early twentieth first century Buenos Aires. The transformations Buenos Aires underwent during the neoliberal era resulted in an unforeseen increase in the number of *cartoneros* going thought the city trying to make a living out of recycled material. Their presence in the city disturbed not only the homogeneity of the neoliberal discourse, but also the homogeneity of the urban landscape of a city accustomed to an elitist image. The *cartonero* phenomenon was, then, a spatial, as much as a social-economic phenomenon. In the post 2001 crisis, an alternative way to grapple with the consequences of massive unemployment was found: the emergence of publishing co-operatives of handmade books made of recycled materials collected by *cartoneros*. The small independent press Eloísa Cartonera, established in 2003, has been successful in producing low cost *libros cartoneros* that, bound in recycled cardboard, re-print works of

[53] Brazil's landless workers, for instance, organize yearly marches to the nation's capital when thousands of people gather to demand from the federal government that the development of programs ensuring land reform, food justice, and social equality.

literature donated by both established and emerging Latin American writers such as Pedro Lemebel, César Aira, and Ricardo Daniel Piña. Since its emergence, the *cartonero* presses have appeared in countries across Latin America and the world.

The relevance of the handmade production of recycled books goes beyond that of making literature more accessible to the people. Rather than merely a consumer product, literature is rendered a potential site for the articulation of critical consciousness. That is, in addition to being a cultural product, literature becomes the site and the setting where other and identities and other politics can be activated (Ludmer 135). The handmade books reflect the role of culture as en essential tool in the process of recuperation of space as a site for the articulation of alternative ways of thinking. They too, like the indigenous occupation in Rio, function as a terrain in which discourses of globalization are challenged and destabilized. While unique to the context of neoliberal Buenos Aires, the experience of Eloísa Cartonera engages in a critical cultural approach to alternative forms of agency, which reflects a sense of consciousness informed by critiques to globalization.

Finally, in *La Ciudad Letrada*, Ángel Rama underscores how preconceived notions of ideal cities pay little attention to geographical specificities of the land upon they are built or to the practices of those who live there. Perhaps more importantly, he argues that the (intellectual) elite, allied with dominant economic interests have, since the foundation of the first Latin American cities, promoted that same ideal urban model as a means to legitimize unequal power relations. This study departs from the framework established by Rama and expands on the

discussion about the intersections between built environment and cultural practices by focusing on analyses of the Latin American city in the twenty first century as a space in which celebratory discourses of globalization can be effectively confronted.

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