



RECONSTRUCTING MEMORY & SPACE

Cognitive Mapping &
The Reconstruction of Argentina's
Clandestine Detention Centres

Felix Hicklin



With Gratitude and Dedication

*This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of
Floreal Avellaneda,
the beloved son of Iris Avellaneda, whose life was
tragically taken by the dictatorship.*

*My deepest thanks to Iris Avellaneda for her courage
and generosity in sharing her story, and to my tutor
Ana Mayoral Moratilla for her guidance and support.*

(Fig. 3, Iris Avellaneda alongside a picture of
her son Floreal Avellaneda
(Agencia Andar, 2021)



Abstract

This dissertation investigates how survivors and witnesses of Argentina's 1976–1983 dictatorship construct cognitive maps, mental representations of space, to identify and historically reconstruct sites where previous clandestine detention centres operated, with a focus on the Bacacay Street site in Buenos Aires. Drawing on cognitive science and environmental perception theories of Edward Tolman and Kevin Lynch, along with schema research and trauma studies, this dissertation applies these theoretical frameworks to testimonies, archival records, and interviews. Even though extreme circumstances and trauma have fragmented survivors' testimonies, their cognitive maps continue to play a crucial role in identifying and reconstructing the history of these sites. In the face of current political efforts to erase the dictatorship's crimes, this study proposes a digital mapping strategy that combines survivors' mental maps with architectural physical data, preserving these sites for the future education of generations and collective memory. By examining how individuals form and adapt cognitive maps under traumatic conditions, the dissertation highlights the importance of memory in ensuring that state-sponsored violence is neither forgotten nor repeated. Ultimately, the research highlights cognitive mapping as a powerful tool for historical reconstruction, advocating for Argentina's continued commitment to truth, justice, and education.

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Fig. 5, Protester dragged by soldiers into
a military vehicle.
(El Pais , 1982)



INTRODUCTION



Memory, in its broadest sense, is essential to how we perceive and interpret space. It links the past, present, and future, informs our understanding of historical events, and shapes our collective consciousness. While memory encompasses various cognitive processes, this dissertation specifically focuses on the mental reconstruction and representation of physical space, known as cognitive maps. In simple terms, these are mental frameworks that we use to navigate, comprehend, and recall our surroundings (C. Tolman, 1948), with this study further exploring their application in spaces marked by violence and trauma.

This dissertation examines how survivors and witnesses of Argentina's clandestine detention centres under Jorge Videla's dictatorship (1976–1983) mentally reconstructed and identified these locations, even in the absence of official evidence. The study also explores how cognitive maps contribute to preserving the collective memory of the atrocities committed during this period. The primary research question focuses on how survivors develop cognitive maps and how these mental representations support the historical reconstruction of these sites, particularly amid current political efforts to undermine the memory of the dictatorship's crimes.

Among Argentina's extensive network of detention centres during the dictatorship, the former clandestine detention centre on Bacacay Street in Buenos Aires serves as a primary case study.

This dissertation pursues various objectives. First, it explores how victims and witnesses developed a spatial understanding of the clandestine detention centre Bacacay Street site, drawing on testimonies and recollections. Second, in response to emerging threats to memory and the remembrance of previous illegal detention centre sites, the dissertation proposes a digital preservation strategy aimed at reconstructing, educating, and preserving the memory of these sites. Furthermore, this dissertation as a whole aims to highlight the importance of documenting and safeguarding both the cognitive maps of victims and witnesses as well as preserving the physical remains of former detention centres.

To achieve these objectives, the study implements a theoretical framework centred on cognitive mapping theories, drawing on foundational theories by Edward Tolman, schema and mental model frameworks, Kevin Lynch's concepts of spatial elements, and trauma studies. The dissertation assembles fragments of spatial and sensory details by combining archival research, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. This approach draws on a variety of sources, including testimonies, legal case files, and declassified U.S. documents, with document analysis used to extract critical descriptions.

Structured into six chapters, the dissertation begins with an introduction and historical context, followed by a theoretical framework outlining these cognitive science theories. The case study of Bacacay Street 3570 is then analysed through the lens of these theories, highlighting how cognitive maps and survivor testimonies support historical reconstruction. The final section proposes a digital preservation strategy to safeguard these spaces amid political challenges, emphasising the importance of memory and justice.

Ultimately, this research aims to shed light on how mental mapping can help uncover and preserve the history of clandestine detention centres, contributing to broader discussions about memory and justice in Argentina, reaffirming the argument that these former clandestine detention centres should remain visible markers of Videla's military state repression, serving as places of remembrance, accountability, and education.

Fig. 6, Dictator Jorge Rafael Videla
(BBC, 1976)



This section presents the historical context of Argentina's dictatorship between 1976 and 1983, as well as the clandestine detention centres that operated during this period.

From 1976 to 1983, Argentina faced a military dictatorship known as the National Reorganisation Process (Proceso de Reorganización Nacional). Under the leadership of General Jorge Rafael Videla, Admiral Emilio Massera, and Brigadier Orlando Agosti, the regime claimed the military coup was necessary to counter leftist militant groups and restore order, yet it instead imposed years of systematic state terrorism (Argentina. Gob, 2023). The regime's actions led to severe human rights violations, including torture, murder, and the forced disappearance of approximately 30,000 individuals (Secretaria de Derechos Humanos, n.d.) This period later became known as the Dirty War (Argentina. Gob, 2023).

Pre-Dictatorship

By the mid-1970s, Argentina was under significant social and economic instability. The death of President Juan Domingo Perón in 1974 left his successor, Isabel Perón, with escalating conflict between leftist guerrilla groups like the Montoneros and right-wing paramilitary groups such as the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (Triple A). The government's inability to contain unrest resulted in the military assuming control on 24 March 1976 (CONICET, 2020).

Dictatorship

Under the new military junta, clandestine detention centres operated throughout Argentina, often in repurposed buildings such as schools, residential houses, commercial buildings, and military or police stations. There are 814 confirmed sites where detainees were mostly blindfolded and handcuffed while undergoing weeks or months of physical and psychological torture, with many "disappeared" due to executions or the infamous Death Flights (Secretaría de Derechos Humanos, 2023). Approximately 500 children were born in captivity and illegally given to military families, erasing their true identities (Gob Argentina, 2022).

The 1982 Malvinas (Falklands) War against Britain marked a pivotal moment. The defeat of Argentina weakened the dictatorship, causing widespread protests and weakening the junta's authority. In 1983, the military dictatorship announced its withdrawal, leading to democratic elections (Argentina. Gob, 2023).



Fig. 7, Control tower of Clandestine Detention Centre.
(Jeff Kelly Lowenstein, 2013)



Fig. 8, ESMA Naval Mechanics School ex-Detention Centre.
(Alejandra Naftal, 2021)

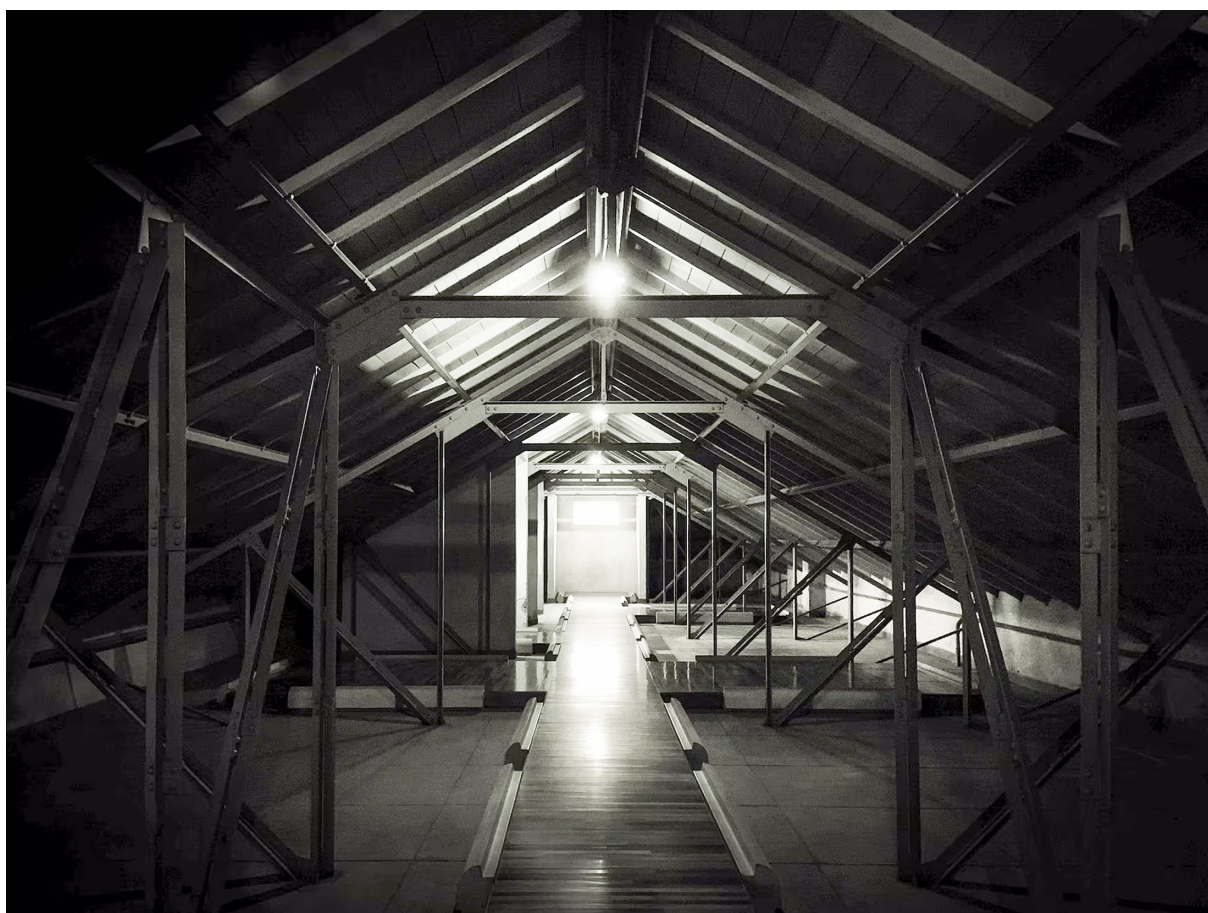


Fig. 9, Loft in ESMA used for torture and confinement during the dictatorship.
(Alejandra Naftal, 2021)



Fig. 10, Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo.
(Clarín, n.d.)

Post-Dictatorship

Raúl Alfonsín of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) party assumed the presidency on the 10th of December 1983, marking the return of democracy (Parque de la Memoria Buenos Aires Ciudad, n.d.). His administration established the National Commission on the Disappearance of People (CONADEP), which published the “Nunca Más” (Never Again) report in 1984. The report documented the regime's systematic abductions, torture, and murders, initially identifying 340 clandestine centres (CONADEP, 1983). This document formed the basis for the 1985 legal proceedings against the leaders of the dictatorship, resulting in the conviction of key military figures (ARGENTINA.GOB.AR, 2021).

Since then, human rights organisations, especially the mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo (fig.10), have played a crucial role in the search of approximately 30,000 disappeared individuals (CONADEP, 1983), reuniting abducted children with their biological families, and advocating for justice (Memoria Abierta, n.d.). Sites of remembrance such as previous clandestine detention centres, became important for recognising these past atrocities. Numerous sites, such as the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA)(Fig. 8-9), have been converted into memorial sites (UNESCO, n.d.). Recent investigations discovered clandestine detention centres around Argentina, suggesting many more sites may remain unidentified (Poder Judicial de la Nación, Síntesis de Prensa). Testimonies from survivors and witnesses have been essential in identifying and rebuilding these facilities through memory and cognitive mapping, converting personal narratives into vital evidence for justice and collective memory (2637/04 ‘Vaello...’,2020).

However, the current Argentine libertarian government, led by President Javier Milei, has cut funding for memory programs, seeks to privatise memorial sites, and promotes revisionist narratives, thereby jeopardising decades of progress (CELS, Memoria Verdad y Justicia, 2024). This dissertation examines how survivors and witnesses created mental representations of Argentina's clandestine detention centres and how these representations can aid in preserving awareness of historical events, safeguarding evidence, and maintaining Argentina's dedication to truth and justice.

Fig. 11, Edward Tolman.
(University of California Berkeley, n.d.)



*THEORETICAL
FRAMEWORK*



This section explores a range of cognitive science and environmental perception theories to explain how victims and witnesses of Argentina's clandestine detention centres, operating between 1976 and 1983, constructed cognitive maps of these sites. These mental reconstructions, shaped by complex and multilayered processes, were crucial in identifying and historically reconstructing the clandestine detention centres past.

Tolman's Theory of Cognitive Mapping:

Edward Tolman, a pioneer in behavioural psychology, introduced the concept of cognitive mapping to explain how organisms mentally represent their surroundings. He challenged the stimulus-response view of navigation, arguing instead that organisms create internal maps to navigate and adapt flexibly (C. Tolman, 1948).

Tolman's theory emerged from experiments with rats in mazes during the 1940s. He observed that when usual paths to food were blocked, rats identified alternative routes. This behaviour suggested they had formed a cognitive map of the maze, allowing them to understand the layout and adapt their strategies (C. Tolman, 1948). He also introduced the concept of latent learning, where organisms passively gather information about their environment without immediate rewards. For example, rats exploring a maze without incentives later demonstrated improved navigation when a reward was introduced, proving that cognitive maps develop independently of direct motivation (C. Tolman, 1948).

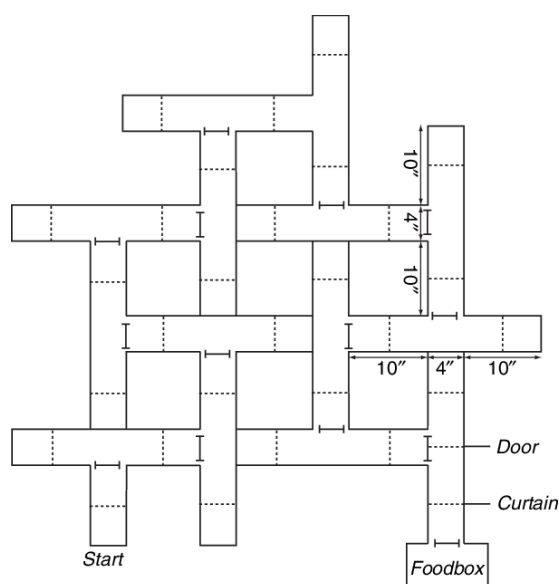


Fig. 12, Maze used by Tolman (1930) to study latent learning in rats. (Tolman, 1948)

Tolman distinguished between narrow maps, which are fragmented and formed under stress or limited sensory input, and comprehensive maps, which result from calm, prolonged exposure, better integrating sensory inputs such as sight, sound, and touch. Comprehensive maps provide a detailed and accurate understanding of spatial configurations, enabling better navigation and adaptability (C. Tolman, 1948).

Cognitive maps which are built on sensory inputs, allow individuals to navigate, remember, and reconstruct environments, even under limiting conditions. Tolman theorised that humans as well as rats create these maps, using sensory stimuli to recall layouts, plan routes, and adapt to changes (C. Tolman, 1948). This theory provides a foundation for defining and understanding cognitive maps, as well as the various ways they can manifest based on sensory input.

Schemas & Mental models

Schema:

Schemas, introduced by Bartlett (1932), are the basic knowledge structures that shape our expectations and understanding of the world (Jones et al., 2011). They influence how we interpret new information by fitting it into what we already know, making processing and remembering easier. (Jones et al., 2011). For example, individuals may have general knowledge of an office (office schema) that includes the expectation of a row of desks, computers and filing cupboards that help individuals understand and remember their environment more efficiently.

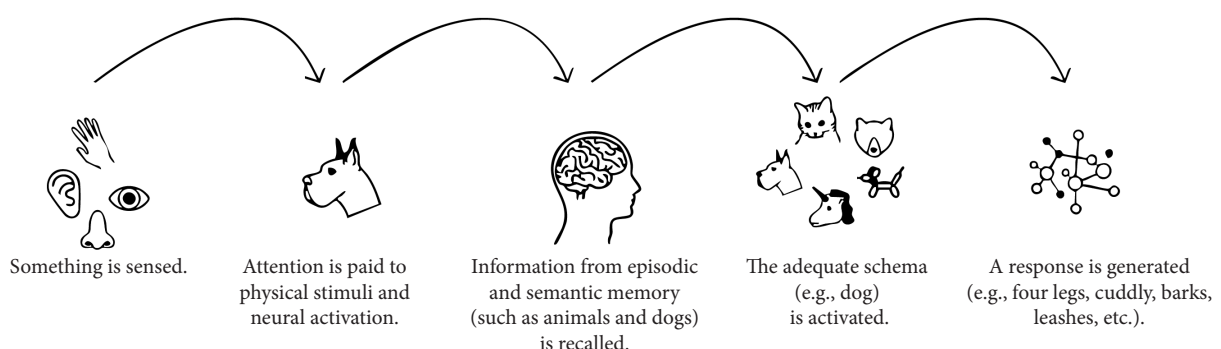
Mental Models:

Building upon the theory of schemas, Kenneth Craik (1943) introduces the theory of mental models: "Mental models are personal, internal representations of external reality that people use to interact with the world around them." (Jones et al., 2011, p. 2) Kenneth Craik (1943) initially argued that individuals had a "small-scale model of how the world works" (Jones et al., 2011, P3) that allows individuals to reason, predict outcomes, and solve problems by actively imagining and manipulating scenarios in their mind (Jones et al., 2011). These models are different from schemas as they are dynamic not static, developing as they integrate new information (Jones et al., 2011).

Similar to schemas, mental models often rely on analogical reasoning to help individuals use familiar knowledge or situations to understand new ones (Jones et al., 2011). For example, the flow of water can be used to understand and explain electrical current, with relationships and structures transferred between these two concepts (Gentner, 1983).

In spatial contexts, mental models are referred to as "spatial mental models" or cognitive maps, which assist humans in acquiring, storing, and recalling spatial information (Jones et al., 2011). These mechanisms allow individuals to generalise from prior experiences and use these generalisations in new circumstances (Jones et al., 2011). For example, hearing the clatter of plates might lead to a presumption of a nearby kitchen.

This theoretical framework will be applied in the analysis of survivors' testimonies to explore how mental models and schemas are used to create cognitive maps and contribute to the reconstruction of Argentina's clandestine detention centres that operated during 1976 and 1983.



(Fig. 13, Schema theory explained, n.d.)

Kevin Lynch's Urban Elements

Although Kevin Lynch's theory is typically applied at an urban scale, it will be utilised in the analysis of survivors' testimonies in Chapter 4, due to its relevance in explaining how humans rely on specific visual cues to understand their surroundings, regardless of scale.

Kevin Lynch's book, *The Image of the City* (1960), establishes five fundamental aspects that influence individual perception and navigation of urban environments: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. This section focusses on three of those elements: paths, edges, and landmarks. These are selected to ensure the study remains concise and because they are essential for developing and organising cognitive maps and enhancing spatial understanding.

Paths:

Paths are the channels along which observers move, such as streets, alleyways and railways. Lynch defines them as “the predominant elements in the image” (Lynch, 1960, p.41) of several people, as they perceive and comprehend their environment while navigating these paths. Paths organise the order of other objects in the environment, acting as axis that connect spatial information. (Lynch, 1960).

Edges:

Edges are linear components that do not form pathways but instead act as boundaries between separate areas. Lynch defines edges as “linear breaks in continuity” (Lynch, 1960, p.41) that function as either barriers or seams. Examples include walls, shorelines, or the edges of an object. While not as prominent as paths, edges are important for defining areas and keeping regions unified. (Lynch, 1960).

Landmarks:

Landmarks are external reference points used by individuals for navigation without physical entry. Lynch defines them as “a rather simply defined physical object,” (Lynch, 1960, p.48) like a building, tower, or hill, that stands out by being singled out from its surroundings (Lynch, 1960). Landmarks can be both far, providing radial references observed from many perspectives, or local, providing markers of identity and structure within areas. As one becomes more familiar with an area, local landmarks can become essential for navigation (Lynch, 1960).

The concept of Paths, edges, and landmarks become essential in shaping humans' perception and mental mapping of their environments. Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* exceeds the urban scale, extending to smaller scenarios like the examination of survivors' testimony, where spatial clues such as landmarks aid in the cognitive reconstruction of clandestine detention centres.

Cognitive Maps & Trauma

Previous theories on cognitive mapping help explain an overview of how individuals form mental representations of their environments. However, survivors of traumatic events, such as the survivors of clandestine detention centres, have endured extreme stress and trauma that disrupt typical cognitive processes (Van der Kolk, 1998).

Trauma significantly disrupts the cognitive processes involved in forming and recalling memories, developing patterns that differ from typical memories (Van der Kolk, 1998). Traumatic memories are often remembered with “extreme vividness or totally resist integration” (Van der Kolk, 1998, section 5), remaining fragmented and overwhelmingly sensory.

Pierre Janet (1889) was one of the first to link memory with trauma, arguing that heightened emotional arousal can prevent memories from forming coherent narratives. He explained that trauma leads to dissociation, where memories are “split off” from consciousness, remaining as sensory impressions, repetitive thoughts, or behavioural reenactments that are difficult to access and verbalise. (Janet, 1889).

Building off Janet's theory of dissociation, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach et al. (2004) further explain dissociation, focusing on how survivors that endured trauma, construct fixed narratives that help them to organise fragmented experiences into a coherent narrative. By creating this structured narrative of their traumatic experiences, they are able to regain a sense of control that allows them to verbalise their trauma. (Tuval-Mashiach et al., 2004) The creation of a rigid narrative reduces the individual's psychological distress when recalling traumatic memory such as sensory or visual memories and helps in recovering from traumatic experiences (Tuval-Mashiach et al., 2004). This is relevant in cognitive mapping, as survivors often rely on structured narratives to access and organise their memories, enabling them to reconstruct the spatial layout of the traumatic environments they endured.

Neurobiological research further supports these theories by finding that during traumatic events, the amygdala, responsible for emotional processing, becomes overactive, while the hippocampus, which organises sensory data into narratives, is inhibited (Van der Kolk, 1998). Furthermore, Scott Laurence Rauch identified that the Broca's area which is crucial for speech production also becomes less active further explaining why survivors that present trauma, often struggle to verbalise their experiences (Rauch, 1996). These neurological changes explain why trauma often leaves fragmented and sensory-dominant memories that resist integration.

Unlike everyday memories, which integrate smoothly into personal narratives, traumatic memories are encoded differently from the beginning and persist as fragmented memories, challenging the traumatised individual's ability to form and verbalise a coherent cognitive map of their surroundings. Understanding these disruptions is vital to exploring how survivors reconstruct environments shaped by trauma and understanding why there is a huge gap in the information available to historically reconstruct previous clandestine detention centres.

Fig. 14, Façade of Bacacay 3570,
(Google Maps, 2023)



CASE STUDY:
BACACAY 3570 STREET CLANDESTINE DETENTCION CENTRE



This section introduces the Bacacay Street case study and analyses the testimonies of its victims and witnesses through the theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 3.

Introduction to the Bacacay 3570 Street Case

During Argentina's military dictatorship, clandestine detention centres operated across the country, with many concentrated in Buenos Aires. These sites varied from prominent detention centres, such as the Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA) (fig. 8-9), to hidden locations within everyday buildings, such as repurposed homes and workshops. These covert sites allowed the state to abduct, interrogate, and torture individuals in secrecy, turning familiar environments into tools of repression (Argentina. Gob, 2022).

Among these covert sites, was the clandestine detention centre operating within a residential house at 3570 Bacacay Street in the Floresta neighbourhood of Buenos Aires (fig. 14,15,18,19). Active during the dictatorship's early months in 1976, it served as a precursor to the nearby Automotores Orletti detention centre, a repurposed car workshop (fig. 16-17). Both centres, located within the same block (fig. 15), were part of Plan Cóndor, a coordinated effort by South American dictatorships to suppress political opposition (Plan Cóndor, 2019). At Bacacay 3570, agents of the Secretariat of State Intelligence (SIDE), abducted individuals were mostly kept blindfolded from capture to release, with brief moments when they could see. Uncertain of their whereabouts, the detainees were then interrogated and tortured in the house's basement (fig. 19) and isolated rooms. (Síntesis de Prensa: Poder Judicial de la Nación).

Identifying Bacacay 3570 as a detention centre was a gradual process. Emma Alcira Lebozec, abducted and taken to Bacacay 3570 on the 1st of May 1976, provided the first testimony in 1984, detailing the site's architectural features (Página 12, 2020). Additional evidence surfaced in 2018 through a declassified CIA document linking the property to the abduction of Argentina's ambassador to Venezuela (CIA, 2018). Testimonies from survivors including Anita Larrea, Mercedes Naveiro, and Juan Ignacio Azarola, provided further confirmation of the site's function and description. Witnesses María Ester Poggi and Norma Graciela del Río, former and current owners of the property, also provided accounts that aligned with survivors' descriptions (2637/04 'Vaello...',2020).

Fig. 15, Overview of Bacacay street 3570 & Automotores Orletti detention centres.
(Google Earth , 2019)



AUTOMOTORES ORLETTI

BACACAY STREET 3570



Fig. 16, Exterior of Automotores Orletti detentioncentre,
(Marcas de Memoria, 2022)

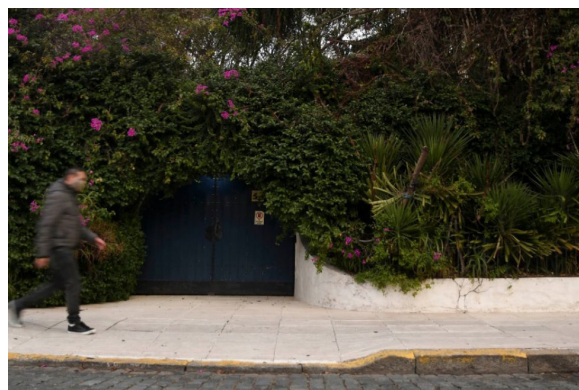


Fig. 18, Exterior of Bacacay street 3570 detention centre,
(Infobae, 2020)

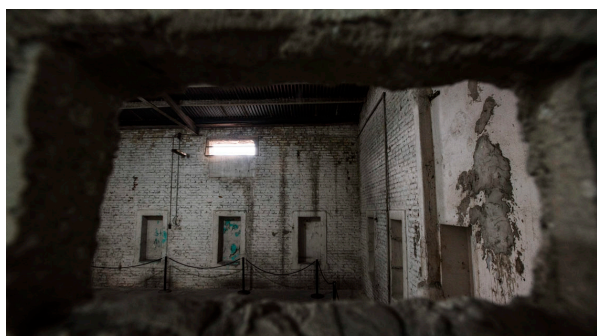


Fig. 17, Interior of Automotores Orletti detentioncentre,
(Conteris, 2011)



Fig. 19, Basement of Bacacay street 3570 detention centre used to
torture, (La Tinta Ar, n.d.)

4.2 COGNITIVE MAPS OF BACACAY STREET

This following section examines how the survivors and witnesses used cognitive mapping to understand and reconstruct the traumatic environment of Bacacay Street 3570, ultimately aiding its identification and historical reconstruction.

4.2.1 Tolman's theory in context: Bacacay 3570 Testimonies

Tolman's theory of cognitive mapping offers a foundation for understanding how survivors of Bacacay 3570 formed mental representations in traumatic circumstances. His distinction between narrow and comprehensive maps clarifies why some testimonies provide rich spatial detail while others remain fragmented.

Maria Ester Poggi, who owned the site after the detention centre was dismantled, offers a comprehensive account of the house. She describes "a patio made of dirt extending to the back of the property, from beginning to end," and notes a "single-story structure with very high ceilings," which occupied only the front half of the property. Toward the rear, there were small rooms and a shared kitchen (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, pp. 10–11). Poggi's calm and prolonged exposure to the site likely enabled her to form a cohesive mental map, detailing the building's layout as a whole and the relationships between its spaces.

In contrast, former detainee's testimonies illustrate Tolman's theory of narrow maps. For example, Juan Ignacio Azarola Saint recalls only "crunchy wooden floors" and "squeaky doors" (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, p. 15), relying primarily on limited sensory impressions rather than a comprehensive spatial understanding. Similarly, Mercedes Naveiro remembers fragmented elements, such as the wooden floors, a garden assumed by hearing guards barbequing, and a basement (Naveiro, 2010). However, these fragments do not join into the cohesive narrative seen in Poggi's testimony, reflecting the restricted perception typical of trauma survivors and the presence of Tolman's narrow map concept.

Tolman's theory therefore clarifies that psychological conditions and environmental exposure shape individual cognitive maps and influence their detail and coherence. These insights lay the groundwork for analysing the mechanisms of cognitive mapping in the Bacacay testimonies.

4.2.2: Lynch's Urban elements in context: Bacacay 3570 Testimonies

Kevin Lynch's theory, originally intended for urban contexts, is similarly applicable to smaller-scale contexts such as the Bacacay clandestine detention centre. In *The Image of the City* (1960), Kevin Lynch identifies five elements that shape spatial understanding, of which this case study examines three: landmarks, edges, and paths, due to their relevance and to keep the study concise.

Landmarks:

Kevin Lynch defines landmarks as "a rather simply defined physical object" differentiated from "a host of possibilities" (Lynch 1960, p.48). The Bacacay Street testimonies highlight the kitchen and basement as key landmarks. While most survivors describe the kitchen located at the far-right end of the property, each testimony highlights different features. Anita Larrea remembers the kitchen by describing a table positioned against the left wall and a small stove with burners, while Maria Ester Poggi remembers the kitchen by describing a pink wall and a granite floor (2637/04 'Vaello...,2020). Similarly, to identify the basement, Norma Graciela del Río relies on a laundry basin near its entrance. These visual elements assist in consolidating survivors' memories, creating cohesive mental representations of the location.

Paths are defined by Kevin Lynch as "channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves" (Lynch, 1960, p.47). Although there are limited details regarding paths in the testimony's documents, their relationship with landmarks is evident in descriptions of the route connecting the kitchen and the garden. Poggi points out that one of the rooms of the house, now recognised as part of the kitchen, "was accessed from the garden" (2637/04, 'Vaello, 2020, p. 11). Whereas Anita Larrea remembers entering the kitchen via the garden when describing the location of the kitchen table (2637/04 'Vaello..., 2020). This connecting route functions as a path but also serves as a landmark: the garden locates the kitchen, and the kitchen simultaneously orientates the garden. By merging the concepts of landmarks and paths, survivors build a more coherent and adaptable spatial mental map of the Bacacay detention centre.

Edges:

Lynch defines edges as "the boundaries between two phases, linear breaks in continuity: shores, walls..." (Lynch 1960, p. 47). They delineate transitions, whether related to external property boundaries or interior partitions. Poggi's testimony describes an external edge: "The house had a disorganised front yard... the entire structure was built along the right side while the left side of the lot was a garden with dirt stretching... from start to finish" (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, pp. 10–11). This boundary divides the property into two zones, shaping how individuals mentally organise the space. Within the property, testimonies describing a wall dividing the kitchen, such as Poggi's description, "It was a kitchen separated in two by a wall in the middle," and Mercedes Naveiro "The kitchen was modern, divided into two parts by a wall," demonstrate how edges partition interior spaces into distinct subareas. (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020 pp. 10–11) (Naveiro, 2010.) By creating clear physical separations, these edges help survivors develop a more structured mental representations of the environment.

Together, landmarks, paths, and edges provide vital reference points for reconstructing Bacacay 3570. These features anchor memories, guide movement, and partition space, enabling survivors to piece together fragmented recollections into a coherent spatial image.

Schema & Mental Models in context: Bacacay 3570 Testimonies

Schemas, as introduced by Bartlett (1932), are generalised knowledge structures that help individuals interpret new information by referencing past experiences. In spatial contexts, schemas guide understanding of unfamiliar environments using pre-existing mental concepts (Bartlett, 1932). Survivors and witnesses of Bacacay 3570 may have relied on schemas to make sense of the site, often under traumatic conditions.

Maria Ester Poggi's testimony illustrates how schemas shaped her interpretation and recollection. She described the property as "a hotel, or a place where rooms are rented out," noting it lacked the characteristics of a typical family home (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, pp. 10–11). She observed "a lot of compartmentalised rooms... they seemed like rental spaces" and referred to the kitchen as "a shared accommodation kitchen," highlighting her use of schemas of hostels or shared spaces (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, pp. 10–11). This allowed her to presume the building's purpose and enrich the recollection and understanding of her cognitive map.

Other testimonies also demonstrate the use of schema. Kovacic simply described the site as "a very old house" (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, p. 15), a description similar to Mercedes Naveiro and Emma Lebozec, who described it as a large old house. Lebozec added details about the "old fixtures and floors" in the bathroom, drawing on her schema of what an older house should look and feel like. (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, p.17) These schemas helped survivors identify key features and integrate them into their understanding of the site.

Mental models, as theorised by Kenneth Craik (1943), go beyond schemas by providing dynamic representations formed in real time, combining current inputs with long-term knowledge (Jones et al., 2011). These models fill gaps in understanding by connecting sensory cues to logical deductions. For instance, Mercedes Naveiro noted the smell of a barbeque, which led her to deduce the presence of a garden, linking sensory input to spatial reasoning (Naveiro, 2010).

Poggi also used mental models when describing the house's "chorizo style" layout (a traditional Argentine design with rooms along one side of a central patio) (fig. 21). She noted that the rear rooms' lower ceilings did not match the original construction (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, p.22), combining observed details with her schema of typical building styles to form a mental model of how the property had been altered over time.

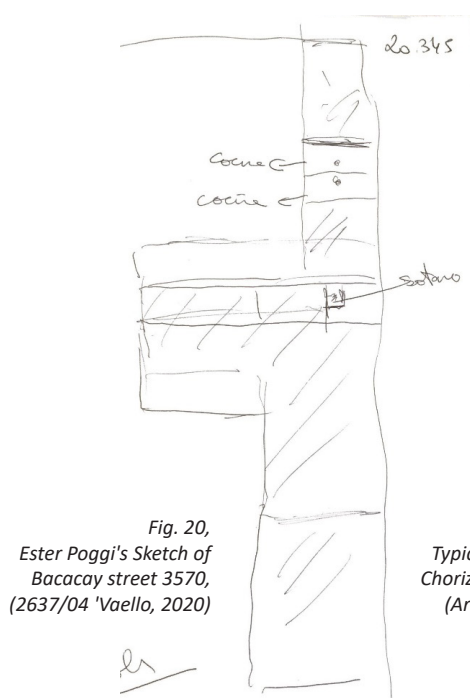


Fig. 20,
Ester Poggi's Sketch of
Bacacay street 3570,
(2637/04 'Vaello, 2020)

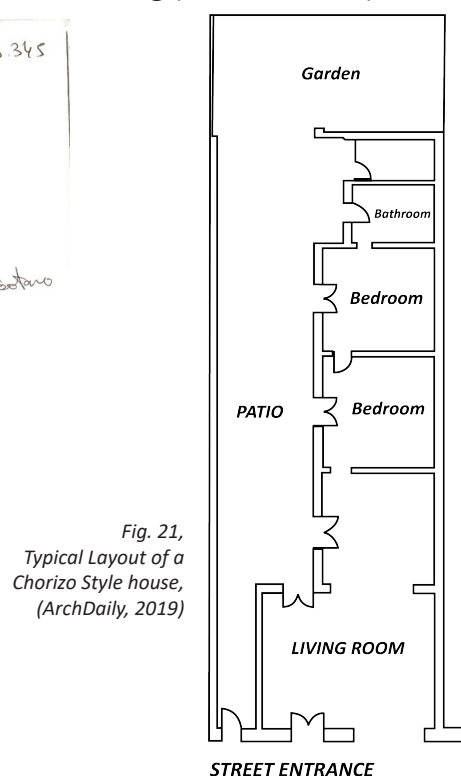
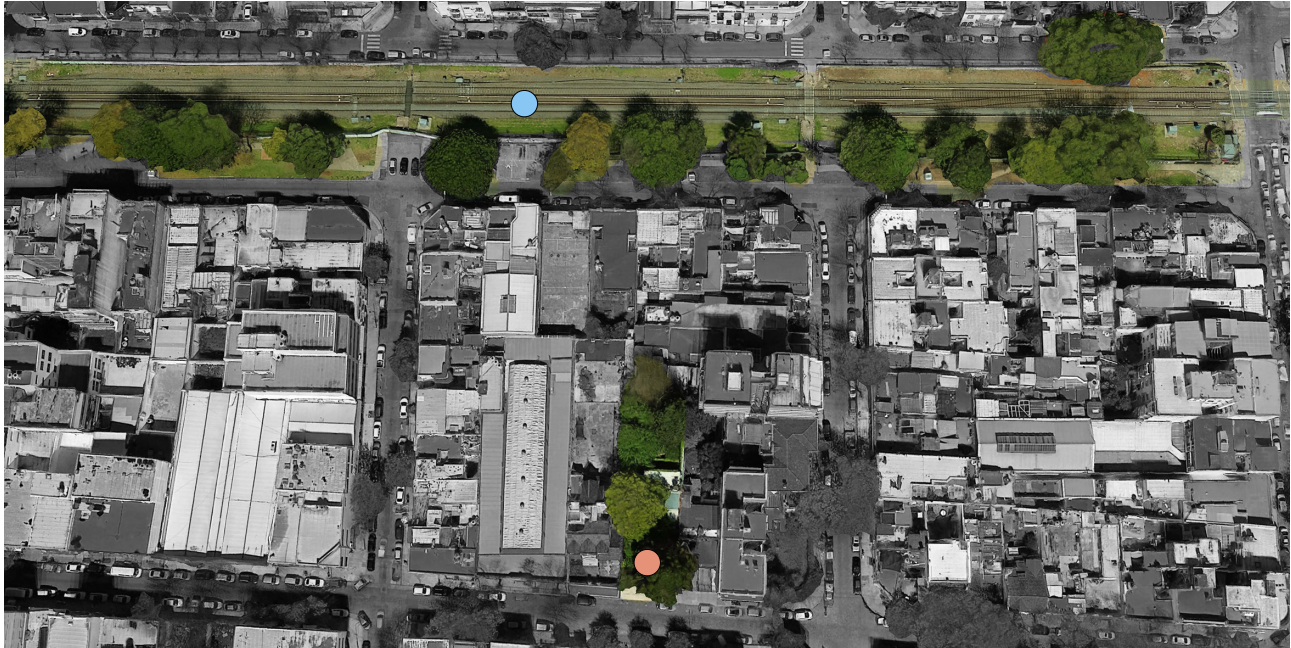


Fig. 21,
Typical Layout of a
Chorizo Style house,
(ArchDaily, 2019)

Anita E. Larrea de Jaroslavsky's testimony highlights how mental models evolve through shared information. Initially, she identified frequent aircraft sounds near Bacacay 3570, but after discussing them with another detainee, Cristina, she realised they were train sounds (fig. 22). Cristina, familiar with the Flores neighbourhood due to frequent visits prior to her capture, used her schema of the area and recognised the soundscape of that particular area. This exchange allowed Larrea de Jaroslavsky to adjust her mental model, concluding, "What I thought was an aeroplane was actually a train." (2637/04 'Vaello, 2020, p.20)



- Bacacay 3570
- Railway lines

Fig. 22, Overview of Bacacay 3570 and the nearby train tracks, (Google Earth , 2019)

The Bacacay 3570 testimonies demonstrate how schemas and mental models work together to create more complete cognitive maps, even under distressing circumstances. Schemas enable survivors to quickly categorise features such as rental-like compartmentalised rooms or large old house, while mental models dynamically integrate observations into a more detailed understanding. Through conversation and exposure, survivors refined their mental representations, piecing together fragmented impressions into meaningful cognitive maps that are essential for reconstructing Bacacay 3570's layout and the traumatic events that occurred there.

Trauma in context: Bacacay 3570 Testimonies

Clear differences emerge when comparing testimonies from victims of the Calle Bacacay detention centre with those of non-victim witnesses. Witnesses such as María Ester Poggi and Norma Graciela del Río, who were previous owners of the property, provided coherent detailed accounts with little sensory fragmentation. In contrast, victims, especially those blindfolded and subjected to both physical and psychological torture, offered fewer details and showed signs of fragmented memory. This pattern is explained by Van der Kolk's (1998) argument that trauma interferes with regular cognitive processes, fragmenting survivors' memories and impairing their ability to form a clear mental map.

FRAGMENTED MEMORIES:

Many survivors recall intense, fragmented memories. Mercedes Naveiro vividly describes the basement by remembering another prisoner convulsing beside her on a wet basement floor, uncertain whether the liquid was blood, urine, or water (Naveiro, 2010). Anita Larrea remembers the kitchen and the gas stove when describing the action of a guard pressing a gas lighter against her ribs while threatening her: "You are never leaving this place" (2637/04 'Vaello... 2020, p.19). Similarly, Juan Ignacio Azarola's recollection of the detention centre focusses only on "crunchy wooden floors" and "squeaky doors" (2637/04, Vaello 2020, p. 15). These impressions support Janet's (1889) view that heightened emotional arousal restricts the formation of coherent narratives, leaving sensory memories instead. They also align with Van der Kolk's (1998) argument that traumatic recollections resist ordinary organisation by appearing as vivid yet fragmented snapshots.

DISSOCIATION AND FIXED NARRATIVES:

Janet's (1889) concept of dissociation further explains how survivors detach from overwhelming events, sometimes describing them as viewed from a distance or as "not them." For instance, Mercedes Naveiro refers to feeling "like a stranger... in a weird dream" (Naveiro, 2010), indicating a split between her personal narrative and the traumatic experience. Dissociation also complicates verbal expression, often leading to fixed narratives, as noted by Tuval-Mashiach et al. A key example is Iris Avellaneda (fig. 23), a survivor from the Campo de Mayo detention centre, interviewed during the initial research for this dissertation. Although Campo de Mayo was intended to be case study alongside Bacacay Street, Iris was not able to provide details about her cognitive map of Campo de Mayo. However, her interview remained vital for examining dissociation and fixed narratives.



Fig. 23 , Iris Avellaneda in Campo de Mayo,
(Agencia Paco Urondo, n.d.)

Context: Iris and her son were abducted by Videla's dictatorship authorities and taken to Campo de Mayo, where they endured 15 days of torture. Tragically, her 15-year-old son was later murdered in the dictatorship's infamous death flights departing from Campo de Mayo. Following her release from Campo de Mayo, they transferred Iris to Olmos prison in Buenos Aires, where she ultimately found freedom in 1978. (Iris Avellaneda, 2024)

During the interview with Iris, despite asking questions related to her cognitive map, she repeated a rigid, consistent, pre-formed narrative. Extensive prior research indicated she was reiterating the same fixed account previously given to the Argentine National Library (Biblioteca Nacional Mariano Moreno, 2023).

The goal was not to psychologically analyse Iris but rather to understand how trauma affects memory recollection and how survivors often rely on fixed narratives, repeated with consistent limited sensory details, as a coping mechanism to manage overwhelming memories. Although Iris shared a fragmented and limited amount of information regarding her cognitive map of the detention centre, her use of the fixed narrative to disassociate herself from the events may act as a tool to recall limited details of her cognitive map without entering further emotional distress caused by trauma, as previously explained by Tuval-Mashiach et al.

This trauma section demonstrates how trauma disrupts memory and cognition, resulting in fragmented recollections and dissociated narratives. Victims at Calle Bacacay rely on vivid yet fragmented memories or fixed narratives, contrasting with coherent memories from non-traumatised witnesses. Such disruptions impair survivors' ability to form cohesive mental maps, highlighting the significance of trauma in shaping how clandestine detention centres are remembered and understood.

Overall, this chapter's analysis explored how survivors and witnesses at Bacacay 3570 may have formed their cognitive maps, drawing on key theories in cognitive science. Tolman's distinction between comprehensive and narrow maps establish the foundation of cognitive maps and their characteristics, while Schema theory and mental models helps clarifies how individuals categorise unfamiliar spaces according to their prior experiences. Kevin Lynch's concepts of landmarks, edges, and paths (Lynch, 1960) clarify how crucial spatial elements, such as the dividing wall, could structure and provide mental anchor points for these mental representations. Furthermore, Trauma research (Van der Kolk, 1998) highlights how intense stress leads to fragmented or disassociated memories. Collectively, these testimonies enabled the identification of the clandestine detention centre, and its historical reconstruction. The following sketches from Maria Ester Poggi, Anita Larrea de Jaroslavsky, and Emma Alcira Lebozec serve as direct evidence of such cognitive maps, unveiling Bacacay's previous layout and operations.

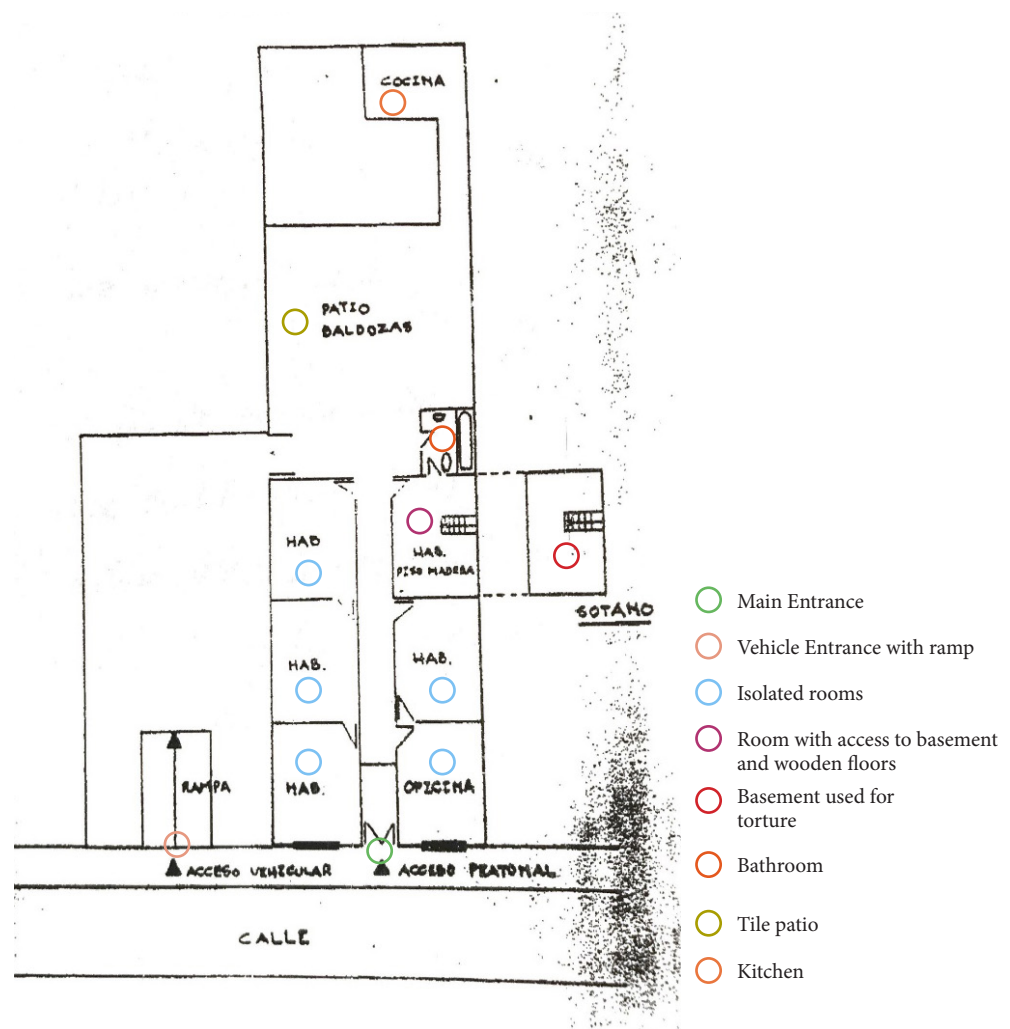
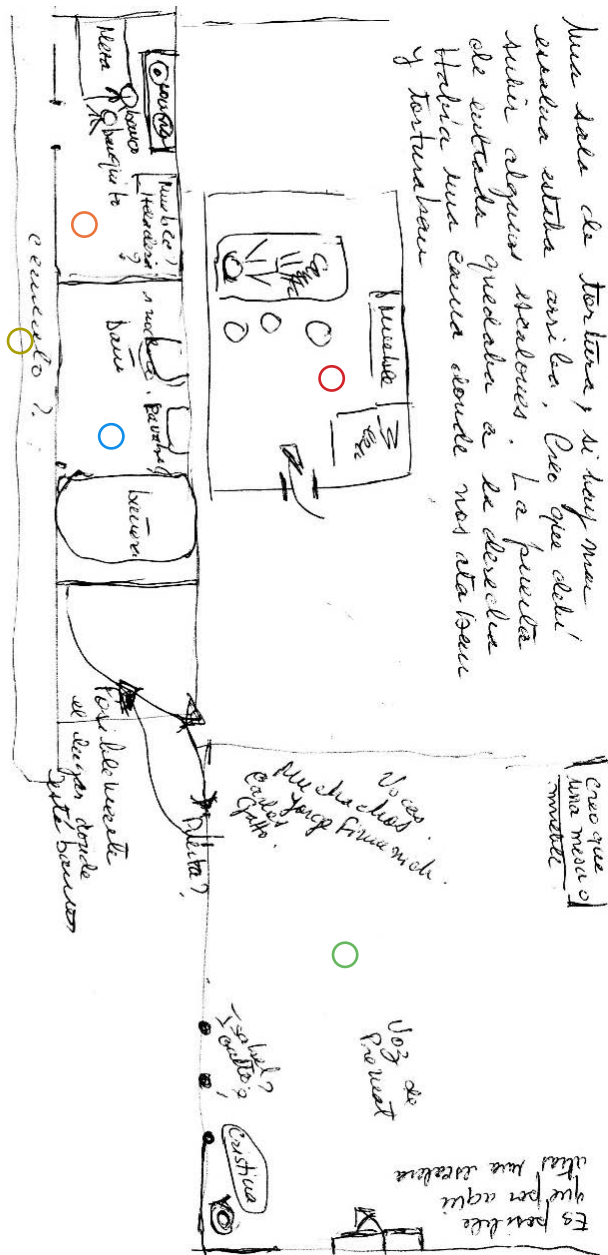


Fig. 24, Emma Alcira Lebozec's sketch of Bacacay 3570.
(2637/04, Vaello, 2020)

una sala de torturas, y hay una
callecilla entre ellas, que que debe
haber algunas escaleras. La puerta
de entrada quedaba a la derecha
había una banca donde nos estaba
y torturaban



- Isolated room
(describes voices from room)
- Garden Wall
- Bare soil Garden
- Basement with torture bed
- Bathroom
- "Cement patio?"
- Kitchen

22. Que de tempo
 passou para estas coisas - y agora sagrada
 Agre me derreem me atulhado de futilidade

PARÉD

Fig. 25, Anita Edith Francoise Larrea de Jaroslavsky
sketch of Bacacay 3570.
(2637/04, Vaello, 2020)

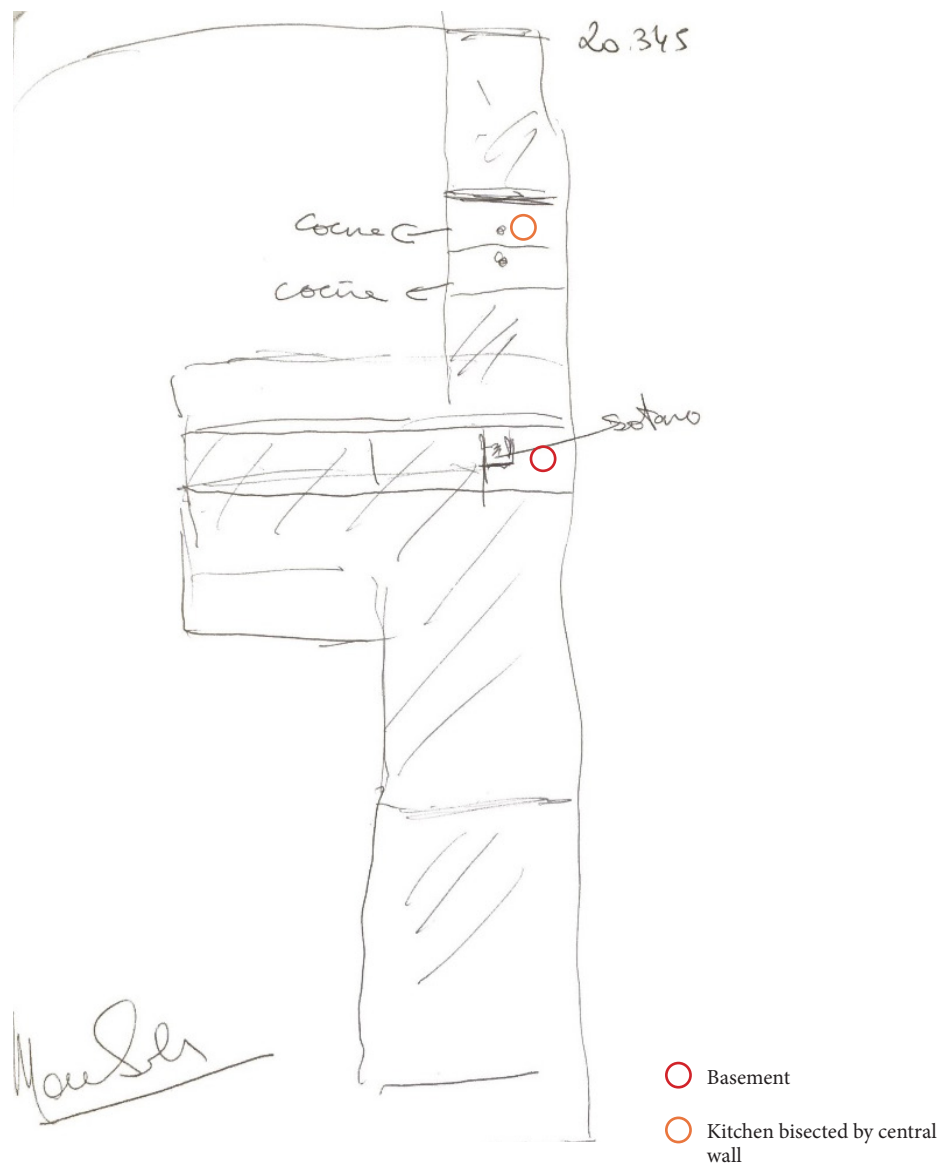


Fig. 26, María E. Poggi's sketch of Bacacay 3570, (2637/04, Vaello, 2020)

Recognising the power of these cognitive maps invites further reflection and application to how these cognitive maps can aid in historically reconstructing sites where former clandestine detention centres operated. Historical reconstructions using cognitive maps preserve the truth of these sites and present a more authentic memory that reflects the victims' experiences, offering insights beyond official narratives amid political and social challenges.

Fig. 27, Monument in memory
of the dictatorship's victims.
(CELS, 2024)

*FROM COGNITIVE & PHYSICAL
TO DIGITAL.*



5.1

Contemporary Context

The following section outlines a critical threat to Argentina's former clandestine detention centres and proposes an architectural digital preservation approach grounded in cognitive mapping and cognitive science theories seen in previous chapters.

Argentina's former clandestine detention centres are essential for preserving Argentina's collective memory as sites of remembrance, ensuring that future generations understand the atrocities committed by Videla's dictatorship between 1976 and 1983. These sites also contain vital evidence for past and present legal cases and serve as physical reminders that prevent any denial or change of narrative regarding the past crimes of Videla's dictatorship.



Fig. 28, Initiation of Campo de Mayo remembrance site, Iris Avellaneda (right) former with President Alberto Fernández (speaker), (Argentina Gob, 2023)

However, these sites of remembrance currently face multiple challenges. Since the dictatorship ended in 1983, there was a general, widespread consensus on maintaining these spaces as memorial sites. Yet, the recent election of President Javier Milei and Vice President Victoria Villarruel in November 2023 has put this consensus in jeopardy. Milei's libertarian government has introduced state cost-cutting measures that strip funding for infrastructure projects in memory sites, dismissing most of the workers responsible for maintaining the site, including halting archaeological excavations and conservation work essential for preserving judicial evidence. (CELS Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, 2024 A). Milei's government is further proposing privatising key memorial properties such as former clandestine detention centres La Perla Chica in Córdoba, La Huerta in Tandil, Puerta 8 in Campo de Mayo, and Regiment 9 in Corrientes, therefore threatening their function as a site of remembrance. (CELS Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, 2024 B)

Furthermore, Vice President Victoria Villarruel, who is the granddaughter, daughter, and niece of Argentine military figures, including her uncle Ernesto Guillermo Villarruel, who was investigated for crimes against humanity (LA NACION, 2024), promotes an opposing narrative known as "complete memory" (Senado Argentina, 2024). This narrative seeks to minimise the actions of the dictatorship by equating guerrilla activities with the systematic widespread violence carried out by the military regime, further intending to justify the actions of the dictatorship between 1976 and 1983. Additionally, she has visited former dictators, such as dictator Jorge Videla, during their time in prison. (PAGINA12, 2023) (LA NACION, 2023)



Fig. 29, President Milei alongside Vicepresident Victoria Villarruel in a Military parade in Buenos Aires city centre on a TAM 2C A2 Tank, (Clarín, 2024)

This political shift in Argentina is partially due to a growing lack of historical awareness among younger Argentines, particularly those aged 16–34 who largely voted for Milei in the 2023 elections (El País Argentina, 2023). The chart below presents the voting patterns by age group in the 2023 election, comparing the preferences for candidates Sergio Massa and Javier Milei.

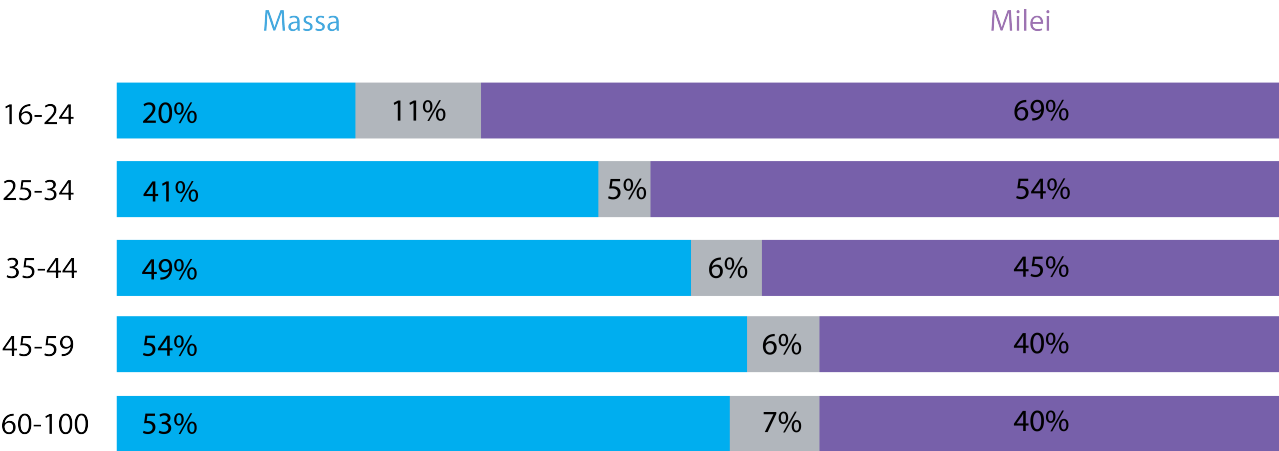


Fig. 30, Distribution of votes by age group in Argentina's 2023 Elections., (El País Argentina, 2023)

Unlike older generations who lived through the dictatorship, many younger voters are clearly less informed about the period's atrocities, making them susceptible to current denialist narratives. Therefore, the urgent task of protecting these sites is not solely a matter of funding or ownership but also of sustaining public awareness.

In response, the next section proposes a way architects and related professionals can help safeguard these sites by digitally documenting and historically reconstructing former detention centres. The digital documentation and historical reconstruction are achieved by combining victims' and witnesses' cognitive maps with physical architectural data. Together, these elements create a comprehensive 3D record that preserves an authentic representation of the detention centre while remaining unaffected by shifting political agendas or natural decay. This proposal is partly inspired by the innovative work of Forensic Architecture at Goldsmiths University, whose methodologies highlight the potential of spatial reconstruction in preserving historical truth (Forensic Architecture, 2019). However, while their work focuses on forensic investigations, this approach is more centred on historical reconstruction and memory preservation specific to Argentina's clandestine detention centres.

While architects may not have the power to override broader social or political factors, this proposition provides a vital tool for educating future generations and preserving memory. It further reinforces Argentina's long running commitment to truth, justice, and remembrance.

Throughout this dissertation, the former clandestine detention centre Calle Bacacay is analysed and presented as an example of how victims developed cognitive maps of the spaces in which they were confined and how they mentally reconstructed and identified these sites. The following proposal uses Calle Bacacay as an example for its development and is intended to be applicable to all former clandestine detention centres in Argentina that operated during the military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983.

5.2

PROPOSAL

The proposal begins with an interactive map of Argentina that outlines the location of every known detention centre in the country. This information is readily available on the government website that outlines every known detention centre up to October 2022 (fig. 31) (GOB Argentina, 2022). The user of this map will be able to select the ex-clandestine detention centre on the map, and a window will pop up with a brief introduction to the site history. The introduction includes images of the site and a button to access the 3D model. This 3D model attempts to provide a historical reconstruction that accurately represents the original structure, functionality, and appearance of these locations during their operational period.

This proposal involves various stakeholders, including architects, victims, witnesses, historians, archaeologists, and forensic anthropologists, among others.

The 3D immersive model:

As there are a large number of detention centres across the country, the proposal aims to start from identifying ex-clandestine centres that are at risk of deteriorating at faster rates or being sold, such as Perla Negra and Puerta 8 in Campo de Mayo.

How:

The reconstruction of the 3D model, of the selected detention centre, will be constructed by a series of digital and physical tasks.

To initiate and establish the foundation for the model, intact sites should be scanned using LiDAR technology, which is user-friendly and relatively affordable. This scan will generate a point cloud model that, when processed using free, industry-standard 3D software such as Polycam or RealityCapture, produces a 3D model accurately reflecting the current geometry and texture of the site.

If the site no longer exists or to enhance the accuracy of the architectural layout from 1976–1983, floor plans from that period can be obtained from sources such as local government institutions or national companies. In Buenos Aires, this may include the General Directorate of Building Permits and the Land Registry (BA, Dirección General de Registro de Obras y Catastro, 2023) or companies such as AYSA that store approximately over 2,800,000 public and private plans that give information to the buildings uses, changes of materials, and energy supply (AYSA, 2024). For example, in the legal case documents regarding Calle Bacacay, Federal Judge Daniel E. Rafecas ordered AYSA to provide the plans of Bacacay Street as additional evidence (2637/04 'Vaello...', 2020, p.9). Unfortunately, these plans have not been included in the publicly available documents.

Cognitive Map Integration:

After establishing a foundation using data from LiDAR scans and historical floor plans, the mental maps contributed by former victims and witnesses are to be incorporated to produce a more detailed digital representation of the appearance and operation of these clandestine detention centres. As seen in the previous chapters of this dissertation, victims' testimonies and mental maps proved to be essential information to identify and reconstruct these spaces.

To understand how victims and witnesses developed their mental maps, chapter 3 utilised theories from cognitive sciences, including psychology, neuroscience, and studies on spatial perception. These theories are implemented within the proposal to identify key elements within victims and witnesses' cognitive maps, further enhancing and informing the creation of the 3D model.

Kevin Lynch's concepts of landmarks, paths, and edges serve as clear examples of these theories applied to the creation of digital models.

By identifying the edges in the cognitive maps of victims and witnesses, we can verify whether the walls depicted in the plans or 3D scans accurately reflect the previous layout of the detention centre during its operation. Calle Bacacay serves as an example of how cognitive maps can be effectively utilised: edges, such as the wall dividing the kitchen into two areas as described in the testimonies of Maria Poggi and Mercedes Naveiro, can be used to identify makeshift walls not shown in historical plans and to verify the existence of walls and boundaries documented in both historical records and the current remains of the site.

Paths also serve to identify and understand the site's accessibility, which can be incorporated into the 3D model. For example, for the digital map of Calle Bacacay, Poggi and Anita E. Larrea's testimony describes how the kitchen was accessible to the garden and vice versa, therefore providing a clearer understanding of the site's layout. Furthermore, landmarks provide essential details that contribute to a more accurate representation of the detention center's appearance and functionality. For example, the torture bed depicted in Anita E. Larrea's sketches and the table she described against the wall as a landmark can be incorporated into the model to enhance its detail and user experience.

When analysing the trauma theory, it is evident that these traumatic events generally lead to heightened sensory memories in the testimonies of survivors. These sensory-driven memories could be included by adding audio and specific textures to certain sections of the 3D model. For instance, the sound of the 'crunchy wooden floors' described by Juan Ignacio Azarola and the constant loud radio alongside the wet floor mentioned by Mercedes Naveiro in Calle Bacacay could be integrated into the 3D model to enhance users' experience and spatial understanding.

Consistent with Pierre Janet's (1889) trauma theory and the analysis of testimonies from Calle Bacacay, most victims' cognitive maps remain fragmented and primarily influenced by sensory perceptions. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate testimonies from witnesses who did not experience trauma in order to develop a cohesive collective map of the detention centre. In the Calle Bacacay case study, it is evident that the cognitive maps of non-traumatised witnesses provided a more comprehensive description of the space. For example, the testimony of Maria Ester Poggi is comparatively longer and more detailed than victims who endured traumatic events such as Juan Ignacio Azarola or Mercedes Naveiro.

Significance and Implications:

This proposal aims to digitally reconstruct Argentina's former detention centres to protect them from the libertarian government's plans to privatise these sites and distort the narrative of the 1976–1983 dictatorship. By creating digital archives, we ensure their memory and evidence remain accessible for future generations, even if the physical structures are altered or dismantled. Combining precise high-tech tools such as LIDAR and 3D modelling software with the cognitive maps and memories of victims provides a lens through which we can better understand what happened in these detention centres and the need to maintain them. Integrating survivors' testimonies and cognitive maps offers a deeper, more authentic account than official records alone, preserving historical truth and fostering collective understanding. Stored properly, these digital maps and 3D models can transcend political agendas, deterioration, privatisation, and demolition.

Fig. 32, A long banner bearing images of victims of Argentina's dictatorship, held by Demonstrators in remembrance.
(Noticias UNSAM, n.d.)



CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined how survivors and witnesses of Argentina's clandestine detention centres, particularly the site on Bacacay Street, reconstructed and identified these spaces through cognitive maps. The analysis combined theoretical perspectives from Edward Tolman, schema theory, mental models, Kevin Lynch's urban design concepts, and trauma research, explaining how these individuals recalled and pieced together environments when mostly blindfolded and under stressful environments.

By exploring Tolman's distinction between narrow and comprehensive maps, the study shows that survivors' levels of stress, exposure time, and personal experiences shaped the depth and coherence of their recollections. Schema theory and mental models help explain how pre-existing mental frameworks and real-time reasoning combine to create, adapt, and refine spatial representations. Kevin Lynch's concepts of landmarks, paths, and edges further identify elements in their surroundings, such as the garden, kitchen wall, or basement entry, serving as navigational anchors for mentally reconstructing physical layouts. Research on trauma, particularly the theories of Van der Kolk and Janet, highlights how extreme stress disrupts memory formation, resulting in vivid yet incomplete cognitive maps. This explains why some detainees recall only sensory fragments or rely on rigid, fixed narratives to cope with their experiences. However, these fragmented testimonies were still crucial for reconstructing and confirming the Bacacay centre's operations and layout. Survivors' mental maps not only helped pinpoint the site but also revealed a distinct, trauma-shaped form of memory that educates our collective memory on the truth of these sites.

These frameworks collectively demonstrate that even fragmented memories can be pieced together into useful cognitive maps when survivors join their recollections.

However, these memory sites now face serious threats under Argentina's libertarian government led by Javier Milei and Victoria Villarruel, whose policies reduce funding and encourage revisionist narratives. In response, this dissertation proposes a digital mapping initiative that merges survivors' and witnesses' cognitive maps with physical architectural data, thereby documenting the truth of these sites regardless of their physical fate. By integrating trauma-shaped recollections, the model offers a "different memory" rooted in survivors' experiences and provides a fuller picture than official records alone. It also highlights how architects, through 3D scanning, modelling, and analysis can help safeguard these spaces from decay, privatisation, or destruction.

In bringing these elements together, the dissertation highlights the importance of cognitive maps in historically reconstructing clandestine detention centres and stresses the need to protect both physical remains and witness testimonies. By weaving together theory, practical work, and personal experiences, it makes clear that preserving memory is not only about being historically accurate but also a moral responsibility, ensuring that future generations understand and remember the atrocities that occurred.



Fig. 33, Military street arrests Argentina 1979.
(Ministerio Del interior Argentina, n.d.)

Reflecting on these themes of memory, justice, and the urgent need to preserve the truth, the historical words of Judge Julio César Strassera during the 1985 Junta Trials are more important than ever: “This isn’t about negotiating, because there is nothing to negotiate. We Argentines have attempted to build peace on a foundation of forgetfulness, and we have failed.” “We have the responsibility to build a peace founded not on oblivion but on memory, not on violence but on justice. This is our opportunity, and it may be our last.” (Julio César Strassera, 1985). He concluded with a statement that now belongs to all Argentines: “Nunca más.” (“Never Again”) This dissertation takes up that call, declaring that these atrocities must never be erased, that memory must never be forsaken, and that our collective future be guided by remembrance rather than silence.



(Fig. 34, White headscarf's a symbol
of the Abuelas de Mayo protest,
LM Diario, n.d.)

(Fig. 35, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo protest,
Buenos Aires Herald, n.d.)

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APPENDIX I:

*Translated Interview Transcription
Iris Pereyra de Avellaneda, Dec 2024*

[Felix]

So, to start, I would like to do a quick memory warm-up introduction. If I asked you to describe an important place for you, not related to the events during the state terrorism but instead a nice memory you hold of a particular space, where would you start, and what feelings or details do they make unique for you?

[Iris]

Well, look, I would like to tell you from the beginning of the kidnapping, where we went, what they did to us, how they treated us, until after the time that we were missing, then we went to prison, from prison we went to freedom. It seems to me that it would be the most correct thing for you to do an analysis later.

[Felix]

Yes, sounds good, I have a couple of more concrete questions that have to do with memory reconstruction and cognitive mapping, but we can start wherever you wish to start.

[Iris]

well look, I'll tell you. On April 15, 1976, they kidnapped us. I worked in a company because in 1974 my husband had lost his job, so I started working. And well, I fell off the stairs on April 5, I was a little sick, and on the 15th the military squad arrived at our house, the agents of state terrorism, of the military coup, who were many, entered the house, and they mistreated us very badly. They hit Negrito (her son) and me, but my husband managed to escape through the ceilings. So, they took us both, Negrito and me, the first place we were taken was to the Villa Martelli police station. that's where they kidnapped us both, well, they tortured us both. They asked us a question while they beat us. they constantly asked Where was my husband?

I didn't tell them anything; I didn't tell them anything; they got angry and let it out on my son El Negrito. Negrito didn't say where his father was or what his father was doing. Negrito was a communist party militant like me. He had been affiliated at 13 years old, but he was not a militant who walked in the street or anything like that, but he was, you see, at the time there was no photocopier like there is now, so he was the mimeograph, which was printed, and, well, he gave us a hand and made us the flyers, and a diary that we took out weekly. Well, that was the task for him, so, well, but when the kidnapping, that they took us both, the squad that came in was from the army and the police; they took me out to the street first, and they put a bandage on my eyes and a hood, and I started screaming because I heard from the outside that the squad officers were saying, should we take the boy, boy?

I started screaming, well, one came and put a dirty cloth in my mouth, and after a while they brought him to me. so, the car left the house with me and my son, and we appeared at the Villa Martelli police station. When we were at the villa Martelli police station, the phone rang, then the door was open and one of the guys, the guard who was there answered the phone and said villa Martelli police station good evening, that's when we learned that it was the Villa Martelli police station. Well, from there, after a while, two or three hours passed, because imagine that when one is bandaged and hooded, time does not have it present.

And well, they bring him to me, they bring him to the black man in front of me, and he tells me, mommy, tell him that daddy escaped. Those were the last words, because then they take me out in a car and they take me to the "Campito", "Campo de Mayo", where the clandestine centre was located, in Campo de mayo there are several clandestine centres, but the biggest one was this one and it was responsible for the disappearance of many people.

[Felix]

In the course of you being in the Villa Martelli police station to then arriving to Campo de Mayo, did you have any idea? Obviously, I imagine that you were bandaged in all that process of getting to Campo de Mayo. Did you have any feeling of where you were, like if you were outside of Buenos Aires, by the distance travelled or something like that?

[Iris]

Well, nothing, nothing, nothing, because from the moment you are bandaged, you are hooded and apart with that dirty cloth in your mouth that they had put in my mouth, I lost notion completely. Also, they did not take me sitting in a car; they threw me between the part where the driver drives and the seat, on the floor practically. So, you lost the notion of where you are.

I found out later, when we entered the Campo de Mayo, after a few days, more or less, after they tortured us. They electrocuted me everywhere and dragged me around; they also threw me to the ground and put a rifle to my head, threatening to kill me. And they asked me to make three wishes. The wish I wanted was to know where my son was, because it is logical, he was a son. Well, as they couldn't get anything out of me, they put the rifle in my head and pressed the trigger, but it was the noise, nothing more. But imagine that at that moment, you think the worst, you think the worst.

And well, they didn't give us, for example, food or water for those 15 days. When a person called to go to the bathroom, we all went out, we went in line, they took us to the bathroom, the bathroom was outside. And well, when I went into the bathroom, the bathrooms were outside; the top part was open, the bottom part closed.

I took off my blindfold to see and I saw that there were dog sheds, that there were the chalets of Campo de Mayo, it was Campo de Mayo. But I didn't know that there was that clandestine center. We found out later, we found out later in the year 1979, we found out about all that.

When the Inter-American Commission came in the year 1979, I was released in July of 1978. When the Inter-American Commission came, well, I presented myself to make the complaint. And well, we accompanied the Argentine League for Human Rights, several lawyers, several organizations.

We visited El Campito, but by the end of 78, they already knew that the Inter-American Commission was coming, and they destroyed everything. They destroyed everything, only the foundations remained, nothing else. The foundations still remained to this date.

[Felix]

After being released, were you able to see Campo de Mayo again?

[Iris]

Yes, yes, we make acts every month or month and a half, two months, but Campo de Mayo is all destroyed. There you can enter where the military homes were, which is all abandoned. The foundations are there, tall grass, but once a month, every so often, we go in to make the acts in honour of the missing companions.

Because it is calculated that among the three, warehouses that were huge, it is calculated that there were between 5,000 and 7,000 missing companions. Because there were only 139 who were freed, according to Judge Bence, who was the judge that we did the trial. And when I spoke to her, I asked her to please tell me how many people had been released from Campo de Mayo.

[Felix]

Are we talking about the 2009 Trial?

[Iris]

yes, the trial in 2009.

[Felix]

After being released, could you see the Campo de Mayo as it was when you were detained? I mean, if the architecture was no longer there, if the only thing that was left were the foundations that you could see after your release.

[Iris]

No, no, only that, because they had already destroyed everything, everything was destroyed, so the foundations remained, and a house that was all destroyed, it has no windows, it has nothing, it was where the tactical group that were the ones who massacred people. it is all abandoned; only the structure is left. And the foundations, and the foundations in the patio, in the field, because it is all earth, and you know that the Campo de Mayo is very large; it is very large.

[Felix]

And I have a question, in the detention centre, in what moments could you see or and not see, I mean, were you always blindfolded? Were there times when you could see?

[Iris]

No, always blindfolded and hooded, always blindfolded and hooded, always blindfolded and hooded. Imagine that we could not move; we were lying down with mattresses and a blanket on the floor. We could not move because they had the dogs around; if we moved, the dogs attacked you.

[Felix]

And then, I think that it is human nature to understand the space around you. Can you describe how you managed to understand your environment in the detention centre, especially when the visual information was restricted? I mean, if you tried to reconstruct your space based on other senses, what you heard, what you read, or what you felt out there.

[Iris]

Well, when the Inter-American Commission came, and went through the Campo de Mayo, there I realized the place was very large, it was very large and there was a lot of us detainees. Because from the moment that the Argentine League for Human Rights took charge of the trial to the junta, there we found out that there were a lot of missing persons, those of us who lived the situation there.

[Felix]

when inside, at the time you were in the detention centre, do you remember how you managed to understand your environment? Did you remember any details of the layout for example offices or

[Iris]

No, in there, while you're lying down, you have no notion of anything, because they didn't even let you get up, even if it was for water. They only let us stand when they took us to the torture rooms you can imagine that they brought you; they threw you there, the dogs smelt you, so you couldn't do anything there, not even move, we moved when we asked to go to the bathroom, that was it, we were lying down as if we were animals.

I was missing for 15 days.

[Felix]

In Campo de Mayo.

[Iris]

yes

[Felix]

Did any of the routine movement, such as going to and back from the rooms where you were tortured create a better understanding of how the detention centre was laid out? And when you were released and went back to the site. Were you able to connect those routine movements to the space within the site?

[Iris]

Nothing, nothing, because those 15 days that they took me to the torture room, and then brought me back. When we went to do the investigation in 1979, several years had already passed. It no longer existed, so no matter how hard you try to remember, you couldn't see anything, you couldn't feel anything, because everything there, they had taken everything out, only the foundations remained, nothing could be done.

[Felix]

And you don't have, let's say, a memory of what the place looked like. Do you think this was due to the trauma linked to the site, or was it more a matter that they didn't let you see from the beginning?

[Iris]

from the moment you were bandaged and hooded, that was not a trauma, that was true actions, what we lived, but from the moment you were bandaged and hooded, that they took you to torture bed, they electrocuted me in all ways. It was terrible, it was terrible what we lived in those 15 days. So, as much as we would have wanted to continue doing research, they had disarmed everything there, there was nothing there, only the foundations remained.

[Felix]

How was the identification process of knowing, both you and other victims of Campo de Mayo, of knowing where they were held, and that it was Campo de Mayo that they were in and that it was not another place?

[Iris]

Well, the investigation that continued through lawyers, because the La Liga lawyers were the ones who worked on this, because the time of 1976 was terrible the amount the complaints that were presented in La Liga, because we had Dr. Julio Viallo, who was the lawyer we had in La Liga, who was the one who received all the complaints, Avia corpus, to be Avia corpus for the kidnappings, because the problem in Vicente López was tremendous. Vicente López was one of the industrial belts that suffered the most violence, that suffered the most disappearances.

Any number of factories, internal commissions, delegates who worked in the companies, were disappeared and went to Campito, to Campo de Mayo, because the complaints that were made through what was done to La Liga, it was told as I told it, that there were times when helicopters were flying over the ceiling, dogs were walking, the way that the military were walking around you, how they took you out to torture you. Well, all that became a thread to be able to make the complaints, and thanks to that and the courage that we, the survivors, had, we were able to make a trial, and to judge the terrorists, Videla, Massera, etc., was the first trial in which I was a witness.

And then in 2009, when we did the trial in Campo de Mayo, Santiago Rivero, who was the leader of Campo de Mayo, Plasen and García, who were his right-hand men, then we had two young officers, Fragni and Archis, who signed the kidnappings, and the sub-commissioner of the Villa Martelli police station. And all that is in the trial.

And the worst thing was that there were people who had nothing to do with it, political followers, who disappeared as if they were, I don't know, terrorists, or that we killed I don't know who. It was terrible.

[Felix]

And you say that within these trials, I imagine that the trial was many of the testimonies of the victims, but also within that there was a lot of description of what the place was like, and if that was used as concrete evidence, or what was the most used, let's say, of the victims to be able to identify the place and take it to trial.

[Iris]

No, that was concrete, the complaints were concrete. Imagine our case, for example, El Negrito. El Negrito, once he was in Campo de Mayo, in Campito, he was bitten by a dog, his leg was torn off.

After being missing, he appears; El Negrito would of turned 16, but he was discovered dead in the sea due to the death flights to Uruguay.

[Iris]

He appears in a terrible state, tied up, do you understand?

[Felix]

Yes.

[Iris]

Well, that's what happened with our case. Just when he turned 16, he appeared for the flights of death. There was a boat, and as it was rowing to the coast, black bags hit the boat, and there was a photographer on the coast, who was Swedish, and he got the camera out when the boat was rowing to the coast and took pictures. The police got there and began to open the bags, and nine corpses appeared in those bags. Of those nine corpses, two were identified.

One was El Negrito (her son), who had the F.A. tattoo, a heart on his arm, and the other girl had in the back pocket an identification card with her last name on it, Hernández. The other seven could not be identified. So, well, thanks to those photos that this man took, it was possible to make a trial, because the corpse appeared in the beach, but just as it appeared, it disappeared.

To date, 47 years have passed since the civil-military coup; the corpse of my son has not appeared. Not only Negrito: most of the cadavers do not appear anywhere; we do not know where they are. To be able to make the trial, we had to wait for democracy to come in 1983; in 1985, it was only possible to do small claims, so we presented the claim in Uruguay for my son's corpse. In Uruguay, the trial was declared incompetent, we could not do much, but we did make a very big move, we went to the cemetery, well, in the cemetery, they showed us the document of that day, May 14, 76, it was ripped off, that is, no corpse entered there with the name Floreal Avellaneda (her son), he entered as NN, but they ripped it off.

Well, so we couldn't do anything. only in 1988, in Uruguay, a law was put in place that we could not do anything about it and this law is still enforced to date; we cannot make any complaint, nor even go to Uruguay to know what happened to the corpse, because there is the law; unfortunately, it is still vital.

[Felix]

This law is still valid to this day?

[Iris]

Exactly, they haven't been able to change it yet.

[Felix]

Well, that's outrageous that it is still in place. Returning to the subject of Campo de Mayo, based on the memories, you tell me that there were almost no memories on your part of what Campo de Mayo was and what part of the testimony that helped the justice?

[Iris]

No, the only memory that one has is the way they mistreated you, that they electrocuted you, and that they put rifles to your head. We know, that there were those three Warehouses, and that is estimated that there were between 5,000 and 7,000 companions inside there, who have disappeared. A little while ago, through the Human Rights Secretariat, before this liberal government that we have now came in, the Secretariat had shown a video that in the hospital of Campo de Mayo, there had been another clandestine centre where there was an oven, when the women had families, all the things that come out of the mother, all the parts, all the things that are taken out, were put in that oven, and well, there it is estimated that there were between 2,500 and 3,500 people burned there, and it is true,

[Iris]

So that's why this situation is no joke.

[Felix]

And as time went by, and once released, how did your memory of Campo de Mayo change, when speaking to other victims were you able to identify things in common, or there were disagreements, did that exchange of information between the victims happen?

[Iris]

We know that many people were held there, but we have no contact with them. The only contact I have is from the moment I was in prison, for almost three years, with the victims who also suffered; some came from Tucumán, others from Córdoba, and others from Mendoza, who were kidnapped there and brought here when we were in prison. The only contact is with a man, who is already an old man; I think he is 85 years old, who was in prison in Las Casitas, not in Campito, in Las Casitas, which was also another clandestine centre in Campo de Mayo.

[Felix]

But when you were in Olmos prison, you did not find people who also came from Campo de Mayo to share your experiences?

[Iris]

With me in the transfer car to Olmos, came a girl who worked in the San Isidro juvenile court. And well, when we got there, to the prison, I asked why was I in a prison, if I had not committed any crime, and, well, I talked to her. That was the only contact I had with her in prison, we came from the same place, from Campito, from Campo de Mayo.

We were a few people who came that day in the transfer car to Olmos, but I could not contact the other people because we were in different wings, but I know that that day that they transferred me and this girl too from Campo de Mayo to Olmos, like ten people got out of the transfer cars, but I had no contact with them.

[Felix]

Looking back at everything, including the trials, would it have been more useful if you had been able to speak to other victims? such as you and other victims coinciding in certain things? What do you think?

[Iris]

No, I don't think it was needed to investigate any more than the things we spoke about and felt in our souls I don't think we need to see the place where we were imprisoned.

[Felix]

And that was one of the personal proofs more than they used, which was the alias, let's say, of what they heard.

[Iris]

Of course, nobody had a name, and they didn't call us by name, they gave us a number in the pants, I was 517, I didn't call myself Iris Pereira anymore. All this so that it is not discovered by name. And there, when an hour came, while one was there lying like a dog, they got drunk, they shouted, long live Hitler, something terrible.

The Connection was lost, and the recording was finalized.

Original Interview Transcription (Spanish) Iris Pereyra de Avellaneda, Dec 2024

Felix: [00:00:01] Para hacer una entrada en calor, digamos, de la memoria. Si te pidiera que describas como un lugar importante para vos fuera de todo lo que pasó en el terrorismo de Estado y todo eso. ¿Por dónde empezarías? ¿Y qué sensaciones o detalles Cree que hacen únicos para vos?

IRIS: [00:00:27] Bueno, Mira, a mí me gustaría comentarte desde el comienzo del secuestro a dónde fuimos, qué nos hicieron, cómo nos trataron hasta pasado el tiempo que estuvimos desaparecidos. Después fuimos a la cárcel. De la cárcel. Salimos a libertad. Me parece que sería lo más correcto para que vos después te hagas un análisis, si te parece.

Felix: [00:00:50] Sí, como quiera. Tengo un par de preguntas más concretas que tienen que ver con el armado de la memoria. Pero si querés arrancamos por ahí.

IRIS: [00:01:07] Te comento. El 15 de abril de 1976. Fue nuestro secuestro. Yo trabajaba en una empresa porque en el 74 mi marido había quedado sin trabajo. Entonces empecé a trabajar yo y bueno, el yo, yo me caigo de la escalera. El 5 de abril estaba enferma y el 15 viene la patota a casa. ¿La patota de del del terrorismo de Estado no? Del golpe militar que fue este. Fueron muchos los que entraron en casa, los que nos maltrataron, nos pegaron al negrito y a mí, pero mi marido se le pudo escapar por los techos, claro. Entonces, en represalia, nos llevan a los dos, a Negrito y a mí la primera. La primera entrada que tuvimos fue en la comisaría de Villa Martelli. Claro. Ahí fue donde nos llevaron secuestrado a los dos. Bueno, ahí nos torturaron a los dos. No, no, nos hicieron preguntas Mientras que nos nos picaneaban ¿dónde estaba mi marido? Como yo no les di nada. No les. No les dije nada. Y se ensañaron con el negrito. El negrito tampoco. Tampoco dijo donde estaba su padre. Y lo que hacía su papá. Porque vos imagináte que nosotros éramos militantes del Partido Comunista. Claro, y somos. Seguimos militando. Entonces el Negrito era militante, se había afiliado a los 13 años, pero no era un militante que andaba en la calle ni nada por el estilo, sino era el que en la época esa no había eh, fotocopidora como ahora.

Era el mimeógrafo que se ponía tinta. Y bueno, se daba una manijita y eso era lo que nos hacía, nos hacía los volantes, los lo todo los documentos que nosotros necesitábamos para volantear un diarito que sacamos semanal. Bueno, esa era la tarea de él. Así que bueno, pero cuando el secuestro que nos llevan a los dos. La patota que entró fue del ejército y la policía y nos sacan a la casa, me sacan a la calle a mí primeramente y me ponen una venda en los ojos y una capucha. Y yo empecé a los gritos porque yo sentía de afuera, de que gritaban A este chico lo llevamos, este chico no lo dejamos. Yo empecé a los gritos, bueno, vino uno y me metió un trapo sucio en la boca y este. Y al rato nomás me lo trajeron a él. Así que salió el coche rápidamente por la calle y fue que aparecimos en la comisaría de Villa Martelli. Cuando estábamos en la comisaría de Villa Martelli suena el teléfono. Claro. Entonces estaba la puerta abierta y uno de los tipos, la guardia que estaba ahí atendió y dijo. Comisaría de Villa Martelli. Buenas noches. Ahí fue que supimos que era la comisaría de Villa Martelli.

Felix: [00:04:09] Claro.

IRIS: [00:04:10] Bueno, de ahí después, en un momento habrán pasado dos o tres horas, porque imagínate que cuando uno está vendada y encapuchada el tiempo no lo tiene presente.

FELIX: [00:04:22] Claro, sí, sí.

IRIS: [00:04:22] Y bueno. Y me lo traen a él, me lo traen al negrito, me enfrente y me dice “Mami, decí que papi se escapó”. Eso fue la última palabra que escuche del negrito, porque después a mí me sacan en un coche y me llevan al campito, al Campo de Mayo, donde ahí el centro clandestino, que ahí en Campo de Mayo hay varios centros clandestinos, pero el más grande que fue y el que más desapariciones tuvo es el campito donde estuve yo. Y había galpón.

Felix : [00:04:50] en el transcurso de vos de estar de la comisaría de Villa Martelli hasta. Hasta el campito. ¿Vos tenías alguna idea? Obviamente. ¿Me imagino que estabas vendada, ¿No? ¿En todo ese proceso de llegar al campito, vos tenías alguna sensación en dónde estabas? ¿Tipo Si estabas en las afueras de Buenos Aires por la distancia recorrida o algo así?

IRIS: [00:05:10] Nada, nada, nada. Porque desde el momento que estás vendada y estás encapuchada y aparte con ese trapo sucio en la boca que me habían metido, perdés la noción por completo. Aparte, a mí no me llevaron sentada en un coche, me tiraron entre el en la parte donde maneja el chofer y el asiento en el piso prácticamente. Entonces perdés toda noción de dónde estás. Yo me enteré después, cuando entramos al campito, después de unos días que más o menos que después que nos torturaron, a mí me hicieron eh, eh, me, me hicieron, me dieron picana por todos lados y aparte, eh, me hicieron este, eh, te arrastraban, te llevaban por la tierra y me hicieron un simulacro de fusilamiento Con el fusil en la cabeza. ¿Viste? Como si como si te querían matar. Y me preguntaron qué Que pidiera tres deseos Yo les dije que lo que quería Era saber dónde estaba el Negrito. Porque es lógico. era mi hijo. Ahí como a mí no me pudieron sacar nada bueno, me hicieron el simulacro de fusilamiento, me pusieron el chumbo en la cabeza, pero fue el ruido nada más. Pero imagínate que en ese momento no pensás lo peor. Claro, pensás lo peor. Y bueno, cuando nosotros no nos. A mí por ejemplo no me dieron ni de comer ni agua esos 15 días. Entonces cuando una persona llamaba para ir al baño, salíamos todos, íbamos en fila india, nos llevaban al baño, en el baño, estaba afuera y bueno, cuando yo entré al baño, eh, los baños que daban afuera tenían la puerta, la parte de arriba abierta, la parte de abajo cerrada. Entonces yo me saqué la venda, me levanté la venda para ver y vi que había cucha de perros que estaban los chalets de de campo de Mayo. Era campo de mayo, pero no sabía que ahí existía ese centro clandestino que es el campito. Lo supimos después, lo supimos después, en el año 79 nos enteramos de todo eso. Cuando vino la Comisión Interamericana en el año 79, yo salí en libertad en julio del 78.

IRIS: [00:07:22] Cuando vino la Comisión Interamericana. Bueno, yo me presenté para hacer la denuncia y bueno, y acompañamos con la Liga Argentina por los Derechos Humanos, eh, varios abogados, varias, varias organizaciones. Este visitamos el campito, pero ya ahí en el 70, a fines del 78 ya sabían que venía la Comisión Interamericana y levantaron todos los galpones.

FELIX: [00:07:49] y quedo algo del campito?

IRIS: [00:07:49] Destruyeron todo, quedaron los cimientos, nada más quedaron los cimientos. Hasta la fecha.

Felix : [00:07:55] Vos nunca lograste después de tu de estar en el campito. Nunca lograste ver el campito Después, una vez liberada.

IRIS: [00:08:04] Sí, sí. Entramos e hacemos actos nosotros todos los meses o mes y medio, dos meses. Pero el campito está todo destrozado. ¿No? ¿Ahí se puede entrar a donde estaban la, las, la, las viviendas de los militares, que está todo, está todo abandonado, eh? Están los los cimientos ahí un pastizal alto, pero una vez por mes, cada tanto entramos a hacer este los actos por el homenaje a los compañeros desaparecidos, porque ahí se calcula que entre los tres, entre los tres galpones que habían, que eran enormes, se calcula que hubo entre 5000 y 7000 compañeros desaparecidos. Sí, porque son 139 solamente los que estamos en libertad. Según la jueza vence que la jueza que fue, que yo. Nosotros hicimos el juicio y yo cuando hablé con ella le pedí por favor que me dijera que lo que la gente había quedado libre.

Felix : [00:09:04] Ese fue el juicio del 2009.

IRIS: [00:09:07] ¿En el juicio del 2009, eh? Ya lo sabíamos de antes, porque al venir la Comisión Interamericana en el año 2009, en el 70, en el 79, eh, ya eso lo habían levantado. Entonces, como nosotros siempre hablábamos con la jueza, una vez le preguntamos y nos dio, nos dio el, el, el los nombres de los que estaban de los 139 que habían quedado, que, que que habían quedado libre, como quedé yo.

Felix : [00:09:36] ¿Claro, Pero mi pregunta es vos después de ser liberada nunca pudiste ver el campito como era cuando vos estabas encerrada ahí? O sea, si la arquitectura ya ya no estaba, el los si lo único que quedó fue los cimientos que pudiste ver después de tu libramiento.

IRIS: [00:09:53] No, no solamente eso. Porque ya se habían levantado todo, se levantó todo. Así que quedaron los cimientos y esa y esa casa que era, que están todo adentro, todo destrozado. No tiene ventanas, no tiene nada. Que era donde lo. El grupo de táctico de que eran los que trabajaban para. Para masacrar a la gente, para para tomar declaración y todo eso. Está todo abandonado. Solamente está la estructura, nada más claro. Y los cimientos y los cimientos en el patio, en el en el campo, porque es toda tierra. Y saben que Campo de Mayo es muy grande, Es muy grande.

Felix : [00:10:32] Sí, es enorme y. ¿Y te hago una pregunta en en el centro de atención Eh, vos en En qué? ¿En qué momento vos podías ver o no ver? ¿O sea, estabas vendada? Siempre hubo momentos en en los cuales vos podías ver y y o sea, me dijiste que en un momento, cuando fuiste.

FELIX: [00:10:47] Siempre vendado.

IRIS: [00:10:48] Siempre vendada y encapuchada, siempre vendada y encapuchada. No podía ver nada. No, ya imagínate que no podíamos hacer un movimiento. Estábamos tirados con colchones y una frazada en el piso. No podíamos hacer ningún movimiento porque teníamos los perros alrededor. Un movimiento que hacían los perros te atacaban y entonces.

Felix : [00:11:11] En base a eso creo que va de la naturaleza humana. Es como siempre, de entender el espacio alrededor suyo. No podés describir cómo lograste, como entender, digamos, tu entorno en el centro de detención, especialmente cuando la información visual estaba como restringida, digamos. O sea, si trataste de reconstruir tu espacio en base a otros sentidos de lo que escuchabas, lo que oías o lo que o lo que sentías por ahí.

IRIS: [00:11:40] Bueno, tuvimos nosotros cuando vino la Comisión Interamericana que se hizo ese recorrido por Campos de Mayo. Ahí me di cuenta. Ahí me di cuenta que que los que nos habían secuestrado, en los que habíamos estado ahí era muy grande. El lugar era muy grande y éramos muchos. Éramos muchos. Porque desde el momento que la Liga Argentina por los Derechos Humanos se hizo cargo de lo de los de los los abogados de la Liga de Juicio a la Junta Este, Ahí nos enteramos de que que éramos bastante los desaparecidos, los que vivimos la situación ahí. Claro.

Felix : [00:12:23] Si, si, si, si, pero pero digamos vos, vos adentro. ¿En el momento de que estuviste en el en el centro de detención, vos te acordás de de cómo lograste entender tu entorno o de que? ¿De que? ¿De que había, como decía la eh? Cómo se dice, eh, que había unas oficinas o que había como más o menos el el sí de tratar de entender el entorno alrededor tuyo.

IRIS: [00:12:55] No. Ahí, ahí adentro, mientras estás tirada. Si no tenés noción de nada porque ni siquiera te levantaban, te hacían levantar para ir a a darte algo, aunque sea agua no teníamos. No solamente lo nos le nos llevaban al a los empujones cuando te torturaban, claro, cuando te llevaban a la a la sala de tortura.

FELIX: [00:13:19] Sí.

IRIS: [00:13:20] Eso era todo lo que. Y vos imaginate que te traían, te tiraban ahí, los perros te olían así que ahí no se podía hacer nada, ni siquiera moverte. Nos movíamos cuando cuando pedíamos para ir al baño era todo eso. Estábamos tiradas como si fuéramos animales. 15 días estuve desaparecida yo.

FELIX: [00:13:38] En.

Felix : [00:13:38] En Campo de Mayo.

IRIS: [00:13:40] En Campo de Mayo, en el Campito.

Felix : [00:13:42] Claro. ¿Y estos, estos movimientos rutinarios, digamos, de de lo que fue la tortura y y de llevarte a esto, a estos lugares, eh? Eso no te no te ayuda como entender de de donde donde estaba la sala de tortura después. Luego cuando fuiste a a campo a a Campo de Mayo ya liberada para para reconocer el espacio. ¿Vos tenías alguna noción de eso como de saber? Ah, bueno, eh, como esos movimientos rutinarios de saber de nosotros nos movemos de acá, acá, entonces así podías como lograr saber dónde estaba la sala de tortura o había un para nada.

IRIS: [00:14:22] Nada para nada, Porque ahí desde el momento que mientras te llevaban esos 15 días que te que te llevaban a la a la cámara de tortura que te traían de vuelta después cuando uno fue a hacer la investigación en el en el 79, pues imagínate que ya habían pasado varios años, eso ya no existía más. Así que por más que que forzar a la memoria. No podías ver nada, no podías palpar nada porque estaba todo. Habían sacado todo. Solamente quedaron los cimientos. No se pudo hacer nada.

Felix : [00:14:54] Claro, y vos no tenés, digamos, una memoria de lo que fue el lugar o de nada. O sea, fue. ¿Y decís que eso por ahí es un un tema del trauma que había pasado ahí o fue más un tema de que no te dejaron desde un principio? Me imagino que no, pero pero que no te dejaban ver nada y que. ¿Y por estar encapuchada no?

IRIS: [00:15:18] Y desde el momento que estás vendada y encapuchada eso no fue un trauma, eso no fue un trauma, eso fue verídico, lo que nosotros vivimos. Pero desde el momento de que estabas vendada y encapuchada, que te llevaban a la cama, de que te picaneaban, que te. Porque a mí me picanearon en forma. ¿Me dieron para que tenga, para que guarde y para que reparta, entendés? Fue terrible. Fue terrible lo que vivimos en esa, en esa, en esa. En esos 15 días.

FELIX: [00:15:47] Sí.

IRIS: [00:15:49] Así que por más que nosotros hubiéramos querido, eh, seguir haciendo investigación ahí habían desarmado todo. Ahí no había nada. Quedaron los cimientos solamente.

Felix : [00:16:00] ¿Y entonces cómo fue la la identificación de de saber, eh? Las víctimas, tanto vos como otras víctimas de Campo de Mayo, de saber donde fueron, que que fue campo de mayo, que que que estuvieron y que no fue otro, otro, otro lugar.

FELIX: [00:16:17] Bueno, la.

IRIS: [00:16:17] Investigación que se hizo por intermedio de abogados este porque los abogados de la liga fueron los que trabajaron sobre esto, que porque la época del del 76 fue tremendo, las denuncias que se presentaban en la Liga. Sí. Porque los abogados, nosotros teníamos al doctor Julio Biaggio, que era el el abogado que teníamos en la Liga, que era el que el que recibía todas las denuncias y habeas corpus para hacer habeas corpus por la Por los secuestros. Porque el problema nuestro en Vicente López fue tremendo.

FELIX: [00:16:54] Sí.

IRIS: [00:16:54] Fue una de Vicente López. Fue uno de los de los cinturones industrial que más sufrió, la violencia que más sufrió la desapariciones e cualquier cantidad de de de de fábricas, de comisiones internas delegados que trabajaban en las empresas fueron desaparecidos y fueron a parar al campito a Campo de Mayo. ¿Porque las denuncias, las denuncias que se hicieron por intermedio que se hizo a la Liga, eh? Se contó, como lo contaba yo, que que había un momento que andaban helicópteros por el techo, andaban perros, eh, En la forma que lo los militares andaban ahí alrededor de uno. ¿Cómo te sacaban para ir a torturarte? ¿Bueno, todo eso se fue haciendo un hilo, No? Para poder este hacer las denuncias. Y así, gracias a eso y al coraje que hemos tenido nosotros los sobrevivientes, pudimos hacer juicio. Se pudo llegar a hacer juicio.

FELIX: [00:17:56] Y enjuiciar.

IRIS: [00:17:57] Y enjuiciar a los a los a los terroristas, no a los a, a Videla, Massera y Agosti. Fue la primera, el primer juicio que yo fui testigo.

FELIX: [00:18:10] Sí.

IRIS: [00:18:10] Y después, en el 2009, cuando hicimos el juicio a A Campo de Mayo, a a este, a Santiago Rivero, que fue el ideólogo de Campo de Mayo a ver Plaza y García, que eran la mano derecha de él. Después teníamos a dos oficiales jóvenes, Frank. Frank Miller, que firmaron el secuestro y el subcomisario de la comisaría de Villa Martelli. Y todos esos están enjuiciados en el juicio. Porque cuando se hizo, cuando se empezó a investigar este, caímos en la comisaría de Villa Martelli y después en Campo de Mayo, que era bueno. Campo de Mayo es la cueva delincuente que hay en Campo de Mayo. Se preparan todo lo lo ahí fueron, se prepararon todos los golpes de estado de la época pasada.

FELIX: [00:19:03] Claro, y.

IRIS: [00:19:03] Ese gol 76 fue así, claro. Y lo peor, cagó gente que no tenía nada que ver y gente luchadora, gente militante que desaparecieron como si fueran, no sé, eh, terrorista o que matamos o no sé qué. Claro, fue terrible.

FELIX: [00:19:20] Sí, sí, sí.

Felix : [00:19:21] Y Y vos decís dentro de estos juicios, me imagino que que la prueba fue mucha de las de los testimonios, de los de las víctimas. Dentro de eso hubo mucho descripción de cómo era el lugar. ¿Y sí, eso fue como usado como prueba, concreta o que Qué fue lo que más usó, digamos, de las víctimas para poder identificar el lugar y llevarlo a juicio?

IRIS: [00:19:46] No fue, fue concreto eso. Las denuncias fueron concretas. Si vos imagináte el caso nuestro, por ejemplo, el negrito, el negrito aparece lo, lo. Una vez que estaba en Campo de Mayo, en el campito que lo hicieron morder por un perro desgarrado la pierna cuando él aparece. Porque imagináte que nosotros el. El 15 de abril fue el secuestro nuestro. El 14 de mayo del 76 el Negrito cumplía los 16 años. Aparece por los vuelos de la muerte en el Uruguay.

FELIX: [00:20:18] Si, si, si.

IRIS: [00:20:20] ¿Aparece en un estado terrible maniatado y lo mataron por empalamiento, me entendés?

FELIX: [00:20:28] Sí.

IRIS: [00:20:30] Bueno, eso es lo que pasó con el caso nuestro. Cuando al mes, justo cuando él cumplía los 16 que aparece por los vuelos de la muerte. Ahí iba un barco, se iba arrimando a la costa. Iba levantando bolsas negras. Y ahí en la costa andaba un fotógrafo. Que era sueco. Y sacó enseguida la máquina. Cuando el barco se arrimaba a la costa. Bueno, en Montevideo. Ahí la gendarmería. Este se arrimó ahí. Empezaron a abrir las bolsas. Y en esas bolsas aparecieron nueve cadáveres.

FELIX: [00:21:07] Sí, De esos.

IRIS: [00:21:07] Nueve cadáveres, dos fueron identificados. Uno fue el negrito que tenía el tatuaje fea. Un corazón en el brazo. Y la otra chica tenía en el bolsillo de atrás del vaquero su documento de apellido Hernández. Los otros siete no se pudieron identificar.

FELIX: [00:21:28] Sí.

IRIS: [00:21:28] Eh. Así que. Bueno, gracias a esas fotos escalofrantes que sacó este muchacho, se pudo llegar a ser juicio.

FELIX: [00:21:37] Porque el.

IRIS: [00:21:37] Cadáver apareció. Pero así como apareció, desapareció hasta la fecha, que ya se pasaron 47 años del golpe cívico militar eclesiástico. El cadáver no aparece. No solamente negrito. La mayoría de los cadáveres, eso no aparecen por ningún lado. No sabemos dónde está, qué hicieron.

FELIX: [00:21:56] Y para poder.

IRIS: [00:21:57] Hacer juicio tuvimos que esperar que viniera la democracia. En el 83. En el 85 recién se pudo mover un poquito que presentamos las querellas en el Uruguay. Claro, en el Uruguay los jueces se declararon incompetente. No pudimos hacer mucho, pero sí hicimos una movida muy grande. Fuimos a la a la al cementerio. Bueno, en el cementerio nos mostraron el libro de acta de ese día del del 14 de mayo del 76. Estaba arrancada. O sea que ahí no entró ningún cadáver con el nombre Floreal Avellaneda. Nena entró como NN, pero lo arrancaron. Bueno, así que no pudimos hacer nada. En el 85. Después fuimos en el 87 y ya en el 88 en el Uruguay se ya se puso una ley de caducidad que no pudimos mover nada. Hasta la fecha no podemos hacer ninguna denuncia, ni siquiera ir a hacer una una movida en el Uruguay, porque para saber a ver qué es lo que pasó con el cadáver, porque está la Ley de Caducidad y sigue, desgraciadamente sigue, sigue vital.

Felix : [00:23:09] Sigue hasta hoy en día.

IRIS: [00:23:11] Exacto. Todavía no la han podido vetar. Bueno.

Felix : [00:23:16] ¿Que que diga eso, eh? ¿Del volviendo más al tema de de lo que fue en Campo de Mayo, no? ¿Que eh, vos me decías que Volviendo más al tema de de Por eso lo que lo que estoy buscando más que nada es como, eh, como pudieron identificar en base a los recuerdos, vos me decís que que no hubo casi casi nada de recuerdos por tu parte de de lo que fue el campito y y de lo que parte del testimonio, eh? ¿Que ayudó a la justicia?

IRIS: [00:23:57] No, el único recuerdo que uno tiene es la forma que te maltrataron, que te picanearon y que te hicieron el el el simulacro de fusilamiento que lo tenés encima en el alma. ¿Eso viste? Claro, otra cosa tenemos. Sabemos si de que hubo esos tres galpones y que se calcula que hubo entre 5000 y 7000 compañeros ahí adentro que están desaparecidos hace poquito, eh, por intermedio de la Secretaría de Derechos Humanos, antes de que entrara este gobierno liberal que tenemos ahora, eh la La Secretaría había mostrado un video de que en el Hospital de campo de mayo atrás había habido otro centro clandestino donde había un horno donde las. Los médicos. Este. Cuando las mujeres tenían familia. Toda. Toda la cosa que sale de la madre, toda la la la. Todas las parturientas, todas las cosas que se sacan se metían en ese horno. Y bueno. Y ahí se calcula que hubo entre 2500 y 3500 personas eh, quemadas ahí. ¿Y es verídico, eh?

FELIX: [00:25:05] Es verídico. Así que por eso.

IRIS: [00:25:09] Esto no es joda. Lo que vivimos no es joda.

FELIX: [00:25:13] No, no.

Felix : [00:25:15] Eh, Y. Y a medida que fue pasando el tiempo. Y una vez liberada, obviamente, eh. Cómo fue cambiando, digamos, tu, eh, tu memoria de de lo que fue el campito. Vos hablando con otras víctimas pudieron identificar cosas en común o habían desacuerdos. Pasó ese intercambio de información entre las víctimas.

IRIS: [00:25:41] Y con conos. ¿Lo que pasa es que nosotros de de de los los compañeros que que tenemos, que estamos en la en la Comisión y solamente dos este, eh están en la Comisión nuestra de la Asociación de Sobrevivientes no? Y bueno, pero lo que hemos sabido sí que que han pasado ahí, por ahí cualquier cantidad de gente. Pero no tenemos contacto casi con ellos.

FELIX: [00:26:08] Okay. El contacto.

IRIS: [00:26:09] Que tenemos. Claro, el contacto que nosotros tenemos es desde el momento que estuvimos presa casi tres años con las víctimas que también padecieron para que algunas vinieron de Tucumán, otros de Córdoba, otros de Mendoza que fueron secuestradas allá y las trajeron para acá para cuando estuvimos presa. Bueno, ahí tenemos el contacto de varias compañeras, pero tenemos el el el contacto con un compañero que ya es un hombre grande, tiene creo 85.

IRIS: [00:26:41] Estuvo preso. ¿Casita no? En el campito, en las casitas, que también era otro centro clandestino de de Campo de Mayo.

Felix : [00:26:51] ¿Pero de donde vos estuviste, eh? No pudiste así compartir con víctimas que pasaron por el mismo lugar donde estabas vos, las experiencias y y de lo que se acordaban.

FELIX: [00:27:03] Ya.

IRIS: [00:27:03] Cuando a mí me trasladan, que me sacan de ahí, del campito que me trasladan a la cárcel de Olmos conmigo. ¿En el celular venía una chica que era que trabajaba en tribunal de Del Menor de San Isidro, no? Y bueno, cuando llegamos ahí a la a la cárcel yo pregunté por qué razón en una cárcel si yo no había cometido ningún delito.

FELIX: [00:27:28] Sí, y.

IRIS: [00:27:29] Bueno. Y bajamos las dos. Bajamos las dos. ¿Y después? Bueno, yo hablé con ella. Estuvimos Bueno, porque nos pusieron en distintos celulares. Y ella era. Era ella trabajaba en. En la. En Tribunales del Menor, en San Isidro.

FELIX: [00:27:46] Sí.

IRIS: [00:27:46] Eso fue el único contacto que tuve con ella ahí. Pero vinimos de ahí. Del mismo lugar del campo, de. Del Campito de Campo de Mayo. Ahora éramos unas cuantas que vinimos ese día en el celular, pero distinto en el celular. Es grande. ¿Viste que el celular es para dos personas?

FELIX: [00:28:03] Sí, así que.

IRIS: [00:28:04] No pude tener contacto con otras personas porque estábamos en distintos pabellones.

FELIX: [00:28:09] Claro. Pero sé.

IRIS: [00:28:11] Pero sé que ese día que a mí me trasladan y a esta chica también, bajamos como diez de acá del del celular. Pero yo no tuve contacto con ella.

Felix : [00:28:21] Y vos decís que mirando como para atrás en todo lo que fue el el eh, el el juzgado, todo eso, va a decir que hubiese sido más servible, digamos. Vos podrías haber hablado con las víctimas y coincidido en ciertas cosas hubiera podido identificar más sobre sobre el campito. ¿Qué opinás?

IRIS: [00:28:43] Yo no creo que más de lo que hablamos, más de lo que vimos y más de lo que vivimos. Yo creo que ya era, ya era de más empezar a averiguar porque lo sentimos en el alma. Eso fue lo que nos pasó a nosotros. Ya no creo que que hace falta que veamos el lugar para para porque tenemos los alias de los que nos torturaban. Están presos.

Felix : [00:29:04] Claro. ¿Y eso? Eso fue una de las pruebas, eh, personales más que que usaban, que fue el el alias, digamos, de lo que escuchaba.

FELIX: [00:29:14] Claro, ahí.

IRIS: [00:29:15] Estaba con nombre. Y a nosotros mismos no nos llamaban por nombre. Nos pusieron un número en el pantalón, en el vaquero. Yo tenía el 517. Yo ya no me llamaba Iris Pereyra. Si. Sea.

FELIX: [00:29:28] O sea que todo, todo.

IRIS: [00:29:29] Lo que no se descubra quiénes eran los alias que te torturaban, dan los nombres. Y ahí, cuando llegaba una hora, que mientras uno estaba ahí tirado como un perro, se emborrachaban. ¡Gritaban Viva Hitler! ¿Viste algo terrible? Y yo lo, lo lo. Los milicos. ¿Ahí había correntino, ¿eh? Había gente de La Tablada. Así, así, con cantito. Había gente cordobesa, también milicos cordobeses. Bueno, ahí se emborrachaban, escuchaban música y todo. Y bueno, después y eso es lo que nos sacaban a nosotros y nos llevaban a torturarnos.

FELIX: [00:30:05] Claro.

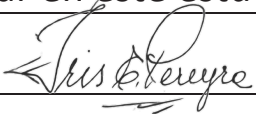
IRIS: [00:30:06] Entonces más claro, ponele agua.

FELIX: [00:30:08] Si no, no te parece.

La conexión se cortó y se finalizó la grabación.

Appendix II:

Ethics approval signed by participant:

Título del proyecto: Mapas a Ciegas: Memorias Sensoriales y la Identificación de los Centros de Detención de Argentina	
El investigador principal de este proyecto es: Felix Hicklin	
Este proyecto está supervisado por: Ana Mayoral Moratilla	
Datos de contacto del supervisor: a.mayoralmoratilla@greenwich.ac.uk	
• Confirmando que tengo más de 18 años: SÍ/NO • He leído la Hoja de Información para Participantes sobre este estudio. SÍ/NO • He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y discutir sobre este estudio. SÍ/NO • He recibido respuestas satisfactorias a todas mis preguntas. SÍ/NO • He recibido suficiente información sobre este estudio. SÍ/NO • Entiendo que estoy libre de retirarme de este estudio: ○ En cualquier momento (hasta la fecha límite, que se me ha comunicado) ○ Sin dar una razón para mi retirada. ○ (Si soy estudiante o planeo serlo en la Universidad de Greenwich) sin que esto afecte mi futuro en la Universidad. SÍ/NO • Doy consentimiento que mis respuestas sean grabadas en audio. SÍ/NO • Acepto participar en este estudio. SÍ/NO	
Firma (participante): 	Fecha: 27/12/2024