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State terror: ideology, protest and the gendering of landscapes

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This case study contributes to the literature on state terror, and political violence in general, by looking at the specific ways in which regimes of terror are mapped onto urban spaces and the ways in which that 'topography' is contested by social movements physically redefining those spaces. The article moves between dimensions of how the meanings of urban spaces are culturally and historically evoked to an analysis of the ways in which women protesters challenge and transform those meanings through action. The article shows that the use of public and private spaces by state aggressors and human rights groups has followed a consistent logic in the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay). Specifically, the occupation of these spaces reveals a pattern based on the gender of the social actors involved, and forms a process we call the gendering of landscapes. Throughout the Southern Cone private spaces are conducive for the abduction of state enemies and for anti-state conspiracy. Public spaces serve as important landmarks for detention and torture as well as protesting state terror. The dialectic or resolution of these uses of the city offer distinct interpretations about the meaning of social justice which can enhance our understanding of this region's transition to civilian rule: 'brutality knows no ideology because its goal is the same; to silence dissent through the destruction of healthy bodies and minds' (Eric Stover and Elena Nightingale 1985, from *The breaking of bodies and minds*).

I State terror: an introduction

Human agency in human geography has taken a strong hold in recent years because of its potential as an explanatory vehicle (Sayer, 1984). As Wolch and Dear (1989: vi) note: 'Human existence is thus expressed through specific histories and geographies. The task of social theory is to unravel the interaction of time and space in the structuring of people's lives and the production of human landscapes.' This article is concerned with the phenomenon of state terror and the response of the oppressed to that terror. The region in question is the Southern Cone, the southernmost Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America: Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. For nearly two decades in the 1970s and 1980s the peoples of this region were subjugated by military rule. Military governments unleashed a reign of terror against unarmed citizens, producing a clearly identifiable landscape of terror. This landscape was made up of strategically located places of detention, state security vehicles, anti-regime graffiti, and public demonstrations. The taking of public spaces by human-rights protesters has proved to be a source of empowerment which is territorially dependent.

State terror takes full advantage of the permeability of international boundaries. The military rulers of the Southern Cone in the 1970s and 1980s exchanged national security information and facilitated the assassination of foreign nationals in their countries. State terror gives military and civilian regimes around the world a source of legitimation and allows them to impose their will on their citizenry. Only sustained domestic protest which is monitored in international media as well as worldwide protest can bring focused, global attention to human-rights abuses. Merging domestic and intermittent protests over human-rights abuses helps forge social movements which bring pressure on illegitimate regimes that flagrantly disregard international law (Scarpaci, 1991). The most common example of this pressure is manifested by restrictions on international aid, loans, and technical and military assistance to nations that disregard the sanctity of human rights. Although much is know about the authoritarian state (O'Donnell *et al.*, 1986; Scarpaci, 1988), little is known about the spatial dimensions of social protest which lead to their downfall. Human geographers have actively pursued studies about landscapes of peace and war (Brunn, 1987; Cutter *et al.*, 1986; Cutter, 1988), yet their approach has not enlisted gender as an analytical category within a political economy framework, grounded by qualitative research. As Brunn observed in his recent review of the literature on landscapes of war and peace: 'In repressive totalitarian societies, there may be no recognized legitimate peace landscape; and anti-military gatherings, protests, and publicity are prohibited' (Brunn, 1987: 253). Why, then, did the Southern Cone generals return to the barracks? Part of the answer proposed in this article lies with the gendered role of social protest.

Our approach to state terror and protest stems in part from Giddens (1979), who observed there is a need to deconstruct or 'unpack' social events to understand important processes of class struggle. Yet he also warns that it is 'banal and uninstructive' (p. 202) to observe that all human activity occurs at particular times in particular places. With this caveat in mind, the study of the struggle for human rights can be instructive only if state actions and the struggle of the oppressed against state terrorism are placed into a broader context. As such, we wish to address the role of state terror and the use of public and private spaces to illuminate how the terrorist state legitimates itself, and how the oppressed both denounce this terror and contribute to regime downfall. Our argument is that women human-rights activists seized on the contradictions of gender roles and dichotomies of public and private spaces in order to bring world attention to the problem and to discredit authoritarian rule. A major premise is that within human geography, feminist theory holds explanatory value because of its attention to power relations (Rose, 1990). Moreover, feminist perspectives provide us an alternative conceptualization of the shift of power in the geopolitical debate about redemocratization in the Southern Cone, and afford us with more careful attention to the role of culture and ideology in shaping domination within the city (Connel, 1987; Fraser, 1989; Driver, 1991).

These ideas about state terror, power and domination, and gender are explored in greater detail below. Initially, we offer some remarks concerning the nature of political violence in Latin America and military ideology and legitimation of state terror. We suggest that unarmed populations become justifiable targets because of the legal guise provided by national security doctrines. We then evaluate the use of public and private spaces in the struggle for human rights in the Southern Cone, and from that it is concluded that the study of state terror is a complex issue requiring a spatial, yet interdisciplinary analysis. The use of public and private spaces is highly dependent on the gender of both the protesters and the agents of state terror. The logic behind the use of public and private spaces is a process we refer to as the gendering of landscapes which has been modified by the women's movement in the Southern Cone. We begin with the political violence factor.

1 Political violence in Latin America

Civilians suffer the greatest toll in civil war and international conflict. William Eckhart (1988: 29) defines war as 'any armed conflict which includes one or more governments, and causes death of 1 000 or more people per year'. Zwi and Ugalde (1989) used this information and calculated there have been 471 wars since 1700, resulting in at least 101 million deaths. Significantly, 90% of the above deaths took place in the twentieth century and 85% have been civilians. The incidence and prevalence of this political violence has moved unevenly throughout Latin America in recent years. Uruguay was particularly victimized by state terror and political violence, measured not by fatalities, but by inhumane and illegal detention. Amnesty International (1975: 35) defines torture as: 'the systematic and deliberate infliction of acute pain in any form by one person on another or on a third person in order to accomplish the purpose of the former against the will of the latter'. The World Medical Association (n.d.) is more specific: 'the deliberate, systematic, or wanton infliction of physical or mental suffering by one or more persons acting alone or on the orders of any authority to force another person to yield information, to make a confession, or for any other reason'. One out of 80 citizens was tortured during the Uruguayan dictatorship of 1973–85 (*El País*, 11 November, 1987). Zwi and Ugalde (1989: 634) estimate that if that same rate were applied to the USA, it would amount to 3.1 million torture victims. Other reports (LCIHR, 1985: 52) estimate that one out of 47 Uruguayans was subjected to some form of repression under the dictatorship whether in terms of beatings, torture, detention, arrest, or house raid.

For centuries North American and western European school children were raised on the idea that the settlement of Latin America was wicked and evil. Spanish *conquistadores* were portrayed as villainous soldiers who brutalized native Americans; a theme which has re-emerged during the 500 year anniversary of the European settlement of the new world. The search for gold and the conversion to Christianity were said to justify harsh treatment of Caribbean and Central and Southern American Indians. This un-Christian behaviour was referred to as the *leyenda negra*, and was meant to contrast with the more civil treatment of the North American Indian by northern European settlers. While the idea of differential treatment by Hispanic and Anglo invaders towards native Americans is contentious (Herring, 1966), the conquest of the new world marked the beginning of sustained political violence in the region.

Public and private images and icons pervade scenes of torture in Latin America. In their thirst for gold, Spanish *conquistadores* were given official church and royal licence in the sixteenth century to torture Indians in Peru and Mexico. It was not uncommon to have

Church and state symbols present in inquisition palaces such as the one in Cartagena, Colombia, *c.* 1550. A crucifix and judge's chair flanked ends of a torture room with a torture rack placed in the middle. Thieves, heretics, *independentistas* and Indians were made to recant their actions and beliefs (Stover and Nightingale, 1985: 8–9).

Twentieth-century Latin America has also been steeped in political violence. In Colombia, *la violencia* period between 1949 and 1954 claimed the lives of 300 000 people, largely because of the liberal versus conservative political conflict. Today in Colombia the leading cause of death among males 15–44 is homocide/assassination. Elsewhere on the continent, estimates are that 30 000 Argentines, 2000 Chileans, and 500 Uruguayans died from political violence in the last half of this century, most of it at the hands of the state during military rule. In fact, so intense has political violence in Latin America become that the term 'disappeared person' has entered the English language. The Guatemalan press was the first in Latin America to use the term *desaparecido* to describe persons who were abducted by death squads or uniformed troops (Amnesty International, 1981: 17).

Political violence remains a complex and multifaceted phenomenon too often simplified by cursory analyses. This may account for the score-card mentality in gauging the heinous nature of state terror. Public opinion may be too easily swayed by the body count: more is worse and less is better. For comparative purposes, though, some empirical assessment of the severity of state terror is necessary. A report by the Lawyer's Committee on International Human Rights is indicative in this regard:

> Uruguay was by no means the bloodiest dictatorship of the region. There were no orgies of open slaughter as occurred in Chile's National Stadium; nor were there tens of thousands of disappaearances or cadavers on to the shores of the Rio de la Plata as in neighboring Argentina (LCIHR, 1985: 51).

Yet it is important to note that in terms of psychological and physical torture, Uruguay perhaps outranks either Chile or Argentina. Training and ideological justification for attacking civilian populations, most of whom were unarmed, did not originate in Latin America. Foreign military missions and war colleges have provided training for thousands of Latin American military and police personnel since the 1950s. While foreign military powers in the USA and Europe are quick to deny these charges, prisoners in the Southern Cone reported hearing voices speaking in English, French and Portuguese at detention centres.

2 Military ideology and legitimation of state terror in the Southern Cone

Bureaucratic-authoritarian (BA) regimes seized power from civilian governments during political and economic crises. Increasing distrust of civilian officials, runaway inflation, and perceived threats of leftist guerilla groups galvanized the military to seize executive powers (Table 1). The BA regime's chief concern was to dismantle unions and left-wing political parties so an investment climate conducive to free-market conditions would emerge (Scarpaci, 1990). The costs were many. In Uruguay in 1973, the puppet civilian president (not elected by popular vote) merely passed a decree which granted the military executive powers. In Chile in that same year, the president died in a fiery and bloody shoot-out in the presidential palace.

The verticalist corporatist structure of BA regimes allows orders to be carried out without question. Low- to mid-level military personnel are indoctrinated into the role of torturer and interrogator. Torture becomes the personification of machismo and those refusing to do so are questioned about their (homo)sexuality and allegiance to the

Table 1 Enemies of the Southern Cone Military, 1973–85

Country	Group
Uruguay	Tupamaros
Argentina	Montoneros
	Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP)
	Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (right wing)
Chile	Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR)
	Frente Patriotico Manuel Rodriguez
	Frente Patriotico Manuel Rodriguez Autentico

homeland. Stalking civilians as well as their subsequent sequestering and torturing becomes an important substitute for 'real' war between nations (Pion-Berlin, 1989).

Proclaiming a state of siege legitimates *coups d'état* and labelling the public judiciary system as ineffective provided additional violence for the heavy-handed measures taken by the generals. Under the guise of protecting the homeland (*la patria*) and all that is national (*lo nacional*), the regimes in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile originally targeted Communist Party members. Later, other political and civilian leaders, union members, students and teachers became prey for detention and execution. The search for the enemy of the state is paramount and provides a *raison d'être* for military build up. Eventually, friends, family members, coworkers, and anyone perceived to be allied with the 'opposition' become targets of state terror. The tireless search for 'the' enemy soon became a macabre and capricious venture.

Logistical, ideological, and technical support for state terror came from outside the Southern Cone. USA and European aid, in the form of materials and training, played an important role in either justifying military rule in the area or introducing cruel methods of detention and torture. Counterinsurgency methods in Argentina were introduced by French military missions in the 1950s. French officers had gained experience in the Algerian independence movement. Many of these French officers published their works in translation in the Argentine military journal, *Revista de la Escuela Superior de Guerra*. In these writings the enemy is depicted as chameleonic, making it incumbent upon the military to understand the manner in which the enemy changes form. The public record also shows that the USA government has had direct complicity in the training of Uruguayan and Brazilian security personnel. In the late 1960s the Public Safety Office of the Agency for International Development (AID) trained South American forces in 'harsh interrogation techniques'. Congress terminated AID's Public Safety Program in 1975. AID admitted that Brazilian and Uruguayan trainees at the Agency's International Police Academy in Washington learned only interrogation techniques such as giving psychological 'jolts', 'emotional appeals', and 'exaggerating fears'. Allegedly, these are 'third-degree' methods of interrogation and not torture (United States House of Representatives, 1974; United States Senate, 1974; Langguth, 1978; Benfeldt-Zarchrisson, 1988). Whether supported or abhorred by the USA, these regimes played a critical role in determining the levels of violence. The Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights reports this conversation with former Uruguayan President Julio Maria Sanguinetti: 'Carter's efforts [on human rights] were very important. In the years of the dictatorship the Uruguayan opposition was very isolated. One of the few elements of support was the presence of the American government. The embassy here fought against individual cases of rights violations' (LCIHR, 1985: 62).

By contrast, the United States administrations of the 1980s offered less of a deterrent to human rights abuses:

> The Reagan administration was much less interested in the issues of human rights and democratization. It never looked like it was applying any pressure on the dictatorship. The State Department said it was carrying out a *silent* defense in favor of democracy and human rights. We criticized their position with much severity (LCIHR, 1985: 62; emphasis added).

The militarization of Latin American society extracts scarce resources from the economies of the region. Funds earmarked for civil unrest and military defence are tapped from social welfare programmes. Uruguay illustrated this trend. Because Uruguayan generals considered state intervention in the national economy the major cause of inflation (Davrieux, 1987), both real wages and social sector spending fell sharply. Between 1970 and 1986, the real wages index (1970 = 100) dropped to 52. Health sector spending fell by 19% between 1980–85. Despite reduced social spending and falling real wages, in 1982 Uruguay had the highest ratio of armed forces members to total population in Latin America. This meant there were 23 members of the armed forces per 1000 Uruguayans, versus 8.2 per 1000 in Nicaragua, and 8.5 per 1000 in Chile. Uruguay became the quintessential Orwellian state: the military even classified public employees based on their political leanings. A scale of A, B, and C reflected employees' support for the regime (LCIHR, 1985: 7). Yet Uruguay was not the bloodiest regime despite high levels of militarization. The immediate attack on the urban terrorists, the Tupamaros, subsided within a year. As one USA Embassy officer in Montevideo told one of us, 'The Uruguayan regime was different [than the Chilean or Argentinian]; once they took control of the government they sort of went on a *parrillada* [barbecue]' (USA Embassy, Montevideo, June 1988: personal communication).

In 1974 in Chile, General Pinochet created DINA (National Intelligence Division), the secret police forces. DINA reported to Pinochet directly (LDR, 1983). Its heavy-handed tactics were justified in many ways, one of which was the constant reference to the national code of arms: 'By force or reason' (*Por la Fuerza o la Razón*). Another justification of state terror was the official name of the armed forces: the 'Armed and Ordered Forces'. The motto suggests that it is the army's duty to bring about internal order, whoever the enemy might be. Argentina, as we will note later, had already designed a security plan which provided comprehensive geographic coverage in containing counterinsurgency.

Semantics played a key role in distinguishing 'good' from 'bad' and 'right' from 'wrong'. For example, the meanings of 'state terror' and 'terrorist' varied widely, depending on whether one's ideology was grounded in the far right or armed left. In general, the left justified armed struggle because they believed the military state was illegal. The military (i.e., the far right) viewed armed civilian insurrection, particularly when insurgents were leftist, as a clear provocation against national security. Argentine Foreign Minister Admiral César Guzetti reflected this sentiment in August 1976, five months after the *coup d'état.*

> My idea of subversion is that of the left-wing terrorist organizations. Subversion or terrorism of the right is not the same thing. When the social body of the country has been contaminated by a disease that corrodes its entrails, it forms antibodies. These antibodies cannot be considered in the same way as germs. As the government controls and destroys the guerrilla, the action of the antibody will disappear, as is already happening. It is only a natural reaction to a sick body (LCIHR, 1979: 3–4).

Guzetti's statement reflects the organic notion of the state, not very different from the German geopolitical concept of *Lebensraum*. Essentially, the state must be able to expand but its growth can be deterred by opposition (in this case, germs). Removing these obstacles, therefore, became a legitimate exercise for the military. So obsessed did the regimes of the Southern Cone become with the concept of internal security and ideological pureness that they set about, rhetorically at least, to rearrange national values and mores. In an interview with the Buenos Aires daily paper *Clarín* (January 30, 1977), President and General Videla said: 'to the classical values of liberty, equality and justice which make up the essence of democracy we must add a principle of vital importance: security'. Here, again, we see how ideology both masks and justifies the regime's perceptions of terror and human-rights violations.

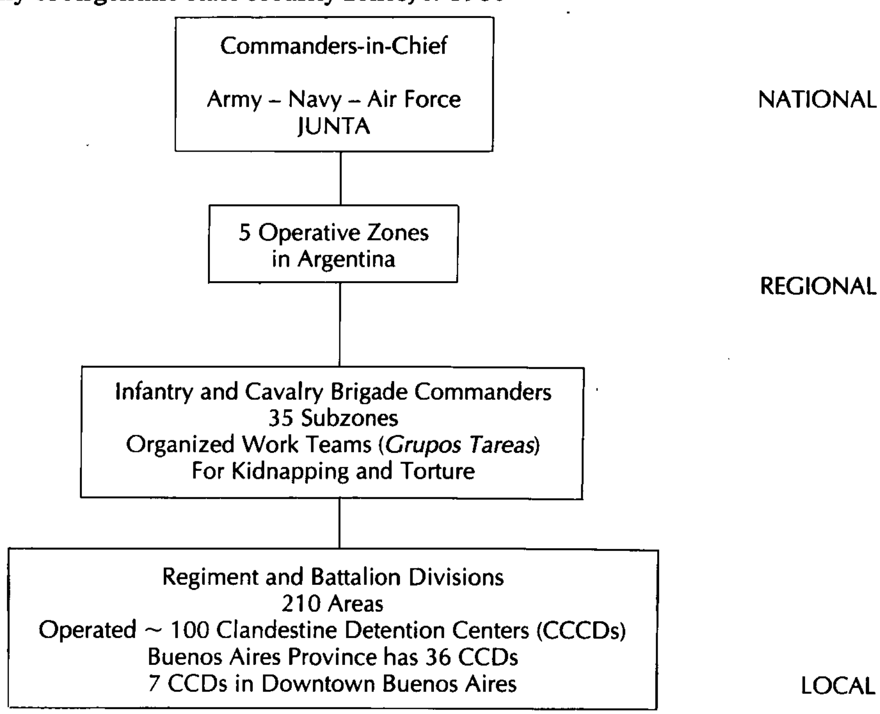
II Strategies and institutional responses to state terror

1 National security doctrine and the spatial hierarchy of oppression

The Argentine state security forces were perhaps the most notoriously fierce. The 'dirty war' carried out against unarmed civilians cost the lives of nearly 30 000 Argentines. The process of identifying the national enemy and pursuing them was part of the National Security Doctrine (NSD). Security forces and services were spatially organized. David Pion-Berlin observes:

> It was geographically comprehensive, reaching into the most remote corners of the nation. From the tropical province of Misiones, to the wind-swept and sparsely populated expanses of Patagonia, no part of the country was left unaffected. The armed forces established a set of security zones, subzones, and areas that effectively parceled the territory into increasingly smaller units (Pion-Berlin, 1989: 102).

Table 2 Hierarchy of Argentine state security zones, *c.* 1980



Source: Pion-Berlin, 1989: 102

Argentine state security zones were not created by the military regimes of the 1960s and 1970s. Juan Domingo Perón created the Law of National Defense in 1948 which spawned this security hierarchy. The law stipulated that certain public-defence guidelines be followed when martial law was imposed. Civilian governors, administrators and magistrates would be subordinate to military governors. The various military governments of 1966–72 and 1976–83 used these security zones to silence domestic opposition. Essentially, the 1948 law was a blueprint to carve the Argentinian landscape into a police state.

The NSD was an amalgam of geopolitics, military geography, and counterinsurgency theories and practices. Militarism, the nation, and state were glorified. Paramilitary and military personnel and institutions became the new vanguards of the homeland. Seen as an organic entity, NSD perceives the state as vulnerable to contamination by communist forces. As French counterinsurgency specialist Roger Trinquier observed, the armed forces must aid the ailing country that has been 'infected by clandestine organizations that penetrate like a cancer into its midst' (Trinquier, 1974: 49). The armed forces were cast as the new ruling elite who employed neutral and apolitical methods of public administration. Purging the communist cancer from the state body became the overriding task. Low priority was given to the number of civilian lives lost in pursuit of the real or perceived enemies of the state. As former Argentine president and Commander-in-Chief Jorge Videla's widely publicized comment in 1976 reveals: 'As many people will die in Argentina as necessary to restore order.' The metaphor of state as an organism which is subject to outside attack served to justify the use of state terror and legitimate the National Security Doctrine. The historical development of NSD in Argentina highlights Fyfe's argument that the geographic study of policing 'cannot be understood from the contexts in which it, quite literally, takes place' (Fyfe, 1991: 265).

2 The legalization of state terror

Since 1853, Article 23 of the Argentine constitution has allowed for the suspension of its guarantees in cases of internal unrest or external attack. Legally, this declaration of the state of siege should be made by Congress. Under the state of siege, however, the executive branch can relocate citizens to other parts of the country unless citizens choose to leave the country. Thus, Article 23 gave legitimacy in detaining Argentines. Also, anyone identified as a 'subversive' did not enjoy constitutional freedoms. The determination of a subversive was sufficiently vague to allow for the detention of thousands (LCIHR, 1979: 18–19).

The 1980 Constitution of Chile also provided a legal justification for sequestering civilians. Certain articles permitted the regime to identify individuals making threats to national security as members of the political left. As a result, nine out of 10 cases in military courts included civilian defendants. Chile's failure to publish international human-rights agreements in the *Diario Oficial* (the equivalent of the USA *Federal Register*) made their adherence to international human-rights agreements nonbinding (Laurenda *et al.*, 1987). That legal technicality notwithstanding, the 'dirty war' carried out by Southern Cone military regimes violated numerous tenets of international human-rights norms and United Nations' treaties (Table 3). The protest of these violations followed a gendered logic, to which we now turn.

III The gendering of landscapes

The concept of the gendering of landscapes is important in understanding both state-terror

Table 3 Articles of the United Nations' Universal Declaration violated by the 'dirty war'

The right to liberty and security of person (Article 2)
The right to be free from arbitrary arrest and exile (Article 9)
The right to be recognized as a person before the law and to receive, in full equality, a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations of any criminal charge against him (Articles 6 and 10)
The right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 5)
The right to leave one's country and return (Article 1)
The right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right of peaceful assembly and association (Articles 19 and 20)
The right to form and join trade unions (Article 23)

legitimation and opposition. Militarization in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay deepened patriarchy. It fortified the notion that public institutions and actions were the dictums of men, while the home remained innately private and female. Political and military control in the Southern Cone required careful separation of these two spheres. Generals in each country praised the virtues of the traditional roles of women. These included emphasizing the sanctity of the home, motherhood, and traditional career choices by women. Only by challenging these male-female and public-private dichotomies was it possible to denounce the atrocities of state terror. The audacity of women who violated this artificial norm by protesting in the most public of places worked towards defying *machista* (male) rule and recasting traditional *marianismo* (female) roles (Stevens, 1973; Jacquette, 1989; Elshtain, 1990). In doing so, the gendering of landscapes redefined the artificial boundaries of public and private places.

1 Gender as analytical category

Our focus here is to explain the use of gender as an analytical category. Following Scott (1988: 42), we approach gender as an analytical category in two broad ways. First, gender is a construct defined by the perceived differences between the sexes because it is a key structure of social relations. As noted before, this particular construct of gender is grounded firmly in Latin American culture. Secondly, gender points to relationships of power and identifies how power is expressed in certain societies. In that vein, gender becomes 'one of the recurrent references by which political power has been conceived, legitimated, and criticized. It refers to but also establishes the meaning of male/female opposition' (Scott, 1988: 48–49). This concept of gender as an analytical category provides the theoretical validity (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 22) for understanding how authoritarian regimes and human-rights movements struggle over the mapping and meaning of urban spaces.

2 Public detention and private abduction

Eckstein (1989) notes that North Americans equate protest in the third world with communist movements and guerrilla tactics. She argues – correctly, we believe – that this conceptualization is narrow and misleading because defiance is much more widespread. Protest includes passive noncompliance, pilfering and foot dragging as well as the more commonly known forms of disobedience such as land seizures, street demonstrations, and strikes. Traditional social protest has resurfaced in Chile after 17 years of military rule. Human-rights demonstrations – calling mainly for speedier trials of human-rights violators – are commonplace. In June, 1992 the largest land invasion in a decade occurred in the eastern Greater Santiago. The outcomes of these protests are equally diverse, and depend on class alliances, global economic and political forces, elite responses, protester tactics, and ideology.

Human-rights protests are slowly receiving more attention as they successfully bring their demands to the attention of the state, and the city becomes the stage for these actors. Abraham Guillen, the ideologue of urban guerrilla movements in Uruguay and elsewhere in Latin America, observed:

> Strategically, in the case of a popular revolution in a country in which the highest percentage of the population is urban, the center of operations of the revolutionary war should be in the city. Operations should consist of scattered surprise attacks by quick and mobile units superior in arms and numbers at designative points, but avoiding barricades in order not to attract the enemy's attention at one place (Guillen, 1973: 238).

The excesses of the generals were denounced in a variety of ways. One method was to disclose the location of detention centres which became well-known to the citizens of the Southern Cone and – for a short while at least – the centre of the media's attention. Victims of abduction and tortures who years later had misgivings about their deeds helped spread the word about these places. Public responses varied from regime to regime. In Uruguay and Chile, publications about the location of torture centres circulated freely. The Chilean Catholic Church even published children's books that illustrated the process of abduction and torture centres through simple, black-and-white illustrations (Figure 1). Argentine generals were much more restrictive in this regard. Thus, Argentines could be jailed for circulating information about clandestine detention centres.

The political opening (*apertura*) of 1983 in Chile quickened the identification of clandestine public detention centres. Interrogation of civilians was carried out at these state secret police headquarters, known as the CNI (National Investigations Center). These were semi-secret places whose telephone numbers and addresses did not appear in public telephone directories or in-house government publications. However, CNI headquarters were published in the daily papers after a law was passed in 1983 mandating the disclosure of 'legal' detention centres (Figure 2). Because these same places served as detention centres in the 1970s, human rights protests formed outside of them thereafter (*La Segunda*, 15 June 1984: 15–19). Identifying public centres of detention (and torture) gave the human rights movement legitimate public landmarks where they could protest (Figure 2). Denying protesters' repeated requests to allow impartial human-rights observers to inspect these buildings discredited the regime. The power of protest focused national and international media attention on state terror.

Not all public places of detention were as centrally located as public buildings in the downtown areas of large cities, and this weakened the protest against state terror. On the grounds of national security and military law, the armed and security forces had a legitimate right to deny public access to examine their installations. Thus, for example, although the Navy Mechanics School in Buenos Aires was renowned as a place of detention and torture, few could inspect the facility (Michaud, 1987). As well, swift military trials of civilians often followed abductions and the accused were sent to concentration camps in the Atacama Desert; icy peaks of southern Chile; remote islands in

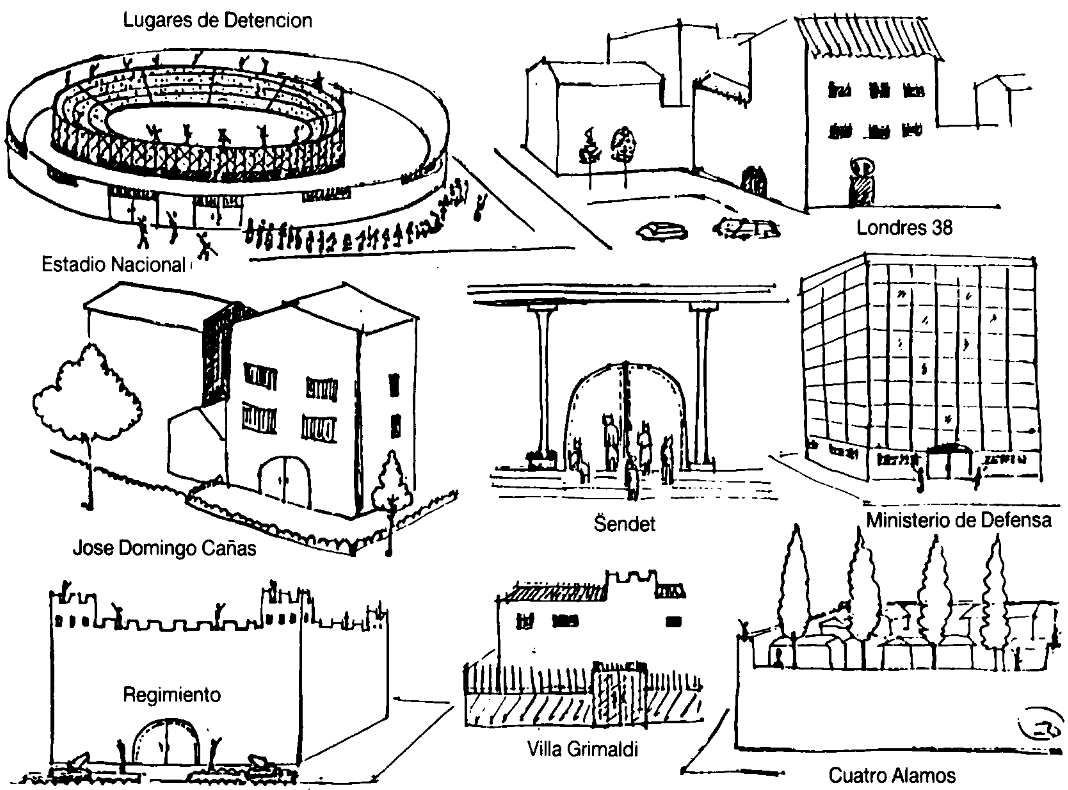
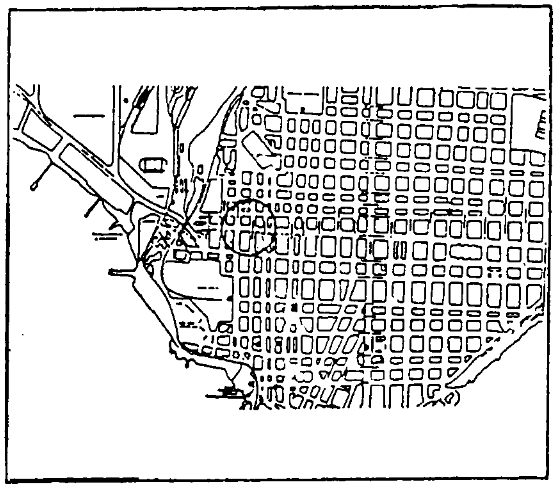


Figure 1 Places of detention. Buildings used in metropolitan Santiago between 1973–90. Clockwise: National Stadium; 38 London Street; government building on Jose Domingo Canas Street; the SENDET government building; the Ministry of Defense building; the army base; a summer country estate (Villa Grimaldi); and Cuatro Alamos (Four Poplars) military camp
Source: Desaparecidos-Detenidos, n.d. Santiago: Vicaria de la Solidaridad

the southern archipelago; the barren grasslands of southern Argentina; and remote areas of tropical northern Uruguay. These political prisoners (*relegados*) served time in these backwaters and often underwent political 'rehabilitation'.

Private places have always been tempting sites for abduction (Table 4). Although secret police sometimes snatched civilians walking to the store, waiting for a bus, or returning from work, most abductions were in the home. Kidnapping in homes reduced the number of witnesses. Home sequestering even included entire families to eliminate potential witnesses. The strategy was fairly similar throughout the Southern Cone. Several car loads of plain-clothed officers would arrive at a residence late at night or early in the morning. Timing was important so neighbours, workers and shoppers, and local police could not testify. Argentine kidnapping squads would actually notify local police of an abduction who in turn would cordon off a particular neighbourhood to facilitate the operation. Argentine state security officers were allowed the 'booty' of the detained persons' belongings. In the beginning, Argentine military officers would secure the signatures of the victim's neighbours showing which items were taken. At first, this gave legitimacy to both



Iquique

Está ubicado en la parte posterior de la VI División de Ejército, en Esmeralda 085. Queda cerca del puerto y a poco más de una cuadra de la Gobernación Marítima, en el sector norte de la ciudad. Queda a cuatro cuadras del centro comercial.

Figure 2 Places of Detention by the National Information Center (state security agency). Excerpt from afternoon daily newspaper revealing government state security office locations
Source: La Segunda, 16 June 1984: 17 (Santiago, Chile)

Table 4 Private and public elements of landscapes of fear

Private abduction
Nondescript Chevettes and Ford Falcons
Four middle-aged men
Death squads of men operate late at night; early in the morning
Seek private spaces for abductions; few witnesses
Killing of important citizens outside the country to avoid state complicity, i.e., killing of General Prats in Buenos Aires (can backfire as in the Moffet/Letelier case)
Public protest
Public legitimacy through the use of witnesses and media coverage
Town square as central arena for protest
Female protesters chaining themselves to public buildings/fences
Strategically located graffiti: at Ministry of justice, health, interior; near traffic intersections and embassy rows
Public whistling, chanting, and protesting at noon rush hours
Seizing media/photo opportunities such as Carmen Gloria Quintana's meeting with the Pope in the National Stadium
Alternate between sudden (*manifestación de relampago*) 'lightning' and regularly scheduled protests (Thursday protests at Plaza de Mayo)
Ballot box/street protest as two-pronged approach
Identifying landmarks of detention and torture in public buildings such as prisons, jails, military and naval bases, hospitals
Using curfew to protest: power outages; pot banging (*cacerolazos*)

Table 5 Forms of pacifist protest during military rule in the Southern Cone

Silent marches in the plaza
Chanting and marching in a line in the plaza and nearby central business district
Whistling anti-dictatorship tunes and circulating individually or in small groups in the plaza and nearby central business districts
Discretely dropping pamphlets along downtown pedestrian malls
Dropping pamphlets from buildings onto busy streets at lunch hours
Interrupting civic or diplomatic events by chanting or raising banners
Citizens chaining themselves to national monuments or buildings such as churches, congresses, and courts

the abduction and the confiscation of property. Later, however, it proved to be a tracing mechanism for proving that an abduction occurred. In the long run, though, the practice was dropped but the kidnappings continued. That there are certain common military actions and characteristics of public spaces during military rule is evident in Henri Costa-Gavras' film, *Missing*. The word Viña is mentioned(referring to Viña del Mar, Chile) as the only Chilean toponym in the film, creating an almost ubiquitous, though distinctly Latin American, setting for the film. (The generic features of state terror surface in the film *Missing* to the extent that it was filmed in Mexico, not Chile, and the Spanish spoken is anything but Chilean. These 'details' are insignificant to the story's plot.)

3 Public protest: the case of the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo

Defiance can be bothersome when seen from above because it can jeopardize the existing balance of power relations. Inversely, defiance is risky when seen from below, or from the vantage point of the protester (Table 5). Punitive measures include imprisonment, exile, the loss of one's job, or even death (Agosin, 1989: xi). Perhaps the most visible protesters of human-rights violations have been the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. The Madres of the Plaza de Mayo began their protests in the main town square of Buenos Aires in April of 1977. The Plaza de Mayo is the typical Latin American town square (Griffin and Ford, 1980; Sargent, 1982). It is the heart of the city, flanked by the old town hall (*cabildo*) and the presidential palace (*Casa Rosada*). An obelisk commemorating the city's founding is situated in the centre of the plaza. The town square as the quintessential urban landmark became a symbol for international human rights, and the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo became the champions of social justice.

As of August, 1992, the women continue gathering each Thursday afternoon at 3.30 p.m. to march in silence around the square. White handkerchiefs are wrapped around their heads and photographs of their missing friends or relatives are pinned to their coats, along with the dates of their disappearances. These women defied the military in their acts of public defiance, and were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983.

> This cooperative, civic effort on the part of a handful of women without any political power, for the most part traditional housewives who had never taken part in any public action before, was the only public protest made for a long time against the traffickers of death in Argentina. They were the *only ones* to stand up for life (Agosin, 1989: 18).

Weekly demonstrations serve as a reminder that the Argentine people refuse to submit to fascism (although the *proceso*, the military's term for their rule, never had the mass mobilizations that characterized the fascism of Europe in the 1930s). 'Because there still exists in Argentine society the legacy of Spanish culture that treats mothers with a certain respect and even veneration, the mothers were treated by police officials with superficial politness, but were never given a straight answer to their questions' (Agosin, 1989: 17).

In some ways, women are granted more leniency because of their gender. Agosin (1989) found evidence that in Argentina there is greater stigma attached to the father of a disappeared person than a mother and that it is rare that men march in public. Although women are held in respect, this does not mean that they are never mistreated. The culture of the Southern Cone mirrors male violence in other western cultures. For example, studies of male violence show that the social construction of masculinity often means assuming power (Messerschmidt, 1986; Daly and Wilson, 1988). In turn, power and masculinity are tied closely to violence and aggression. In this way 'male to male confrontations are also confrontations of masculinity; a means of testing and establishing power in relation to other men' (Alder, 1992: 269).

Avoiding male to male confrontation over human rights in Argentina, therefore, afforded some advantages to female protesters, but it did not grant them *carte blanche*. The founder of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti, along with 11 other members, disappeared in 1978. Moreover, a quarter of the disappeared were women, and of those, 10% may have been pregnant when they were arrested (Agosin, 1989: 17). Women's seizure of and protest in public places may have even provoked greater violence against them because of their allegedly egregious violations of gender roles. Bunster-Burotto's account captures the essence of this punishment:

> In the state torturers' efforts to force confessions, elicit information, or to punish, a pattern in structure and in content is clearly discernible. These common elements experienced by female political prisoners in violent sexual attacks upon her body and psyche are consciously designed to violate her sense of herself, her female human dignity. The combination of culturally defined moral debasement and physical battering is the demented scenario whereby the prisoner is to undergo a rapid metamorphosis from madonna – 'respectable woman and /or mother' – to whore ... this violent sexual treatment administered by the state ... magnifies the women's already subservient, prescribed, passive, secondary position in Latin American society and culture (Bunster-Burotto, 1986: 288).

The military's response to family members of the disappeared who made enquiries to government officials was to blame the victim, and women bore the brunt of these accusations. In Argentina, the police and military would blame the women for raising subversive children. In Chile, authorities had the audacity to claim repeatedly that their children had never been born. These testimonies of women working in a human-rights organization and a sewing co-operative are taken from the videos (with English subtitles and narration), 'The struggle for human rights in Chile' and 'Reciprocity and survival in a women's sewing Cooperative in Santiago, a Chilean shanty town', 1989. (Writer and producer: Joseph L. Scarpaci. Available through Media Services, Seashore Hall, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242 USA). Wearing a photograph in the public square is essential; it makes a statement that these women have given life to their missing children (Agosin, 1989: 19). The civic ritual of marching regularly in the most public of Argentine spaces is a statement of the outrage and despair these mothers, wives, and sisters must bear. Agosin describes the civic ritual this way:

> The mothers continue to create a feminine poetic imagery in their pilgrimages around the Plaza de Mayo. During these demonstrations, the Mothers wear kerchiefs embroidered with the names of their missing children. Their bound and covered hair symbolizes pain and mourning. Many women carry, or attach to their bodies photographs of the missing, proving that their children existed and showing the bond between their own bodies and those of their

> offspring. The symbols of the kerchief and the photographs have caught the public's imagination, but there are also other acts that enlighten the world and form a link in the chain of human solidarity (Agosin, 1989: 21).

In essence, the mothers must personify the missing, to prove they were just not statistics in dusty police files. As a catalyst to the social movement of human rights in Argentina and Latin America (which we address later), their weekly meetings were also organized to create new strategies of protest. Significantly, the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo were the only civic group to oppose the Malvinas/Falkland War publicly (Agosin, 1989: 34).

4 Santiago de Chile: curfews and 'lightning protests'

The state terror that characterized colonial Latin America or was portrayed in films about Nazi Germany was apparent in Chile, albeit in more subtle ways. One of our experiences in Santiago during the tenth year of Pinochet's rule is illustrative. As the 8 p.m. emergency curfew imposed by the Pinochet regime neared on September 11, 1983, the city grew quiet. The sounds of footsteps on the cobblestone streets of Santiago could be heard as workers rushed to their homes from bus stops before curfew. An occasional television or radio from nearby apartment buildings interrupted the hush of four million Santiaguinos. At 8 p.m. the crash of mufflerless army trucks broke through the calm as army battalions roared through the streets to take positions against an enemy. One suddenly envisions 11 million Chileans sitting, waiting in their homes, asking when, after 10 years, all of this would end, and who they really feared. Then, opponents of the regime sheepishly started banging pots (*cacerolazo*) in protest at Pinochet's dictatorship. Dorfman (1986) describes how friends of his reported the pot-banging protests during the curfews of 1983. 'It was wonderful. We had always been suspicious of our neighbors. I timidly knocked two spoons together. Next door they answered me. Then another apartment joined in. We went out in the corridor and we all began hugging each other. "You're also against him? You too?"'

Protesting in public means knowing certain 'public safety rules'. For example, protesters should always travel in numbers. Lying prostrate when accosted by soldiers or police can defer being dragged into a vehicle. If accosted by uniformed officers or military or police personnel, Santiago protesters would call out their names and the names of their next of kin so some bystander would notify them of the detention. If waiting in a paddy wagon or large police bus, many would try and jot down their names and the telephone number or address of family members, and then toss wads of paper out of the window.

Human-rights protests against the military atrocities of the Southern Cone incorporated spatial strategies in getting their message to the world. Lightning protests (unannounced and secretly organized) showed clear signs of spatial organization and territoriality. Following Sack (1981: 55) we can define territoriality as behaviours that 'affect, influence, or control actions and interactions by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a specific geographical area'. A common practice of carefully orchestrated protests was the lightning protest (*manifestación de relampago*). As in the case of Buenos Aires, the town square served Santiaguinos as the most effective site of public protest. It guaranteed pedestrians, shoppers, tourists, and business persons a glimpse of their protest. Two types of lightning protests were common in Santiago between 1983 and 1989: the collective protest and the whistling and chanting strategy.

a The collective protest

The collective protest should be understood as a process whereby protesters move through a maze of state-placed obstacles (paddy wagons, patrolmen, police dogs, blockades) to reclaim a space for civil society. As a metaphor, then, charting the protest against state terror shows how landscapes of terror get mapped, challenged, and rechallenged by key social actors.

The collective protest typically occurs in the main town square in downtown Santiago: La Plaza de Armas. In classic Latin American city design, the Plaza de Armas is flanked by the municipal offices of the county of Santiago (the *cabildo*), the main Post Office, and the Roman Catholic Church's main cathedral. The Plaza de Armas, always bustling with people, holds even more between noon and 2 p.m. Collective protests are usually kept secret amongst human-rights activists. The part of the Plaza facing the Cathedral is the 'safest' place to begin the protest. At first, the protesters begin circulating among other pedestrians in the Plaza, travelling in groups of two or three. At a designated hour, often noted by the chimes of the cathedral's bell tower, the small groups draw together at a predetermined place. Suddenly, chanting breaks out and clusters of posters appear. The first obstacle for the protesters is to pass from the Plaza de Armas southwards along the pedestrian mall, the Paseo Ahumada. A paddy wagon or a Mercedes-Benz police bus is stationed between the Plaza de Armas and the Paseo Ahumada (Figure 3). Within minutes, patrolling *carabineros* (policemen) radio to headquarters that a demonstration is underway. Reinforcements, mostly patrolmen, rush to the protest site.

Our interviews with the protesters as well as witnessing about 40 demonstrations through the perspective of participant observers, complete participants, and observer

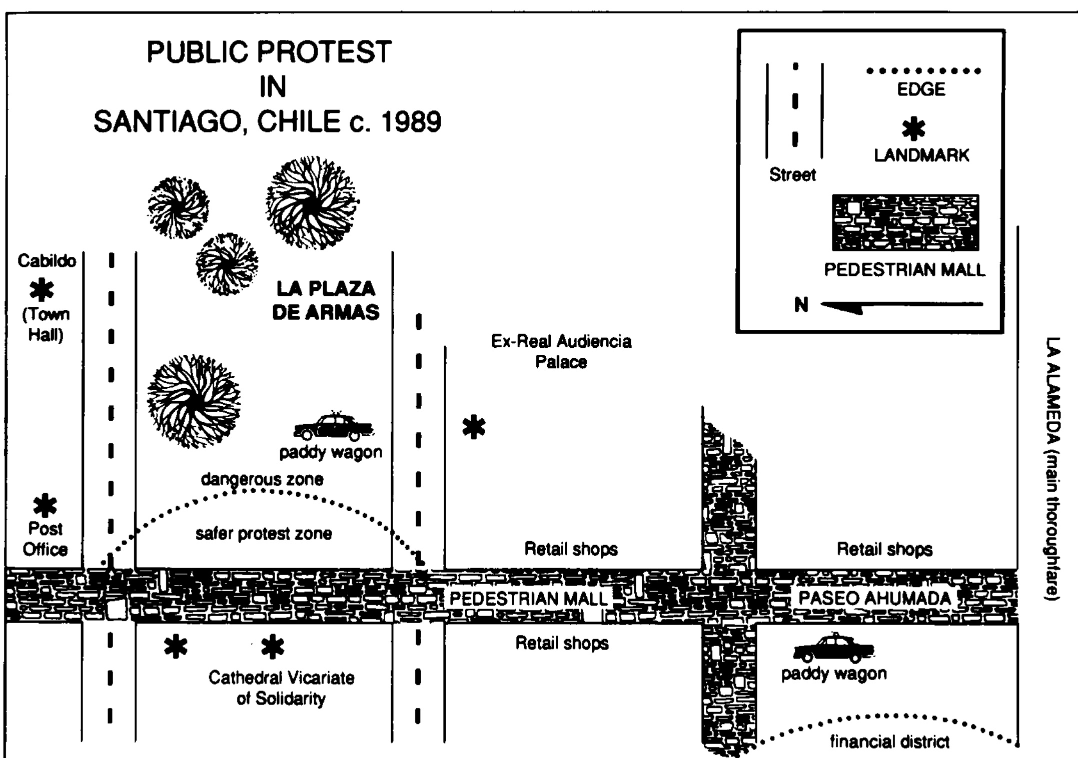


Figure 3
Sources: authors' field notes, 1983–89

participants (Babbie, 1989: 264–66), show that the ability to move the demonstration from the Plaza de Armas to the main boulevard of the city (the Alameda), a distance of four city blocks, yielded high visibility and media attention. Police attacks on protesters intensify with distance from the Plaza de Armas. If a successful march traversed the four blocks from the Plaza de Armas to the main thoroughfare, the Alameda, they were often met with the wide-bodied water-cannon truck, more *carabineros*, and a wider public audience to hear their message.

b Whistling or chanting protest

A second form of protest in the downtown Plaza of Santiago is the whistling or chanting protest. Tunes of well-known political protest songs are whistled as individuals and groups walk throughout the main square. A successful protest of this nature includes many people whistling, humming, or singing a protest song along the pedestrian mall and Plaza. Such whistling and chanting 'on the move' makes it hard for the police to pin-point where the dissents are located. Gradually, pedestrians downtown for reasons other than protesting begin to join in the whistling and chanting. Scores of citizens walking in different directions, and carrying out activities ranging from shoe shining, sipping coffee at a kiosk, window shopping, or waiting for a bus, underscore the broad yet indefinable core of human-rights opposition. As police patrols draw near, the whistling and chanting subsides, only to resume once the patrols move away. The greatest victory for the protesters means making *carabineros* look foolish by rushing through crowds and asking people: 'Were you whistling? Were you?'. These scenes in the heart of the city speaks volumes about the absurdity of curbing basic civil rights.

The gendering of landscapes, as urban social movement

The roles of women, feminism, and human-rights protests have been a neglected theme in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in the Southern Cone (cf. Jaquette, 1989). We suggest these roles have joined forces in the realm of urban social protest. This protest, forming a consistent gendered logic between male and female and public and private, has brought in participants from across class lines. In this regard, we may conceptualize the gendering of landscapes as a new social movement because it crosses class lines (Slater, 1985; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). It is 'new' because it differs from the traditional party movements that characterized mass political mobilizations such as Peronism in Argentina and the Aprista movement in Peru in the 1940s. It joins other new social movements which also found participants outside of party lines and across social and economic class. These movements include the environmental and women's movement in Brazil and the evangelical movement throughout Latin America (Eckstein, 1989). Unlike these other movements, the role of public protest by women became a central force in bringing world attention to heinous state behaviour. Moreover, it casts women in the third world as agents of change and creators of feminist theory rather than victims of oppression. Victims of state terror were not confined to a single class, and seizing public places by women from all walks of life underscored that.

IV Conclusions

State terror employs an array of sophisticated techniques and strategies to impose control over the masses. This study shows how state terror offers insights about the economic and political aspects of military rule, gender, and public protest. Military governments justify attacking unarmed populations because of their fervent belief that the armed forces are protecting the homeland. National Security Doctrine, a mixture of tactical support and geopolitical thinking from the USA and western Europe, has provided the ideological basis for violating human rights. The use of public and private spaces by state aggressors and human-rights groups has followed a consistent gendered logic. State terror served the technicians who implemented the free-market model because it facilitated the accumulation of capital through the elimination of vocal opposition to such policies. Themes of interest to geographers both as concerned citizens and scholars are evident in this aspect of the study of human rights. If, as David Smith (1986: 526) contends, welfare geography includes a concern over the 'absence of . . . threats to social stability and security', then a geography of human rights certainly has a legitimate standing among the discipline's practitioners. The study of human rights can provide a metric for: 'evaluation, whereby the existing state is judged against an alternative (past, predicted, or planned) . . . Implicit in welfare geography is a recognition that the issues in question extend beyond the limits of a single discipline, and in fact render disciplinary boundaries increasingly irrelevant' (Smith, 1986: 526).

Public spaces are an essential focus for the voices of the oppressed and disenfranchised under authoritarian rule. Dear's (1980) notion of a public city can be useful in forming a geography of human rights, if by this we are concerned with the city as 'an asylum without walls'. The concept of a truly public city entails the politics of exclusion. In Dear's original paper, he referred to service-dependent groups' access to treatment facilities. By extension, we may apply this idea of exclusion and public asylum to opponents of the military regime in power and supporters of human and civil rights in many corners of the world. Only by the dialectical use of the city centre as places that contain historical landmarks and public institutions, as well as the settings for public protest, can nonviolent change topple military rule. Unquestionably, the return of the generals to their barracks has been hastened by the kinds of civil protest described in Santiago and Buenos Aires.

Geographers, ever sensitive to the subtleties of scales of analysis, can profit from larger-scale studies of human-rights groups. Though megatheories are useful in understanding broad trends in the global dynamics of the world economy, we need to allow for interpretations based on the 'voluntarism and left conflicts grounded in noneconomic relationships' (Eckstein, 1989: 3). Accordingly, then, what are the implications of the struggle for human rights in the Southern Cone now that the transition to democracy (i.e., civilian rule) has been completed? Garretón (1989: 263) contends 'social mobilization is indispensable for the transition [to democratic rule]'. Peaceful popular protest can provide an important outlet for pressing issues that are not voiced in conventional forms of media. The March 1988 plebiscite in Uruguay about whether amnesty should have been granted to the military is indicative of the outcomes that result from pacific protest. With the return to democracy, survivors of detention and torture are forced to recreate the sounds and nuances of their places of detention (Timerman, 1981). Regular sounds of automobile traffic, commercial airlines, and factory whistles are being used to estimate distance from transport arteries and commercial landmarks in order to locate detention centres. By finding where they were detained and tortured, this sort of historic 'wayfinding' (see Jackle *et al.*, 1976) allows victims to place themselves in control of past events, if only metaphorically. Returning to detention sites allows former prisoners to foster a sense of domination over the past which can be useful in rehabilitative therapy and counselling.

Showing the courts the places of detention is also useful in criminal litigation and can help reconstruct a geography of human rights.

Future research should examine how the gendering of landscapes in other contexts of social protest is related to broader structural concerns such as the environmental movement, disarmament, and domestic violence. We also need to know more about Eckstein's insightful observations that neither political science paradigms of regime types nor social movement theories can adequately explain the ways in which common people resist and protest exploitation. In her words,

> Our current knowledge of Latin America is painfully inadequate and centered primarily on elite concerns and perspectives. As a consequence, we know much more about state structures, political parties, and interest groups than about the lives and preoccupations of 'popular' groups. Usually it is only when US interests and dominant class hegemony have been challenged . . . that attention has shifted to subordinate groups (Eckstein, 1989: 2).

State terror in the Southern Cone sustained military rule. Women's grassroots organizations which played strategically on gendered notions of public and private spheres were catalysts in focusing worldwide attention on human rights. The gendering of landscapes, perhaps best characterized by the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, exposes the contradictions of military rule and the generals' obsession with national security. Gender as an analytical category in the struggle of human rights exposes the antithetical nature of traditional Latin American culture which ascribes the public sphere as a male place and the domestic sphere as female. Lessons learned from human-rights abuses and state terror in the Southern Cone transcend the narrow confines of the geography of international law. They help us to understand the ways in which gender as a social construct can lead to a mapping and contestation of landscapes of state terror.

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