TRACES OF PROTEST
An archaeological study into the decolonisation of urban territories

Student
Tessa Koenig Gimeno (4923219)
Chair of Interiors Building Cities, "The Independent Group"
Thesis "Architecture and Protest"

I   AWARENESS IS ACTIVISM

The significance of research-methodological awareness is paramount when considering architecture as a social science. Within any scientific field, a consciousness of the existing and developing research-methodologies is an extremely valuable resource, enabling open and accessible cross-disciplinary conversations regarding the processes of knowledge contribution.[1] Within the built environment, this awareness is instrumental in identifying and formulating specific urban 'problematiques' and placing them within an appropriate research framework, in order to logically establish and support future design decisions, and promote a symbiotic relationship between academic research and architectural practice.

The relevance of a methodological awareness is useful in positioning architects within the city. If a verifiable and thorough research methodology is not considered, architecture and urban design can run the risk of becoming deterministic.[2] Prehistories of projective systems of power have demonstrated the strategic use of urban design, venturing a form of 'social engineering'.[3] This approach engenders a sort of architectural violence, in which the parameters of design are determined by political ideology and private market economies.[4] Furthermore, our rapidly changing urban environment has continuously challenged the role of the architect. The profession has often succumbed to dominant market logics such as neoliberalism, breeding a possessive individualism within design practice.[5] The lack of methodological (and general) awareness engendered by this form of individualism, endangers architectural practices to produce context-less, image-driven design, as opposed to the verifiable and accessible information produced as a result of well-thought research methodologies.

Transparency is crucial when considering research processes. For instance, if the objectives of design practices have anything to do with democracy, then the processes which inform them must also be democratic. Thus the choice of specific heuristic techniques are to be considered as tools to understand and express the intentions of the research, and communicate them to a wider audience. Methodological awareness could almost be considered a sort of 'academic activism', allowing one to identify and categorise the scientific integrity that is presented in a design project.

The content of the course thoroughly illustrated the various research methodologies that can be applied to investigate specific architectural problematics. I found it especially enlightening to reflect on the different design approaches I have adopted over the course of my academic career, and position them within the methodologies presented throughout the lectures. Emphasising the intent behind different heuristic techniques and their representational assets in relation to a specific type of research methodology, I was able to understand the value of ethnography in the fields of anthropology and sociology as well as architecture. I found the theoretical literature referenced by M. Berkers in the lecture regarding praxeology, especially helpful to structure my thesis research, notably works by Henri Levebvre and Jane Jacobs. Considering the socio-political nature of my thesis, I found these references very useful in deciphering the exact research methodology and analytical methods in order to conduct a sensitive, ethical and democratic research.

This thesis is concerned with the re-appropriation of public space in the context of protest, in order to understand the democratisation of space. The genesis of the investigation is centred around my personal experience of the Santiago protests in Chile, commencing October 2019. Acknowledging the act of protest as an essential part of Chilean culture, this event is an extremely relevant example that demonstrates how 'deliberative democracies'[6] of 21st Century Latin America are being challenged. Therefore, using Santiago as my case study, this thesis will investigate the phenomenon of protest and its ability to de-power a space, by answering the driving question: **"How does protest decolonise an urban territory?"**

Belonging to the Interiors Building Cities Chair, my studio's approach aims to develop socially conscious projects within a specific urban context. The Independent Group is a collective studio which encourages students to develop their own, unique project, independently and as a group, valuing the collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to design. No structure or favoured methodology is prescribed, but each student is required to develop a set of terms acting as the project's framework. These terms are the initial theoretical investigation that refer to the social, cultural and political conditions positioning a certain problematic within a specific site.

II   RESEARCH-METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

In order to clearly position my research approach, it is necessary to first define the concept of decolonisation in relation to an urban territory.[7] In conversation with the architecture collective DAAR (Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency),[8] Giorgio Agamben proposed the concept of 'profanation' as a **productive process** of decolonisation by "restoring things to their common use," explained in his book *Profanations*.[9] Thus the act of protest, especially when violent, can be understood as a **destructive process** of decolonisation by *removing* things to their common use.

Therefore, within my research, the etymology of 'decolonisation' is re-established in contemporary terms, referring to *the action or process of withdrawing from an existing* (as opposed to former) *colony, leaving it independent,*[10] in which the term 'colony' refers to current hegemonic, authoritarian powers. As a type of 'urban revolution,' concepts such as agency, collective conscience, memory, ruination and temporality are significant in understanding the process of de-colonisation. Respective to the general notion of democratisation of space, these terms define the social, cultural and political concepts that informed my research approach.

Figure 1 Plaza Italia
(Source: Cl.Glbnews.Com)
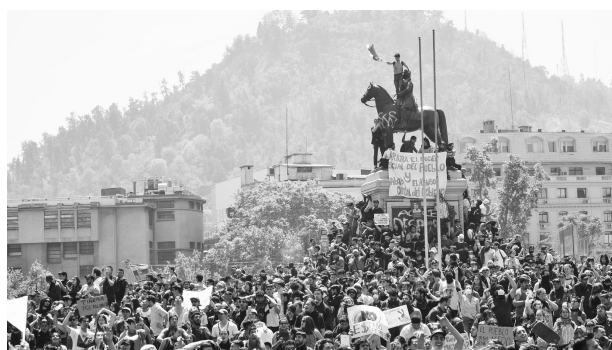
Figure 2 Plaza de la Dignidad
(Source: Paige Sutherland, Npr.org)

Protest as Profanation: This public space in central Santiago (Chile) is the main site for protest. Throughout the 2019 protests, the original name of this plaza was rejected and changed to 'Plaza of Dignity'. This profanation can also be understood as an act of decolonisation.

This investigation aims to answer the research question by applying an ethnographic research methodology and relevant theory to the specified context across various scales, in order to produce a documentation of spatial decolonisation as a result of protest. Considering the site-specificity of the research, I adopted a context-led approach, driven by my personal experience, knowledge and participatory observation throughout the protests.[11] The spontaneous nature of the protests in Santiago prompted a 3-month period of improvised fieldwork, where I was able to document and register the city during protest almost everyday. The chosen site is defined as the protest route, an urban territory which held great political and symbolic significance for Chileans during the protests.To initiate the research investigation, I started a qualitative research registering the site throughout the protests by the means of photographic, video and audio documentation. To support this research, I

began to translate field notes and observations into architectural drawings through the means of a sketch journal in order to capture the phenomena produced within the site during protest, such as activities and movement; repression strategies from authorities; destruction, street art and material culture.

Figure 3 Destruction along the protest route, Santiago (Etic Perspective)
(Author: Tessa Koenig Gimeno, April 2020)
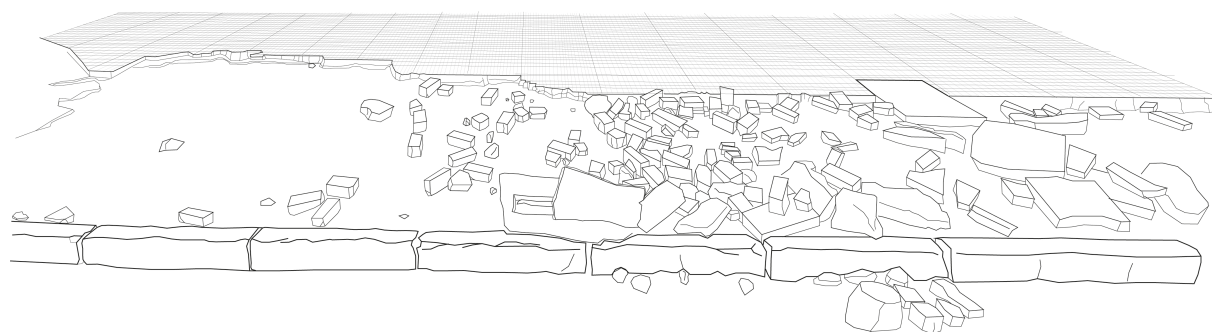
Figure 4 Ruined paving stones as material artefacts (Emic Perspective)
(Author: Tessa Koenig Gimeno, November 2019, Santiago, Chile)

The heuristic techniques I have chosen to express the site's ruination, seek to graphically represent certain intentions. Hand sketching and atmospheric drawing illustrate the observatory fieldwork from an emic persepective (figure 4); whereas a more objective method is adopted for research carried out from an etic perspective (figure 3), through mapping and technical survey drawings.

Furthermore, in order to gain an overview and contextualise the conditions of the fieldwork, I focused an etic perspective by researching specific architectural theory, in order to understand the phenomenological conditions that produce an act of protest. Significant to this research included Henri Lefebvre's account of *The Production of Space;*[12] David Harvey's advocation for public agency in *The Right to the City;*[13] Aldo Rossi's interpretations of collective memory in *The Architecture of the City*;[14] and understanding protest spatially as an 'event' through Bernard Tschumi's deconstruction of space, temporality and movement in *The Manhattan Transcripts.*[15]

Alongside my theoretical research, the fieldwork carried out until now has provided the framework to continue with a more in depth *post situ* ethnographic investigation in order to further analyse the process of decolonisation. This involves documenting the site in its state of ruination, through the examination of the material traces of protest. Therefore, I will use archeological drawing as a primary heuristic technique in order to produce an analytical site survey. In conjunction with the carried out fieldwork, theoretical research and data from external sources online,[16] the aforementioned information will be used to mobilise the archeological survey drawings, as an explicit means to understand the entanglements and relationships between objects and people, in order to understand the process of decolonisation.[17]

Considering the ambitions of my research in terms of its social, political and cultural contexts, I wanted to ensure that the methodology reflected the research intentions. The nature of ethnographic research concerns people and their engagement with a specific context, hence I want to ensure an immersive, inclusive and transparent approach. To avoid an ethnographic authoritative investigation, anthropological theory is an asset which acknowledges the subjective nature of fieldwork encounters. *Writing Culture*[18] edited by James Clifford and George Marcus, presents 'a translation of culture into writing'[19] through anthropological theory, thus my choice for an ethnographic methodology can be understood as a translation of culture into drawing, using techniques in archeological documentation.

Supported by Lefebvre's theories presented in *The Production of Space,*[20] the research approach is situated within the epistemic framework of praxaoelogy, by contributing towards an in-depth analysis of the production of space and the practices of human action within it (protest). Regarding the progressions between archaeology and architecture, the current relevance and novelty of the selected method(ologies) stem from a trans-disciplinary exchange, in which the tools of archeological documentation can provide valuable suggestions for the practice of architectural drawings.

III   RESEARCH-METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

An explicit engagement between archeology and architecture is rather unconventional within architectural practice. Archeology and architecture have always been interrelated and interdependent, but they have mostly existed parallel to each other. Both fields concern themselves with space and people, discovering the ways in which people live their lives, one looking to the past, the other to the future. As a research method, the inscriptive practices of drawing used in the fields of archeology and architecture provide an insight into their similar forms of knowledge production. Archeological drawings express historical graphical narratives whereas architectural drawings project intent and intervention. A symbiotic exchange of these approaches imagines fascinating and experimental potentials for trans-disciplinary research. As a method of research, archeological forms of graphical representation have been used by architects to evaluate the production, temporality and memory of space.

Archeological documentation embodies a thorough investigation of past cultures through the study of their material legacies. The method of excavation traces a socio-spatial enquiry into the actions of past lives, which becomes both a systematic and creative process.[21] The simultaneous act of destruction, promotes graphical documentation as an essential apparatus in archeology. Appreciating the techniques presented in studies from material culture, archeological drawing is an extremely significant tool in documenting the biographies of artefacts,[22] (in my research, these

artefacts refer not to commodities, but to the material traces left by protest). The ruin as an object of knowledge and memory was poetically captured by the work of 18th century artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi whose engravings are considered a great contribution to the field of archeology and architecture. Best known for his engravings in *Vedute di Roma* [23] (Views of Rome), Piranesi's meticulous observation skills imitate Roman ruins, capturing the temporal essence of material. Architectural fantasy is explored through his series of capriccios[24] named *Carceri* (The Prisons), which are composed as aggregates of archeological ruins and architectural monuments. Piranesi's evocative etchings capture space, time and monument as essences of architecture and archeology, and are a striking example of their value in graphical representation.
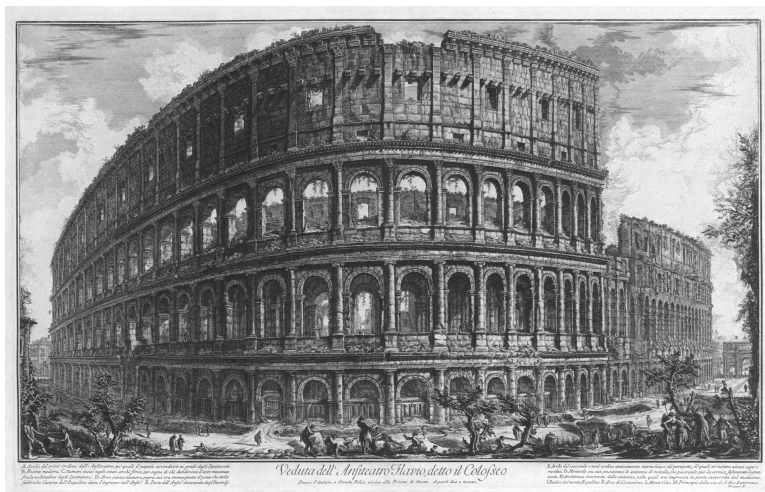
Figure 5 The Colosseum
(Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Vedute di Roma, 1745)

Figure 6 The Gothic Arch, *The Prisons*
(Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 14ᵗʰ plate in the second edition of Le Carceri d'Invenzione, 1761)

Time in Material: The documentation of ruins by Piranesi, capture temporality, decay and material legacies.

The field of archeology contributes to ethnographic studies by recognising an anthropological site, and drawing graphic interpretations of its past use.This method of drawing embodies a temporal dimension by capturing a moment of the past, and mapping it in the present. This medium has been instrumental within architectural practices that seek to represent processes in the built environment. In *The Everyday and Architecture,* Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till make use of line mapping as an archeological documentation of the everyday, beyond traditional architectural boundaries. The series of drawings named *Table Manners* illustrate the process of a space through its production, and the relationships which exist within it. I find this abstraction of time and movement through drawing to be extremely relevant for my research, especially for capturing the ephemerality and process of protest.
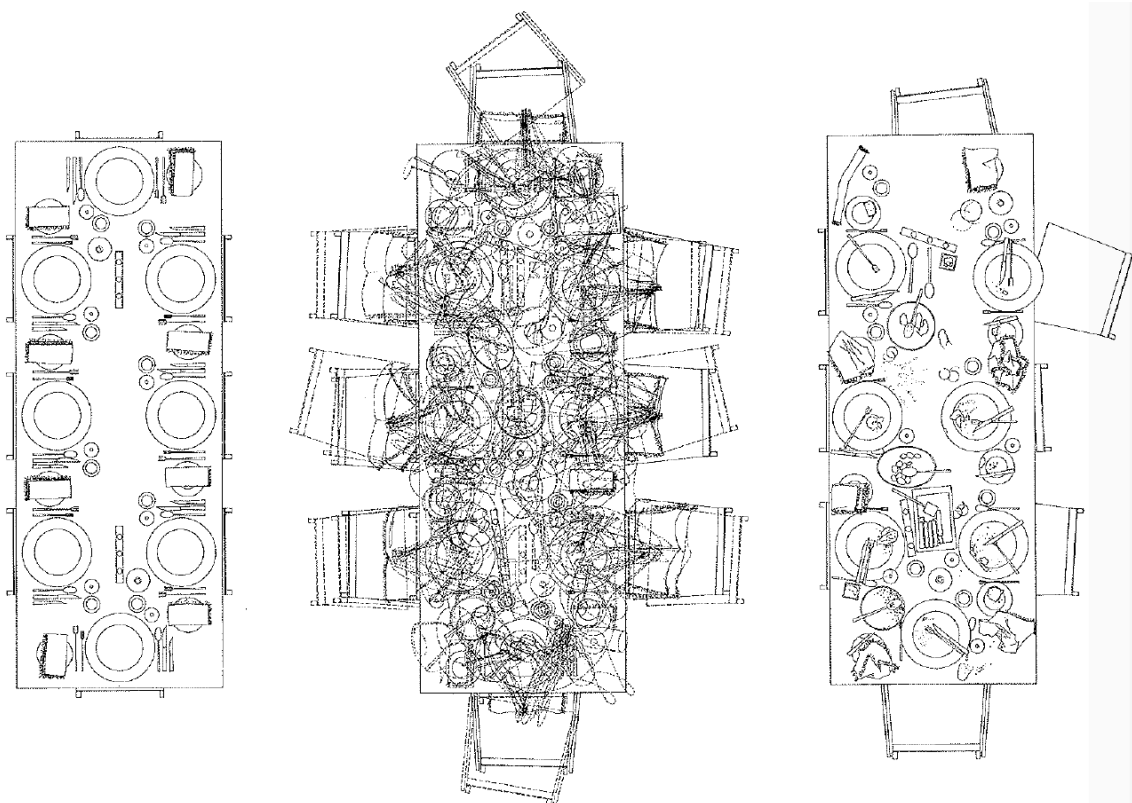

Figure 7 Table Manners
(Authors: Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till, *The Everyday and Architecture 1998)*

Movement in Lines: Line mapping tracks the process of use in space and challenges the apparent stability of architectural order of place, status and use.

The emotional presence of materiality can be experienced through archeological drawing. Renowned for their sensitive and atmospheric graphical language, Flores i Prats Arquitectes in Barcelona represent temporality and spatial heterogeneity through drawing. When dealing with existing heritage, as with the Sala Beckett Theatre for instance, drawing is approached with an archeological sensitivity. A vacant and decayed building becomes the site of a graphical excavation, expressing the dimension of time inscribed in material through delicate graphical motifs. In the proposal drawings for the renovation of the theatre, nuances of detail and shading accentuate areas of conservation, which indicate the outset of a potential design approach. The choice of specific analytical representations, such as the axonometric drawing, also reveal information about the spatial dimensions and composition of material. Adopting an archeological sensitivity with regards to materiality, texture and emotion, a drawing can be considered an archive of knowledge, graphically describing the history of a space and its value.
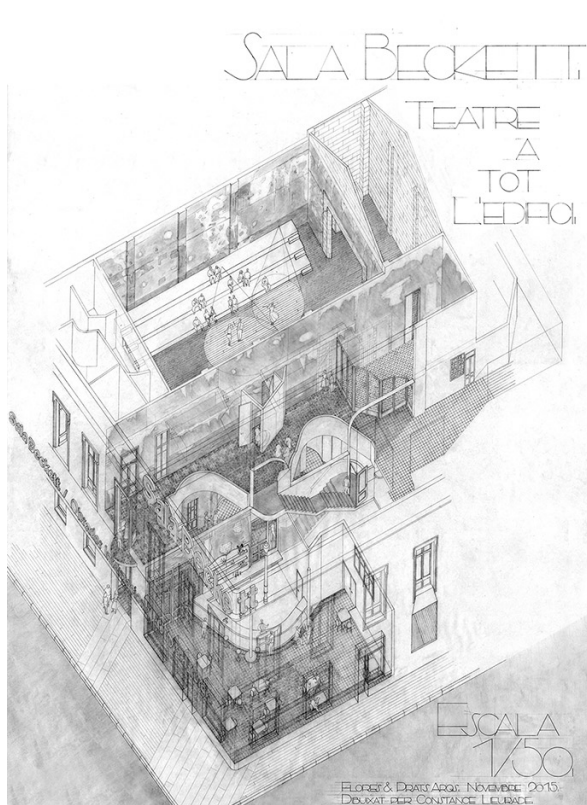
Figure 8 Sala Beckett Theatre Axonometry
(Source: Flores Pratts Arquitectes)
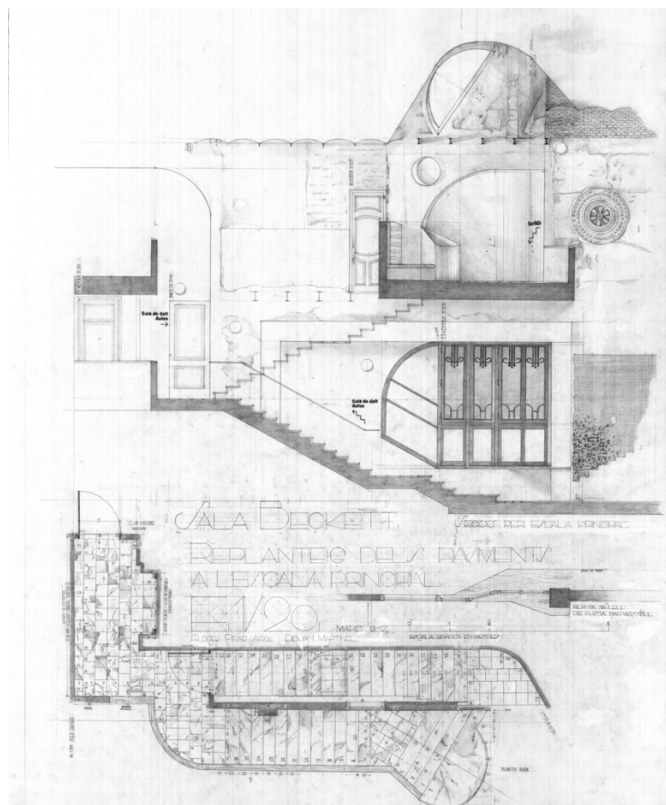
Figure 9 Sala Beckett Theatre Section and Plan
(Author: Flores and Pratts Arquitectes)

Material emotion and sensibility: A graphical excavation of an existing theatre building, the proposal drawings of Flores i Prats Arquitectes evoke a poetic sensitivity towards materiality and intention. The atmospheric pencil drawings illustrate a spatial experience that combines the existing and the prospective, in which every object holds a purpose and a story.

The analytical methods used in archeological documentation, such as site surveys and excavations, seek to provide an anthropological understanding regarding the ways in which people live, as well as their relationships to objects and places. Battlefield archeology for instance, examines traces of war to illustrate the story of a territory, commencing from its state of ruination. In the context of my research, this type of investigation could be carried out as a sort of praxeological excavation, seeking to discover the practices of human action onsite, influenced by the surrounding built environment. By focusing on signs of usage, examining the material destruction of protest would describe artefacts as a result of actions; ruins understood as objects inscribed with memory. These actions, ranging from the production to the damage of objects, can be animated using methods such as line mapping and movement notation, in order to commence a graphical representation of the process of decolonisation.

IV   POSITIONING

"Space is a product" …every society produces a space - its own space [25]
The Production of Space, Henri Lefebvre

In order to position my research, it is important to first define the socio-political and economic conditions which have placed protest as the origin of my thesis. Referring to the socio-historical theory discussed in M. Berker's lecture on praxeology, I respect Lefebvre's notion that space is a product of the society in which it exists. Furthermore, one can assume that what happens in this space can also

be considered as a product of society; if a society is not egalitarian, the spaces which compose it will most likely imitate the same principles. In the context of Latin America, a new form of colonialism has impacted society, where developed countries use capitalism to influence and maintain a form of dependency.[26] In Chile, this reliance is facilitated through the implementation of neoliberalism, a free market capitalism associated with privatisation, free trade, austerity and de-regulation, in order to endorse the private sector. This has lead to the commodification of cities, and subsequently influenced the production and conditions of urban life. Inequality, social segregation and social stasis are examples of the consequential infringements of civic rights engendered by this form of capitalism.

The resurgence of these 19th century ideas of economic liberalisation, came into (re-)fruition as neoliberalism in the 1980s under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile. However, since Chile's return to democracy, the neoliberal model still dominates daily life. These political and economic systems which have built up Chilean society, have directly contributed to the production of a protest culture considered a pivotal part of public life. Through the act of protest, the manifestation of a collective consciousness rejects the aforementioned neocolonialism, by destabilising everyday life, thus leading to a decolonisation of the urban spaces which it occupies.

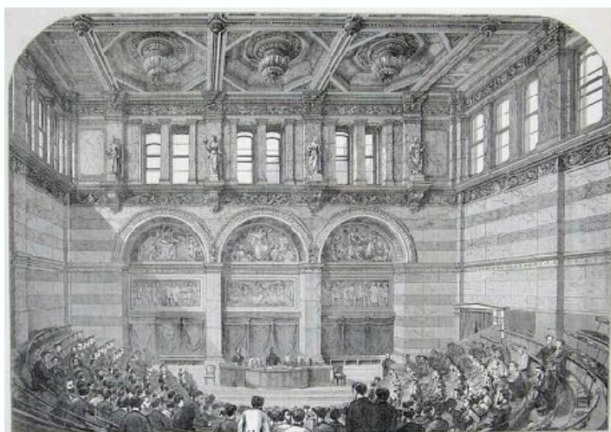

Figure 10 Santiago's Urban Morphology
(Source: openstreetmap.org)
The Production of Space: Santiago's urban morphology illustrates the societal production of space. A process of capitalist and authoritarian urbanisation has reduced the urban block, (from right to left of figure 10) by increasing the presence of vehicular streets to enforce surveillance and control. Here we can see Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space: "that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power;" it is in this everyday, utilised space, power relations becomes visible"[27]

Architecture in itself cannot solve the problems of society, however architects must be aware and conscious of their contributions to the built environment and thus, to society. This conscience also applies when choosing the research methodology that will inform the project. In *The Death and Life of American Cities,*[28] Jane Jacobs emphasises the importance of learning from reality, to understand how people actually use spaces, as opposed to the assumptions imposed by sweeping plans of urban renewal. The following statement presented in M. Berker's lecture enforces this position, which informed my decision to adopt an ethnographic research methodology: "*By studying the praxis of*

architecture, one can develop an eye for the actual users of building, and not the imagined ones."[29] I think this encourages an ethnographic approach, in which the architect must immerse themselves and participate in daily life in order to produce sensitive architecture that will actually benefit the built environment and its users.

My research is concerned with the advocation for public agency in cities. Designing for the agency of citizens and understanding how the public interior can contribute a form of cultural resistance against questionable political contexts, has been a central ethos of my studio and chair. In his essay *Democratic Spaces*, Richard Sennett demotes the hierarchical nature of architecture by supporting a more associative democracy, illustrated in the participative spatial arrangement of Athenian Agora, a multi-functional market space.[30] This polemic between space and democracy provokes an interesting question with regards to the built environment today: how can architects design for spatial agency? Alternative solutions to architectural traditions are presented in "Spatial Agency: Other ways of doing architecture" by Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till.[31] Promoting trans-disciplinary and collaborative practice, the projects presented in this book encompass a more bottom-up and associative spatial approach to architecture.

Figure 11 Power relations in space
(Source: Lecture slides on Praxeology by M.Berkers)
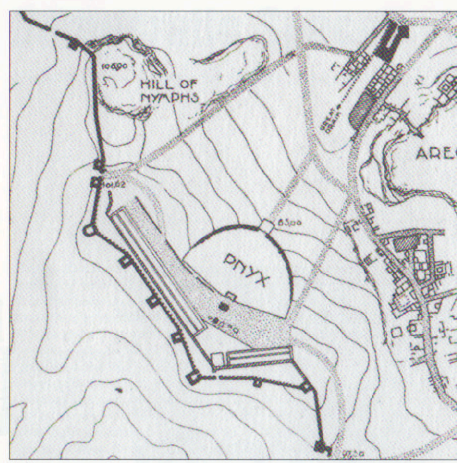
Figure 12 The Pnyx, a political theatre
(Source: Democratic Spaces, by Richard Sennett)

Colonial Spaces: The production of spaces as a result of society. The composition and arrangement of authoritarian spaces engender a deliberative democracy. Decolonisation can be understood as the 'demotion' or 'subversion' of these spaces.

Finally, my individual architectural position is to engage with the production of democratic spaces. The role of the architect can no longer operate independently. Architects must position themselves within a wider framework of disciplines and acknowledge the demand for collaborative and interdependent design within a globalised, inter-connected context. I have found that the methods and techniques explored in archaeology, as a method of ethnographic research can provide a thorough and truthful inquiry into the social, material and historical conditions of my site. The appreciation of trans-disciplinary approaches to research, that reference fields such as sociology, political theory and material culture alongside architectural practice, ensure a more scientific and thorough analysis of the context, that will initiate a well-founded design process with a clear intent and direction, and hopefully contribute to a more democratic architecture.

END NOTES:
1   Ray Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2016), 7.
2   Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture,* 15.
3   Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture,* 15.

4   For instance, neoliberalism which encourages urban developers to maximise property and ground surplus (cheapest build for surface area).

5   David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review,* no. 53 (September/October 2008): 32.

6   Authoritarian democracies are directed by a ruling elite or authoritarian state. See Anthony Arblaster, "Democracy", *Concepts in Social Thought.* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 48.

7   The political conditions presented by David Harvey in *The Right to the City* describe a neoliberal colonisation of modern cities and the types of urban spaces which have been affected by this form of capitalist urbanisation. This has enabled me to identify my site of investigation, the protest route in Santiago, as an urban territory in which neoliberal ideologies are actively challenged. Protest is thus an instrument of public agency, in which profanity becomes the strategy to take over and subvert an urban territory, and use it for something other than it is supposed to; essentially to queer a space.

8   Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal and Eyal Weizman, *Architecture after Revolution*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 18.

9   Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 2006).

10   Etymological definition of Decolonisation taken from the Oxford dictionary. See https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/decolonization.

11   Through engaging in a university exchange programme at the University of Santiago, and living in the city for 6 months, I was actively engaged with the social, political and historical contexts of the city on a daily basis. Prior and during the protests, I was consistently in contact with local academics, cross-disciplinary researchers from different fields and local citizens, allowing me to build a solid foundation of knowledge and experience that would become the basis of my research.

12   Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

13   David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: from the right to the city to the urban revolution,* (London: Verso, 2012).

14   Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City,* trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman, (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1982).

15   Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts*, (London: Academy Editions, 1981).

16   These sources include google earth, google street view, instagram, facebook and other social media platforms on which people have documented the protests as a form of digital activism.

17   Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture,* 109.

18   Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture,* 166.

19   Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture,* 166.

20   Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* 1991.

21   Wolfgang Müller, "Archeological Documentation as Ethnography," *ARCH+ Zeitschrift,* no. 238 (January/March 2020).

22   Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture,* 103.

23   Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Vedute di Roma,* (Rome: 1745).

24   Capriccio painting is a 17th century art style aggregating architectural monuments and archeological ruins to create an architectural fantasy.

25   Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* 26.

26   Concept of 'dependency' as neocolonialism. See Petti, Hilal and Weizman, *Architecture after Revolution*, 18.

27   Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* 26.

28   Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of American Cities,* (New York: Random House, 1961).

29   Lecture by M. Berkers, slide 40, see https://brightspace.tudelft.nl/d2l/le/content/192744/viewContent/1622413/View.

30   Richard Sennett, *Democratic Spaces*, (Lecture at the Berlage Institute: 03 March 2004), 40.

31   Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, *Spatial agency: other ways of doing architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011).

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Paige Sutherland, "NPR Choice Page", Npr.Org, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2019/10/22/772078420/in-chile-protesters-decry-troop-deployment-as-a-pinochet-tactic?t=1589488865505.

Till, Jeremy, and Sarah Wigglesworth. The Everyday And Architecture. Reprint, London: Architectural Design, 1998.

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