***Documentality and Display: Archiving and curating the violent past in contemporary Argentina, Chile and Colombia***

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**I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Institution: **Memoria Abierta, Av. Libertador 8151, Ciudad de Buenos Aire (CABA), Argentina**

Name and position:

* **Alejandra Oberti**, Coordinator of the Oral Archive

Interviewers: Cecilia Sosa, Oriana Bernasconi, Jaime Hernández, Vikki Bell

Location: Memoria Abierta, Buenos Aires

Date: March 28th 2019

Duration 1:01.08

**II. TRANSCRIPTION**

The interview begins with Cecilia Sosa describing the project.

Cecilia: You have been working in Memoria Abierta since a very long time.

Alejandra: Yes, since 2005.

Cecilia: What decisions were historically taken in relation to the testimonies...? Why? How do we record? What type of things were done well? What are you proud of? What would you change? How are these issues in the most concrete practice? We are trying to..., and it is not easy.

Oriana: Is that and also -so that we can keep track of time-, if you can also tell us a bit about the display of the project, which has to do with how do those testimonies that are hosted in this archive are used for other purposes? Those segments that are transferred to other tools years later. So if you can tell us a little bit about how is the archive made up? and I believe that this is a very good case because you have a long experience, unlike the other countries that we are studying. Then maybe if you can tell us about the changes or decisions that have been made during the process of doing it in another way, or if you have persisted in something in particular, if you can tell us about that kind of 'procedural-time variable' of this registration work.

And then if you can tell us a little about the uses of these other tools in art, or in pedagogy, or in other arenas that perhaps are not so traditional when you think of raising and holding an archive.

Alejandra: Ok. [Laughs] I have five minutes. Well, what the oral archive has unlike other Memoria Abierta projects, is that it has been very documented over time. So it has gone from a publication called ‘Testimonio y Archivo’ that should…

[An interruption occurs]

Cecilia: I’m sorry.

Alejandra: There is a publication called ‘Testimonio y Archivo’ that is on the Memoria Abierta website. That publication [describes] in an absolutely synthetic way some of the decisions that have been taken over time. We publish it because many times the question about how we did what we did arose. But it has also been the personal seal of the Archivo Oral, at least since 2005, to transmit its experience to other projects that during the mid-2000s begin to appear. For example, the Villa Grimaldi project in Chile.

And that's when the idea of systematize came up, and finally many years later we put together that publication. And on the other hand, there are also my articles, and other things written everywhere. There is also a booklet that is on the Memoria Abierta website called: ‘Historia, Memoria y Fuentes Orales’, where there is an article written by the first three members of the Archivo Oral, where they systematize some of the decisions that were taken. That is to say, there are written things that you can look for too, so don't think that we have to talk about everything now.

Regarding your first question, the first thing I would say is that all the decisions that have been made in the Archivo Oral, at least from 2005 onwards have not been technical. That is, the technical aspect was always undeveloped in this institution. And the technical aspect has a link with what we do that is a bit 'opportunistic'. In the sense of: 'well, it is the only thing that can be done', in technical terms. Unlike other countries, Argentina is not a country that has the technology and the resources within reach. We are always lagging behind in terms of technology, of the materiality of the cassettes, chips, computers, databases, etc. And this causes that in terms of procedures, we are often behind what we know we could do to make things much easier.

It seems to me that because what it mattered to us was the conceptual basis of what we were doing, technology was a bit relegated behind it. I will give you an example of what I am talking about. At the beginning of the Archivo Oral, even since before I entered -and we finished defining this with my management at the head of the archive- we discussed whether these testimonies were going to be accessible. And how does a testimony become accessible? So, the first idea that came up was [to use] the model of some audiovisual archives that transcribe the interviews, for example. The most emblematic model -perhaps there must be another- would be the Fundación Getulio Vargas in Brazil, which is one of the oldest oral archives. Is from the 1970s and is not about political violence, instead it is a much more a general archive. At the beginning, they used to transcribe the testimonies.

With the resources that Memoria Abierta had, with the team and the type of testimony that had that was totally unfeasible. Then the discussion arose that in order to make these testimonies accessible, they should be catalogued in some way. How is the audiovisual material catalogued? It is catalogued with some criteria that are rather archival, but it is also catalogued with the construction of indexes that tells you: 'In minute 1 [the person] speaks of one thing, in minute 2 [the person] speaks of another thing’. That is one methodology. And for Memoria Abierta it was totally unfeasible. It requires a number of hours of cataloguing that we will never have. It is economically unfeasible because it implies having a person who has to focus exclusively in that task. We don't have a team to do that job. But we said: ‘Well, if we have to do it like this [we will have to do it]’, [and] we begin to see [what we could do]. And we began to analyse and see the material, and making a virtue out of necessity, to put it somehow, and we realized that it was not only economically unviable, but that it was not good in conceptual terms. I mean, you cannot watch only 5 minutes of an interview. If a researcher, a journalist, a plastic artist, or someone who wants to work in terms of memory pedagogy, wants to use a testimony as a resource, they cannot go looking for it in [a summary of] 5 minutes where one person tells how they kidnapped her. Because that testimony makes sense within the framework of a personal life story. So, they kidnapped her and she lived in a certain place, the kidnapped her and she militated in an organization, she had family ties. What I want to say is that there is a story that allows us to understand that kidnapping -to give you an example- within the framework of a life story.

Then we began to look for a way to justify this, and after a while we realized that this discussion was settled by another emblematic archive that is the Fortunoff archive, that is the Holocaust testimony archive that is now placed at Yale University. They are absolutely more rigid than us with the way of cataloguing. It is a very interesting archive. I think that the model that we want to look is closer to that one than any other. But it is at the same time an archive that has stopped, that is, it is not producing anymore, or produces some things but very slowly. Well, they have a different situation.

So, we have the Fortunoff archive on the one hand, and [on the other hand] we have the opposite model -if you want to call it that way- that was known as (because now it does not exist anymore, but it used to be called) the Spielberg archive. Now it is the archive of the Shoah Foundation that is deposited in the university... I forgot the name. It is deposited in a university; what was the name of university? It is a university in the United States.

Cecilia: We can look for the name later.

Alejandra: [The Spielberg archive] does completely the opposite, provides the interviews for the public online consultation of researchers. In fact, we are about to sign an agreement with that foundation so we can have an access point for our entire collection of thousands of interviews that we have here in Memoria Abierta.

They charge a high price, but they also make agreements with institutions, because they are interested in having their file available in Latin America, so maybe that is the place to achieve what we want. They are very interesting. But they don't have the same scheme of interviews that we have here.

I mean, the issue of cataloguing is an example. But well, I know you are also interested in the uses, and it seemed to me that it was an interesting example to begin with, that can also help to link the two issues. The Memoria Abierta archive is an archive that was built for consultation. That is, its main objective, and many of the decisions that were made have to do with thinking in a way that people can quickly consult [the interviews]. The interviews that we do are brought to Memoria Abierta, then the digital file that allows ‘accessibility’ is built, and they are available the next day.

Cecilia: Really?

Alejandra: Really. In fact, if someone wants to come the day after the interview, it is available to watch it. Well, sometimes it is not exactly the next day, but it is a process that is automatic. Parallel to the construction of that file, there is an entire cataloguing process, that depending on how the team is in terms of the amount of people that is working and the amount of work they are doing, it can take more or less days. And the cataloguing provides basic data of the interview, and descriptions and summaries, that allows the person that is looking through an interview to know what topics are in it.

Two issues are combined in the cataloguing. One is: who is that person? what happened to him? What situation did he live? So, for example, what kind of data do we have there? Name, gender, militancy. We have one thing that we called: 'respondent category', which is a way of cataloguing that has to do with experiences in relation to the recent past of a person: political prisoner, arrested disappeared. Then, all these elements allow the person to be known. That is: 'He was a militant of a territorial organization, based in the Chaco, he had a missing brother, he went into exile in such a place, and militates, is a participant in the lawsuits against humanity, and has a participation in the Centro de Estudios Legales Sociales' for example. This type of data allows us to know the person as such. So someone who comes looking for interviews of ESMA survivors can quickly find 100, 20, as many as we have, of this or that experience.

And on the other hand, there is what we call: an 'analytical summary', which contains the main events and summarizes precisely the topics that are covered in the interview. Also the main topics and key words are extracted from that 'analytical summary'. So that is another way of accessing the complete collection, which is from ‘what the interview tells us’. They are more specific questions: He talks about torture, he doesn't talk about torture, he talks about militancy, what kind of militancy, he talks about assemblies in the union, he talks about the Fiat unions in the 1960s. That is, they are more specific issues that are the cross between the person in all his social determinations and his subjective experience. And there, what is also decisive is what that person wants to tell about each moment of his personal history, and about the history of the country, so to speak.

I am working on a concept now, and I had been working very closely, well, not that close, but I have been conceptually working on the issue of the testimony from the perspective of anachronism. It is a concept that I use, and I always found it very useful to think about why we can interrogate the militants of the 1970s from a gender perspective. Well, it's a work that I do since many years ago. Now I am linking that with another conceptualization in which I still do not explore enough, but I am getting closer to doing so, which is the idea of testimony as a raw material. What do I mean by testimony? Well, the Memoria Abierta testimonies are raw material because unless the person giving the interview asks for it, we do not edit the material. So, what is there is what it is. Unless the person says: 'I talked about a person and I don't want [that to appear in the interview], [or] I told an action that I don't want [that appear in the interview].

We had 2 or 3 interviews that we edit ourselves for different reasons. One was an interview of a militant of the 1970s that told us about a number of military actions, and although there are many [interviews] in which people talk about political-military actions, in this specific case the whole interview was focused on that, a whole part of the interview was focused on that, and also named a lot of people. He didn't get involved just by himself in kidnapping and other things, but he involved a lot of other people. So we said: ‘I'm not going to give this to the police.’ We called him and said: ‘Look, we think this shouldn't [be shown],’ and [he said]: ‘Well, I don't care.’ We said: ‘Look, don’t. And then he accepted that we censor that part.

And another interview that we censored was from an intellectual. When we planned and started the interview process, which is always a fairly long process, we thought that he was in good health. We did the interview around two months later. [And] he was a rather old man and something had happened in his life that had led him to be in not too good conditions. Then, in some parts of the interview he exposes personal things about himself and also about his daughter, in an unnecessary way. So in that case it was more a human issue than a political one, even though the human [issue] also has a political dimension, so we decided to cut some fragments. But in all the other cases it is never a Memoria Abierta decision to cut [fragments]. It always has to do with what the interviewee decides. In that sense it is a raw material, it is not an edited material.

But there is something else that often comes to my mind, and that is what I am trying to work on now, which is the idea of raw material in the sense of a material that always remains, to which you can return to and somehow it is what we did when we wrote the book on gender violence during the dictatorship.

Cecilia: That was published here in Memoria Abierta or...?

Alejandra: Yes. It's all on the website because at some point we made a decision, that to me to is a very good one, which is to upload everything into the website. So everything can be downloaded from there. These 3 publications that I mentioned can be downloaded from there.

Cecilia: And was this material used for the exhibition that you are right now [showing]...?

Alejandra: The website itself was used a bit for the preparation of the script, and there is a showcase with materials, the interviews and the fragments that are there are… you saw that they work with judicial material. But the books are there, our book is in that showcase, because it was used it to produce the exhibition. It was very early; it was when the first trial was beginning to be discussed. This was in 2010. We started in 2009 and finished the work in 2010. And it was a somewhat capricious hypothesis of work, but, we began to observe and it was not that nobody wanted to talk about sexual violence, but that nobody wanted to listen. In fact, the book is called ‘And nobody wants to hear’ because an interviewee said that. And we found that during the process. And what we did there and what many are doing now, is that every time that a new issue appears, and that those issues are put on the agenda, we revisit [old] testimonies, that maybe are from the year 2001. And those subjects that we believed that in those days were not talked or not known, and that we though that it was a new topic that is being investigated now, there, appears. It appears sometimes very silenced. It’s something that appears in not well-elaborated conversations. Or in some cases, it appears in phrases like: 'And nobody wanted to hear, nobody wanted to know.' I'm sorry, the phrase is: ‘Nobody wanted to know’, and an interviewee said it because she actually wanted to tell what happened to her, and nobody listened to her anywhere. She ended up telling in the interview that not even her gynaecologist listened to her.

So, well, going back to these decisions that have to do with how to assemble the archive, how to catalogue it, how to give it to the query, both in the production of the testimony, and then in the cataloguing and in the provision for public consultation, you have to try to make that testimony to do its utmost, to talk about all the topics it can talk about, make the questions as open as possible, to measure the type of narrator or narrator that is the person. How does [the person] tell something? Does it tell a long story or a short one, does it answer in monosyllables? [You need to] work hard on that before the interview, to think about how to generate a situation in which a person can talk. Sometimes it's impossible, there are people who tell you: 'Yes, that happen in 1985, what else?’

Cecilia: And before the ‘interview situation’, do you investigate the case? Do you share the question model and the topics? how…?

Alejandra: Yes, especially in the last years we have been trying to work in 'collections'. It means that we try to make a set of interviews about a certain topic, or that together all those interviews talk about a certain situation. So the previous researches that we do are more solid. And we usually reach someone not because we are interested in that person as a victim of state terrorism, but because of a particular issue of that person. So that is accompanied by a whole previous investigation. [For instance] we are interested in interviewing a base delegate of a certain place.

In general, we try not to meet a person without knowing something about that person. Social networks are very helpful in this context. Earlier on that was impossible. That is, there were things that you did not know and you would never know. But now there is an infinite archive, google is the most infinite archive you can imagine. We talk to other people, we ask, we investigate, we get an idea and then we meet with the person. We meet and we tell him what we do, we tell him about Memoria Abierta, and we try to invite him to come here. When we were in the other office in Corrientes [street] it was much easier, because of the physical place and the emotional place. There are people who still have not enter into the ESMA.

Yesterday [I was talking to] a person who was saying yes to everything that I proposed her. [I was inviting her to] a meeting in which we were going to discuss some issues. [She told me]: 'Of course, yes, well, I can [participate]. Yes, on that day I can make it too.' And I say: ‘Well, it's going to be in Memoria Abierta,’ and she says: 'And where are you located now?', [I say]: 'In the ESMA’, [and she replies]: ‘No’. That is how it was, I finished pronouncing ESMA, [and she said:] 'No, I don't go to the ESMA.' She is not a survivor, she is a militant from the 1970s, she was exiled, and neither she nor a family member..., but she gave a resounding no, an indisputable one.

Cecilia: And what do you do in those cases? Do you conduct the interview in another place?

Alejandra: We go anywhere, yes, yes. And besides, it is not very comfortable to come here. So it is not so easy to bring people here. So we meet them, we talk to them, [and] we tell them [what the interview is about]. The first meeting has those three objectives. On the one hand, we tell the person about the project, we tell him about Memoria Abierta, we tell him what the interview is for, and what they are going to be asked. We really like them to come here, because one thing we do here is show them the archive, and the public consultation room, the materiality of things. So well, when I say ‘public consultation’ it may sound like an abstract thing, but when someone comes in, and sees a library with a person who is a 'record manager', and some computers to see [documents] it adopts a different shape. So that is on the one hand.

Secondly, [we seek] to know the person. And in that sense, of course we know that a relationship of trust is not established in a single meeting, but at least it opens a framework for the interview. And there is another element that one learns over time, which is to understand in that dialogue (the one that I was just telling you before) the 'narrative modality' of that person. The 'how do that person narrate [something]?'. [That also helps] you to know what to ask and how to ask.

And there is a third issue, this is 'obtaining information', and it also has two aspects. That is, knowing more precisely the path of that person, so what we ask her has to do effectively with what she can tell us. And the second aspect of this issue is to understand what [the person] wants to talk about and what not. There are things that people don't want to talk about. Well, they may not want to talk about it today, but maybe yesterday they wanted to talk about it, and maybe in 2 more years again they will want to talk about it. But well, we are very respectful of that, which does not mean that between the first meeting and the interview there is not a whole process in which the person decides that she does not want to talk anymore about what she did wanted to talk about before. Because [maybe] she talked to someone, or [maybe] because she asked her daughter about it, and the daughter said: 'No mom, is better if you don't talk about that'. Or [maybe because] she realizes that she does want to talk, or that she remembers [other] things.

This type of interview has the peculiarity that there are 'things' that occur during the interview. The phrase: ‘Now that you ask me that’, ‘Now that I think about it’, ‘I had never thought about this, but it’s like that’, ‘this is happening to me now’, it has a lot of ‘enactment’. And with all these elements a questionnaire is built. A questionnaire that seeks to guide the interview in terms of what we want to know in each case. And it also can happen that the questionnaire may not even be opened [during the interview].

Cecilia: But the idea is that a questionnaire is specially built for each person?

Alejandra: Yes. We have some basic guidelines of course. We have blocks of questions that have to do with..., [for example] for exiles, you can't forget to ask them in which country they went into exile. There are basic questions for each type of experience that helps as an aide memoir or as a guidance, but you don't necessarily have to ask them all. And [in some cases] you don't necessarily have to ask questions, there are people who don't need to be asked anything.

Cecilia: And do they usually go [to conduct the interviews] as a team? do they go in pairs? or does a person goes by itself?

Alejandra: If the first meeting is here in Memoria Abierta we introduce him to the team, we chat, [and] we explain him everything between several people. And then everyone leaves and the interviewer and the person that is going to give the testimony stays. That moment is intimate and very important. It is more like a little private moment and it is very important. And then during the interview there is a person filming with a camera, so there are two people. We do not have a sound engineer, we do not have an illuminator, [so] it is only one person who does everything.

Cecilia: Is the duration of the interview flexible?

Alejandra: It is absolutely flexible.

Cecilia: There may be interviews that are longer and others shorter.

Alejandra: At the beginning we were playing a game between technology and the 'political-conceptual' decisions. Until 2010 we recorded the interviews on DVCAM tape. However, a DVCAM tape running at its highest quality can lasts a little less than 3 hours. So we decided that the limit [for each interview] was going to be one tape. Because we also did not record on top of any tape. So if the interview stopped at 1 hour and 20 minutes that tape was going to stay like that, and if there was a second session of the same interview another tape would be used. That is like a basic rule of material preservation. So we said: we have to start and finish one cassette at most. At the same time, we realized that spending more than three hours conducting an interview was unfeasible. And I would even say that more than 2 hours is unfeasible. I mean, it is very difficult to hold the attention of a person for more than 2 and a half hours because you are not talking about holidays, they are really very tense interviews. So usually the sessions last around 2 hours. But there are much shorter sessions and others that are much longer. There are interviews that are done at one time, and there are others that are done in 4 or 5 sessions.

We try not to make them too long because it is not people’s life story in general, but it is a life story that has as a certain axis. So sometimes they last 3 [or] 4 [sessions]. We have one that last 5 sessions. But [in general they last] 2 [or] 3 [sessions]. If you look at the distribution of the oral archive interviews, there is a big number of interviews that last [2 sessions]. Then there are many that last 1 session. Those can be short interviews with people who tells something very specific or people who don't want to talk, that is, people who answer the interview but don't really want to talk. There is an interview that I did, that when you ask me: what did you do well? What did you do wrong? I always have the feeling that I did everything wrong in that one, because I shouldn't have interviewed that person because she didn't want to be interviewed.

Cecilia: Because the person…

Alejandra: She did not want [to be interviewed]. [But] she didn't dare to say no. She is a mother of a very young girl, of 16 years old, who disappeared in Córdova. At that time, we were building a collection that was about anti-Semitism during the dictatorship, and that was a very emblematic case. A little girl who militated in ... I say little girl, [because she was] a young girl, you can see it in the pictures and ..., [she] was a militant of a Zionist group that at that time had a lot of power in Córdova. And a very large group of militants of that group switched to a political-military organization called ERP. And her case was very emblematic [because] a young girl was kidnapped...

Cecilia: She was 16 years old?

Alejandra: 16 years old. She was in high school. It is a very interesting case for many reasons. So we wanted to interview the mother and we contacted her through a friend, and of course, as a very close person told her to do it she came to meet us. We chatted, and you could tell she wasn't very prepared. She said: ‘I have nothing to say, I did not take care of anything, I was not with the mothers’, but at the same time the trials in Córdova were reopening at that time. So she was starting to connect. So she said yes, and the interview lasted half an hour. I mean, that can happen.

Cecilia: And in any case she [inaudible 35:54:00] … because I was thinking about Pablo's case [inaudible 35:58:00], I had in mind that he was the youngest missing person, and he was 17, 18 years old. The one that Claudio worked [ inaudible 36:06:00], as part of the memory, of the photography installation.

Alejandra: No, this girl was 16. And there is also the son of Floreal and Iris Avellaneda. His name was Floreal, and people called him 'negrito Avellanedo', a boy from the communist party, who was younger.

Cecilia: Even younger.

Alejandra: Much younger, 14, 15 years old.

Cecilia: It is good to known.

Alejandra: They are part of the youngest, of course.

Vikki: Gustavo told me that you have a book, a manual for interviews.

Alejandra: Yes, that is on the Memoria Abierta website, it is a publication called ‘Testimonio y Archivo’, and there is an English version as well. The translation is not very good but it was the only one that could be done. [It was done] by a person who was volunteering, and we fic it it as much as we could. But it is there.

Cecilia: Is this the collection of anti-Semitism during the dictatorship? Is it built? How do you keep it? This is very interesting particularly for the research that I am doing.

Alejandra: Our intention was to build the collection, look for a set of documents. It was the moment when the 'Graiver case' broke out, so everything that had to do with anti-Semitism and dictatorship was sent to the 'Graiver case'. We did a documentary search, that finally became a search in the press and ended up very associated with the 'Graiver case'. So we have the interviews, people can come here to consult them, they are many, they are around twenty interviews.

We have a collection of interviews that were conducted by a researcher that had also started her own research, she published a journalistic book, and this girl passed away. She was a very young woman, and had a health problem, she died and her father donated al the interviews. These are interviews that were not filmed but recorded in audio only, and they are also here. The book is called ‘Los judíos bajo el terror’ and the journalist was called Gabriela Lotersztain. So well, there are the interviews, there is the documentary set that we always look through it. Every so often it appears to me and I say: Something must be done with this because it is press...

Cecilia: That’s great.

Alejandra: It is great.

Cecilia: No, but this is for the curator of the Jewish Museum in London, who is a specialist in this subject, she is coming to do something in relation to the [Argentinian] dictatorship. And she is interested in where do the narratives intersect.

Alejandra: Well, tell her to come and we can work together.

Cecilia: She does not speak Spanish. But it's great.

Alejandra: Please [do it]. Because we also want to do something with that material, so if we could...

Cecilia: Aha, awesome.

Alejandra: It would be great to do something. There are many interviews, and some of them are very good because we manage to work very thoroughly something that is so clear in the Argentine case, but that is not always seen with that clarity that is the fact that the Jewish community in Argentina is very large. I do not know if it is that big, but it is big enough to have different groups, to have a lot of cultural life and within all that cultural life is the most traditional community, but there are also groups closely associated with the communist party.

For example, in Argentina there is a whole group that defends the Yiddish [culture]. So something that this collection does very well is [to explore in how] all those young Jews, many of them coming from Jewish schools, or from community groups of the Jewish community, ended up massively joining left-wing organizations during the 70s. [They joined] montoneros, breaking with the idea that the montoneros were excessively Catholic, in some places they joined montoneros in blocks. And in other places [they joined] the PRT. In the case of Córdova it was the PRT.

So, many of these disappearances did not happen because those persons belonged to Judaism, but because of their militancy. However, during the moment of repression there was an over-determination of the repression because of their status of Jewish. So in that case, those two things come together...

Cecilia: That’s very interesting.

Alejandra: We have that written. We have a written book that we were unable to publish it. It is written and it is there. We have a lot of material, selected material, documents, letters, the work is impressive. We were unable to publish it.

Cecilia: It's incredible. I mean, we have to talk about this. I don't want to take so much time now, but we have to see if there is anything that might interest us.

[Laughs]

Cecilia: It take so much time. Something different… [inaudible 41:51:00]

Oriana: Should we [inaudible 41:53:00]

Vikki: About uses. Yes. Ok.

Alejandra: Well, we already talked a little about the uses. A first type of use is the public consultation. That is, the material is there and people come to see it. And that is a diverse audience: students from all levels, national and foreign researchers. And there are a lot of productions made with the material from the Memoria Abierta oral archive. There is an example that I like it very much, because I really like the product of it, and I like how it worked with the archive, which is Barbara Sutton's book ‘Sobreviviendo al terror’. She worked practically only with interviews from our oral archive. She watched 53 filmed interviews. And I believe that we were the only ones who saw that many interviews before she did. And [people] work very well with that archive.

Then, well, the Museo de la Memoria de Rosario has built its whole history based on the collection of interviews that we did for the museum. So that is another use that is more related to public dissemination promoted by human rights organizations. It is a much wider public dissemination. Well, it is a museum that schools visit, and that is another aspect.

Regarding education there was a very strong point of work with the Ministry of Education, during the management of, I believe it was Daniel Filmus who was in charge of the Ministry of Education, but well, during the 'Kichnerismo' the Ministry of Education began to implement educational programs related to memory. So then, Memoria Abierta retired a bit from the production of materials, because our idea was to never compete with them, but just to fill the gaps. So in 2005 we published a set of CDs, which although it was not so long ago, that technology seems today very old. We published a collection of CDs that I can show you later. They are called ‘De Memoria’, and there were 3 CDs that aimed to be used in the classroom to work on issues that have to do with dictatorship and Human Rights policy in Argentina. Those albums had fragments of interviews and it is a very old material. I was looking at it the other day and it can't even be opened in most of the computers today, because they are CDs. I was at home with the CD and I wanted to extract a fragment of an interview, and I say: 'there is no computer that reads this anymore'.

But well, it was a very revolutionary material, it was the first interactive material that was produced. And recently, we have been asked again to produce resources for education: fragments of interviews, fragments of films, working documents, [and this is] because the Ministry of Education has stopped producing [material]. [The Ministry] produced a lot of material during 10 years, and there is a mass of material that teachers have had available and that are still available for them.

Oriana: Do you know if there is any study that evaluates the use of this material in the classroom?

Alejandra: [An study] of our own material?

Oriana: Of your material or the Ministery's one.

Alejandra: Yes, there are. There are some books. There is a book of which one of the compilers I believe is Sandra Raggio.

Cecilia: Ok.

Alejandra: She works in education issues. And she goes through some of the uses of these materials. The Provincial por la Memoria de la provincia de Buenos Aires has also worked hard in the production of educational materials. Therefore, there were state resources involved. Now they ask us again to do things, to produce materials, to give them fragments of interviews, and we do it all the time.

Art, also. I don’t know. Films have been produced that contain fragments of interviews.

Cecilia: Does that occur once they have [the interviews] available or later? How do you deal with the issue of the rights of the people that have sign a consent to have their material available on the archive?

Alejandra: If you look in the small manual, you will find the consent, so that you do not have to [inaudible 47: 21: 9]. But the basic criterion is that it is a broad permit in which the person cedes all [his material to the institution]. And it has some items in which the person can place some restrictions. The broad [criterion] consist in: 'I cede this interview to Memoria Abierta to be keep, consult, used in educational materials, [used in] dissemination materials of any kind: artistic, academic, or others'. And that includes -we have a lawyer who advised us on this issue- to make a profit from those materials, as long as those resources are used within the institution. It sounds very strange, so sometimes we have to explain it, but for example, if a fragment of an interview is used in a movie, the director of that movie will charge an entrance fee to the people who watch that movie. So it is a way for us of getting completely covered. So that is how it would be in a broad sense. We reviewed it recently because as both media and reproduction of it has changed, the lawyer had to make a very minimal adjustment.

And then people can also place some restrictions, and say: 'I don't want my image to be used in the media'. That is something for which we have many restrictions. There are people who say: 'Yes, [my image] can be used for consultation, it can be use it for educational purposes, it can be quoted anywhere, but not for media.' And well, there are more personal restrictions, for example, people who want something not to be shown.

Oriana: And in the case of art? We were just talking about this issue with some colleagues. How far is it possible to quote [something]? Because there may be people who make literal uses of the material: 'I grab this piece of interview and I put it in the documentary'. But if we are thinking about fiction literature for example, then, there is a cross between the use and the appropriation of the material, and the appearance of something new. How traceable is that appearance of the material in...?

Alejandra: It is not traceable, and I love it that way. I mean, there are people who have consulted the oral archive interviews and used them literally, and they do not quote and it is perfect.

Oriana: And in visual art.

Alejandra: Also.

Oriana: In other words, they are like inspirations or something like that, but it's hard to...

Alejandra: Yes, there are some people who tell us, that we know it, that we recognize it. Remo Bianchedi, who is a painter, was watching some of our interviews and made a series of paintings.

Vikki: Do you have an example? For example, do you have a favourite movie that has used the files? Or [an example of] visual art?

Alejandra: Well, in visual art there is a series of paintings that Remo Bianchedi made in recent years, which were made after he listened the interviews, and for him it is a reference. Regarding movies, I couldn't choose a favourite one [silence]. That is a very difficult question because everything that has to do with artistic expressions just goes away from the literal quotation. So no, I don't know, I wouldn't know how to answer you that.

Cecilia: We have a question that is difficult to answer. From your experience working in Memoria Abierta from 2005 until now, if you had to say what things you would do in the same way. [And] three things or two things you would do...

Alejandra: Different, yes.

Cecilia: Especially thinking about making a report that can be used in other places where other teams are working on the recovery of archives and testimonies of missing persons. Thinking of something that can be repeated.

Alejandra: I think that what we would do in the same way, and that surely has different parts, is the way in which we build the testimonies. That is, the way in which we work to get to the interview and the interview itself. That sums up many things, but that would be what we would do in the same way.

What I would do differently, and what we are trying to do differently now, is to work the cataloguing system differently, which is cumbersome and time consuming. So what we were thinking now is, for example, to focus on more specific issues when preparing the summaries of the interview synthesis. There, I strongly advise focusing on more specific issues. Making 'more synthetic syntheses' to put it in some way, and work on the basis of keywords and blocks of ideas rather than an extensive synthesis. That would be something I would review.

And the other thing I would review (and these are things that come to my mind now, I'm not killing myself to answer your question) would be to work harder on the issue of dissemination. [We need] to find a way to achieve the balance between the material being preserved and adequately protected as it is taken care of now, and at the same time to find a way of producing pieces that allow us to spread to wider audiences the job that we do here.

It seems to me that those are the two things that an archive should consider. And surely there are other things that I don't know.

[Laughs]

Oriana: Do you have any record of these uses in art?

Alejandra: We have a public consultation record but it is not very systematized. It is a…

Oriana: Where it appears ...

Alejandra: At some point we carried it forward...

Oriana: Something we could see, something like...

Alejandra: No. We had one at some point. I mean, we have a public consultation record. Of course that all the people who come here to consult something, fill out a form and we see what they saw. And then, what we were doing was to ask people to give us a copy of the article they wrote, or the movie they made, but...

Oriana: People do it if they want to.

Alejandra: People do it if they want to.

Oriana: But what if the person ...

Alejandra: It is not systematized.

Oriana: But it's here.

Alejandra: Yes, but it is not systematized. It is not accessible to the public. We can't ... There is infinite amount of things we don't do, that's what [happens]... We do some things, and we do them quite rigorously and quite well. And then there are infinite amount of other things we don't do. Memoria Abierta is a very small institution. Well, I don't know if very small.

Vikki: How many people work here?

Alejandra: We are 15 people currently working here. And the Archivo Oral team has also been changing over time. We just had a turnover of staff that took a very long time to get done. So we never have enough human resources to do everything we know we have to do. That is a pending issue and we are worried because we lose the trail, but well, we have no way to do it. In recent years there was no way to systematize that.

Jaime: Excuse me, where do Memoria Abierta resources come from?

Alejandra: They come mostly from international cooperation, and some come from national projects, but very few comes from the latest. It is basically international cooperation.

Jaime: There are no public resources.

Alejandra: No, only public resources by contest. As I said, we have had some projects linked to national money but that came exclusively from contests. Contests in which we compete with...

Jaime: And, I imagine that international cooperation is ...

Alejandra: Yes, it is fluctuating.

Jaime: There can be a lot...

Alejandra: There is always little or zero [resources]. There is never much. It is a problem to sustain an institution like this one, but not relying on state resources was a decision taken by the board of directors from the outset. We don't depend on resources of any kind. I mean 'to depend' in the sense of having a dependency relationship. It is a civil association, so it has the format of 'Asociación civil Memoria Abierta', which provides it autonomy. Then we owe no explanations to anyone.

This table is where the board of directors meets, which are human rights organizations. So this table has witnessed major battles [Laughter]. Memoria Abierta is an institution of the human rights organizations. It is a research centre, it is a documentation centre, it is a production plant of materials, but it has its main link with the human rights organizations. We are deepening links with some universities as well. But the Argentine public university has very few resources too, so resources from there will not come either.

Jaime: But there are human resources that can be shared.

Alejandra: Yes, that can be shared, yes.

Cecilia: Great.

Vikki: Another question?

Oriana: You don't have interns for example? Or thesis student?

Alejandra: We do have some to work on some specific issues. But not to work on oral archive, definitely not. This is because it takes a very long time to train an interviewer.

Oriana: No, but for the archive.

Alejandra: Yes, for some of those things, we have had in the past.

Oriana: Or to do research, to help in...

Alejandra: Yes, we have had interns. We have had interns for the photographic archive, for example, for cataloguing the photographic archive. They have not been very successful, and it gives us a lot of work too. You have to have someone to organize the work of the interns. And we have had people who have done very interesting jobs, but it is not something that frequently happens.

Cecilia: Great, very good.

Vikki: Thanks Alejandra.

Alejandra: No, please.

Cecilia: I'm checking if you have the same email.

Alejandra: Yes.

Cecilia: I kept thinking about all this work that has been done with the interviews of relatives of Jews, because it seems to me that there is something very... The person I was telling you about is coming to do a workshop in Parque de la Memoria, and she is the curator of the Jewish Museum in London. She is a person who has obviously worked a lot on the subject. She has just launch an exhibition about Judaism and money, and the myths in relation to this. And she is coming in November to give a workshop in the Park. We have been working on the idea of blood, because she made a first exhibition in Poland that was also about blood. And for me always the issue of blood in Argentina post-dictatorship and the story of the blood, the DNA, the genetic, and also how to do the performance of the blood has always been very present. For me it has always been...

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