

Walking Away: Alternative Practices in South America Southern Cone in The 1960's and Their Legacy

The 1960s were brutal and creative times in South America on all cultural fronts. In response to Modernism's evolution into an unresponsive and strict formalism, and the quasi-official style of national developmentalism, a new generation of alienated architects engaged in innovative Design-Build practices that acknowledged the intense and evolving social and political context, and challenged the existing canon by distancing themselves from the disciplinary center.

INTRODUCTION

Post-Brasilia was an intense revisionist period in South America's Southern Cone. In a region where Modernism had represented the aspirations of the most enlightened intelligentsia factions - even managing, as in Brazil, to rise to a national style and embodiment of the country's developmentalist politics - the context of crisis within the architectural modern movement (the end of CIAM, Le Corbusier's Brutalism, Team X rise) and the brutal circumstances involved in the construction of Brasilia and other large emblematic projects generated profound questioning of the ideological and formalistic rigidity that had become dogma. At the same time, the Cold War scenario fueled a brutal dictatorial wave - largely promoted by the United States - which swept most countries in the region in reaction to the impact of the Cuban revolution. Modernity's promise of the spiritual liberation of humanity began to feel largely unfulfilled.

In this context of increasing restrictions of freedoms, a series of alternative cultural experiments sprouted on many fronts. In architecture, there were some notable cases that shared a will to 'walk away,' distancing themselves from the traditional disciplinary center. This took many forms. In Sao Paulo, the *Arquitetura Nova* group in its search for a "poetic economy" claimed that *o canteiro e o desenho* [the work site is the design], where all relations of production come to be resolved. Further south, *La Comunidad Tierra*, a collective led by Claudio Caveri, exiled itself to the periphery of Buenos Aires, aiming "to leave the vitrine and place oneself where both Argentinas meet," to focus on engaging reality as opposed to analyzing it. On the other coast, a dissident community of architects and writers converged in Valparaíso, Chile, giving birth to the so-called School of Valparaíso and its communal testing site: *Ciudad Abierta* or Open City, an educational experiment that linked

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1

architecture with poetry as the point of departure for a new architectural poetics and the “change of life.” These precedents set up the conditions for the rise of a new consolidated aesthetic and ideological paradigm that would be continued in other regional enclaves, despite repressive political conditions that sought to suppress its development. On this topic Chilean historian Fernando Pérez Oyarzún notes:

During the 1960s a new sensitivity to modern architecture brought the opportunity to crystallize modernism in relation to established cultural forms. This attitude was not merely focused on adapting forms and ideas to the local conditions, but had the more ambitious aim of questioning modernism’s central orientation and tenets.¹

Today Latin America presents innovative examples of urban renewal, public architecture, and slum upgrading. I argue that this is a consequence of an epistemological break that started in the 1960s. The traditional historiographical approach has been to consider South American cultural production in relation to the disciplinary discussion in hegemonic countries of *El Norte* (mainly Europe and to a lesser degree, despite the economic and political dependence, the United States). I consider that the regional modern architecture crisis, though benefiting from the post-CIAM X state, responds more to the immediate contextual circumstances and its own modern tradition than to external disciplinary discussions.

I will present these three cases – *Arquitetura Nova*, *La Comunidad Tierra* and the Valparaíso School - as examples of a *fuga* [flight] or escape, a voluntary exile into either the realities of the working site, the urban periphery, or collective poetic acts. I will further argue that in the democratic context of the last decade their legacy will establish *otra* relation between theory and practice, between architecture’s social dimension and commitment, and its role in society’s welfare. This legacy has been claimed by a new generation of young practitioners that have been sprouting and extending across the subcontinent through design-and-build collective practices. Meanwhile, new academic models are rising, such *La Escuela de Talca* (Universidad de Talca, Chile, an emergent architectural program) that would update Valparaíso’s legacy with a clear social mandate, most notably through the required design-and-build graduation theses that have begun to populate the school’s surrounding communities and landscape.

Figure 1: João Vilanova Artigas, *Faculty of Architecture & Urbanism, University of Sao Paulo (FAU / USP)*, 1961-69. Photo: Jose Moscardi

THE POLITICS OF THE WORKING SITE

"A false crisis,"² stated João Vilanova Artigas - São Paulo's Brutalism architectural priest - in response to the questioning of the national modernist agenda brought forward by a small group of former disciples through a series of texts and articles.³ The dissidents were *Arquitetura Nova*, a radical group formed by Sergio Ferro, Flavio Imperio and Rodrigo Lefèvre, who met while studying architecture and were drafted to assist in Brasília's construction frenzy. Originally brought up under the FAU/USP (Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Universidade do São Paulo) functionalist credo and the top-down developmentalism directives of the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party), to which most of the architectural intelligentsia belonged (Oscar Niemeyer and João Vilanova Artigas included), the Nova architects committed themselves to developing a profound critic of the modern canon. Through a series of acts and strategies they sought to dismantle the 'efficiency' of the modern architecture apparatus and democratize access to architecture as the design and build process itself.⁴

In Brazil in the 1960s, there was a change of the central stage, from Rio de Janeiro to São Paulo, and of formal agenda, from the Carioca sensual formalism to the Paulista righteous Brutalism. This so called 'Paulista School,' under the tutelary figure of João Vilanova Artigas, proposed a highly formalized design tendency that took concrete, structural clarity as one of the main arguments of its strict formalism. Its "moral constructivism" saw the working site as a didactic "laboratory of sophisticated technical solutions" where the limits of the country's available technology were stretched aiming to achieve the level of developed countries.⁵

Arquitetura Nova challenged such modernist impulses as unsustainable and ineffective at addressing everyday architecture, accusing it of transforming small architectural projects into laboratories of technical and building experiences that could not be justified in the context of underdevelopment where these techniques and technologies were being developed. The group was profoundly impacted by working conditions present during the four-year high-speed construction of the new capital city - one of the most brutal working sites in history. Nova reflected that this produced only contradictions to the "monstrous promises" of Brazilian modernization at an unprecedented scale.⁶ They argued that the alienation of labor at the working site was implicit in architecture's top-down approach and its ordering instrument: the executive project. Sergio Ferro equated this social division of labor to the division of society into classes with the worker at the base.⁷



2

Figure 2: Rodrigo Lefèvre and Nestor Goulart Reis Filho. *Pery Campus House*, Sao Paulo, 1970. Photo: Acervo Lefèvre FAU/USP.

But functionalism's own logic, expanded by the circumstances, contains within itself the seeds of authoritarianism... It classifies, separates, fixes categories (the "functions") that appear adequate themselves. What it is not rational, however, is this fixation, this separation, which isolates the movements of life and stiffens any integration.⁸

They extrapolated this authoritarian spirit linking the new capital construction with the 1964 *coup d'état*. Sergio Ferro, who went on to suggest that there was an anti-union agenda within modernism, said in an interview:

The 1964 rupture is always mentioned as the moment when violence is installed. However it is necessary not to forget that this violence was already in Brasilia's construction sites... In architecture, the strengthening of the authoritarian dimension favored risk development, but in other sense; that of the [gestural] trace, of the hand that commands, of the arbitrariness of its own movement that, by power of will, wants to impose what, in reality, already have started to fade. In my view, this need of an authoritarian pole, demanded by the urgency of accumulation of capital, was what led Brasilia's still disguisable violence to not be able to be hidden [anymore] after the dictatorship. The social revendication movements and their struggle were becoming stronger and the bascule [sic], the shift, demanded blatantly that latent violence to appear more clearly. That transition happened between the end of Brasilia and the start of the dictatorship.⁹

In his essay, *O desenho e o canteiro* [the work site is the design], Sergio Ferro denounced architects as enablers of the status quo, of consolidating capital: a labor dominant relationship. *Arquitetura Nova* or "New Architecture," in an echo of Ernesto Che Guevara's call for a "New Man," called for architects to step down from their professional, privileged position to the *canteiro* [work site]. This displacement was aimed at provoking a change of consciousness, ideologically speaking, from individualism to integration with the masses, unselfish and in solidarity, as a first step towards a new society. A new architecture to engender a new man.

Arquitetura Nova proposed an architecture as a social and highly political practice, born within the existing technical limits and material constraints, and as a rational agency for the optimization of popular building knowledge into new construction and production systems that could potentially be applied at a large scale. This mandated an alternative organization of labor aimed at restituting the integrity of physical labor and technical knowledge into a collective methodology. Their approach was described as a "poetics of economy" targeted to formulate a new language based on "the useful minimum, the built minimum and the didactical minimum."¹⁰ An aesthetic of poverty.

The Paulista reaction was not isolated from similar critiques to the national modernist and developmentalist cannon on other cultural fronts: notably filmmaker Glauber Rocha's *Estética da Fome* [Aesthetic of Hunger]; Augusto Boal's *Teatro do Oprimido* [Theater of the Oppressed]; Paulo Freire's *Pedagogia do Oprimido* [Pedagogy of the Oppressed]; and *Tropicalismo's* multiple faces in music and visual arts. These collective reactions demonstrated widespread attitudes that were instrumental in inciting not only *Arquitetura Nova's* experiments, but those across the Southern Cone.



3

INLAND EXILE

In the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentinean architect Claudio Caveri also started distancing himself from the center. Caveri was known at the time as the leading representative and ideologue of the Casa Blanquismo, a loose architectural collective that articulated a critical position of Argentinean Modernism and late 1950s developmentalism by “developing a resistance to metropolitan hegemony on one side and, on the other, an affection for manipulations of archaic traditional forms, from which they found possible to formulate a domestic aesthetic and productive ethic based on an affirmation of craftsmanship.”¹¹

Las Casas Blancas attempted to root themselves to their geographical space “with a definition that made emphasis on scale, materials and local techniques, lifestyles and other principles alien to the ‘international style’ principles.”¹² Stylistically, this could be referenced to (late) Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto (notably to Säynätsalo), but also to local practitioners such as Antonio Bonet and Eduardo Sacriste, and the colonial architecture of northwestern Argentina. It was an austere architecture of humanist ambitions. Its influence, however, seemed restricted to the domestic scale and occasional religious commission - as seen in its most emblematic work, the Fátima Church (1957) by Caveri and Eduardo Ellis.

In 1958, Caveri and a group of colleagues consisting of architects, artists, artisans and educators, as well as their families, initiated a small settlement, *La Comunidad Tierra* - a utopian residential commune - in the Moreno locality. It was similar in spirit to other contemporary experiences, such as *Ciudad Abierta* (Valparaíso, Chile) by the Amereida Cooperative, Arcosanti by Paolo Soleri, or even Taliesin West by F.L. Wright - who Caveri identified as the “foundational American architect.”¹³

Caveri’s ideas were influenced by Americanistas thinkers such as Rodolfo Kusch and Arturo Juaretche, the new Catholic mandate emerging from Vatican II Council, and counterculture influences such as non-violent practice promoted by Gandhi’s disciple Lanza del Vasto and its Arca Community in France. Caveri called for architecture as countercultural practice ‘inserted in the reality, rather than interpreting it.’¹⁴ While other schools of thought presented themselves as the natural progression of architecture’s modern movement, discarding its aesthetic formalism but still ascribing to its lineage, *La Comunidad Tierra* rejected it as a totalizing scheme. I would argue that *La Comunidad*’s enterprise could be better understood as Christian

Figure 3: *La Comunidad Tierra*, Moreno, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina, circa 1963. Photo: author unknown

political-activist commitment in consonance with Liberation Theology's 'option for the poor,' in times where a generation of priests - moving from 'orthodoxy' to 'orthopraxis' - inserted themselves into the core of the slums and championed community based activism.

If the so-called *Comunidad Tierra* had and [still] has a meaning, it was to have been and [still] be an experience in a frontier zone. Today it can be confirmed that it is challenging the paradisiac utopia myth, because it was not searching for an alienated isolation (*entfremdung*) but, on the contrary, distancing (*entfernung*) from the dominant culture center, displacing [itself] to the Great Buenos Aires' second ring, to the battlefield between "Latin America and the civilizatory model."¹⁵

This voluntary *exilio interno* [internal exile] places them in a "position clearly anti-avant-garde and anti-cosmopolitan," as J.M. Montaner has noted. He further argued that:

La Comunidad Tierra has to do with a volition for leaving behind the struggles, competitions, and ambitions of Western society. It aims to found a new American society that places "*el estar*" [to be in a place], to live, experience and solidarity – that should be characteristics of the Latin American [way of] living-- above "*el ser*" [being], power, having and appearance – individualism's essential engine fomented by European rooted Western capitalism. For Caveri, politics has failed as reformist instrument for humanity. The key to man's regeneration and salvation goes through the dissolution of power, not by its apologia. In opposition to Western Marxism objectivation of the revolution, there is a defense of individual freedom and creativity of Eastern rooted anarchism.¹⁶

Aside from the Design-Build experience of the settlement itself as pedagogical example and experience, La Comunidad Tierra accomplished two other remarkable achievements: the establishment of the *Escuela Técnica Integral Trujui* (ETIT), a secondary school that graduated students as maestro mayor de obra (certified master builders); and the *Programa Olmos* (1989) an experimental incarceration program where young offenders participated in the design and construction of their own jail.¹⁷

The *Comunidad* presence in Moreno has had a slow but steady influence in the district and surrounding communities. In the material sense, the community opted for low-tech solutions that could be easily demonstrated and transferred, such as an extensive use of Ferrocement shells that can allow for simple formal experiments such as the hobbit-like constructions, which the locals nicknamed *las casitas raras* [the little weird houses]. Also, they learned and accepted methodologies in the context of the urban outskirts where economic resources were scarce and formal education limited; they absorbed the notion that buildings and occupations were intertwined and that buildings were built over an extended period of time. A standard example is of a core basic shelter that is built first, which allows the occupant/builder family unit to move in, and only later, incrementally, other cells are built as more resources (material and/or time) become available. These self-built processes led to the organization of 'sweat-equity' strategies that served as an organizational and political empowerment tools.

BUILDING POEMS

On the other side of the Southern Cone, in Valparaíso, Chile, another architectural experiment had been taking place: the so-called *Escuela de Valparaíso* [Valparaíso School]. From the early 1950s, Chilean architect Alberto Cruz Covarrubias and

Argentinean poet Godofredo Iommi, joined by a collective of poets, artists and architects, worked to reshape architectural pedagogy at the Catholic University of Valparaíso. They focused an innovative agenda on linking architecture with poetry, particularly to the modern French poets – *les poètes maudits* – and the Surrealists, notably Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé and Breton. They empathized with their rejection of literature as a commodity and the claiming of it as transcendental activity whose objective was to question and alter language itself through ‘poetic acts’ aimed at unraveling the connection between aspects of the interior and exterior world and the unconscious mind. Within this frame, the poem became a by-product of the experience or event.¹⁸ The Valparaíso School searched for an architecture born out of a similar spirit.

La Escuela de Valparaíso understood the processes of building, construction and fabrication as the foundation for a new architectural poetics radically challenging the traditional pedagogical scenario, reclaiming architecture’s social role and assuming the territorial landscape (both physical and mythical) as an experimental and performance ground. In order to achieve this program they relied on a series of interconnected pedagogical devices. First was the prominent role of the word and the poetic act that became most evident through the so-called *phalène*, a performance of poetry aiming to cause the “changing of life.” Originally a poetry recital, it evolved into a collective act of creation that could include words, texts, physical performance and group games. Among these we can recognize aspects of the second device, *la ronda* [a way of utilizing traditional communal work practices that also holds a ritualistic component], work *en ronda*, construction in *en ronda*:

A collective and changing way of working, through which the group teaches, researches, designs and builds.¹⁹

A collective and dialogic design style [way], outside the traditional individualistic subjectivism.²⁰

... [a] project co-operation which could manifest itself at several levels: from the possibility of contributing ideas or observations, in dialogue form, to working collectively on a project starting from relatively independent fragments developed by different architects.²¹

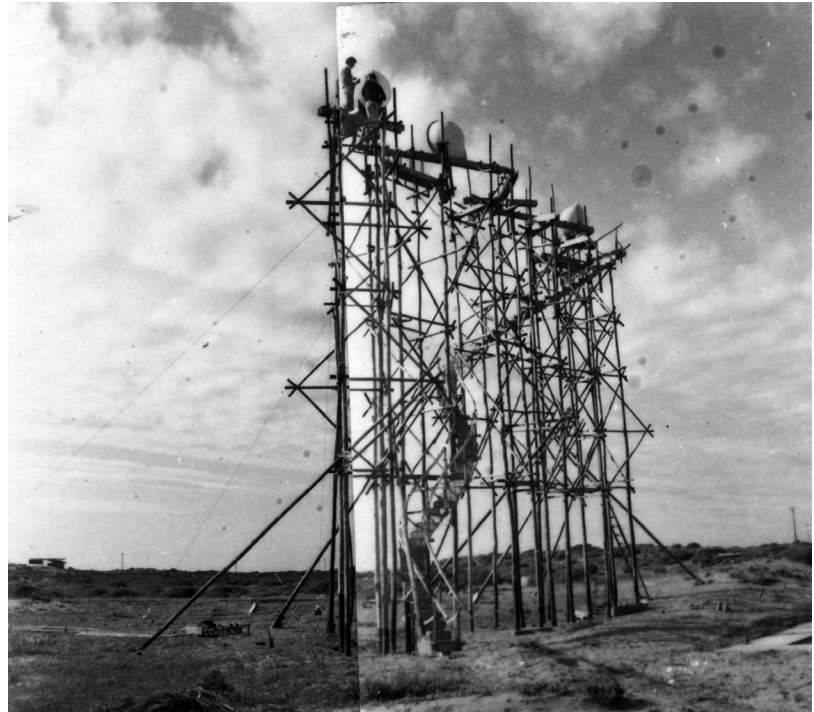
Another component was the program of *travesías*, an architectural and performatic pilgrimage/journey/crossing that involved traveling and the construction of proto-architectural structures. I consider that, in consonance with the university’s confessional mandate, there is profound Catholic ethos from which one could derive parallels to pilgrimage, renunciation, poverty and compassion. These voyages, *travesías*, were aimed at exploring the ‘interior sea’ of South America, the less developed and urbanized inland region, a contrast to the current, coastal, colonial development. There was an intention to rediscover and poetically reclaim South America’s identity through one’s own experience. *Travesías* include a built component, which began initially with small marks or construction gestures, though they progressed into more substantial projects. These gestures aimed to poetically mark the territory as a way to reclaim it for architecture, but also strove to know the territory through making and operating on it, searching for a physical engagement with landscape.

Eventually, the plan progressed until the founding in 1970 of *Ciudad Abierta* [Open City], a living community and academic testing-ground located in Ritoque, a small coastal village 50 kilometers from Valparaíso. There the ascription to the temporality of the construction process was further supported by renewed sense of frugality. The resulting built form was, in most cases, considered a by-product that sought

no interpretation - to 'be there' seemed enough. As the poem was for French modernists, the building became an indexical signifier of a larger affective operation aimed to relink architecture with life. Rather than prove an internal formal logic, the constructions acted as collective *improntas* [markings] that make evident the phenomenological experience of building both shelter and community.

TAKING DISTANCE

The response to the failure of mid-twentieth century modernity's promise to be the spiritual liberation of humanity was the previously described experiences and their occasionally quasi-ritualistic experiments. Its detractors shared a will for a *volver a no saber* [return to not knowing] status, aimed at operating in the internal world of each participant and the collective in which he or she takes part.²²



They embraced and furthered their peripheral condition as an asset to build upon. Their voluntary exile could be understood as a more expanded definition of *travesía* to encompass not just Valparaíso's poetical journeys, but also the voluntary exile to the urban or regional periphery. Similarly, programmatic commitment to making and the *obrador* or *canteiro* [work-site] politics, placed them outside the professional model of the architect as an omniscient but distant expert. Some promoted programs akin to a trade school or labor union approach and called for a direct, sometimes activist, engagement with material and fully contextualized reality. Site, more than an ideological platform, was considered a contested and politically charged territory. The manner of *working en ronda* with traditional communal work practices (such as the *minga* in the Andean communities, or the *mutirão* in Brazil, etc.) unravels the architect's inherently public vocation, beyond an internal dialogic design method, to coordinate resources and labor, and the empathic need to verify its impact in the immediate surrounding community.

Several authors, notably Pedro Fiori Arantes, have examined the link between *Arquitetura Nova* and the contemporary *Movimentos de Moradia* [pro-housing movements], better known as *Mutirões*. *Mutirão*, whose etymological origin is the

Figure 4: Valparaíso School. *Water Tanks at Open City [Ciudad Abierta]*, Ritoque, Chile 1970: Photo: Archivo Histórico José Vial

Tupi word *motyrõ* (work in commons), could refer to any collective initiative where labor is contributed without monetary compensation, but was originally identified with the construction of popular housing. These are self-managed mutual-aid organized groups that rose in Sao Paulo in the 1980s due to the failure of housing policy, during the process of re-democratization following the dictatorship. The pressure of the diverse popular action groups and changes in the new constitution, in regards to municipal competencies, opened the way for a series of innovations exploring how the need for affordable housing could be addressed.²³

Built upon the history and practice of local base communities and the Uruguayan housing cooperatives' experience, the *mutirões* became public policy with the election of a democratic and popular local government in 1989. The government financed the popular housing built by *mutirão*, however the resources and the entire construction process is managed by the community, with technical assistance of experts – the so-called *assessorias*. They have been able to raise the standard of subsidized housing with a diversity of projects and building methods. In a World Bank report, Imporato and Ruster noted that these *assessorias* are one of “the most innovative and promising features São Paulo’s *mutirão* programs.”

They are basically groups of professionals—architects, planners, engineers, social workers—that are organized as NGOs but operate more like small consulting firms. They have to go through a screening process to be included in the rosters maintained by the municipality and the Housing and Urban Development Company of the State of São Paulo (CDHU). Once they are part of the roster, they may start to compete for business. The key feature of the process is that the decision on which assessoria to hire is made by the housing associations, not by the project sponsors. Therefore, although they are also accountable to CDHU or municipality technical supervisors, the *assessorias*' clients are actually the community groups.²⁴

Many of these teams of socially-committed architects came from critical pedagogical initiatives developed by Lefèvre, Imperio and Ferro as educators at the FAU/USP.

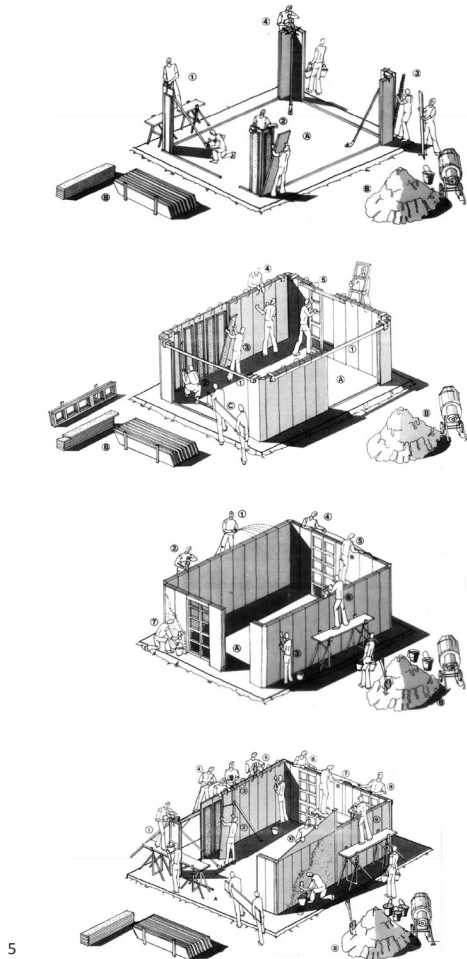
The *Casablanquismo* stylistic legacy is undeniable at the level of everyday residential architecture and could be clearly noted in any Argentinean middle-class suburban district. Argentine critic Alberto Petrina wrote in 2003 that it was “the major contribution of the second half of the twentieth century in the searching of an architectonic expression of [Argentine] national affirmation” and while recognizing Claudio Caveri as “one of the rare creators among us that deserve such name and one of the few really brilliant theorist that Argentinean architecture has today.”²⁵ Caveri, who died in 2011, paid dearly for his unrelenting commitment. His work was looked down on, and he received personal condescendence by the high-modernism oriented national intelligentsia. However, in recent years, in a more favorable political climate – he was declared *Peronista*, a supporter of Juan Domingo Peron and his political movement (currently in government) – his work has started to resurface and gain recognition.

Among his increasing influence, I would note two key contributions by Claudio Caveri. First, his affirmative adscription to *mestizaje* [cultural and racial mixture] as the foundational condition of the Americas. In a country such as Argentina, perpetually torn by the opposition between “civilization or barbarism,” as described by nineteenth century writer and president Faustino Sarmiento,²⁶ Caveri’s acceptance and promotion of this bastard condition as its natural status it is liberating. Also critical was the establishment of hands-on material research tradition, particularly oriented to the development of new building systems developed for self-built, affordable housing.

ENDNOTES

Unless otherwise indicated all Portuguese and Spanish translations are mine.

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4. Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till. *Spatial Agency. Other ways of doing architecture*. (London / New York: Routledge, 2011), 148.
5. Ana Paula Koury, *Grupo Arquitetura Nova: Flavio Imperio, Rodrigo Lefevre e Sergio Ferro* (Sao Paulo: Romano Guerra / USP / FAPESP, 2003), 53.
6. Sergio Ferro, “Brasília, Lucio Costa e Oscar Niemeyer,” in *Arquitetura e Trabalho Livre*, edited by Pedro Fiori Arantes (Sao Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2006), 305-318. Interview conducted by Geraldo Motta Filho, Ghillerme Wisnik and Pedro Fiori Arantes, and revised by S. Ferro. It was partially published in *O Risco: Lucio Costa e a Utopia Moderna*, edited by G. Wisnik (Rio de Janeiro: Bang Bang Filmes, 2003).
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8. Ferro, “Brasília, Lucio Costa e Oscar Niemeyer” (Note 6), 308
9. Ferro, *Ibid.*, 312.
10. Koury, *Grupo Arquitetura Nova: Flavio Imperio, Rodrigo Lefèvre e Sergio Ferro* (note 5), 61.
11. Roberto Fernandez, *Inteligencia Proyectual: Un Manual de Investigación en Arquitectura* (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2013), 217.
12. Ramón Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura y urbanismo en Iberoamérica* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2002), 653.
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14. Claudio Caveri, *Mirar desde aquí, o la visión oscura de la arquitectura* (Buenos Aires: SynTaxis, 2001).
15. Caveri, *Ibid.*, 78.
16. Josep Maria Montaner, *Arquitectura y crítica en Latinoamérica* (Buenos Aires: Nobuko, 2011), 95.
17. Carlos Firvida, “Arquitectura Penitenciaria”. Text insert in “Un estado de excepción permanente: Cárcels Argentinas”, by Martín Losada, *Le Monde Diplomatique / Edición Cono Sur, #95 / May 2007*. Accessed June 22, 2014 <http://www.insumisos.com/diplo/NODE/1572.HTM#1574>.
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5

Figure 5: Centro Experimental de la Vivienda Económica (CEVE). BENO prefab panel system. Graphics: CEVE/AVE

These strategies were not only explored at *La Comunidad Tierra* but, perhaps more systematically, by research collectives lead by other former *casablanquistas* such as Horacio Beretta and C.E.V.E. (*Centro Experimental para la Vivienda Económica*) in Córdoba, or Víctor Pelli and IIDVI/UNNE (*Instituto para la Investigación de la Vivienda/Universidad Nacional del Nordeste*) in Resistencia, who developed and patented several open building systems, most notably the BENO (CEVE) and UNNE-UNO (IIDVI) systems, which could be easily transferred and appropriated by other sweat-equity organizations and have been widely adopted and readapted.

The Valparaíso School's influence is very strong today, even outside Chile. Aside from the impact on a new generation of practitioners, I would like to point to its influence in education, in particular the *Escuela de Talca*, a new architectural school that focuses on Valparaíso's legacy of a socially sustainable commitment to local development. The School of Architecture at the University of Talca was founded in 1999. Talca is small city of two hundred thousand people, located in Chile's Central Valley, between the cities of Santiago and Concepción. It is an agricultural region considered one of the poorest of the country. A former Talca student, J. L. Uribe, has noted the social and economic context from which the school aims to educate students from low-income families, poor secondary education, and minor social capital. He also describes the singular architectural landscape 'narrative' of the valley defined by vernacular utilitarian constructions (small warehouses, chicken coops, cellars, canopies, etc).²⁷ These are buildings of low technology and cost that nonetheless defined a singular iconography that has shaped the imagination of the people, of their memory and identity.

Juan Román Pérez, founder and Dean of the school during its first ten years, embraced this "provincial" condition, making clear that "where and whom" they were teaching were the foundations that defined a "particular way of doing." They felt obligated to ensure that the school's graduates could perform the role that society expects from them – the designing of buildings – as well be able to to earn a decent living wage. Building upon students' practical knowledge, they started by focusing on materiality more than spatial constructs, promoted an architectural notion that goes from the "territory to the detail" where context was not a backdrop for the architectural object but its main engine, and instilled a disciplinary ethos where any commission, regardless of scale and purpose, should be considered a major work.²⁸

Starting from the students' familiarity and sensibility with local materials, the curriculum describes an educational trajectory. It starts from the *Cubo de Materia* [Cube of Matter], a series of exploratory exercises with local/found materials for the purpose of having the students 'haptically' reflect upon their own people, landscape and matter. Toward the end of their education, these explorations would evolve in the development of an *Obra de Título* [Graduation Project], a final requirement where the students must design, manage and build a 'real project.' Since 2004, under the motto *10 metros cuadrados de algo en alguna parte* [10 square meters of something, somewhere], dozens of small and humble but ambitious structures have started to populate the valley's landscape. They have ranged from utilitarian problem-solving projects to conceptual process-based experiments. Even though most projects have a single author, they are collective not just in spirit but in the process of design and development where students may assist each other. The management, procurement and construction procedures and negotiations with local communities, leaders, suppliers and (small scale) labor reflects this collective desire as well.



6

Finally, these were not avant-garde moves in the traditional radical sense. As recent left-revisionist strategies (i.e. Mexican Zapatismo, landless movements, worker-run factories), these were not revolutionaries that sought to overthrow and take power but to develop parallel strategies and spaces of freedom for development and empowerment in the context in which they were inserted and given their *raison d'être*. This stepping aside did not provide a safe ideological position; on the contrary, they were often criticized from both extremes of the political spectrum for either buffering and muffling or inciting and organizing the discontent.

These experiences, born within Modern architecture's folds, aimed to fulfill its promise while questioning the modern dialectic opposition between theory and practice. The question (and affirmation) addressed is if *otro futuro* [another future] could be possible.

Figure 6: Rodrigo Sheward, *Parador-Mirador at Pinohuacho* (Graduation Project, Escuela de Talca), Villarrica, Chile, 2006. Photo: R. Sheward.

19. Rodrigo Pérez de Arce and Fernando Pérez Oyarzún. *Valparaiso School: Open City Group*, edited by Raul Ripa (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 2003), 166.
20. Fernández, *Inteligencia Proyectual*, 126.
21. Pérez de Arce and Pérez Oyarzún, *Valparaiso School: Open City Group* (note 19), 11.
22. Pendleton-Julian, *The Road that is not a Road and the Open City*, 69. Also Perez de Arce and Perez Oyarzún, *Valparaiso School*, 58.
23. Evaniza Rodrigues, Leonardo Pessina, and União dos Movimentos de Moradia (UMM). *Self-managed Mutual-Aid Groups: Mutirões in São Paulo*. January 1, 2006. <http://www.hic-net.org/document.php?pid=2832> (accessed July 27, 2014).
24. Ivo Imparato and Jeff Ruster. *Slum Upgrading and Participation: Lessons from Latin America* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2003), 93.
25. Petrina, "Americanismo, Mestizaje y Mito en el Pensamiento de Caveri" (note 13), 93.
26. Domingo F. Sarmiento develops this thesis in his 1845 book *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie* (Madrid: Catedra, 2001, 5th edition). For English translation see: D.F Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*, translated by Kathleen Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)
27. Juan Luis Uribe Ortiz. "La Escuela de Arquitectura de la Universidad de Talca: Un Modelo de Educación" in *dearq. 9, Issue: Educación en Arquitectura* (Bogota: Universidad de los Andes, December 2011): 62-73. See also "Un imaginario de escuela" in *TALCA. Una Cuestión de Educación*, edited by J. L. Ortiz Uribe (Mexico DF: Arquine, 2013), 29-35.
28. Juan Roman Perez. "Donde enseño arquitectura", in *Revista ARQ # 61, Issue: La Profesion* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones ARQ, December 2005), 19-20 and 23-24.