BETWEEN SEA, MOUNTAIN AND IRIS FROM AROUND THE WORLD: AN APPROACH TO THE USHUAIA PRISON MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT
"Los invitamos a caminar por los pasillos estrechos, asomarse a las celdas para imaginar cómo habría sido la vida en la cárcel". This is an invitation to Ushuaia Museo Prison (Argentina) on its website. Inaugurated in 1902 and transferred from San Juan del Salvamento’s military prison, Ushuaia’s prison has a long trajectory. It is currently part of a historical, cultural, and tourist arena in the city just for being a museum. Documentaries and books in Argentina as well as their characteristics imply a certain correlation between tourism and this place. Coming from an old trial prison to become a museological and tourist place, it revitalizes memory. What were the necessary arrangements for such change? This article presents a correlation between two main events: the deactivation of the prison and the new function as a museum.

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Prison; memory; museum; culture; art.
In August 2019, I included a new activity on my schedule for my research paper. Months after, I was taken to The End of the World because of that. Between planning my visit and arriving at Ushuaia, the last city in Argentina, also known as the southernmost city, on 15 of October of 2019, it was turning a hundred and thirty-five years old. On the same day, the city’s website had announced: “Ushuaia was born between the ocean and the mountains, and today the world recognizes it as one of the most beautiful cities” (our translation).

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2. This schedule referred to one of the activities of the doctoral internship at the University of Buenos Aires, under the tutelage of Cora Gamarnik and with the help of a scholarship from REDMACRO. The aforementioned research focused on the articulation of image, development and aging in publications by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in Argentina. The bibliographic collection belonging to the ECLAC headquarters in Argentina, located in the city of Buenos Aires, was transferred to the Río Grande campus of the National University of Tierra del Fuego.

This paper serves to share an analysis of the correlation between the Museo, memory, and tourism, based on an ethnography that contemplates my visits to the Museo Penitenciário de Ushuaia 4, as well as my experiences while I was in the city; it aims to indicate the perspective of this relation and to situate my view as a tourist on such an occurrence/event: Unlike my research on the campus of Río Grande at the National University of Terra do Fogo5, I did not visit the Museo nor stayed in Ushuaia as a researcher.

Taken by my curiosity and trying to understand how The End of the World’s Prison was deactivated and turned into a museum, my memory took me to a period that preceded my visit to Ushuaia: my only idea of a similar prison deactivation was Carandiru6, in São Paulo. All my memories and inquiries of Carandiru were related to events published in the newspapers, such as the massacre, the implosion, the creation/build of Parque da Juventude and judgments—and memory (Nassif 2016). With specific memories and forgetting policies presented by several authors such as Maira Machado and Marta Machado (2015), Carandiru was my first case seeing such a process. Carandiru’s operation revealed the efficiency of memory and forgetting. This process made me think about memory and forgetting policies related to prisons. And that was what got me interested in investigating how the concept of memory functions in the case of Ushuaia.

A while before going to Ushuaia, I bought a book at the Argentine National History Museum, in Buenos Aires7, “Celdas: Textos de Presos y Confinados en Ushuaia” (1896-1947), by Alícia Lazzaroni. After that, I decided to watch a documentary on Encuentro channel8, as suggested by my Argentine friend. A storyteller and police chronicler, Ricardo Ragendorfer, inquires at the beginning of the three episodes if the trial prison of Ushuaia was truly used to punish criminals and to confine political enemies, or just as a tool to discipline the people of this city.

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4. I use “museum” to refer to this type of institution and “Museo” for specific reference to the Museo Penitenciário de Ushuaia
5. The National University of Tierra del Fuego has two campuses: Río Grande and Ushuaia.
7. During my visit to the Argentine Antonio Ballvé Penitentiary Museum in Buenos Aires, the institution was closed. The occurrence of an event cannot be exposed in this article. However, it is important to note that this museum is situated next to Fundación Mercedes Sosa. The bars between the two spaces allowed to photograph some parts of the referred Penitentiary Museum.
8. The documentary is divided into three parts. The first part called “The origin” (Canal Encuentro 2018a), while the second, named “Los confinados políticos” (Canal Encuentro 2018b). The third, “El fin” (Canal Encuentro 2018c).
CITY, NATURE AND PRISON AT THE END OF THE WORLD

The tourism in Ushuaia, founded and permeated through nature and the Museo, brings to light several historical events at the end of the world: since the foundation of the town until the consolidation of Argentine sovereignty in southern lands after numerous geopolitical conflicts.

Ushuaia’s story is almost identical to that of prison. Since 1896, there was a project of penal colonization, until in 1902 a large prison was built, in which Catello Muratgia stood out. The inauguration was on September 12. Between 1902 and 1911, there was a military prison. Obviously, none of this is a cause for happiness. There are many stories, usually very painful and other tragicomic, such as the tension, which almost ended in a shootout, between prison officers and the police, but, from the point of view of the population, it was a valuable contribution. Not only did it provide sources of work, which led to the continued establishment of a stable population, but it also had many advances, such as electricity, repairs on the streets, construction of public buildings, provision of bread and other advantages. (Canclini 1989,18, our translation).

Based on pictures and written descriptions of the Museo, the stories of the town are related to the prison, as stated by Aroldo Canclini (1989). The drawings of the Malvinas Islands and the Yámanas on the walls are also memories of this town. Despite all these relevant complexities and utterance relations, I will not be discussing them in this article since my main topic is related to the Museo, souvenir shops, and my observations in regards to the tourism of the town. Firstly, the fragility of the boundaries between the prison, the city, and sovereignty must be noted. Lila Caimari (2004) points out that at the end of the 19th century, when the Argentine nation was establishing its criminal justice system in Terra do Fogo, where the population faced some challenges: the delimitation of its boundaries with another nation-state, Chile.

9. For some perspective on the Malvinas Islands as disputes of meanings in addition to territorial claims and press coverage related to the Malvinas Guerrade, see Cora Garmanik (2015).
10. Regarding the Yámanas, also called Yaganes, canoe and fueguino nomads, there is information in the following museological institutions in Ushuaia: Yámana Museum, Museum of the End of the World and, as mentioned in the text, in the Maritime Museum. When portraying colonialism and the Yámanas concerning the indigenous peoples of the Fuego, Kawésqar, Sél’knam, Aoniken, Häusch and Yámanas, as well as processes of a nation-state, sovereignty and violence, see the Chilean film El botón de nácar (2015), by Patricio Guzmán. On colonialism, representation and Yámanas, see Jorge Pavez Ojeda (2012). In a note dialoguing with Thomas Bridges, I highlight the author’s note on reducing the demographics of this population in the 1980s of the 19th century to a third as an effect of the foundation of the city of Ushuaia by the South Atlantic Expeditionary Division of the Argentine State (1884), an installation of employees in the city, and measles, smallpox and influenza epidemics.
11. Susana Bandieri, in an interview with Maria Cristina Bohn Martins (2009, 99), highlights dimensions of national politics around the territories and populations of southern Argentina, including time: “[…] a full penetration of the nation-state into Patagonia was completed in the 1930s and 1940s, when a concern to” Argentinize “these territories, hitherto closely linked to the Pacific region, became a necessity for nationalist groups who...
The day before I went to the Museo, in another tourist area, I saw two children dressed in yellow and gray-striped overalls portraying prison uniforms. I had already seen those uniforms in some stores. It caught my attention, but I did not consider taking a picture of the children. The next day, after my first visit to the Museo, located at the shores, I met a heterosexual Brazilian couple. We were chatting about the town. I asked them if they had visited the Museo. They said that they did not have the desire to go there. While listening to them, I felt uneasy remembering about the two children wearing the overalls, a feeling related to my experience as a prison researcher, as a Brazilian, as a student of an exchange program, that made my imaginary, at that moment, sink in my own memory.

I shared with the couple my impression and opinion about my first day of visit to the Museo. I told them about the concept of human rights in the cells/rooms, my fascination for famous prisoners, and the fact they were separated by levels of dangerousness, “common prisoner” and “political prisoner”. When I mentioned the overalls, the husband started to laugh and said that his wife wanted one. Although I also laughed, I wasn’t sure what to say about that. Then, she mentioned she wanted a souvenir or something of the town, but she did not share the same opinion and view about that prison. I agreed to disagree. After that, we ended our small talk. I wanted to share this situation because I consider quite interesting the mixture of my moral values on how the city uses the Museo and the prison as a touristic attraction. The study of the Museo is related to the field that researches Memory and Museums (Beiguelman 2019), Dark Tourism (Rodriguez, Sizzo and Arechiga 2018) articulated with extinct prison units (Amaral 2016; Santos 2003), and the way it is applied and reframed.

THE MUSEO
In the Museo, I was listening to a thrilled and adventurous song playing on the television at the main lobby. When I starred at the TV next to the pavilion 3, I noticed how some parts of the Museo, connected to the Maritime Museum, were arranged. The official name is Museo Maritimo y del Presidio de Ushuaia. That area, divided by cells of the old prison and rooms of the museum, includes the Maritime Museum, Arctic Museum, Maritime Art, and Art Gallery.

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then dominated national politics. Only those years were concluded or advanced against the indigenous society perpetrated in the 1880s, with other forms of State penetration, both in the material aspects - construction of bridges and highways, agreement of railway lines, limit control measures, rates of control public agencies, etc. - such as, and particularly, ideological, through education and the generalization of the patriotic and national liturgy ” (our translation).
On my second day, I decided to stay in the central area, the one that connects and has access to all the aisles of the Museo, to start writing on my journal. While wandering there, I saw some old brochures and signs with old dates showing that the Museo has had different names in the past.

“The prisoners stayed here” he told me when he left a door under the numbered sign 1. Then he said that many people didn’t know that. The Museo is concentrated in wing 4 and the 1st has preserved an architecture without reforms. This includes ruins, brittle and rust. The two wings relate the architecture of a closed prison and a museum: celdas / rooms. Do the two wings differ in terms of their memory projects? While in wing 4, production is largely linked to city tourism, 1 seems to scale up as a concrete memory. (Journal, 14 nov. 2019)
Ecléa Bosi (2003, 31) reminds us that “memory operates with great freedom, with specific occurrences in space and time not picked at random but rather related to a subject by common indexes” (our translation).

In the Maritime Museum, the entrance door takes us to a room that has an exhibition about Yámana. Next to it, in pavilion 4 on the main floor, is the Museo (prison). The information about the Colonia Penal is the first thing seen when you step in. Right next to it there are two rooms for visually impaired visitors; three rooms for only authorized people and two rooms with information about the building’s construction. A guided visit sign leads us to the entrance of the Museo revolved by statues of famous prisoners. This hall has the following thematic arrangement:
At the end of this pavilion, we reached a central hall that connects all the other pavilions, namely the old prison building and current Museo. There are penguins at all the pavilions’ entrances, except in pavilion five, which was closed. Over pavilions 3 and 4, there is a souvenir store, and the Art Maritime Museum (closed on that day). The Art Gallery located in pavilions 1 and 2 includes a sign written “historic”.

In front of the closed Pavilion 5, there are stairs and a coffee machine. To be able to buy coffee, visitors need to get coins at pavilion 3, where there is a television comparing the old walls and the inside of the obsolete prison in 1994 to the renovated building of 2003.

The penguins and paints display some of the elements of nature in Ushuaia promoted by tourism through the Museo. Near the same pavilion, there is a picture at the entrance: penguins below mountains and snow. The penguins’ population is honored and portrayed at the museum. There are penguins painted in the fueguina landscape and two others (as sculptures) with no painting.
The penguins, remarkable figures of tourism, when portrayed in the Museo, address elements of nature that make us wonder how they promote the tourism of the city. This species, native of the fire land, entails social arrangements and everything that goes through the town. The same way penguins are painted, tourism and the Museo are simultaneously painted. While penguins painted as prison agents and convicts indicate the Museo, another one portrayed with Marilyn Monroe’s face makes us wonder how popular and visited the Museo is. Noel B. Salazar (2006, 102) pointed out certain considerations about the economy and tourism policy:

A theoretical framework clearly inspired by the work of Karl Marx - offers the most systematic attempt to explain and criticize the uneven nature of tourism development. According to this view, developing countries maintain an unequal relationship with the developed world, insofar as the structure of their economies has historically been based on imperial domination over trade relations and the exercise of authority (our translation)
CELLS AND STAMPS IN THE LAND OF FIRE

The first group of prisoners included fourteen men in 1896 in Ushuaia. In the same year, the Recidivism Prison, made out of woods and sheet metal, was built. According to the Museo’s brochure “The idea was to colonize with penalties and that is how 11 more men and 9 voluntary women were sent immediately. All of them ex-convicts who had committed a new crime” (our translation). It must be noted that there is little information about the living situation and how female prisoners left this prison unit. However, there is, in fact, a document evidencing convicted women marrying Ushuaia’s residents.

In 1911, after a legal order, the Recidivism Prison was merged with the military prison, previously located at Isla de Los Estados, San Juan of Salvamento, and in Porto Cook. Additionally, in accordance with the Museo’s brochure, the prison “was transferred for humanitarian reasons to Ushuaia” (our translation).

The construction of the national prison had begun in 1902, before the official merge of the two prisons. It was at the same place as the temporary complexes were previously. The prison was built by prisoners themselves and the construction went on until 1920. According to the Museo, in the same year, the prison had 76 cells in each of the five pavilions. They were single cells. However, more than 600 convicts stayed there in the same period.

As seen in the history of the Museo, in 1947, the president issued an order to shut down the prison. In 1950, the facility was transferred to the Marine Ministry, and a Navy headquarters was built there. As seen in a documentary, the deactivation was marked by reports of tortures and escapes, including an iconic fugitive: Radowitzky, a famous escapee mentioned in Argentinean articles. The same documentary classifies Argentinean news, in several articles, as a social actor in the controversial debate about the prison of the end of the world. Argentinean journalists, mainly from Porto, might have been social icons that created these famous fugitive characters of the Museo.

13. Simón Radowitzky, an anarchist activist, was one of the most famous prisoners of the Ushuaia Prison. The film Un mundo mejor is a narrative about his trajectory (Death Rashero 2010).
There is a lack of information regarding the period between the deactivation of the prison and the opening of the Museo, which suggests not only the use of the old prison by the Navy but also a narrative and bureaucracy related to the creation of the Museo. According to the history of the Maritime Museum, this citation inflates this transitioning process of the Museo.

Carlos Pedro Vairo, trained in business administration, museologist, writer, historian, explorer and researcher, and two founders and director of the Ushuaia Maritime Museum from his childhood. Given the more conditions of the building, together with the Associação Civil do Museu, it solved several basic problems.

"Once we entered the old prison to be able to visit the facility of the Maritime Museum of Ushuaia, we found a bleak panorama, where the walls were not intact, there were no aqueducts, running water, electricity, glass or openings, encanamento em péssimas condições, etc. On the other hand, it was flooded, as it either raised or increased the level of the ground that either stopped two new buildings, or caused the drippings to infiltrate the walls and gates. A fence with a perimeter of about 70 centimeters deep allowed the elimination of a large part of two water flows and the diversion of the water flows. Gradually, it was valued and, in this way, we managed to recover or space for cultural activities. The challenge was great, but not impossible.

We understand the patrimonial importance of which is the driving force of the local economy and the population factor of the Province in the first stage of the past century. As parliamentary support and a requested presentation that we make the two chambers of the National Congress, or adjacent buildings are declared National Historical Monument in 1997."

(Site do Museo Marítimo, our translation)

It is quite interesting that by making pavilion 1 “historical”, pavilion 4 obtains a distinct meaning in the context of the institution. This distinction demonstrates how the city and visitors use the Museo. Related to history, it is extremely important to highlight that there are some cells in the Museo that synthesize some prison museums around the world. The relevance of these cells is similar to what Pierre Nora (2012, our griffin) called ideologias-memorias (ideologies-memories). Based on these cells, there is an explicit arrangement of an institutional memory policy grounded on a historical perspective, and another through the tourism: several ways to comprehend the Museo under a looser and more flexible memory.

14. Available at http://www.museomaritimo.com/Maritimo/maritimo02B.php. The access to this information on the site of the Museum attached to this artifact was available. In the meantime, since a reformulation of the Museum site on 06/28/2020, it is also noted that the link was no longer available.
When comparing memory and history, Nora (2012, 9) points out that there are as many memories as there are groups and that “they are inherently multiple and non-accelerated, collective, plural and individualized. Opposed to that, history belongs to everyone and nobody, which gives it a universal character. Memory is rooted in concrete, in space, in gesture, in images, in objects” (our translation).

As such, the Museo becomes not only a place of memories that resembles “when it was a prison” but also the Museo in itself, a place to be visited. With another prospect, Museo enters through a journey in other spaces and times in this town. As mentioned, it is possible to buy souvenirs of the Museo in several stores without even visiting the Museo.
INDICATOR OF MEMORY, MUSEO AND TOURISM

Amnesia, Memory and Forgetting policies have been categories used by Giselle Beiguelman (2019) associated with the interpretation of Eclea Bosi (2003) regarding the freedom of use of memory.

Claudio do Prado Amaral (2016, 291), in his article based on a research of 17 prisons, presents one of the aspects of the Prison Museum of Ushuaia: non-erasure. mismanagement and disinterest in society. These are traits that cannot and should not be erased. On the contrary. They must be recorded, for which errors of the past will not occur, with the implementation of public policies. One of the most efficient for effectiveness is the preservation of disabled criminals, who no longer receive convicted and accused persons. Not only the preservation, but also the structuring of memories or the attached musealization is indispensable (our translation)

FIGURE 8
Store in Ushuaia. Photo: Natalia Negretti.
If, on the one hand, some of these dimensions of non-erasure are raised by the Museum, the deactivated unit and the imaginary about prisons - and surroundings - are handled by tourism.

In this sense, part of the pendulum blended between and through the different pavilions as a memory index, and along with other indicators, such as famous prisoners in Argentina. The fact that the ex-convict Godino called an Argentine tourist “estrella de acá” makes us think about the visibility of the non-historic pavilion: famous prisoners. Godino or “El Petiso Orejudo” and “Radowitzky” are well known in the country since they were alive in prison, as often portrayed in the news. Godino was associated with the idea of imprisonment for his mental illness and Radowitzky for his political prison that is recalled by the most visited section of the Museo, pavilion 4, which contains statues of famous prisoners and books about the Ushuaia Prison. Amaral (2016, 292) emphasizes the reason for that to happen as a gateway of curiosity:

The prison theme arouses curiosity. Many people are interested in the imprisonment of individuals and related matters, such as details about the reason for the imprisonment (criminal or political?), The crime committed, the length of the sentence, who are the best known detainees who have been in a particular prison and, in particular, the place and routine of the prison (our translation).

In a mixed relation between memory, Museo and city, without any intention of making a rigid analysis, this article brings to light social interaction continuity. If between prison and city—considering their territorial and geographical particularities—this interaction was marked by population policy and the sovereignty process in Latin-America between Museo and Ushuaia, and the national establishment is reshaped by tourism through a movement that considers and represents all particular traits reiterating them: the end of the world and its features15, articulated through the prison and the Museo format, and grasped by tourism policy.

Moreover, the interpretation of the Museo depends on who is visiting it. Their background, views, and how social issues such as prisons themselves are related to their lives.

As Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos states (2003, 273), imagination and experience, which have the past as their primary reference, is an essential perception of memory, and the Museo seems to be based on this idea.

15. Regarding the issue of prison policies, deactivation of prison units and Latin America, see Filipe Horta’s dissertation (2013) wherein Ilha Anchieta Correctional Facility, located in the city of Ubatuba (SP) between the years 1942 and 1955, was analyzed.
In this case, understanding the past is constituted by a more complex network of meanings. Individuals get in contact with other individuals in specific social context that bring the past to the present. Thus, on the one hand, the concept of memory allows us to interconnect past and present, and on the other, it allows us to bypass the classical theoretical opposition between individual and society (our translation).
It is as important to name one pavilion as historical as well as to not name another pavilion. Hence visitors may experience several possible scenarios. In the non-nominated “historical Pavilion” we can see statues, replicas, and representations of famous cells and prisoners. It should be noted that the portrayed characters in this section revive the imaginary about mental disorder and political prison crimes. As such, a narrative that distinguishes political prisoners versus regular prisoners, political prison versus regular prison, and “political crime” versus “regular crime” remains present. This issue goes beyond the schemes of ideologies-memories (NORA, 2012), there is debate about prisons being political, as placed in perspective in this article. Considering that every prison has a political effect in society, not only political prisons, the one in Ushuaia has influenced a couple of public policies in this city, such as labor and population. The same way that inmates worked as constructors helping to build the city, many citizens worked at the prison, maintaining its operation. Moreover, several prisoners were transferred from other cities to this unit in a period when Argentina had to obtain sovereignty over this land.

CONCERNS AND THOUGHTS: ACTIVATIONS BETWEEN MEMORY, MUSEO AND TOURISM

Compounded by patrimonial and national importance, this prison unit, historically was considered “the drive of the local economy” and “a population factor” of Ushuaia since 1997. It then inaugurated as Museo, and it still boosts the local economy. However, it is not considered a population factor anymore, and the tourist factor takes place in the city.
The concept of memory resulting from the Museo, initially, inspires me to pursue further studies about this topic. This article has brought the idea that the Museo establishes a relation between memory, museum, and tourism in Ushuaia.

I presume that possibilities of memories tied to distinct interactions among Memory and Museo and, consequently, memory and prison. The city and the prison, both founded between the sea and the mountain, were transformed after the deactivation of prison, and its inauguration as a museum. When this highlighted expression used by the news on Ushuaia’s website gives the city the worldwide title of Fueguina beauty, we may consider the idea of Iris. Just like a camera’s diaphragm controls the absorption of light that enables viewing through a camera, the correlation between memory and tourism happens by means of the interaction between cultural elements and prison matters, relying on this view and not on the personal perspective of the viewers.

According to the history of the museological institution and meanings attributed to the museum and the old prison building, the prison unit is seen as going from the smallest detail to the splendor of “The End of the World.” The iris of tourism in Ushuaia works similar to expanded photometry; it allows adjustment by the irises of those who arrive there.
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