

Faith is the Place  
the Urban Cultures of Global Prayers

metroZones (Hg.)

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## Imprint

### Faith is the Place

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# Another Way of Knowing

## Some Notes regarding Visual Research on Ghosts and Spirits

ANNE HUFFSCHMID

*In every act of looking there is an expectation of meaning.*

*This expectation should be distinguished from a desire for an explanation.(...)*

*Prior to any explanation there is the expectation of  
what appearances may be about to reveal.(...)*

*Revelation was a visual category before it was a religious one*

John Berger: *Another way of telling*, p. 117/118

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Death is of course the most radical blind spot: no image left, not even blackness, just pure absence. Extinguished existence and sometimes, under conditions of extreme violence, disappeared bodies like the missing corpses of those killed by Latin American dictatorships, the *desaparecidos*, the countless and often nameless buried victims of civil wars, or the anonymous ashes produced by the Nazi mass murder technologies. These are almost impossible challenges for the imagination as well as for any imaginary recreation and there have been intense disputes on the ability or inability of the visual to represent the “unimaginable” absolute terror, as in the case of Auschwitz (Didi-Hubermann 2007). While filmmaker Claude Lanzmann proclaimed the necessary surrender of all image-production in the face of the Shoah, George Didi-Hubermann insists on the capacity of the image to “speak”, not to visualize or represent, but to be deciphered as “shreds” rescued from imposed blindness (Didi-Hubermann 2007: 37). In discordance with an aesthetics of the unrepresentable that tends to “sacralize” the word as the only legitimate source of truth and knowledge (110), Didi-Hubermann argues that images can and must also be “read”. They shouldn’t be considered primarily as documents but as “events”, with material implications involving the gaze, the body, the viewpoint of those who took the pictures, those whose image is exposed and frozen and those who look at them.

Following Didi-Hubermann’s approach, this article discusses visual procedures and processing of visual knowledge within research processes concerning topics such as “faith”, as explored by the Global Prayers project, or “memory” as studied in my own current project about memory sites and conflicts in urban space in Latin America. Both topics refer to immaterial dimensions (similar to “death” and connected with it), which are explored here in their spatial manifestations and located in urban space: the spirits of urban religious movements, the ghosts or phantoms of violent memories in the urban present. As we will see, visual strate-

gies approach the materialized and somehow “seeable” – and spatial – articulation of beliefs, convictions and memories in the shared space of public and urban life (bodies, iconographies, performance, built space). At the same time they address, explicitly or not, the question of representation strategies. And they all point to the need for knowing in order to see and vice versa.

The following notes pretend by no means to offer more than a few ideas concerning the relationship between images, knowledge and imagination in the fields of artistic as well as (other) cultural research. They do so on the basis of some selected art works from our exhibition “the Urban Cultures of Global Prayers” as well as based upon my own research experience. In the first case – that of artistic approaches to urban religiousness in the context of Global Prayers – the focus is on art practices of photographers and visual artists that draw on ethnographic and other research methods and engage in an aesthetical representation and reflection, constructing and deconstructing visual narratives. In the second case, the exploration of urban memory cultures, a cultural scientist and urban researcher (myself) resorts to visual methods by taking and reading images, aiming to analyze visual discourses and create image-based narrations.

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### Beyond dichotomies: some statements

In general, the Global Prayers project does not conceive art, and more precisely visual approaches, as one of many methods or techniques but as a specific mode of knowledge production. Utilizing visual devices such as photography is not meant to illustrate or *visualize* research findings generated by other approaches, but to *visibilize* phenomena related to the research issue and to generate both experiences with and insights into the subject(s).<sup>1</sup> This implies a notion of transdisciplinarity that aims to broaden the idea of research itself and to overcome the fixed boundaries and dichotomies between “science” and “arts”, both to be conceived as different “systems”, each of which includes a set of regulations and restrictions. The proposed transdisciplinarity neither seeks to incorporate art or photography completely into the science-system (in the sense of “creative studies” or “visualization techniques”) nor does it just apply the scientific framework (systematics, field work, classification) to art production. Instead it questions the traditional notion and status of “knowledge” itself. I argue that the illusion of objective validity and also the unavoidable subjectivity of any research practice, including the so-called academic, necessarily becomes more evident in artistic research. Furthermore, it reveals the procedural nature of any research, which should be no longer conceived as a procedure of validation of hypothesis,

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<sup>1</sup> Besides the indispensable classics Barthes (1997), Berger/Mohr (1982), Sontag (1981), Belting (2001) or the already mentioned Didi-Hubermann (2007) on image semiotics, I found the works of Sarah Pink (2007) and Markus Banks (2001) most inspiring, both coming from practical visual anthropology, as well as the dialogue between Emmel and Clark (2011) on their experimental use of photography in urban research.

but as one of exploration and discoveries, a constant and delicate movement between knowing and not-knowing.

166 In stating that I do not wish to postulate that artistic and ethnographic research turn out to be the same. Obviously they are not, regarding the very different institutional settings with their own legitimization procedures as well as the role of aesthetical strategies. But undoubtedly there has been an important interpenetration in the last two decades. Qualitative research experienced a “visual turn” or “pictorial turn”; initially, visual methods were solely regarded as an efficient tool for data collection but over time they have become recognized as creators of “new meanings” (Pink 2007: 16). At the same time socially interested art practices were traversed by a so-called ethnographic turn that led to the incorporation of mappings, interviews or participative methods.<sup>2</sup> From that perspective, visual and especially photographic practice can be understood as “epistemic practice”, as Elke Bippus (2009) states for research-interested arts in general. This understanding implies two tendencies that I consider crucial for any social or cultural research practice dealing with all kinds of social semiosis: self-reflexivity and the aesthetical interrogation of reality. The first refers to the construction of the analytical gaze, in literal but also in metaphorical terms: From which angle, position (distance, proximity) or “subjectivity” does a researcher approach topics such as faith, religious empowerment or traumatic memory in different political and cultural settings? How do we aspire to generate (write or picture) knowledge and how do we relate to others and to otherness? The second, closely entwined with the first, involves a reflection on form, aesthetics and representation – here the mediality, materiality, performativity of religious urbanities, or political stagings – and requires a critical consciousness of visual discourses.

### Visual art(ist)s meeting religious spatiality

As argued above, one purpose of the Global Prayers project is to leave behind the unproductive opposition between “artistic” image production and “scientific” text-based research. Even within the field of visual knowledge production, the usual division between documentary and conceptual photography might at least be questioned. In a very basic understanding, the first seems to focus exclusively on the seeable, with apparently mere documentary intentions; whereas the latter is considered to reflect on representation processes as such (power, negotiation, mediality). However, both of them deal inevitably – be it explicitly or implicitly – with questions of point of view, proximity and distance, selection, focus and editing. As we learn from discourse analysis and semiotic studies, there is no such thing as visual innocence or naturalness in “taking a picture”, but only different types of visual genres and discourse constellations, which are displayed in the

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<sup>2</sup>For an instructive overview of that interpenetration see the essay by Beate Binder (2008).

image's readings, implied by but also independently from the artist's deliberate intentions. All of them involve complex interactions between seeing and knowing, verbal and visual discursivity, as we may observe by having a closer look at some of the global prayers works.

The sound artist Gilles Aubry generates an extraordinary "close reading" of a photograph, provided by a historical archive. This picture shows a Swedish missionary in the former Belgian Congo in 1910, and was discussed by the artist and some religious activists in today's Kinshasa; the recording and its transcription, performed by the artist, are included in the exhibition. It turns into a display for a whole set of possible meaning layers and becomes the pretext for a discussion on a wide range of topics that can not be seen directly (colonial power relations, evangelization, African culture), but which at the same time has never been disconnected from the materiality of the image: its rich visual facticity (naked and clothed people, for instance) but also the compositional arrangement (the relation between the colonial phonograph and the Congolese drum). Moreover, there are things that remain impossible to know from the picture or even the contextual information, for instance the content of the broadcast the black youngsters are listening to so attentively. The photo does not reveal this mystery, but the seeing-without-knowing among the observers gives way to a fascinating collective reflection on missionary language and translation. Here, the image itself does not tell us anything beyond "the usual" colonial visual discourse but generates a different (non-visual) discourse set.

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On the contrary, in the work of visual artist Paula Yacoub there is nothing but image and (impossible) imagination. Her series "Saint Dimitri" shows a cemetery located on an urban hillside within the city of Beirut, built and administrated by the Greek Orthodox community. Some sections of the site seem to be under (re) construction, others offer a rather (at least for the outsider) confusing palimpsest of stones, gravestones and mausoleums in different scales and levels. The underlying backdrop of our gaze on this cemetery series, where nothing extraordinary seems to happen, is the diffuse though powerful imaginary related to the Lebanese civil war, widely circulating media images of bombed and destroyed areas. So, an initial uneasiness is aroused from looking at this unusual area that does not transmit the peacefulness expected in a graveyard but an atmosphere of busy reconstruction. Which turns into open suspicion when we are informed, in the concise contextualization text offered by the artist, that thousands of disappeared bodies of all warring factions used to be buried in secret mass graves, often located below the official congregational cemeteries. Here, the knowing certainly transforms the seeing, the visual surface of the cemetery and its markers. Thus, the graveyard, usually a stable place with a decipherable topography, turns into an uncertain and disturbing space. And the series of Yacoub does not even

offer, beyond the limits of the seeable, the rationalizing comfort of discourse or evidence: we (as spectators) may know or learn about the existence of anonymous mass-graves, and with some effort try to imagine, but we will hardly ever be able to see or prove or “make sense” of it.

168 Other than Aubry and Yacoub, the Latin American photographers Verónica Mastrosimone and Frida Hartz were part of a broader field team, coordinated by myself, that explored the traces of liberation theology and new spots of popular religiosity in Buenos Aires and Mexico City. Still, their images are more than just a visual support for an ethnographic research, they establish their own authorial “point of view”. Thus, works of Mastrosimone and Hartz represent an intersection between visual and urban research, involving specific contextual knowledge and “seeable” material dimensions, especially the body practicing or performing various kinds of belief. The following observations offer some closer readings of the interplay between seeing and imagining, learning and knowing in these series.

Verónica Mastrosimone employs what we might call an aesthetics of proximity. As the eye of the camera she is clearly positioned, assuming an explicit subjectivity in her visual relation to the other (body). There is the red-haired girl looking directly into the camera, with an intriguing fragility, some kind of despair seems to lie in her widened eyes – or is it just disconcertion due to the unusual closeness of the camera? Another picture of Mastrosimone shows the girl's complete body in profile, from a certain distance now, with her eyes looking towards an undefined far-off and the photographer still looking at her. In general, her work is about capturing and crossing of *gazes*, in a corporeal sense, including the “taking over” of the other's gaze as Mastrosimone does in one of her images of the migrants' procession. In another one she captures the figure of a young musician, who seems to express an unexpected melancholy or resignation – or maybe he is just taking a rest, we cannot know but still connect to the precarious beauty of the composition. Behind him we identify, coexisting with his supposed sadness, the virgin's icon on the wall, a sort of leitmotif in her series, together with the graffiti of Father Mugica, the popular liberation priest assassinated by the military dictatorship in the seventies: markers of the invisible but living spirits of memory and faith and community. Likewise the mural as background for the passionately preaching priest can at first sight be easily read as visual “proof” of the vitality of liberation spirits, was it not for the mysterious dark skinned man, who seems to watch over (or threaten?) the blond Father. This figure certainly complicates the image, reminding us of the unavoidable ambiguity of the seemingly obvious.

In Mexico City, Frida Hartz approaches the striking phenomenon of Santa Muerte, a new religious icon, by focussing on its public visibility and exploding



iconography. The monthly street celebration for the skeleton figure is located in a legendary and stigmatized inner city quarter named Tepito. What may appear at first sight an exotic and somehow gruesome ritual performed by the urban marginalized – and is represented as such by media, civil and ecclesiastical authorities' discourses – acquires an unexpected complexity when contextual knowing is involved. Experts say that the going public of *Santa Muerte*, known also as “the saint for those in despair”, after many decades of discreet private worshipping, is related to the economic crisis of the mid-Nineties. First, the figure began to appear on stamps or T-shirts, as graffiti icons or tattoos. Later on it spread mostly among imprisoned youngsters, who were handed over to her spiritual power – protection for the unprotected – from their older relatives, who had kept the saint as a family secret. Finally, in 2001 a Tepito trader decided to put her private shrine in the entrance of her house, thus making it accessible to the neighbours. Since then, this spot turned into a public “sanctuary” and stage for a quasi-Catholic public liturgy.

What we (as researchers) saw and recorded in this celebration, but especially what we (as viewers) learn from looking again at Hartz's pictures does not correspond to what we may have expected from media discourses of underground aesthetics of violence and criminality: A carefully prepared and proudly performed public staging, extremely conscious of being looked at, with an evident need and longing for celebrating and sharing faith with fellow believers and, at the same time, exhibiting devotion in front of visitors and journalists. The overall peacefulness of the scenery and the unexpected tenderness with which the members of this instant community care for each other and the *Santa Muerte* figure: the young pilgrim mother, for instance, moving on her knees over the last meters to the sanctuary, holds the skeleton figure with the same affection she holds her baby in her other arm. The presence of children of all ages, so seriously involved in the *Santa Muerte* rituals, and also the presence of ordinary people, with no visible eccentric features, whole families from the lower middle class, not as spectators but as participants. As the photographs reveal, *Santa Muerte* is not only the new patron saint for the most excluded in town, but also offers spiritual comfort for a broader range of people feeling abandoned by the Catholic Church. Hartz is clearly looking from the outside, but does not fall into the usual othering: for all their strangeness, the others here remain familiar to her.

The same phenomenon – the increasing popularity of this “heretical” saint in Mexico City – is processed by the visual artist Lía Dansker. Her video installation focuses on *Santa Muerte* not in public but in highly restricted spaces: juvenile prisons in Mexico City. While Hartz' images in a way perform the hyper-visibility of the public staging of the *Santa*, Dansker is framing and editing the invisibilized, that is, the saint's secret and precarious presence in the everyday life of



young males accused of violent crimes. As mentioned above, the prison has become a central place for transmission of the Santa Muerte cult since the 1990s. As a strictly secular institution, it is prohibiting any religious expression. Therefore, the youngsters are not allowed to worship openly or exhibit any shrine or image of the adored *Santa* in their dormitories. That is why they come to inscribe precarious images, almost invisible, on pillows, sheets or baseball-caps, under the washbasin or on a ceiling beam. Looking at it closely and carefully, as Dansker does with her camera, one can recognise that the walls and spaces of the prison are full of hidden markers of the saint. The artist confronts us with the prison's inside, its non-spectacular everyday life, its cleaning routines and the restless bodies of imprisoned teenagers. In a key sequence we see a young man, fully conscious of the camera's presence, on his bed, covered by a blanket, and shaking his body in a little horizontal dance – not really visible but recognizable for the viewer who soon discovers that another boy is laying beside him, covered as well. Cellmate or lover? No way to know, only to register the striking intimacy of the scene, in sharp contrast to the following long shot of the prison's courtyard. Here, we listen to a frightening tale about normalized violence, a youngster's voice (who did not authorize his image), who openly admits a murder but is optimistic about being released soon; the main credit for that, we learn, goes to *Santa Muerte*, who is protecting him. Dansker, who conceives her work as an invitation to "listen" and to have "a closer look," deliberately separates and re-edits text and image, fragmented verbal and visual discourse. We see and learn simultaneously, but on different channels, about the disturbing proximity between vulnerability and violence.

### Urban research(ers), memory and visibility

Simultaneity is also the key issue for urban studies interested in semiotic processes, the production of contested meanings in urban space, and one of the principal reasons for drawing on visual methodologies.<sup>3</sup> I will briefly outline this on the basis of the project on urban memory cultures related to state terrorism in Latin American megacities referred to above.

Traumatic memories, especially those related to the forced disappearance of human beings and bodies, are by definition invisible, neither are they materialized nor visualized. Instead, they produce what we may call "social ghosts" or "phantoms". The field of public memory itself is often conceptualized in terms of metaphors of the visual, when we think of the "blind spots" of silence and legal impunity or the nebulous "grey zones" of social complicity and indifference. In the centre of collective memory practices are the strategies of visibilization that seek to resist not only deliberate invisibilization through juridical impunity or

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<sup>3</sup>The visual here never stands alone, of course, but is combined with ethnographic readings of sites, places, bodies and performances as well as analytical readings of discourse as social practices. See Huffs Schmid 2012.

political complicity, but also the invisibilizing – and probably even more powerful – effect of urban indifference, the flows and routines of the city's everyday life, levelling any irruption or disturbance into normality. The “social ghosts”, traces and shadows of unresolved events such as violence exercised by institutionalized terror and its civil collaborators, inhabit the imaginary of society, escaping from strategies of rationalization and control. The metaphors of “ghost” and “phantasm” can be connected to the concept of *imaginario* as developed by Armando Silva and other Latin American anthropologists. “The phantasm will always be of the imaginary order, but alive, as if it is real life” (Silva 2006: 118-119). The *imaginario* hence does not refer to fiction as opposed to reality or truth, but to the subconscious power of the unseen or repressed “that I do not see or know, but that still affects me” (Silva 2006: 110).

In spatial terms, this notion of “phantasm” relates to the metaphor of the urban palimpsest: overlapping and competing layers, boundaries and frontiers between past and present<sup>4</sup>, the profane and the sacred, everyday life and exception. Particular spatial markers of traumatic past, in the palimpsestic landscape of the city, are the so-called memory sites such as memorials and museums, monuments and historical sites. I conceive these kinds of memory markers as “uncertain spaces”<sup>5</sup> due to their polysemic and often disputed meanings – whose memory, exactly, is (not) displayed here? – and also due to their uncertain condition as a public space: Who is entering these sites, what are the rules and codes of access? The most uncertain of all sites is of course the *plaza*, the public square, as a scene of densification, dispersion and extreme urban simultaneity.

Dealing with visibility in this context implies, on the one hand, the reading of visual discourses and representation strategies. For instance, photography played and still plays a key role in memory practices and politics: be it the display of photographs of the disappeared in the public performance of memory actors like the Argentine mother's movement (or the decision not to use images any longer), the use of photographs as a museographical device in memory sites (or the decision not to work with photographic visualization) or the impact of new visual evidence on the public discussion of state terror. One example for a visual appearance of the disappeared, in a manner of speaking, are the photographs of secretly captured prisoners in one of the most notorious concentration camps in Buenos Aires, the ESMA<sup>6</sup>. In contrast to the photographs showing the disappeared before they had been kidnapped, usually happy young faces spread by their mothers as evidence of their (former) existence, these other portrayals show the bodies of

<sup>4</sup> For a conceptualization of urban memory palimpsests see Huyssen (2003).

<sup>5</sup> For the notion of “uncertain (public) spaces” see Cupers/Miessen (2002).

<sup>6</sup> The pictures, which were smuggled outside by one of the prisoners, are published in Brodsky (2005).

men and women that are still alive, but visibly tormented, probably with no illusion about their fate. These are gazes and pictures “from hell”, no doubt, but they still have a humanizing impact: they confront the void of disappearance and the murderous project of “desimagination” (Didi-Hubermann 2007: 36), bringing the ghost-like disappeared back to the realm of humanity, including their tortured bodies and anxiety.



Plaza de Mayo, inscriptions and semiotic battlefield. Photo: Anne Huffs Schmid

On the other hand, the researcher uses photographic images in order to create her own visual archive and narration, as a particular access to the research field, beyond text-based description and testimony, constantly moving between taking and reading (and also writing about) pictures, between close-up and long shots. These “visual field notes” that are to be processed as textual field notes in procedures of constructing thick (visual) descriptions are based on and constantly informed by a variety of other sources. Especially in urban settings, resorting to visual argumentation allows us to focus on connections and intersections between different spatial dimensions, space and places, buildings and bodies. By doing so, visual methods facilitate insights into the key characteristics of urban semiosis, namely simultaneity and non-linearity, polyvalence and uncertainty.

Within the research process, the production and reading of photography can perform, in my experience, a wide range of functions: the recording of material of a certain density and revealing of “unseen” details; the capturing (and/or composing) of spatial constellations (coexistences, palimpsestic configurations) and distinguishing between different spatial scales; the editing of significant synchronic or diachronic sequences; the reconstructing of the emotional particularities of a research scenery and encounter beyond verbal transcription (gazes,

body language, self-positioning); the self-reflecting on the existence and veracity of implicit or explicit research expectations; the identifying of transversal visual patterns and, last but not at all least, the reflecting on the ever specific limits of visibilization.

Though photography in qualitative research is clearly an important mnemonic device, it can not be reduced – as already stated for the artistic approach – to a tool for documenting or “revealing” reality, neither to “empirical evidence” nor to “illustrate” of research findings. Instead, photography facilitates the incorporation of “the unsaid” into analysis, that is, all kinds of non-verbalized data, that otherwise would have remained “unseen” and out of the analytical focus. Furthermore, as stated above, working with images potentially provides and promotes methodological (self-)reflection on how “knowledge” and “power” are generated in research procedures and discourses, and how we as researchers construct our analytical gaze on the objects and subjects we are studying. I would like to suggest that our inevitable (though not arbitrary) subjectivity becomes more evident when we are dealing with images. Processing them forces us to sharpen our gaze and thinking about questions of point of view and angle, epistemological desire and expectations, sensorial and emotional dispositions and effects. The image, besides its function as a visual record or signifier, “allows us to map our reflexive engagement with the research field” (Emmel/Clark 2011: 39).

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One example of a vibrant research field is the Plaza de Mayo in the centre of the Argentine capital Buenos Aires. The Mothers' movement, which challenged the last Argentine dictatorship (1976-1983) and clearly appropriated this place-space in semiotic terms, has probably invented one of the best-known memory practices. Since they first met on the square in front of the Presidential Palace one afternoon in April 1977, the *Madres* have been present on the Plaza de Mayo every single Thursday afternoon. Their ephemeral action, a kind of memory ritual, led to permanent inscription, not as a monument or memorial, but as a circle of pictograms of the *pañuelo*, the characteristic headscarf of the mothers' activism, which appeared one day, painted by anonymous hands. But in the everyday life of downtown Buenos Aires this inscription oscillates between its seeable presence and semiotic disappearance, with the sign being completely normalized as part of the plaza's landscape and covered by the same magic cape of invisibility as most monuments in public space. As a researcher, I would not have been able to understand to which degree, and exactly how, the flows of urban life flood the plaza, if I had not taken pictures there over and over again, for a number of years, from the viewpoint of a plaza user, a kind of visual *flâneur*, recording all kinds of subtle transformations and sudden appropriations, deliberately sustaining my focus on the marker of the *pañuelos*.





Plaza de Mayo, the two divided mothers's marches. Photo: Anne Huffschmid

This perspective with a fixed focus on the inscription level allowed me to capture an on-going semiotic “battle” in the square that began some years ago: the appearance of what might be called “counter-inscriptions”, black signs of mourning and modified headscarf-pictograms, painted besides or directly over the original pañuelo inscription. On a textual level, these are complemented by the slogan *victimas del terrorismo* (“victims of terrorism”), referring to the armed movements of the 1970s, which mutilate the meaning of the original inscription related to “state terrorism”, a term that human rights’ movement had succeeded in establishing in public discourse ten years ago. These counter-inscriptions also originated from anonymous hands but are clearly associated with family members of accused or sentenced perpetrators, since the reopening of the legal trials in 2005. Very soon afterwards, the human rights activists began to respond by overwriting these counter-*pañuelos* again. So, the relative “hegemony” of the Madres turned into a disputed semiotic battlefield.

Another memory conflict is even more evident at a visual and spatial level, but less suitable to incorporate into an explanatory narrative: the profound division of the Mothers’ movement into two factions, which occurred more than 25 years ago. Since then, both groups still share the same location for their weekly manifestation, while demonstrating strictly separate from each other. What we see on Thursday afternoon are two groups of mothers marching in a circle, *la ronda*, around the same statue in the middle of the plaza, with absolutely no eye or verbal contact and no textual allusions to the other group. Despite its obvious strangeness (the tangible division of a group that shares the same traumatic political history) this spatial performance has been completely normalized over the years. Nobody seems to wonder: the insiders are used to it, the outsiders (tourists) do not register or care. I argue that the visual recording and analysis of these contrasting memory stagings, including their spatial frictions, may contribute to the understanding, “denaturalization” and historization of political stagings with regard to the use of space,

discourse and images. Thus, the visual reading and reconstruction of phenomena such as the semiotic dispute or the divided mother's performance, reveal the conflictive and never stabilized nature of public memory cultures.

As we saw, working with images – in artistic as well in ethnographic or semiotic research – may indeed illuminate vibrant memories and social phantoms, spirits and absences. Despite the apparently smooth and slippery surface of images, they offer telling materialities and visual palimpsests, which speak to us and let us know, in the terms outlined by Didi-Hubermann, though they might not be decipherable at first or even second sight. In fact, reading images will always require to draw on other sources and discourses, seeing is never equivalent to knowing but capable to stimulate different kinds of knowledge. And there will still remain coexisting zones of darkness that can and must not be lighted up, yet the “field of vision is not exhausted by the showable”, as Nelly Richard (2000: 33) puts it. How to “rearticulate the politics of the trace”, she asks, in order to examine carefully the borderlines of hegemonic representation and to produce deliberately, from time to time, some “shadow in the middle of so much satisfied visibility”?

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