

Dislocación in Globalization

Ingrid Wildi Merino

Dislocación first came about in late 2007 in response to an invitation from the Swiss embassy in Chile to develop an exhibition concept to commemorate the bicentenary of Chilean independence. With *Dislocación*—a word borrowed from medicine—I refer to the action and effect of disjoining an element from the surround in which it rests. The term is also used to express the distortion of an argument or line of reasoning, manipulating, moving, or removing it from its context. When used in this manner, the term indicates a lack of continuity in the course of a natural process. I am using *Dislocación* from this perspective to demonstrate the processes of disjoining caused by dispersal and dysfunction provoking a mismatch—or failure—of systems and social and cultural processes. From this viewpoint, the requisite elements for an action suffer fracture, which results in discontinuous articulation of any future action from this source.

World globalization, its historical causes and contemporary effects, are the particular focus of *Dislocación* as a research project. It arises largely from my research as an artist into the issues of identity and geopolitics as they interrogate the space and place of the subject and their particular 'story' in 'History,' exploring issues arising from the movements of colonizers and the colonized, social and cultural displacements, historical connections and disconnections between the personal and the political. These junctures within the social and cultural structures, within the framework of globalization and its economic and political characteristics, force an entire section of the world's population into displacement and

migration in the quest for greater opportunities for economic and/or social development, often ultimately leading them into a life that is culturally cast adrift.

World globalization produces economic and symbolic transactions between one location on the Earth and another that in turn generate migration or rather a form of 'new nomadism.'

This implies a form of mobility that safeguards economic stability on the basis of a belief in global ideals. World globalization produces unifying models without taking into account ethnic, cultural, or social differences. This unification allows for better economic management and permeates into local policies while only the economic profit of these initiatives is being calculated. A large proportion of the world's population that is at a clear economic disadvantage aspires to these unifying ideals, believing in a democracy of economic, social, and employment opportunities. The great bulk of (economic) immigrants from the underprivileged social classes will find the opportunities for progress in Europe, in terms of either labor and/or social and cultural elements, almost unachievable in comparison with Europeans or other migrants who have the economic and/or cultural capital they need to facilitate greater personal and social progress. In concrete terms, this implies that the (economic) migrant lives in a way that is socially/economically and culturally out of step within a privileged society, forming part of a sector of the population that is rendered invisible and is referred to as the 'fourth world' in rich countries.¹ With *Dislocación* I am interested in questioning the context of world globalization. Examination of the transcendence of migration, deterritorialization, social differences, cultural differences, and all the differences related to political economy and 'history' arose from there. According to Peter Sloterdijk the philosophical origin of global thinking can be traced back to Western antiquity, where the term 'globe' made manifest the thesis of the cosmos as a great unity. The adjectival forms of 'global' things derive from the English verb 'to globalize.' That is where "the hybrid

¹ ATD Fourth World Movement. International organization. The 'fourth world' refers to the population that lives unprotected or at economic and social risk in areas belonging to the first world.

figure of ‘globalization’² comes from. As it is, this expression accentuates the active nature of the current world situation: where globalization occurs it is always due to activities that have long-distance impacts.³ The first intent of globalization consists of representing the totality of what *exists* in the form of an omnicomprehensive sphere,⁴ a conceptual cosmos that can then be assumed to be an order.

For thinkers in the European tradition it was viewed as a fact that “goodness and roundness are the same thing in the end.”⁵ Therefore the spherical form could be effective as a cosmic immune system. Theories of the not round only come into play as much later achievements (sciences of experience, the death of God, chaos theory, and the end of the Old Europe). In Latin America this rationalization of the structure of the world, so well described by Peter Sloterdijk, today forms part of our colonial inheritance and leads us to conceive of and structure the world on the basis of options suited to serving the neoliberal economic development systems.

Economy and History: Pensée unique?

Reflecting on globalization is nothing new, but considering its origins helps us to rethink our future. We live under the principles of the historical schema of globalization. In a history of political economy, Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*⁶ in 1759. This theory starts with the exploration of all human conduct where selfishness does not appear to play a determining role. Throughout the work, the author explains the origin and operation of moral sentiments: resentment, vengeance, virtue, admiration, corruption, and justice. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and in *The Wealth of*

² Peter Sloterdijk, *El Mundo Interior del Capital. Para una Teoría Filosófica de la Globalización*, trans. Isidoro Reguera, prolog. Rüdiger Safranski (Madrid, 2007), p. ##.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, p. 25.

⁶ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Sálvio M. Soares (London, 2007).

Nations (his later work) Smith makes it clear that empathy with selfishness forms part of the legacy of political economics. In this context his assurance “Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want . . .”⁷ takes particular relevance. It must be remembered that it was Smith’s work that provided the initial guidelines for current neoliberal economic policy.

Much later, with the labor problems caused by the reigning capitalist system, Karl Marx declared in his *Theses on Feuerbach* and book *Das Kapital* (1867) that “philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”⁸ When making a historical, economic, and social analysis of European capitalism, Marx departed from the basis that the history of humanity is the history of class struggle. According to Marx, the capitalist state responds to the interests of the bourgeoisie and its function is to defend private property. Marx’s *Das Kapital* can be understood as a study of the historical specificities of modern society to the extent that it considers how the economic ‘sphere’ dominates and conditions the functioning of modern society. He states that this ‘sphere’ is the fundamental point of departure for understanding modern society and how this functions through relationships of domination between social classes. The capitalist order is distinguished from previous orders by social mobility and the formal regulation of social relations. From the ideological point of view, Smith's theory has been ably used to consider ‘desire’ and ‘demand’ as primordial factors for productivity and social and global stability. Hence his work can be seen to form the basis of Milton Friedman’s later neoliberal economic policy. In the recent history of Latin American, Chile has experienced periods marked by the application of these world visions. In 1970, the first Marxist president in history was democratically elected with the support of Unidad Popular (an electoral coalition of left and

⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Book 1, Chapter 2. Online version: Project Gutenberg EBook (release date: February 28, 2009).

⁸ Marx in his eleven *Theses on Feuerbach*, in 1845, “Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.” Written by Karl Marx in the spring of 1845. Published according to the text in the 1888 edition.

center-left political parties), namely Salvador Allende. This president tried to establish an alternative route toward a socialist society, the ‘Chilean route to socialism’ through projects including the nationalization of copper, accelerated agrarian reform, a freeze on consumer prices, increased pay for workers, constitutional change, and the creation of a single chamber parliament. The actions of the Allende government led the Chilean bourgeoisie and Richard Nixon to impose a boycott on Allende’s administration by refusing external credit, requesting an embargo on Chilean copper, and finally supporting the abrupt coup d’etat of September 11, 1973.

During the seventeen years of military dictatorship under General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, Chile became a testing ground for neoliberalism. Milton Friedman, the main proponent of this theory, was invited by former Chilean students who created the group known as the “Chicago Boys” who spoke about the Chilean economic situation at international conferences.

Friedman considered a social market economy was absolutely “the only medicine” possible for Chile with a gradual dismantling of the state to allow the laws of supply and demand free reign, a return to the original purity of the Adam Smith system, and an update to the quantity theory of money. All these economic and political transformations were possible in a context where human rights violations became the norm for the military dictatorship.

This process led to progressively more acute social inequalities. Privatizations benefited those in partnership with the dictatorship, while brutal suppression of the unions prevented workers and the popular movement from campaigning for improved living conditions. Human rights violations in Chile became a business opportunity. The Rettig Report⁹ and the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture Report¹⁰ stated that the human rights of some 35,000 people were violated in Chile: 28,000 were tortured, 2,279 were executed, and

⁹ Report delivered on February 9, 1991, by the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation on the human rights violations committed in Chile under the military regime of Augusto Pinochet. Online edition: http://www.usip.org/files/resources/collections/truth_commissions/Chile90-Report/Chile90-Report.pdf

¹⁰ Comisión Asesora para la calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión Política y Tortura. Online version: <http://www.comisionvalech.gov.cl/> (accessed December 21, 2010).

1,248 are still registered as disappeared.¹¹ Some experts speak of up to one million political exiles and economic migrants.

Objectivity Obligates

As can be appreciated, globalization—and in particular the neoliberal globalization conceived from the First World perspective—has collaborated with the systems of economic power and has also imposed itself on social, cultural, and identity systems. Many leading historians have developed a referential historical discourse that is founded on very concrete bases. These foundations are essentially characterized by the fact that their source comes from an exclusive sector, and their main function is to throw all those who, in themselves, personify any attributes contrary to the discursive political order of the time toward the perimeter of the morally acceptable. Extra-European theorists—more especially those originally from Latin America or India—have produced a new line of post-colonial criticism; a critical theory that works against these eurocentric postulates. The new perspectives of these researchers have enabled them to deconstruct the historical paradigms of the Western individual using the tools of revision and displacement, and taking ownership of the very intellectual apparatus that produced Western historical knowledge. The main outcome of this important critical-theoretical current has been the disarticulation of the dominator/dominated relationship that marked the conceptual views of the more recent past. The movement has led to the formulation of a more diverse and plural history in which those groups previously excluded by hegemonic discourse have become participants in the process.

“What new centrifugal forces emerge in the culture below the line of the equator? What outcomes have inclusion policies had? What new schema of power have emerged with the inscription of the South on the global artistic map? How much can artistic practice aim to

¹¹ The current number of disappeared prisoners is estimated at 1,248 individuals and their remains have still not been located. This group includes 127 foreign citizens, 79 Mapuche, and 54 individuals who were children when they were taken into custody.

relate with the decolonization project?”¹² The Mexican art critic, curator, and historian Cuauhtémoc Medina posed a series of questions to produce an overview of the concrete impact of Latin American art on the global scene in the last twenty years. The South is using this cultural counteroffensive to achieve the critical, geographical, historical, and political reconsideration of the narrative of modern and contemporary art.

The example of *Poetics and Politics* curated by Catherine David (documenta X, 1997) can also be drawn into this reconsideration of the political dimension of art. In this sense “. . . today, more than ever, contemporary aesthetic practices have to open the space of the political wherever that may be, in recent years, it has been emptied of the political. Politics cannot be defined only as the mere management of resources and administration in the hands of the institutions, as though it were only the dominion of professional ‘politicians,’ but rather as the complex negotiation of the common space in the hands of its actors and direct protagonists.”¹³ This common space is never fixed, but rather mobile, homogenization- and closure-resistant: contemporary art practices make it visible and comprehensive despite its complexity. This provides a concrete base for the word *dislocación* as an act of generation through which we can approach our local and global reality. Finally, this is why my interest is not in displaying finished works of art but rather the aesthetic processes, why in artistic exploration I return to certain problematical issues, where the work is not reduced merely to the moment of exhibition, but is exhibited within the context of the research: this is the breadth of the term *dislocación*.

Curatorship as Essay

¹² Cuauhtémoc Medina in *Séptimo Simposio Internacional de Teoría sobre Arte Contemporáneo*, Mexico City, January 29, 2009. Panel I: *El otro hoy: a dos décadas de la emergencia postcolonial*, Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco.

¹³ Catherine David, curator, *Poetics and Politics*, documenta X (Kassel, 1997).

If I speak of my curatorship in terms of writing an essay it is because the arrangement and choice of the works and locations was the point of departure through the term *dislocación* as the exhibition concept. As I received and analyzed proposals from the artists, and with progressive confirmation of the locations available, I began to position the works according to the spatial properties available in the institutions. From my perspective as an essayist, I recomposed the problematical issues of identity and geopolitics that interrogate and dialecticize the space and location of the subject with their ‘story’ within the fragmenting ‘history’—‘rhyming’ and narrating on a time line, forming a fabric of questioning within a thematic body. The essay form allows me to create unseen spaces for reflection and transition. These spaces generate an untold truth, something that is found among the images, between the sequences, between the spaces of transition, between the objects and temporal spaces, and within the perception of the spectator. These invisible spaces of questioning appear through the recomposition of those elements supposedly not present between them and the frictions that these produce. *Dislocación* is perceived as a composition of fragments distributed in a cadence of time and space for reflection, relocating various artistic explorations that form a composite whole when added together. In *Dislocación* I show disarticulated themes that are produced by local as well as global fractures between the economic, social, cultural, and political systems. The *Dislocación* exhibition is conceived as moving between one place and another, between one theme and another. In the course of designing and reflecting, a type of schema was incorporated, proposed by the investigation of the dislocation theme by the artists in various locations around the city of Santiago de Chile.

Dislocación opened with an exploration by Voluspa Jarpa entitled *La biblioteca de la no-historia*, a work referring to CIA documents returned as declassified to Chile (ill. p. ##). This work consists of a library of history books based on declassified CIA files, referring to the historical period of 1968 to 1991 and known as the “Chile Declassification Project.” This

work involved editing and selection that consisted of the review of 10,000 files, which were reclassified on the basis of two factors in consideration of their main material characteristics between information and the slur of censorship.

Non-history is also present in the psyche and traumas of individuals, as is reflected in *Cuenta regresiva / 11.09.2006* by Lotty Rosenfeld, a work that contains discourses from the visual arts, literary fiction, theater, and cinema (ill. p. ##). The piece emanates from those non-official locations where violence takes place, marked by the history of the dictatorship in Chile. This work was produced in 2005, on the basis of a script by Diamela Eltit, with themes including violence, threat, death, and destruction that are shown in the suffering, sleep, and linguistic disturbances of each of the characters culminating as a form of dementia.

The video-essay by Sylvie Boisseau and Frank Westermeyer entitled *Y con ansias están esperando los barcos que traerán los nuevos hermanos a sus costas* (ill. p. ##) sees the artists (French and German) investigating territorial issues in southern Chile between the Mapuche and the German colonists. They question the initial images produced of the South of Chile by the German Romantic painter Carl Alexander Simon and signed by Vicente Pérez Rosales (the Chilean politician responsible for the colonization project that brought German immigrants to the south of Chile). This work explores the causes of colonization and uncovers how migration was negotiated and propagated through romantic images of the Southern Chilean landscape. Colonization works through various strategies to appropriate and transform what is “yours” into that of the “Other.” We can see this happen with the economy in a globalization process that takes advantage of the political and economic imbalances of developing countries—as was the case in Chile in 1973. RELAX (chiarenza & hauser & co) explored the various kinds of transactions underway in current economics, morals, and ethics. Their installation, *invest & drawwipe*, is based on a notice published in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on September 21, 1973 (“Chile: Jetzt

investieren!” or Chile: Invest now!) just ten days after the military coup, and RELAX (chiarenza & hauser & co) starts the exploration process by declaring that demarcations are limits with different meanings (ill. p. ##). Such demarcations are mainly visible on maps in the form of frontiers, but they also exist in contracts and laws where their significance impacts on ethics and morals.

With my own installation consisting of two projections of interviews and landscapes, *Arica y norte de Chile no lugar y lugar de todos*, I take a thematic approach to the identity, cultural, and economic issues of the north of Chile in the face of the effects of globalization (ill. p. ##). In Arica and Iquique, I held various interviews with sociologists, anthropologists, economists, teachers, and local people. The cities of Iquique and Arica were only made Chilean territory in 1884 and 1929 respectively. This is where I asked the question: Is there such a thing as a ‘regional identity’? I investigate the components of a possible collective memory through various historical events in the north of Chile, through the relationship between the personal and the political, the individual and the collective, the public and the private, the local and the global. The territorial problems and issues of belonging in terms of identity are even further complicated by the extermination of ethnic groups and consequently the reduction of indigenous languages. In *Lengua izquierda* (ill. p. ##) Bernardo Oyarzún has an installation of thirteen screens showing phrases and words in various indigenous and colonizing languages. This work is centered on inscribing the indigenous languages as ‘sleeping languages of the left’ under the dominion of European cultural colonization. The artist studies the contradictions in a way that goes far beyond the desire to vindicate any identity, declaring throughout the process that: “. . . I have spoken my left language, the absurd language that has slept through the event. The suffocation of my hidden language, resistant, leftist, of an ancient epistemological phalanx, survives the hegemony and insistent logic of other languages that go further, very far beyond . . . the simple naming of things.”

With *Radio ideal* (ill. p. ##) Mario Navarro states analysis and proof of a type of reconstruction that considers the entire *Dislocación* exhibition as infinite substations that allow us to comprehend dislocation as a form of decentralization across various points of the city, building a mobile broadcasting center and producing Internet radio transmissions, podcasts, and live interviews on his independent amplification system at various locations around the city of Santiago. Mario Navarro included various forms of exploration used in works by the artists in the *Dislocación* exhibition, proposing a series of reprocessed works on the basis of discarded materials or elements participating artists had not considered useful within their own products.

In the Galería Metropolitana, Thomas Hirschhorn's *Made in Tunnel of Politics* sees a Ford Ranger pickup truck cut in half and put together again with sticky tape—a material that is used recurrently throughout his work (ill. p. ##). With this operation, the pickup truck becomes a dislocated object and a form: a declaration on the difficult outcome of the complex history of Chile. The artist declares: “I want to complete a work where precariousness finds the meaning of life, resistance, invention, cruelty, creativity, universality, a sharp edge. I think the form of the pickup truck cut in half and joined again provides an understanding of how with precariousness I can confront History and the stories for which a person is responsible, even when there is no responsibility. Assuming the responsibility for the History for which you were not responsible. I can only do that when the form of this—precariousness—is in agreement with the World. The World in which I am living—the whole World. Chile on this occasion, but also the whole World. The only world we have, the only Chile we have.”

In Juan Castillo's *Campos de luz* (ill. p. ##) the artist and two members of the Señal 3 La Victoria television channel built an installation made up of interviews with various people, who were asked what they understood by the term ‘dislocation.’ The work consisted of two stages: in the first week of the exhibition, a truck toured various parts of the city of Santiago

showing recordings of the interviews while Señal 3 La Victoria also broadcast conversations with artists and local people on aspects of their understanding of the exploration undertaken in *Dislocación*; in the second stage, the facade, pavement, and entrance of the Señal 3 La Victoria offices were used to display portraits of the interviewees.

Alfredo Jaar presents *La cordillera de los Andes (CB)* a photographic installation in homage to Clotario Blest, the Chilean union leader (ill. p. ##). Blest was photographed by Jaar in the eighties. In this memorable photography session, the artist suggested Clotario Blest should represent the sinuous nature of the Andean Mountain Range as, in the opinion of the artist, Blest's presence, solidity, and majesty represented a human version of the Andes. Jaar himself stated: “. . . it is impossible to conceive of the dignity and achievements of the Chilean worker without Clotario Blest. He is an integral part of the social landscape just as the Andes form part of our urban landscape.” The presence of Clotario Blest as a photographic model shows the relevance of the dislocations held in the recent history of the country, as he represents the figurehead for a group of demands and social campaigns undertaken in recent decades in Chile.

The history of social housing is the history of Chile. The *Decreto público no habitable* by 000 Estudio, forms part of historic and present concerns in relation to living space (ill. p. ##).

Through his invitation to *Dislocación*, Javier Rioseco was able to cross over the frontier of architecture into contemporary art. This work is built on the basis of the most common measurements used for shared living space in social housing (a living-dining room) in Chile: some twelve square meters. An average Chilean family of five people lives together in this space. This work provides an opening to reflect on how we view each other and come together, how we think of those who lack opportunities, who live in stigmatized and impoverished surroundings. Meanwhile, it also shows us the reality, producing a dislocated space, a space that is created by each spectator as they move through the installation.

Deterritorialization, problems with identity, memory, and history are serious problems that are not exclusively a Chilean concern, and the inclusion of the *Sahara Chronicle* by Ursula Biemann is important in relation to frontiers we must constantly cross today because of economic and global perspectives (ill. p. ##). This work is a collection of short videos that explore post-colonialism and document the current sub-Saharan exodus towards Europe and that analyze the politics of mobility and containment in current global geopolitics. The modalities and logistics of the migration system in the Sahara are examined in contrast with those networks facilitated by the material infrastructure such as roads. The network of trans-Saharan migration is an active process of spaciality created on the basis of psychic activities of anxiety, fantasy, and desire, a fabric woven from obstinacy and vulnerability.

Made in Chile by Josep-María Martín demonstrates the importance of becoming aware of what is not achievable (ill. p. ##). His exploration for *Dislocación* was based on the reconstruction, creation, and design of a prototype human habitat for Chile. His objectives were to capitalize on the experience of the Un Techo para Chile Foundation and its design for emergency housing that can become long-term residential units in the joint creation of a new type of housing. In *Made in Chile* the artist aimed to create open a process of research and reflection on human development to consider the situation of habitat and its socio-economic context. The entire premise runs under the need to rethink social space and differentiate the urban from rural environment, exploring these on the basis of transversality and horizontality. The project passed through the states of consideration of social space as a laboratory where new relational contracts are agreed and negotiated, creating negotiated proposals with people and agents implied in the project, putting into practice and testing the proposals, and relating these to the research themes; stages that allowed for deep reflection on the contemporary world and its aesthetic and economic translation.

Lastly, I decided to include an already completed work by Camilo Yáñez, *Estadio nacional 11.09.09 Santiago, Chile* (ill. p. ##), alongside the selection of aesthetic explorations that analyze and question the effects of globalization. In the words of the artist, this final work shows the National Stadium of Santiago de Chile as it was dismantled and demolished for remodeling and fresh inauguration in September 2010. The artist takes a cinematographic approach, through a slow traveling shot where the camera films and becomes part of the history of the location showing details of the architecture as filmed on September 11, 2009; thirty-six years after a military coup that converted the National Stadium into the biggest concentration camp in the country.

To express my aim better, I will cite a fragment by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière that expresses my feeling for the spatial work in the various locations where *Dislocación* is being staged: “. . . it is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.”¹⁴

14 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. and intro. Gabriel Rockhill (London, 2006), p. 13.