Social demands and historiographical production. Writing on the history of the brazilian student movement from two experiences in the brazilian present time

Demandas sociales y producción historiográfica. Escribiendo sobre la Historia del Movimiento Estudiantil brasileño a partir de dos experiencias del Brasil actual

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Abstract: The article shows how a significant part of Brazilian historiographical production on the student movement from the 2000s onwards was performed thanks (and in response) to two different moments in our recent history that resulted from the social demand for memory, truth, and justice: the first, the development of the Student Movement Memory Project (Projeto Memória do Movimento Estudantil) in the early 2000s; the

Resumen: El artículo presenta cómo una parte significativa de la producción historiográfica brasileña sobre el movimiento estudiantil, a partir de la década de 2000, se produjo beneficiándose de (y en respuesta a) dos momentos-acontecimientos importantes diferentes que resultaron de la demanda social de memoria, verdad y justicia, a saber: el primero, a principios de la década de 2000, el Proyecto Memoria del Movimiento Estu-
second is the period since the establishment of the National Truth Commission (Comissão Nacional da Verdade), in 2012. In order to do this, there is an introductory overview of the first works from the 1980s, focusing on the study of the National Union of Students in the 1960s, to show how research on SM became more comprehensive (and more in-depth), especially through the expansion and opening of archives, notably in the construction of oral collections. The main analysis focuses on the presentation and development of these two initiatives. Finally, the article makes some considerations about this overview by signaling some connections between social demand and historiographic production, which is characteristic of the history of the present time, and pointing out themes and study objects that are still worthy of further investigation.

Key words: Brazilian student movement; historiography; oral history.

A maxim of the historiography of the Brazilian student movement\(^1\) (SM) states the following: despite numerous course conclusion monographs and several master’s dissertations, there are only a few doctoral theses on the topic and only a handful of researchers who keep working on it during their academic careers. Like the period of student activism itself, the time researchers tend to focus on this subject seems to be ephemeral. The somewhat expected result is that, among social movements\(^2\), works encompassing SM tend to lack dense reflections. Another difference is that the SM is also studied in other knowledge areas, such as Education and Social Sciences, which together have a greater production than the History field.

In this article, supported by my trajectory of more than two decades researching and working on the history of the Brazilian student movement, I aim to show how certain milestones that are deemed important and in which I had the opportunity to participate have enabled a shift in this landscape, as

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\(^1\) My understanding of the term “student movement” is that, despite being a single expression, it does not obliterate the plurality of its actions, languages, and experiences across time and Brazilian geography, taking into account the different competing currents that it encompasses. Thus, the movement is always understood in its plurality.

\(^2\) For example, there is a vast and consolidated production around the social history of labor and workers in Brazilian historiography. Many researchers dedicate their entire lives to this topic.
evidenced both by the vigor that SM historiography had in the current day and by the complexity of this object. That was due to the following: actions and events that brought attention to this topic; the opening of archives, notably those produced using oral history methodology; and the growing historiographical production in the field of history of the present time. Historians from this field are aware of how subjectivity and experience are both part and some of the strong points of their work. Thus, the topic of SM is joined by one of the ways how the history of the present time is guided and operated: social demands. Historians of the present time have an ethical and civic commitment that drives their writing.

Therefore, looking at these two decades under a telescope might help to notice advances in the field and where research is heading, on top of reflecting on what is yet to be done. Like any perspective, this will also be partial and will not encompass the entire production on SM. Quite the opposite. Above all, it will be limited to a portion of the works produced within the scope of Post-Graduate Programs in History (Master’s and Ph.D.), as I believe that they encompass the heart of this production and are where most of the works and innovations are achieved, thus making them appropriate to assess the evolution of the topic.

This article is divided into an introduction, two main parts, and final considerations. These two parts refer to two experiences that arose from social demands and that I deem important because they help expand the research themes surrounding the topic. They were also chosen because of the number of new findings related to them, especially oral files. The first to be presented is the Student Movement Memory Project (Projeto Memória do Movimento Estudantil), carried out in the early 2000s. The second one is the enforcement of the Access to Information Act and the National Truth Commission, implemented at the end of 2011.

As researcher Carlos Menegozzo found, the bibliographical production on this topic is too dispersed and lacks a sufficiently broad and upda-
ted systematization effort. In the mid-1990s, Menegozzo worked on what he considered a real challenge: collecting all the bibliographical production regarding students’ political participation in Brazil. Over almost a decade, it established a list of more than 1,180 bibliographic references on the topic, published in Brazil and abroad in different formats between 1821 and 2003. Until the present day, the overwhelming concentration of works concerning the SM generally dealt with the actions of the national student entity, the National Student Union (União Nacional dos Estudantes, UNE)7, focused on the left-leaning youth of the 1960s. The book by journalist Arthur Poerner8, O poder jovem: história da participação política dos estudantes, was published precisely in the troubled year of 1968, and this work is to this day considered by activists as the “Bible” of the Brazilian SM. This book gave rise to a mythologized historiography of the history of the Brazilian SM, as pointed out later by historian José Saldanha9. In the 1970s, works on the subject had more emphasis on social sciences and education; from the 1980s onwards, more historiographical works began to emerge, notably João Roberto Mart-

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6 Most of the books from these periods are memorials, literary and journalistic in nature. Works with a more academic vein were published mainly from the 1960s and 1970s onwards in the social sciences.

7 Brazil had a late start on its university tradition, even when compared to its South American neighbors. The first Brazilian universities were founded in the 1930s and 1940s: the University of São Paulo, USP, in 1934, and the University of the Federal District in 1935. Medical Schools and Isolated Colleges were also established late in the country and date back to the 19th century. Unsurprisingly, when the universities were established in the country, so was the national student representation association, UNE, during Getúlio Vargas’s New State (1938). Since then, UNE has been the only student association with representatives across the entire country. Each Brazilian state has a State Student Union (União Estadual dos Estudantes, UEE), each University has an Academic Student Directory (Diretório Acadêmico dos Estudantes, DCE), and each course has an Academic Center (or Directory) (Centro Acadêmico, CA, or Diretório Acadêmico, DA). This vertical structure has been kept since the 1930s and is mostly comprised by left-wing parties. In 1964, the budding military dictatorship made UNE and student entities illegal. However, the SM found new forms of organization and, as soon as winds of redemocratization started to blow, the UNE was refounded in 1979. For more information see: Angélica Müller. O movimento estudantil na resistência à Ditadura Militar (1969-1979). Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2016.

8 The revolutionary, romantic tone of the time is imprinted in the work, which also presents premises from the communist party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro, PCB) that Poerner was affiliated to. According to the author, the main goal of O Poder Jovem is to show the importance of political participation, one of the principles of democracy. This participation should be enacted by youth assemblies. In 1968, with the signing of the Institutional Act Number Five, which among other arbitrary decisions enabled the enforcement of censorship in the country, O Poder Jovem was one of the first books to be censored.

ins Filho’s book *O movimento estudantil e a ditadura militar* (1964-1978), the result of his doctoral thesis that presents an in-depth look of the participation and engagement of the SM at the beginning of the military dictatorship.

Until then, few works had Oral History interviews as their source and/or object. Other books that stand out are the ones published on the “anniversary of 68”, in 1988 and in the following decades, which highlighted its protagonists, such as *1968: a paixão de uma utopia*, organized by Daniel Aarão Reis and Pedro de Morais, which features 15 interviews, which had its third edition in 2008. Of note: the first edition is from 1988. Oral history arrived in Brazil in the mid-1970s, especially thanks to vigorous work by the Center for Research and Documentation of Contemporary History of Brazil of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (*Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil-Fundação Getúlio Vargas*, CPDOC-FGV), and it was consolidated in the 1990s with the establishment of the Brazilian Association of Oral History (*Associação Brasileira de História Oral*, ABHO) in 1992. Other important publications, like the book *Usos e abusos da história oral*, organized by Janaína Amado and Marieta de Moraes Ferreira, from 1996, also contributed to this.

In an article published in the magazine created by ABHO, this author revisited the challenges and dilemmas of this methodology at the end of the 1990s. For the historian, amidst the increasing number of works at the time, oral history had three major lines of action: academic, community, and business.

Parallel to this growth in the usage of this methodology, in 1979, when the SM itself raised the issue of rebuilding the UNE, students understood producing a historical memory of the entity could be a weapon to help endure the military dictatorship. Thus, it is no coincidence that the military decided to tear down the UNE building in 1980, which had already been rebuilt after it was set on fire during the 1964 coup. According to the Union, since its archives were there during the fire, almost everything was destroyed, and the few scattered documents left were with former members. Understand-
ding the importance of memory in the identity of the student movement, UNE begins its attempt to reconquer its land plot at Praia do Flamengo, 132, in Rio de Janeiro, and “rebuilding” its history, headquarters, and memory.

In the 1980s, there were some actions with this goal in mind. Among them is the “Fontes para a História do Movimento Estudantil” project, developed at Unicamp and financed by CNPq and UNE. It was initially coordinated by Professor Marco Aurélio Garcia\(^\text{13}\) (1984-1988) and later by Professor Mirza Pellicciota\(^\text{14}\) (1988-1991). There was also an attempt to create the Honestino Guimarães Study Center (Centro de Estudos Honestino Guimarães, Cehog)\(^\text{15}\), based at the University of Brasília, which would be directed by a former president of the UNE, Gisela Mendonça. However, in the early 2000s, UNE sought partners to perform a large institutional memory project.

**The MME Project and its Oral Archives**

The result of an “unusual” partnership, the “Student Movement Memory Project” (Projeto Memória do Movimento Estudantil, PMME), was developed between 2004 and 2008. It was an initiative of UNE, the Roberto Marinho Foundation\(^\text{16}\), and the Museum of the Republic, with support from Petrobrás via the Culture Incentive Law\(^\text{17}\). The main goal was “recovering and preserving the memory and history of the Brazilian SM, thus contributing to new research and analysis as well as the formation of new generations of

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\(^{13}\) Vice-president of UNE in the 1960s who went into exile in 1970 in Uruguay and later in Chile and Panama. He helped found the Workers’ Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) in 1979. He was a Professor in the Department of History at Unicamp and held the position of Special Presidential Advisor for International Affairs during the mandates of Lula and Dilma Rousseff. He passed away in 2017.

\(^{14}\) A historian who at the time was working on her seminal Master’s dissertation about the student movement in the 1970s. Between 2000 and 2010, she wrote her Ph.D. thesis about a Trotskyist current in the student movement, Freedom and Fight (Liberdade e Luta). She is a freelance historian who works with heritage issues.

\(^{15}\) Honestino Guimarães was head of UNE between 1971 and 1973, when he was arrested, tortured, and killed by the forces of repression. Honestino’s corpse was never delivered to his family, therefore he is still classified as “disappeared due to political reasons”.

\(^{16}\) Foundation named after the owner of the largest Brazilian media conglomerate, Organizações Globo, whose television broadcast permit was granted during the dictatorship and, by the end of it, was already the largest television network in the country. Roberto Marinho openly supported the military regime.

\(^{17}\) Law No. 8,313, of December 23, 1991. Federal law to encourage, safeguard, and provide incentives to the Brazilian cultural heritage.
Brazilians”18. To this end, a team of multidisciplinary researchers led by university professors Carla Siqueira, from the Communication Program of PUC-Rio; Ana Paula Goulart Ribeiro, from the Communication Program of UFRJ; and myself, who had recently left the position of Director of Science and Technology at UNE and was joining the Master’s Program in History of the State University of Rio de Janeiro, studying the foundation and activities of UNE in the 1930s and 40s19.

One of the three axes developed was the implementation of an Oral History program20, which resulted in 102 interviews with people who were part of the history of the SM that were part of a research initiative carried out in 2004 and 2005. The choice of names followed some criteria, including a time and region-based split of the interviewees, the presence of university-level and high-school activists, and contemplating different political currents simultaneously. Interviews with all former UNE presidents who were still alive also took priority. Over fifty interviews with activists who worked during the military dictatorship stand out among these. A bio for each interviewee was written based on research by the PMME team with primary and secondary sources; in some cases, there was a prior conversation with the interviewee. The researchers created a personalized script for each interviewee based on each bio and a bibliography about the period.

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19 Here, I have a personal remark that helps demonstrate this advancement in Brazilian historiography, albeit in temporal terms. When starting my Master’s degree in 2002, my initial idea was to study the “caras-pintadas” movement that led to the impeachment of President Fernando Collor in 1992. However, as it had only been 10 years since it had happened, I was advised against writing about such recent events, which could be seen as a more journalistic endeavor. Today, my students at the Universidade Federal Fluminense investigate the “journeys of 2013” and how the SM faced the Bolsonaro government (2018-2022). About my dissertation: Angélica Müller. Entre o Estado e a sociedade: a política de juventude de Vargas e a fundação e atuação da UNE durante o Estado Novo. 2005. Dissertation (Masters in History) - Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2005.

20 A source guide was also created with a corresponding archive, comprising documents donated by former activists and some institutions. There will be a brief explanation of the methodology used in the interviews and the products derived from them. There will be a brief explanation of the methodology used in the interviews and the products derived from them. For more references on the MME project, its different activities, the complete list of interviewees and its outcome, see: Angélica Müller. Projeto Memória do Movimento Estudantil: relato de uma experiência. In: Angelica Müller; Inez Stampa; Marco Aurélio Santana. (ed.). *Documentar a ditadura*: arquivos da repressão e da resistência. 1st edition, Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 2014, p. 152-172.
The vast majority of the interviews were recorded in studios in the cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Brasília, in audio and video format. The PMME team chose to work with life stories, seeking to account for the interviewee’s trajectory from childhood/teenage years until the moment of recording the interview. The trajectories were described based on the surrounding political, socioeconomic, and cultural situations, thus creating a crossover between biography and history. The scripts were organized in chronological order, which, in the team’s view, would serve the purpose of chaining the interviewee’s memories.

Whenever possible, all interviews were performed by two interviewers and an initial set of questions about the interviewee’s family, background, and participation on the SM. The intent was to incorporate biographical data about the interviewee to understand their trajectory and also provide a backdrop so they could present their narrative more easily. In addition to questions about their time as student activists, some questions approached their professional and personal lives. In the final set, all interviews included a standard question about the influence the SM had on the person’s life. Finally, the interviewees were asked to provide their opinion on the project about the memory of the Brazilian student movement.

Despite following a previously defined script, the interviewers had the flexibility to add new topics that emerged as the interview progressed. We tried to make as few interruptions as possible during the interviews, allowing the interviewee to follow their train of thought, freely associate ideas, and chain past events. On the other hand, the interviewers were “passive listeners.” They intervened by requesting more explanations, asking about specific topics, or raising new questions whenever necessary. The questions sought to make the interviewees recall their experiences and how the social subjects thought and acted during the events. The goal of the interviews was to present data on the history of the Brazilian student movement that were not present in written and iconographic archives precisely because of the possibility that oral narratives enabled: to offer different versions and new information on specific topics from the perspective of the people who lived through them.

In the second stage of the project (2006-2008), the idea was to create products based on the interviews. With this in mind, more than 250 hours of videos were sent to documentary filmmaker Sílvio Tendler, who used this wide range of audiovisual material to make two medium-length films: Ou

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ficar a pátria livre ou morrer pelo Brasil and O afeto que se encerra em nosso peito juvenil, which are available on YouTube. The same interviews were also sent to historian Maria Paula Araújo (UFRJ), who wrote the book Memórias estudantis: da fundação da UNE aos nossos dias (2007), which narrates the period from the 1930s to the “Lula Era” with help by the memories of former activists. Above all, the interviews were a source that the author used to write an approachable book capable of reaching a wider audience.

The book became a core reference for SM researchers and the Project’s interviews were used as sources for several other dissertations\(^22\), theses\(^23\), and books\(^24\). This is not an exhaustive list, nor are the other references presented throughout this article. One of the main standouts is Aline Portilho’s master’s thesis: Praia do Flamengo 132: memória, reparação e patrimonialização da União Nacional dos Estudantes\(^25\). One of its chapters was dedicated


to PMME, especially to the Oral History work performed by the team. For Portilho, the project tried to create “an official history of the UNE”, which does not correspond to the goal of systematizing and producing sources about the history of the SM nor to the goals of the authors of the products based on the interviews.

The products based on the PMME were created by professionals renowned in their respective fields, and the interviews were used as sources for several academic works. Therefore, I propose another way of seeing the PMME – as a public history action. Academic knowledge can be structured by leveraging social and political demands to create products for the general public. In other words, it is a project with experts from various fields (including History, Journalism, and Social Sciences) that employed different media and technologies to create distinct products, helping spread knowledge in various media and languages to different audiences. Ultimately, the PMME can be considered, as Juniele Rabelo Almeida and Marta Rovai point out, a new perspective on knowledge and practice on how to make History and help preserve material culture (in this case, the archives), while also motivating the community to reflect on its history and the relationship between past and present, by means of making the past a live dimension of the present.  

Since the 2000s, academic texts about SM that use interviews performed using oral history techniques have become a constant. Beyond the one mentioned above, we can include the dissertations by Mansan and Pinto, who produced a series of interviews and corresponding data. A few studies have focused on reflecting on the memory of the SM or specific student groups. However, a work that deserves special attention is the thesis by


historian Gislene Lacerda, presented before the UFRJ in 2015 and published in book format in 2017: *A História em disputa: o Movimento Estudantil e a transição democrática brasileira*. This thesis deals with the role of the Brazilian SM in the country’s path towards democracy, highlighting its different trends and pioneering spirit that led to street protests in 1977, in addition to the reconstruction of the UNE in 1979 and the mobilizations alongside other social movements during the period. However, as the author demonstrates, for these activists of the 1970s, their recognition is still hindered in favor of a memory centered around the revolutionary generation of 1968. Such memory was supposedly created by the 1968 activists and reinforced by the transition model agreed and endorsed by the State policies regarding memory after the 1988 Constitution. The thesis relies on a vast range of documents and 20 interviews the author performed with former activists. These two works, by Portilho and Lacerda respectively, are a more in-depth reflection on the history of the SM, as they investigate the constitution of memory and myths, typical of narratives that use interviews solely as sources.

At the end of the first decade of the 2000s, two renowned Brazilian historians dedicated their research to a broader topic: the university environment, including the student environment. Marieta de Moraes Ferreira addressed a precise object: the development of the History course at the former University of the Federal District, which would later become the University of Brazil and, finally, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). However, the focus was the faculty trajectory. The students’ movement was noticeable from the 1960s onwards, especially since some, like Francisco Falcon, became teachers. In the book’s second part, the historian presents the interviews

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30 I systematized the struggles over memory and historiographical production around the SM resistance against the 21 years of military dictatorship, which enabled me to reflect on a new chronology for the “1968 era” of the Brazilian SM. I concluded that there was an initial historiographical production, led mostly by former activists who endorsed the revolutionary idea as the only means of understanding the 68 era. The subsequent works also adopted the same tone. I try to investigate this issue further by presenting other perspectives, such as counterculture and different modes of resistance, such as peaceful resistance, expanding this temporality. For more information, see: Angélica Müller. “O acontecimento 1968” brasileiro: reflexões acerca de uma periodização da cultura de contestação estudantil. *Revista de História* (USP), v. 180, p. 1-21, 2021.

she performed, thus establishing them as a primary source. The second work that deserves special attention was extensive research in the archives of the National Information System (Sistema Nacional de Informações, SNI) coupled with oral history interviews: *As universidades e o regime militar* by Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta. The author analyzed how universities behaved during the dictatorship and outlined major aspects of Brazilian political culture using concepts such as resistance, adherence, and accommodation. Despite not focusing on the SM, these contributions enabled a deeper understanding of its research object by expanding the understanding of the university environment. That allowed new works to reflect on how the SM is organized from its own environment, considering not only its actions but further deepening the relationship between university policies and the various agents that are part of this scenario. And this happened at the same time that another important milestone in this field was attracting the attention of Brazilian society.

The CNV and University Committees: the creation of new oral sources and the consolidation of the history of the present time

Nearly 30 years after the end of the military dictatorship, in November 2011, President Dilma Rousseff established the National Truth Commission (*Comissão Nacional da Verdade, CNV*) thus sanctioning the Access to Information Act (*Lei de Acesso à Informação*) and answering a demand from human rights movements and the families of diseases and missing political agents, as well as other individuals fighting for the tortuous transitional justice process in Brazil. Despite the quarrels between academics in favor and against historians participating in the Commission, the CNV enabled countless other truth commissions to be established nationwide, in different formats and levels (state, municipal, and in the name of various associations and unions). Inside universities, that was no different - Several of them created

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33 Law No. 12,528, of November 18, 2011.

34 Law No. 12,527, of November 18, 2011.


36 This issue and other ones regarding the role of historians in the CNV and university committees are further investigated in: MULLER, 2020.
their truth commissions, and 15 partnered with the CNV\textsuperscript{37}, whose work I was able to facilitate during 2014 as a senior researcher\textsuperscript{38}. The main goal of the work between the CNV and university committees was to write a chapter about severe violations in universities, included in Volume II of the report\textsuperscript{39}.

Here, I will focus on the work of these commissions, which produced hundreds of interviews, depositions, and hearings (in Portuguese, “oitiva”)\textsuperscript{40}. Firstly, it is necessary to tackle the term “oitiva”. Although the researchers tended to use other terms like “entrevistas” (interviews) or “depoimentos” (depositions) when executing the work, the term “oitiva” (hearing) was chosen by the CNV due to its legal tone, i.e., a hearing for a witness involved in the process. On top of establishing the “historical truth” provided for in the act that created the CNV, the term “oitiva” (which is at least controversial for historians) shows that the members of the CNV were seeking to use the report to constitute a “legal truth”\textsuperscript{41}. It is possible that, at its origin, this decision by the CNV could be guided by a sense of impartiality, of “building evidence”, performing a critical analysis of the “credibility of the witnesses”, issues specific to the work of a judge; however, as Carlo Ginzburg\textsuperscript{42} states, this is also the work of a historian, although in an entirely different way, since only the former enacts judgment. There was a cross of legal argumentation and a historical approach, each with distinct aspects, given that the work followed political, social, and moral guiding threads\textsuperscript{43}.

In the vast majority of cases, the interviewees were professors and students who were persecuted for being part of the resistance against the military regime. Some committees managed to interview employees who worked during the period, particularly the UFRN, which heard depositions from two

\textsuperscript{37} Fundação Escola de Sociologia e Política de SP (FespSP), PUC/SP, UnB, Unesp, Unicamp, Unifesp, Unioeste, UFBA, UFC/UECE, Ufes, UFPA, UFPR, UFRJ, UFRN, and USP.


\textsuperscript{39} For more information about the work of the CNV and university committees, see Müller 2019.

\textsuperscript{40} It is important to remember that the CNV alone had more than a thousand hearings.

\textsuperscript{41} According to the CNV coordinator, jurist, and USP Professor Pedro Dallari (2016). In this interview, Dallari presents his view on the CNV work and discusses the issue of historical truth and legal truth.


employees of the Security and Information Advisory (Assessoria de Segurança e Informação, ASI), the part of the Ministry of Education (Ministério da Educação, MEC) responsible for monitoring and producing information about students, faculty, and staff members to be sent to the National Information System (Sistema Nacional de Informações, SISNI). To provide a brief overview of how these commissions operated and used various oral history techniques, I would like to detail the work of two of them to highlight not only how rich their contributions were but, above all, to show how such results could be used in distinct activities: primarily playing a social role, but also serving as the initial groundwork that their reports could be built upon. In addition to their social role, the interviews were used in academic works, as shown below.

The Truth Commission of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (Comissão da Verdade da Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, CVUfes) was established under Ordinance No. 478 of March 2013 to recover documents and memories from the military dictatorship, particularly the ones regarding students and public servants from Ufes; this was done by collecting depositions of people from the university community who suffered political repression. The activities of the commission were split into two work groups: Collection and Interviews, which, according to the report, were called “testimonial evidence hearings” (“oitivas de provas testemunhais”) and were performed with 15 witnesses. These “hearings” were divided between “reserved depositions” (“depoimentos reservados”) and “public declarations” (“audiências públicas”), as prescribed by the CNV template. The reports included only a few references regarding the methodology used during oral testimonies. The CNV report states that:

The deposition collection methodology used by the CNV initially involved defining, based on research by workgroups and guidance by partner truth commissions and societal entities, who the Commission should hear. Thus, state, municipal, sectoral, or union truth commissions (on top of the families of victims and memory, truth, and justice people committees) suggested the names of people the CNV should hear. After the names were chosen, the next step was to collect information about each person in public databases. A list of questions was created for each case.

According to a note about the methodology presented by the Commission of the University of Brasília (UnB), the interviews had clear benefits:

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The second line of work, i.e., the private depositions collected in public hearings, proved irreplaceable. Written documents rarely reveal vivid memories, personal journeys, ideals, losses, pains, and joys. Lives pulse under the apparently impersonal chain of events. The testimonies are also very rich in the sense of revealing political options and differences, as well as the friendship bonds established at the time. Every point where power is exercised is also one of resistance. Moreover, the reported memories brought new and substantial information, e.g., the backdrop on which the documents found in the archives were created. This is major because, commonly, in official documents, statements of people deemed “subversive” are captured and adapted according to the interests of agents of State crimes. What is less important but should not be ignored is how testimonies can help fill gaps, e.g., dates, a missing name, or stories that the repression agent did not want, could not, or did not know how to tell.\(^47\)

In the 363 pages of the UnB Commission report\(^48\), which included the possibility of analyzing documents from the depths of its ASI (one of the only remaining ones), the 47 depositions were prominent and were a reaffirmation for the witnesses by defining who played the roles of victims and perpetrators of violations. This is the case of Euclides Pirineus, punished under Decree 477 in 1969, who recalled the persecution he suffered by Captan at Sea José Carlos Azevedo, who was Vice-Rector and later became Rector of the University:

UnB was going through difficult times. The student movement no longer had its comrades: Honestino was being persecuted and was no longer there, and by then, Prates had also left. So, the few people who stayed tried to keep the student struggle alive, I, Hélio Doyle, Maninha, and Ivonette. I was just a student leader who fought with other comrades for some university freedoms so that UnB would not be militarized and turned into military barracks.\(^49\)

Excerpts from the interviews produced by the State Truth Committee (Comissão Estadual da Verdade, CEV) of the Federal University of Espírito Santo also appear in the report. A good example is Marcelo Paes Barreto, who gave a “reserved deposition”. Marcelo was the son of Rector Manuel Xavier Paes Barreto Filho, who was dismissed from the university shortly after the coup and was a friend of João Goulart. Marcelo also remembered another major character in the history of the UFES during the dictatorship, who later became Head of the UFES ASI: Alberto Monteiro. According to the report, Marcelo stated: “He was a coward. That’s what those people, they report, (...)”

\(^{47}\) CATMV UnB Report, 2016, p. 27.

\(^{48}\) The UnB created a website for the committee with the material they worked on, the entire report, deposition videos, reports, etc.: http://www.comissaoverdade.unb.br

\(^{49}\) CATMV UnB Report, 2016, p. 141
I remember one time when he came into the house, and my mother yelled at him: ‘What are you doing? Why are you reporting my husband?’

The intent is to highlight the importance and potential of the material produced by the commissions, which undoubtedly deserves a careful critical analysis by the historians who choose to analyze them. The immense effort of these university truth commissions provided access to information about a little-known facet of the military dictatorship’s history, which had significant repercussions. The Federal University of Espírito Santo was an exemplary case because of what the actions of the Commission enabled in the scientific field: there have been five dissertations on the University and the local student movement using the documents produced, in addition to two theses.

**Final notes**

The two experiences narrated herein showcase how the “memorial boom” that began in the 1980s and 1990s was important to rally agents and institutions in Brazil that advocated for the ideals of memory, truth, and justice—pillars of transitional justice—and how they managed, from the 2000s onwards, to perform actions geared towards fulfilling these demands. First of all, for the student entity that took it upon itself to build and make available

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a documentary corpus –notably an oral one– the development of the Student Movement Memory Project had noticeable effects in expanding knowledge and studies on the topic. Many of these studies even used the sources from the project. The same happened in the CNV process, albeit in a much smaller scale, since this moment was a turning point\textsuperscript{53} in the historiography of the history of the present time in Brazil, and topics surrounding the student movement and universities (among others) deserve to be highlighted.

Since the work of the National Truth Commission has finished\textsuperscript{54}, interest in the topic in academia has greatly increased, particularly in the field of History. Proof of this is the Thematic Symposium of the National History Association (Associação Nacional de História, Anpuh), “Universities and the student movement”, in its third edition in 2019. All editions were attended by over twenty researchers (including master’s students, doctoral students, and university professors) from all country regions and even researchers from Argentina. Much of the research uses oral sources (either through interviews by the authors or found in the various archives mentioned herein and others). Oral history, which has a strong presence in Brazilian historiography, is also a highlight in works on the SM. Truthfully, in their vast majority, these interviews act as a source, thus dictating a partial interpretation of the past. It is also a fact that a large part of this work is performed by young historians who have had some type of involvement in the SM and who, therefore, also have a preconceived view. That in itself is not an issue when this perspective is made explicit to the reader\textsuperscript{55}. Here I go back to where this article first started: the fleeting time a researcher has to focus on this topic. Deeper reflections require maturity and, at the end of day, time for study and research. But what I can attest to after two decades investigating this topic is that this is still a collective endeavor and that reflections on the history of the SM have become denser precisely due to advancements and more in-depth studies on historiography, be it by encompassing more varied topics and periods, or by the reflections that have emerged over time.

\textsuperscript{53} Marieta de Moraes Ferreira. Notas iniciais sobre a história do tempo presente e a historiografia no Brasil. Tempo e Argumento, 10 (23): 80-108, 2018.
\textsuperscript{54} It is important to note that several commissions kept working after the CNV, like the UFRJ Commission, which was renewed at the beginning of 2019.
\textsuperscript{55} In my History course senior research assignment, I wrote about my experience with activism and the history of the project that I was a part of and helped stay active during the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. That monograph became a book: Angélica Müller. Qualidade no ensino superior: a luta do Programa Especial de Treinamento. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2003.
It is also worth noting that, over fifteen years after the survey by Meenegozzo, the topic of student movements has become more plural, as shown by the examples presented herein. And regarding its depth, I believe that the field of memory studies and public uses of the past is an adequate way to further develop the historiography of the SM. As well as the analysis of the production of different types of oral testimonies produced by truth commissions and their differences in comparison to interviews produced directly for academic research, like Marieta Ferreira and Maud Chirio with Mariana Joffily have already done on investigations about the dictatorship.

The “CNV moment” opened the way for multiple narratives of the past, including denialist ones, to emerge in the present time. Greater proof of this was the election of Jair Bolsonaro, an enthusiast of the military dictatorship and former president Dilma Rousseff’s torturer, Colonel Brilhante Ustra. It is no coincidence that the current Brazilian scenario led researchers to focus on right-wing SM, which has already consolidated itself. Studies on the right-wing SM were practically non-existent until the beginning of this century, which shows that historians of the present time are not only driven by social demand; as agents of history, they feel compelled to interpret the facts that unfold before their eyes. As “masters of time”, the density of their reflections is showcased by the possible interpretations of the different temporalities of the present.


57 By “CNV moment”, I mean the period from the creation of the Access to Information Act (and the one that created the CNV in 2011), until the delivery of the Final Report, in December 2014. This “moment” encompasses the array of actions, characters, and movements, including activities from all other commissions created in the period that advocated for transitional justice in Brazil. It is my understanding that this “CNV moment” was a turning point not only in recent Brazilian history but also in our historiographical production about the present time, especially in what concerns reflections about our practice. For more information: Angélica Müller. Responsabilidade histórica, responsabilidade do historiador: o “momento CNV” como turn point da historiografia da história do tempo presente. Tempo e Argumento (mimeo).

Another critical point is that these studies are no longer restricted to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. That shows that Brazilian historiographical production is more decentralized and that there is no longer the need to go to large urban centers to research archives. However, above all, this is a testament to the fact that, in a continental country like Brazil, the experiences are multiple and encompass regional and local particularities; for this very reason, they deserve to be analyzed and highlighted, since the movement cannot be summarized in the actions of the UNE nor in the events that happened in large urban centers like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Several works have tackled periods before and after the military dictatorship. I believe these topics have also been motivated by the consoli-


dation of the history of the present time in Brazil and are a sign of how historiography is influenced by social demand (and vice versa). Although the current production is still centered to a large extent around the period of the military regime, the focus is no longer on the 1960s and the activism of the 1970s, even reaching the 1980s.

Student activism is now analyzed based on the broader context of the universities, thus enabling research around gender studies, university housing and also its relationship with culture, for example. The “other side” of resistance—repression—has now become a topic of interest, providing a more


in-depth reflection on the actions of students and the military\textsuperscript{67}. However, this topic deserves further study, given the number of sources (written and oral) that have emerged in the last ten years. It is true that the high school SM continues to be understudied in comparison to the university movement thus, it is another topic that can be further explored. Finally, there is a lack of works focused on an in-depth analysis of historiography presenting developments and setbacks, as well as potential research paths. In this sense, this article is an invitation.

Ultimately, besides the richness of oral sources, this plurality of approaches and topics is chock-full of potential. This is a testament to the wide diversity of works about the SM and the possibility of presenting more developed reflections, showing that, even with their respective specificities, social demand, and historiography are two parts of the same feedback loop.