**LEIGHTON — Down/South**

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**The Down/South Connection: An Archival History of Australia’s Relations with South American Dictatorships**

The Down/South connection is a collective research project to create a historiography of the political, economic, and cultural relations between Australia and South American dictatorships during the 1970s and 1980s. This investigation will explore these complex relations by uncovering new information and creating memories of the exchanges between these two (sub)continents, which share the same ocean and southern latitudes. The Down/South connection project aims to source, display, and analyse original materials that illustrate the interactions between these two regions during a period of historical conflict.

Traditional memory predominantly displays a history of solidarity with the persecuted victims, as well as tensions between the Australia government and the South American dictatorships. The researchers associated with this study will interrogate new and archived material that might challenge that reality. The project has two questions as its starting point: Why and how did the Australian government and its institutions and corporations keep functionalrelations with these dictatorships―regardless of which national political party was in power―from the early 1970s to the end of the 1980s?

This archaeological project, inspired by the need to open history in Australia, and also by Michel Foucault’s interrogation of archives, will review the overlooked connections between nations, historical phases, and social spheres (politics/economy/culture). Material from official, media, and personal archives can testify to the rise, stabilisation, and fall of these dictatorial governments, and provide fresh historiographical perspectives. As a collective initiative, the Down/South connection project seeks to actively interact with community groups, opening and sharing archives, and calling for contributions from citizens from both continents. The underlying purpose is to build a rich pool of material and create a registry. By sharing and displaying the material online, and through publications and documentations, the community will have access to new and original information. Participants also will be able to contribute material and help to answer the two questions that kick-start this project, and certainly those that will emerge during the inquiry.

**Call for Archival Contributions**

Latitudes, the Latin American Research Group Australia, extends an invitation to people locally, from Latin America and elsewhere, to share public or private archives. Those interested in joining this effort can contact us by email (latitudesgroup@gmail.com) to initiate the process of collaboration.

The call is to create a national and international network of researchers, academics, archivists, and citizens to liaise through Latitudes. Material can be integrated from places such as the Australian National Archive or the Historical Archive of the Uruguayan Foreign Relations Ministry, and include declassified material or summaries of documents. Besides institutional material, we call for the sharing of newspaper clips, media reports, photographs, videos, letters, or personal diaries to form a wide registry.

Researchers are welcomed and encouraged to create their own lines of investigation within the project. Students and academics can suggest interdisciplinary assessments of archival material. Outcomes can be discussed in future publications and public seminars. The goal is to develop collective answers to (or further interrogate) the issues arising from the relations between these geographical regions laid here, during the time addressed in this project. Always having in mind that this is a collective effort, Pablo Leighton and Fernando López, founders of Latitudes and authors of the original research idea*,* will work as general editors of all the material and content to be published. There are two initial lines of archival investigation and gathering of material:

*Archives of Media and Culture (Edited by Pablo Leighton)*

The Media and Culture line of investigation will explore material that illustrate and witness the history between the two regions during the 1970s and 1980s, in particular when politics become culture. This section will interrogate first how the imagesof the South American dictatorships and of Australia were manufactured and displayed in each territory. Some cases are the propagandistic campaigns that attempted to create a different picture of those dictatorships, and the Australian initiatives in South America―including political and economic ones―that had a major cultural impact.

*Political and Economic Relations (Edited by Fernando Lopez)*

This work will focus on the political and economic relationships between Australia and the anticommunist South American dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s. During that time, groups of citizens, political refugees, and the Australian labour movement marched on the streets of Sydney and Melbourne. They also conducted a successful and well-organized solidarity campaign with Chile and other Latin American countries. At first glance, the levels of solidarity displayed by the militant labour and student movements were not matched by most Australian government officials. Despite a number of official requests and measures from Canberra to stop or reduce the human rights abuses conducted by these dictatorships, the diplomatic relations between these countries continued. This project will rely on the unique perspective provided by archival documents and material to focus on specific features of these relationships, such as economic interests (private and public), diplomatic contacts, political exchanges, and business interactions between Australia and the region during this period. This interdisciplinary approach will evaluate these experiences to, as a first step, document and enhance the historiography of the two subcontinents during this intricate period. This historiography will enrich the field of Latin American studies in Australia and will provide a strong foundation to understand, build, and expand upon future political, economic, and cultural exchanges that will benefit both Australia and Latin America.