

# Designing Modernity:

## Seeing Urban Greenspace as Infrastructure in Buenos Aires

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Sustainability

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Designing Modernity

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# Abstract

This thesis looks at Parque 3 de Febrero and Parque Las Heras in Buenos Aires in an attempt to establish the role of public greenspace in ‘modernizing’ a city. Rather than looking at modernity as a stagnant collection of values and beliefs, this thesis will look at how modernity can be understood as an always-shifting condition, one which produces ‘ruptures’—as phrased by Arjun Appadurai—that divide a more progressive present from a past. This analysis begins with the establishment first of Parque 3 de Febrero, under the orders of Domingo Fausto Sarmiento in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as an attempt to civilize the city. This will be followed by examining the changes made by subsequent actors, including park steward Carlos Thays (representing *fin-de-siècle* landscape design trends), the Peronist era, and the military dictatorship. After tracing its changing function throughout history, the recent changes enacted by former Mayor—and current President—Mauricio Macri and the autonomous city government will be analyzed through the prism of infrastructure. In this sense, borrowing from Kregg Hetherington’s definition of infrastructure as ‘part of a series of complex processes to which one draws attention in a causal argument about linear history,’ we can see the parks as playing a crucial part of these processes. For Sarmiento, this meant using the parks as a symbol of taming the wild and backwards pampas, whereas for Macri it was an attempt to recast the parks as sites of connectivity and consumption, in line with the aims of the newly-started Ministry of Modernization in the Buenos Aires Autonomous Government. The information used to support this thesis was gleaned from historical sources, interviews, and mental maps provided by park-visitors, which help to flesh out the different activities taking place in the parks. Through these, along with ethnographic data, it is possible to see how the modernization project of Macri has been received and internalized. This will be possible by looking not only at how space is contested, but definitions of modern as well. As the site of many of these projects, the parks serve as a window into the ‘ruptures,’ so that it might be possible to understand more about the process of modernization itself.

Key words:

Modernization, modernity, public space, urban greenspace, rupture, perceiving space



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# 1 Mi Buenos Aires Querido

*“Lo que por ahora interesa conocer, es que los progresos de la civilización se acumulan sólo en Buenos Aires: la pampa es un malísimo conductor para llevarla y distribuirla en las provincias, y ya veremos lo que de aquí resulta.”*

*“What is interesting now is that the progress of civilization only appears in Buenos Aires: the pampas are a lousy route through which it is carried and delivered to the provinces...”<sup>1</sup>*

*– Domingo Fausto Sarmiento (1961 [1845]); Facundo: o Civilización y Barbarie;  
Written from Chile in exile*

July 2015 marked the elections for mayor of Buenos Aires. For the last two terms, the city had been under the government of Mauricio Macri, a former president of one of the largest football clubs in Buenos Aires, Boca Juniors. The seat was left open as he intended on running for the presidency of the nation just a few months later, which he would eventually win. My conversations with the people of Buenos Aires turned toward the impact of Macri on the cityscape, especially in relation to the parks. One afternoon I was talking to an expatriate, originally from North America, who had been living near Parque Patricios, one of the parks I originally intended on exploring. He remarked that the renovations during the past few years had completely changed the area, with overgrown and dangerous areas landscaped to spots of seclusion and to promote public gatherings. Everywhere was the ubiquitous yellow and black branding of the city government of Buenos Aires. According to him, this was due to Macri’s attempt to use parks as a public advertisement for his ability as mayor and suitability for the presidency. While not wanting to overemphasize the role of a few parks in Buenos Aires in relation to the national election, this was a theme which surfaced in different forms throughout my stay. Accordingly, I moved the aims of my research to match what the people were interested in discussing: most notably being the modernization of the city. In the park that I chose to focus on, Parque 3 de Febrero (and to a lesser extent its neighbor Parque las Heras), people were willing to discuss matters related to its recent renovations, the control that the city was exerting over these spaces, which was

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<sup>1</sup> Unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own.

ostensibly for lowering crime, as well as the changing function of greenspaces from places of leisure toward dynamic places of exercise and consumption. A useful theoretical lens for this thesis has been that of infrastructure, especially as used by the anthropologist Kregg Hetherington; while it will be described more thoroughly in chapter 3, the main idea is that parks exist as infrastructure beyond their “green” benefits, as a space which can communicate a move toward progress and modernity (Hetherington 2014). I was also curious as to whether there were any novel methods which could help to understand what people were saying, especially regarding the recently-developed field of participatory Geographic Information Systems (or GIS), an offshoot of participatory mapping and qualitative GIS.

As a result, this thesis explores the following research questions:

How has Parque 3 de Febrero existed as an infrastructural site that communicates progress and modernity throughout its history?

What is meant by modernity when discussing the forward march of progress in the case of Parque 3 de Febrero?

The first research question is tied in with one of the main goals of studies of infrastructure in this way: namely, what does it mean for infrastructure to communicate modernity? In order to discover this, it will first be necessary to establish that Parque 3 de Febrero has been used in the past to communicate these ideas of modernity. The reasoning for this research question is twofold; first, to explore how urban greenspace—using Parque 3 de Febrero as a case study—can be part of a city’s infrastructure beyond its well-studied public health benefits; and second, to look at what the Macri government has tried to implement as modernity.

The second research question revolves around the informants and how they understand modernity. This will use the aforementioned participatory GIS in order to look at how people perceive the park, which can be helpful when used alongside interviews where they discuss their feelings toward the recent changes and what they would like to see happen in the future. Additionally, this question covers some of the main conflicts which were discovered during the fieldwork, the contestation of space and the definition of modernity.



Map data: Ciudad de Buenos Aires

**Figure 1: Map of Parque 3 de Febrero and Parque las Heras**

1. Plaza Holanda and the Rosedal (Parque 3 de Febrero)
2. Botanical Gardens (Parque 3 de Febrero)
3. Parque las Heras
4. Bosques / Palermo Woods (Parque 3 de Febrero)
5. Planetario (Parque 3 de Febrero)

## 1.1 Introduction to the Field

One's first impression of a city is commonly obtained from ten thousand meters above, through a thick looking glass in an airplane's cabin. In the case of Buenos Aires, one is confronted with two realities depending on the side of one's seat. First, to the east, is the centrally-planned provincial capital of La Plata, named after the wide and meandering Río de la Plata (the La Plata River) which borders to the north. On the other, to the west, is the sprawling metropolis of Buenos Aires and its provincial satellites. The eye of a researcher is different than that of a tourist—my first role when visiting Buenos Aires in 2010 and 2011—and I noticed the lack of green from afar in a way which I had not in my previous two stays in the city.

After departing the international airport, located in the largely green suburb of Ezeiza, I was again struck by the endless scenes of concrete after crossing into the city limits and on into Palermo. It is quite easy to lose a sense of the city of Buenos Aires when this particular neighborhood is the reference point, as Palermo is home to many of the expats and the middle- to upper-class Porteños—people from Buenos Aires—with whom they are acquainted. I once heard an expat, surprised at running into somebody familiar with a classmate from far away, proclaim that the city is such a small place. He was quickly corrected: Buenos Aires is not small, Palermo is small. From years before, the parks in this particular neighborhood had occupied a space in my memory associated with relaxation and escape from the sounds, smells, and other senses of the city. More specifically, they belong to the larger complex/park known as 3 de Febrero. Located in Palermo, this complex is a place where different types of people from around the city and its metropolitan area come to enjoy the outdoors. A common conception is that this park is unique in the fact that people travel from all over the city to visit it, creating something other than a simple neighborhood park. In many ways this is due to its history as being symbolic of Argentina as a whole—the theme of chapter 4—but this conception will be critiqued further on.

In recent years there have been changes and developments in the parks, and the extenuating circumstances and resulting consequences are to be the subject of the thesis. Colleagues and friends have noted the inherent “advantages” of doing fieldwork in beautiful parks in a trendy neighborhood of a cosmopolitan and desirable city as reason enough, but digging below the surface of the (at times) immaculately manicured grass and its soil underneath have revealed much regarding civic governance, ideas of what

constitutes modernity, and the overlapping interests surrounding these parks. I was undoubtedly aided by the timing of this visit—specifically regarding the run-up to the mayoral and presidential elections. While by no means the centerpiece of debate or intrigue, the parks received attention during this process which has proven to be quite fruitful for this particular endeavor.

## **1.2 The City of Buenos Aires**

Buenos Aires is a city which does not lack in descriptions; it can be described as “seductive” or “barbaric” (Guano 2002, 181; Guano 2004), “anarchic” (Wilson 2003, 252), and with presentation in literature and film which displays it “as a singularly attractive, modern city” which is “linked to the often-noted unique status of Argentina among Latin American nations” (Leen 2008, 467). This status is usually its link to European culture, especially its resemblance to Paris (Guano 2002, 181; Wilson 2003, 252). On a tour in the old barrio of San Telmo, the local guide relayed an entertaining description of the people in Buenos Aires: “Porteños are Italians who speak Spanish but believe they are French.” Digging any deeper into this off-hand remark would be overly-essentializing, but it expresses an interesting intersection of the cultures which have had large influences and which also had a hand in shaping the city. When I recounted this to my own friends from Buenos Aires, some laughed and noted its veracity while others heartily disagreed. Nevertheless, I want to keep in mind that Buenos Aires is a city with at least one eye on Europe, possibly both. Ideas of design and aesthetic, according to popular opinion, are more likely to come from Paris than New York City or Miami, which differs slightly from other countries in South America. These tendencies and preferences are by no means homogenous, but many of my informants stressed this link, even if this was often done in order to highlight what they perceived to be pursuits of folly. This is not to say that Buenos Aires embodies any of these traits in an essential form, nor is it what the above authors have suggested, but it is to say that these themes are important not only to Porteños, but also to visitors and the media. The strong tension between these terms—at once seductive and barbaric, anarchic and modern—will be a theme throughout this thesis. The city as a location that is so often represented as modern in contrast to the rest of Latin America or, indeed,

the rest of the country, is a notion which will be used and engaged with in order to tease out what is meant by modernity in this particular context.

### **1.2.1 Buenos Aires as “Peripheral”**

While not wanting to generalize too much of Buenos Aires’ experience, it does share some things in common with regional neighbors. One of the most telling legacies of colonialism in many Latin American nations, Argentina included, was the production of cities which were designed to export materials and capital from the Americas to Europe—as a result, there were cores constructed to reflect European civic design styles while informal settlements sprung around the urban area (Agnotti 2013, 7). The size and importance of these cities meant that they came to dominate their regions and nations, leading to stress on urban infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> In the post-war years, a divide between the wealthier parts of North America and the poorer Latin America became evident, with commentators blaming the sheer size and unbalanced nature of urbanization in Latin America,<sup>3</sup> something which Tom Agnotti has called the urbanization fallacy (Agnotti 2013 and Agnotti 1996). This coincided with privatization and laissez-faire development strategies which were intended to disperse the population (Morse 1965), but in the end even supposedly positive developments such as community participation suffered severe problems in implementation.<sup>4</sup>

Although I was hesitant to take at face value the tales of the city’s uniqueness, it is true that Buenos Aires differs from Latin America in some ways. In an attempt to highlight the uniqueness of Buenos Aires, Agustina Martire puts an emphasis on its location toward the ‘periphery’ of urban design, and putting forward the idea that “planning and architectural discourse can be shaped by domestic locality... and ... while some outside planners and designers arrive in a foreign city with a collection of predetermined ideas, they often leave with their conception of planning having evolved as a result of their experience there” (Martire 2012, 259). Although Buenos Aires received European ideas, it maintained several differences from the European experience—being a large capital with a waterfront, in contrast to inland European capitals and smaller port cities—as well as from the Latin American experience, as a

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<sup>2</sup> See Agnotti 2013 and Agnotti 1996 for discussions on this stress.

<sup>3</sup> See Morse 1965.

<sup>4</sup> See Crot 2010 for an overview on failed models of urban planning in Buenos Aires from Barcelona and Porto Alegre.



city which never received the same level of colonial investment as Mexico City or Lima. This leads us to the story of Buenos Aires itself—what were its experiences? What were the concepts in design that were made unique to this city, and which played out through the development of the parks in this thesis? The subsequent chapters will be a discussion of these developments, which will prelude an examination of Parque 3 de Febrero’s role as a civilizing and modernizing agent.

### **1.2.2 The Barrio of Palermo**

The barrio where the vast majority of this research took place was that of Palermo—a physically large neighborhood which lies on the northern edge of the city, bordering the Río de la Plata. The barrio, while translating to neighborhood, carries with it a more significant connotation; the social scientists Alejandro Grimson and Ramiro Segura describe it as a “modality” that “demarcates contexts for interaction and social identification not analogously relevant in other societies and cultures” (Grimson and Segura 2016, 37). Palermo is without doubt an upper-class neighborhood, with trendy boutiques in Palermo Soho, edgy theaters and craft breweries in Palermo Hollywood, quiet bookstores and detached houses in Palermo Viejo, and greenspace and expensive apartments of Palermo Chico. The last of these sub-neighborhoods is the setting for my fieldwork, although absolute boundaries are at best contentious issues. Nevertheless, the northern area of Palermo is the location which features the most greenspace of the barrio, and is the part of the city which I called home for the duration of this project

### **1.2.3 Parque 3 de Febrero, the Third of February**

The parks and plazas of Parque 3 de Febrero are located at the northern edge of Palermo until its border with the barrio of Recoleta. Spanning over 370 hectares, the park constitutes the single largest agglomeration of greenspace in the city (Buenos Aires Ciudad n.d. - b). The Botanical Gardens, which are the former home of the original landscape architect Carlos Thays, form the southernmost collection of greenery within the park. The gardens are adjacent to Avenida Santa Fé, the main road one takes from Palermo to the city center in the east. Thays’ old house now serves the population as a museum while a team of biologists maintain the various species of flowers and trees which come from abroad. Directly north of this, along the larger Avenida Sarmiento, is

the zoo of Buenos Aires, while to the east is the smaller neighborhood park called Parque las Heras.

At the intersection of Avenida Sarmiento and the equally large Avenida Libertador, a roundabout contains the colossal Monumento de los Españoles, and to the north beyond the intersection is the main complex of parks. Avenida Sarmiento divides this area into two sections—to the east are the quiet “Bosques,” or Woods, while to the west are the more populated Rosedal (also known as the rose gardens) and Plaza Holanda. In the middle of this western area is a lake, which is the location of many of my interviews. It is an area of relaxation in the outer rings, while closer to the water is a ring of paved road which is used by roller skaters, skateboarders, bicyclists, runners, and any number of others who can find usage for a rare space of car-free flat concrete. The Rosedal, as has become typical in the parks of Buenos Aires under the government of Macri, is surrounded by iron bars which are promptly shut at 6pm in the winter and 8pm in the summer. The Bosques, however, are much more secluded. Old men fish at the small lake, couples take advantage of the quiet to enjoy each other’s company, and most notably dog walkers come from the exclusive neighborhoods of the north to let their clients’ pets roam freely.

Continuing northward, airplanes flying into the domestic Newberry Airport can be seen, beyond which lies the Río de la Plata. The park continues to be divided into east and west by Avenida Sarmiento, which is quieter this far away from the chaos of the high-rise apartments, shops, and fleet of cars which reside in the northern areas of Palermo. On the east is an open greenspace while to the west is the Planetario, or the Planetarium of Buenos Aires, beside which lies a small lake. At this point, the greenspace represents less of an escape and more of an anxiety—if rest, exercise, and relaxing were words my informants used for areas to the south, so then prostitution, drugs, and crime were used to describe the fringes of the greenspace surrounding the Planetario. Going farther to the north leads one to the airport, but farther to the west are the polo fields and Hípódromo, both of which used to be part of the park but were then sold in the privatization movement of the 1990s. Moving farther to the west takes one to another open greenspace and then to a narrow lake, the Lago de Regatas. As can be surmised by the name, rowing and crew are common here.



**Figure 2: Parque 3 de Febrero with Palermo in background**

All of the above comprise the 3 de Febrero park complex, but during fieldwork my attention also shifted to the smaller Parque Las Heras. A supposedly unique aspect of Parque 3 de Febrero is its level of access from different geographic areas. In a city where space is so divided based on geography, between north and south (Grimson and Segura 2016), it interested me that this was claimed by others to be an area which represented the entire city. Las Heras, located five blocks from my apartment, surfaced as another interesting case which did not share much in common—apart from geographic proximity—with Parque 3 de Febrero.

Palermo Chico, north of Avenida Santa Fé, is characterized by a more residential and quieter atmosphere compared to its southern counterparts Palermo Soho and Palermo Hollywood. There are not any of the bars or nightclubs (here called *boliches*) that fill the Palermo chapters of different guidebooks, but there are smaller coffee shops, cafés, bistros and, most importantly, parks. My apartment was on one of the streets that stretches from the Botanical Gardens to Las Heras and was roughly equidistant between the two. It was typical for the area – the two corners of the opposite street housed cafés while my apartment’s side contained a small kiosk and an adjoining sandwichería. The street was often clean and featured large trees which were confined by sidewalk and fenced railing which measured knee-high. A common problem for the city did not leave

this area untouched – the trees, while impressive, often developed roots which could no longer be held back by the sidewalk. As a result, bulges and breaks in the cement were quite ordinary occurrences and it was a challenge to keep one’s eyes on the impressive architecture while avoiding the gaps and loose bricks on the sidewalks which were caused by the trees and their roots. It was a walkable area, the boulevards often featured extraordinarily wide walking paths while the smaller streets and avenues as well had sufficient space. These routes would be my primary mode of transport, as the Botanical Gardens and Las Heras were five-minute walks each and the Bosques and other parts of 3 de Febrero could be reached within anywhere between twenty-five and forty minutes on foot. Parque Las Heras is more intimate and smaller than the expanses of greenery which belong to 3 de Febrero. The exercise spaces are smaller, courts for soccer are home to packs of children and teenagers in after-school hours, and the trees offer much more protection even than those in the Bosques. It features a higher proportion of locals and is, in general, a much quieter atmosphere.

The above description hopefully sets a picture in mind for the fieldsite. In order to aid the reader in developing this picture, a map of the park can be seen at the beginning of the chapter. Some parts of the description above—the history of the name of the park, the iron bars, and the elections—will be discussed more throughout the thesis.

### **1.3 Mapping the Thesis**

The first chapter has been an attempt to introduce the reader into the field; both Buenos Aires and Palermo in general, while also looking at Parque 3 de Febrero and Parque las Heras. The research questions function as a grid which will hopefully provide structure throughout the thesis. While part of the theoretical framework was mentioned in this process, it will be handled more in-depth in chapter 3.

The second chapter will deal with the methods used during this research as well as my positioning both to the site and to the informants. Part of this research involved a new area of geography called participative mapping, where the emphasis is placed on the informants’ ability to participate in the mapping process and thereby represent visually a certain place according to their own perceptions. Many authors<sup>5</sup> have noted that certain quantitative methods (such as mapping, surveying, and cartography) can

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<sup>5</sup> See Mitchell 2002, Appadurai 1996.

have the effect of creating a reality rather than reflecting it, which is ostensibly the goal of mapping. With participative mapping it is possible to reverse the normal process of drawing the map, taking its construction from the laboratory to the field. This process is helpful because it gives power to the informants such that they can represent, for themselves, how they see their surroundings. In the case of looking at parks as infrastructure, these maps have enabled me to ascertain the different ways in which people see the park. Aside from this will be an exploration of the various other methods used for this project: namely historical analysis and qualitative research which is ethnographic in style.

The third chapter will set the theoretical framework to be taken by the thesis. This project relies on a novel definition of infrastructure, pioneered by anthropology and science and technology studies (STS), which states that infrastructure can be a structure—physical or social—which becomes crucial to the communication of successful governance.<sup>6</sup> In order to narrow this slightly, I will take after Hetherington, who defines infrastructure as a system or structure which is used to communicate progress (Hetherington 2014, 197-8). In order to make this argument, however, it will be necessary to explain how themes such as civilization are to be understood in this context. Much will be owed to Arjun Appadurai and his formulation of modernity as requiring an experience of “rupture” with the past (Appadurai 1996).

The fourth chapter will deal with the history and design of the park. Following from Hetherington’s ideas of infrastructure’s temporal nature, the onus will be on me to establish how the park has been used for the purposes of establishing something “modern” in the city for people to enjoy—a theme which has been ever present in the park’s governance from Thays to Macri. Actors as diverse as Le Corbusier and Domingo Fausto Sarmiento—one of the first presidents of Argentina and the leading figure in establishing Parque 3 de Febrero—have had an impact on what is perceived as civilized or modern in Buenos Aires, and the benefit of this chapter will be in tracing the larger developments and applying them to the specific context of Parque 3 de Febrero.

In the next chapter, after exploring the temporal nature of the parks, I will focus on the results gained from mapping and interviewing people in 3 de Febrero and Parque las Heras as it relates to stewardship of the parks today. Although moving away from

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<sup>6</sup> See Hetherington 2014, Larkin 2008, Star and Ruhleder 1996.

ideas on how urban design affects the way people regard space, the maps are still an interesting part of the project in that they can help the researcher to understand in a better way how people see the parks. A commonly held opinion in qualitative and participatory GIS is the belief that, by understanding different philosophies on how somebody sees the nature of the land, one can gain insight into different opinions on how the land should be used. However, this thesis will aim to complicate this theme (while understanding that this understanding is helpful in its most common application, namely representing marginalized communities' property rights), and GIS will allow a picture to appear where even those who have different conceptions of urban greenspace can have similar views on what should be done with it, while those who share the same conceptions can disagree regarding its governance. In addition, this chapter will delve into how people are using the park, and what motivations they have to either accept or reject the suggested behaviors which the government has set.

The sixth chapter will contain a discussion, pulling together the threads from chapters four and five in order to reinforce a cohesive story for the thesis. Building the case that Parque 3 de Febrero has been used to communicate modernity, and using it as a tool to trace what these meanings of modernity have been over different epochs, opens the possibility for unnecessary diversions. The discussion will attempt to justify the different directions taken in the analysis chapters and will then try to ground this analysis with a common thread.

Finally, this thesis will end with suggestions on where to proceed. In Buenos Aires, there are many other spaces which could represent sites of negotiation between the government and its people. Additionally, public green spaces in other places could be well-served by being conceptualized in a way other than the advantages which are most obvious, namely studies which relate to the public health benefits of parks. The intersecting interests and battles for control are common in many spaces in many cities (from Gezi in Istanbul to Tahrir in Cairo), and it could be interesting for future research to be used in a way which leads to reformulations regarding parks' roles in the city.

## 2 Methodology

Broadly speaking, this has been a qualitative research project which has also made use of techniques which are often affiliated with quantitative analysis. With the subject related to how people experience public greenspace and formulate ideas of modernity, it was decided to begin by using the ethnographer's eye. However, due to time constraints, I felt I had to become creative with how the research questions could be addressed. In addition to mixing different qualitative methods—such as ethnography, textual and historical analysis, and formal interviewing—it became apparent that using GIS would offer a unique angle when it came to understanding how Porteños (and others) were using the parks. These methods reflect flexibility in my approach to the objects of study, as well as a willingness to change course when my informants pointed to another direction. The thesis falls squarely within the constructivist tradition of the social sciences, an approach which “recognizes the important role of the observer and society in constructing the patterns we study as social scientists” (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 9). Qualitative methods, such as those described below, are intended to understand the informants' stories and to reveal the world that has been “constructed” by them. In this case, that world amounts to ideas of modernity and the construction of Buenos Aires as a city symbolic of various ideas throughout time. Due to the connotation of the term “mixed methods” with combining qualitative and quantitative research, I will avoid the term in this thesis, rather using the term multiple methods, which emphasizes the complementary mix of interviewing, historical analysis, and qualitative GIS.

The aims of this project, as mentioned in the introduction, have evolved over time. After my first interviews it soon became apparent that the route of looking at how greenspace affects perceptions of urban space, while still interesting to me, would require much more time and closer relationships with locals than could be obtained in two months. As a result, I decided to follow what my informants were interested in, namely the renovations that had been happening in conjunction with the upcoming mayoral race. This is not to say that the “perspective” angle has been sidelined completely; it was a crucial line of inquiry when trying to uncover the different definitions of modernity which were held by my informants. The following chapter will attempt to explain how the chosen methods have aided in the answering of the research

questions. First, I will discuss my positioning to the fieldsite and my informants, including themes such as our relationships, my previous history with the city, and issues of language. The second part will deal with the individual methods and how they helped specifically in answering the research questions.

## **2.1 Fieldwork: Positioning and Language**

### **2.1.1 Time**

The fieldwork portion of this project took place during the months of June and July, 2015. The first month was primarily spent in language courses as well as familiarizing myself with the parks. As somebody who has studied Castellano<sup>7</sup> before in Buenos Aires, the dialect did not prove to be a problem, but rather turned into an icebreaker during the informal conversations in the park, which were almost completely conducted in Castellano; Porteños sometimes find it amusing when foreigners can imitate their distinct style of speaking. It was also necessary during this time to organize formal interviews which could take place over the remaining weeks of my stay. July was then when the most work was done. Three of five formal sit-downs were conducted during this month, as were the majority of the informal conversations in the parks. A sixth interview was scheduled with an academic and professional urban designer, but this was cancelled at the last minute and could not be rescheduled before my departure. This was perhaps the most difficult part of fieldwork; the upcoming political races provided much to discuss with informants on the street, but occupied those involved with the process to the point where it was difficult to organize meetings and interviews. Although I had originally planned to get interviews from city planners, representatives of the respective mayoral candidates' campaign teams, and scientists who worked with the park, an interview with an architect who headed a local NGO succeeded in providing context for many of the phenomena which I could see and sense but could not quite describe.

Another challenge related to the timing of this fieldwork was the season—specifically the southern hemisphere winter. Buenos Aires, while thought of as a warm place, can feature winters of a distinctly unpleasant style—overcast, wind, rains, and

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<sup>7</sup> I will use the Porteño name for their dialect of Spanish, Castellano, throughout the thesis.



temperatures which hover around 10 degrees centigrade during midday and sometimes reaching the point of freezing at night. However, as is typical for the city, a break came over most of July when temperatures were temporarily warm, and I was able to take advantage of this period to conduct the majority of my conversations in the parks. After returning to Oslo in August, about a month was spent on post-fieldwork activities: transcribing notes and interviews, getting opinions and feedback from formal and informal advisors, and starting the writing process.

### **2.1.2 Position to the Fieldsite**

Buenos Aires is a familiar city to me, and it was this familiarity which introduced me to my residence and field site. My memory of the parks until now had been as a vast and expansive hinterland north of Avenida Libertador, one of the main thoroughfares which lines the northern part of Palermo and extends down into the Parisian barrio of Recoleta. During this first stay in 2010, the parks were less restricted—in contrast to the metal bars around them erected by the Macri government—but they were also considered slightly more dangerous and even feral.

In the park, the thought of where and who I am in relation to its visitors was constantly on my mind. I was hesitant to approach those who looked to be minors due to obvious ethical concerns, but for the most part the open nature of most Porteños meant that, regardless of perceived differences, most responded to me with a similar enthusiasm and openness which made work in the park much easier.

My first informant was a student, artist and friend from this time. As somebody who had been living in the neighborhood around the parks since we met in 2010, he was able to understand my previous experiences with the park and fill in the gaps of what had been happening over the previous five years. He was also able to introduce me to his apartment's landlord—who would become my second informant—and I was then able to stay in an area between the Botanical Gardens of Carlos Thays and Parque Las Heras.

### **2.1.3 Position to the informants**

My positioning relative to the informants is something that should be taken into account. Positionality refers to “the interaction between the anthropologist in others”

and is something which deserves “to be explored, not repressed” (Okely 2012, 125). As will be discussed in the analysis chapters, the architect had become dismayed at the lack of participation in the park’s preservation, especially when considered in contrast with the 1990s. I believe that I was seen as somebody who could deliver the message in another language and another demographic.

### *The Informants*

The first informant, Juan, was a student at a nearby university. As mentioned above, he was a friend from before and was helpful in finding me a place to stay. He was in his early twenties and was not from Buenos Aires or Argentina. However, due to the fact that he had been living in the neighborhood for recent years, and his interest in urban developments, he was included in the study. In addition to being the first to sit down and interview, he agreed to be my translator for the interview with Paz, the architect. Rather than his close ties as a participant and an informant representing a drawback, I felt this was an advantage; Judith Okely puts forward the story of a graduate student who was initially reprimanded for his close ties to HIV patients in Edinburgh whom he studied, only later for it to be decided that this formed a crucial portion of his research (Okely 2012, 126). Still, it is important for the researcher to keep in mind the well-being of the participants. I also asked him whether I could use comments outside the confines of recorded interviews for the thesis, which he agreed to.

Through Juan I came into contact with the manager of the apartment, Armando. He was in his early 30’s and was managing the property on behalf of his parents, who lived in another apartment that they owned directly adjacent to Parque las Heras. He was also studying part-time at a local university. As somebody who had been born and raised within such close proximity to both Parque 3 de Febrero and Parque las Heras, his opinions were crucial in developing the story of the parks.

Through the social community of expats in Buenos Aires, I was then able to meet the personal trainer, an Australian from Sydney named James. Having a background in business, he decided to try his luck in Buenos Aires as a personal trainer due to its low costs and improved infrastructure for outdoors exercise. He represented a different viewpoint; although he had lived in the city for a while and spent more time per week in the parks than other informants, he approached them as his office rather than a place of leisure. As many of the recent changes in the park were directed toward

enabling fitness and exercise, his insights helped in showing a different perspective regarding these developments.

Paz, the architect mentioned above, was the only contact I was able to make via traditional outreach as a researcher. I had found his organization online and many op-eds he had written regarding the park, and he was more than willing to share his story of Parque 3 de Febrero. Preservation of the park was one of his biggest preoccupations, and so his legal and historical understanding gave the project a needed grounding.

Additionally, there was an academic who worked near Parque Centenario named Julia. We were put in contact by another professor at her university whom I had originally contacted but who was unavailable for interviewing during the time I was in the city. She was unfortunately not familiar with Parque 3 de Febrero and preferred to talk about the national parks and Parque Centenario. While the meeting was pleasant and she had much interesting information, none of it was relevant for the purposes of this thesis.

Regarding the informants in the park, I had little contact with interviewees to the point where I never took their names, in order to ease the process of anonymization. I approached them with an introduction which included information concerning who I was, the project of the thesis, and then an offer to take part. They came from all walks of life but, in contrast to the many stories I heard of Parque 3 de Febrero's open access, were mainly either from Palermo or other middle-class neighborhoods. Notable exceptions were two informants from the surrounding province of Buenos Aires as well as a few tourists. Finally, in addition to representing the project fully and clearly to all, I felt it to be proper to abide by the rule that participants "should not come out of it in a worse position than they went in" (Madden 2010, 89). Each of the informants was fully anonymized—in the case where I know their name or backstory, substantial details have been altered.

In summary, positionality was an important factor even before approaching the field, but it gained greater significance during my conversation with Paz. He said something that made me think twice about my relationship to the project; after asking me who I had talked to up until that point, and hearing that it had mainly been academics, he responded that this was no way to go: academics make their money off of research but they don't get their feet dirty in the actual cause. His bluntness was not intended against

me, as I was too young for him to consider a professional academic, but it still gave me reason to pause.

### **2.1.4 Language**

Castellano, or Castilian, is the name of the dialect used in Buenos Aires. Although I mentioned my understanding and pronunciation of Castellano as an advantage, it was still a large impediment in the parks. Fortunately, almost all of those I encountered were curious about the project and patient as we plodded along in Castilian, with a switch to English only opted for in one instance as a middle-aged couple wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to converse and practice with a native speaker.

## **2.2 Multiple Methods**

Continuing on from before, I will use the term multiple methods in order to highlight the varied techniques which were used during fieldwork. This is used in contrast to mixed methods, which presumes a quantitative aspect of fieldwork.

### **2.2.1 Ethnographic in Style**

In order to avoid entirely the contentious debate surrounding what comprises ethnography, I will simply put forth that this thesis employed a multiple methods approach, with the qualitative aspect ethnographic in style. This is meant to say that, beyond the formal and informal interviews conducted, I wanted to spend time in the parks and to act as I saw others acting. The ethnographic project, although not possible in its entirety in this case, still stands as the point of departure for the goals of this project. João Biehl describes it pointedly,

As ethnographers, we are challenged to attend at once to the political, economic, and material transience of worlds and truths *and* to the journeys people take through milieus in transit while pursuing needs, desires, and curiosities or simply trying to find room to breathe beneath intolerable constraints. (Biehl 2013, 574)

Trying to be faithful to each of the pillars set out above is difficult, but with the aid of a multiple set of methodologies—ethnography being at the forefront—this faithfulness is something which I have attempted. The parks have been an incredibly fruitful site, as

long as one bothers to dig below the surface. The political and economic worlds of Buenos Aires converge in an unexpected manner, while the visitors of the park are each embarked on their own journeys, using the land for their own “needs, desires, and curiosities.” The metaphor continues as 3 de Febrero and Parque las Heras offer some of the largest spaces to breathe in what can be an intimidating and dwarfing cityscape in the city of Buenos Aires. In order to look at the different ideas of the modern, as described in the introduction, ethnographers “must attend to the ways that people’s own struggles and visions of themselves and others create holes in dominant theories and interventions and unleash a vital plurality” (Biehl 2013, 592).

Beyond the interviews, the parks offered much in the way of observation, one of the cornerstones of the ethnographic process. Starting with the first week, I was able to visit the parks most days as long as weather permitted. However, even in the case of inclement weather, I wanted to see how the park could be used at all times, even when most would prefer to stay warm and dry indoors. I spent time in various parts of the parks throughout the two months in Buenos Aires, observing for what different spaces were used. These areas were controlled in different manners and different levels of importance—bars and maintenance hours restricted access to the manicured Rosedal (the Rose Gardens), while just meters away the grass was open night and day—and people behaved in them in different ways accordingly. The notes gained from these days out have fleshed out many of the conversations and interviews I was able to obtain.

This technique was most helpful when it came to gleaning ideas of modernity which was possessed by people in the parks. By talking to my informants and observing what was taking place around me, I was able to address partly my first research question (regarding how the parks have been used throughout history as a place to communicate modernity), while getting to the core of the second research question (which dealt with uncovering what exactly is meant by modernity, especially today).

### *Interviews*

The interviewing process over June and July featured 20 park interviews and 5 formal sit-down interviews. While the formal interviews contained much more information than what was gained in the parks, they could still be coded along similar lines. Altogether the interviews were broken down by age, occupation, barrio of residence (or city/country, if necessary), reason for coming, approval of the amount/quality of

greenspace in the city, approval of accessibility to this greenspace, and a classification of their reasoning for coming (recreation, relaxation, exercise, etc.). Some would overlap (for instance those who had just exercised and subsequently rested in the grass), so this accounts for the sums of the combined categories exceeding the total number of interviews. In addition, not all information was obtained during each interview. For instance, especially in group conversations where friends or family would join in the conversation, it was not always natural to go back and get age and occupational data. The act of going into the park and conducting these short interviews is where I depart from ethnography; although a rapport was built with those outside of the park (and was also developed with some of those I met in the park), for the most part there was not the same level of immersion and therefore did not face the same challenges of building trust over a period of time, as is common with many anthropologists in longer-term ethnographic settings (Madden 2010, 16).

**Table 1.1 Overview of interviews**

Interview Type	Number	Setting	Subject
Informal interviews	20	Outside in the parks	Happiness with parks, frequency of visits, reason for visit, background information
Structured interviews	5	In cafés, offices, or apartment	Same as above, but also background of the parks, recent developments, and general situation of the parks in Palermo

**2.2.2 Texts and History**

While much of the data has been gathered through traditional means in the field, another aspect has been analyzing texts and historical accounts of the parks, as well as journalistic accounts from various publications—notably *La Nación* and *Clarín* who have covered recent developments of the parks. In Buenos Aires, perhaps more than other places, I thought it important always to understand politics behind the press and

their relation to political discourse in the country. The Kirchner government was in an open war with the media group in ownership of *Clarín*, which is generally considered to be centrist. *La Nación*, while considered even farther to the right, has escaped the same level of criticism, although it has also come under scrutiny from the former president. This is something to keep in mind in light of the recent mayoral and presidential elections, which saw various parts of the media campaigning against Kirchner, while the parks featured somewhat in the dialogue of the opposition candidate—Mauricio Macri, who would end up winning the presidency—to her successor.

Beyond searching for texts in the media over the past few years, the works of the former president Sarmiento were also helpful. As an exile in Chile in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, he wrote *Facundo*, a well-known treatise on the ills of the rule of caudillos—the warlords which drew strength from the pampas and the rest of the countryside—such as Juan Manuel de Rosas. In addition, he was one of the planners of what would become Parque 3 de Febrero, and the city government has scanned and archived these historic documents to be used by researchers. Additionally, documents by the city’s urban planning office as well as plans coming directly from architects such as Le Corbusier have allowed me to look not only at the history of the design of the city, but the influences and trends which were taken on board in the development process.

The historical analysis was most helpful in reference to the first research question, building up an account of how Parque 3 de Febrero has been used to communicate modernity throughout time. Crucially, this is not to construct a teleological timeline of the park, with a clear beginning and a clear ending in some more “modern” state. I only mean to show that the park has been influenced by what is considered to be modern at the time, which can be used to discover what “modernity” has meant in different eras.

### **2.2.3 Participatory Mapping and GIS**

#### *GIS Usage in Qualitative Research*

While I am not comfortable saying that participative GIS can be a universally liberating force, the method was still of great help throughout this thesis, and a crucial part of much of the analysis. GIS has an obvious tie to geography, but less known is its application in ethnographic inquiries. Noting the spatial turn in social sciences, it has

been pointed out by geographers that there is a need to become “spatially literate” (Goodchild and Janelle 2010) in order to make the best of any spatial analysis. Early applications of GIS in anthropology, to make an example, relied on the use of GIS (especially using remote sensing images) as a way to check or to verify information gleaned from informants.<sup>8</sup> However, the research goals of social anthropology dovetailed with the technique of participative GIS, and (as mentioned before) one common application was with indigenous rights in the Americas. Noting the advantages of the technique in working with the Buglé of Panama, Derek Smith writes the following:

“Maps made by or solicited from local people have been used to conduct valuable scientific research that contributes to our understanding of the relationships between culture and the environment, while at the same time collecting information that can be used to defend the interests of disenfranchised groups against further exploitation by more powerful forces” (Smith 2003, 335).

When taken as a complementary piece of a wider empirical collection, maps which have been made in a participatory way and then analyzed through GIS can contribute to producing knowledge. As Sarah Elwood states, this is not to say that these maps can come “to encompass all ways that individuals and social groups produce knowledge” (Elwood 2006, 198), but it is that this methodology and its genealogy are “essential for understanding how participation and power are structured in research” (ibid.). When combined with a level of spatial literacy, there is reason to say that participatory GIS can be an able complement to standard ethnographic practice.

### *Participatory GIS of Parque 3 de Febrero*

The participatory mapping process began differently depending on whether I was engaged in a formal or informal interview. When conducting the former, mapping was an integral part of the interview and was weaved throughout the questions. The first question I asked was why each of them started at their respective beginning points, as this usually signaled an area with which they were most familiar. In the case of the architect, it was slightly different—after the culmination of the interview, he agreed to take part in the activity and was occupied only with this and not simultaneously by questions. The landlord and the trainer drew maps of Parque las Heras, while the other

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<sup>8</sup> See Nyerges and Green 2002 for example.

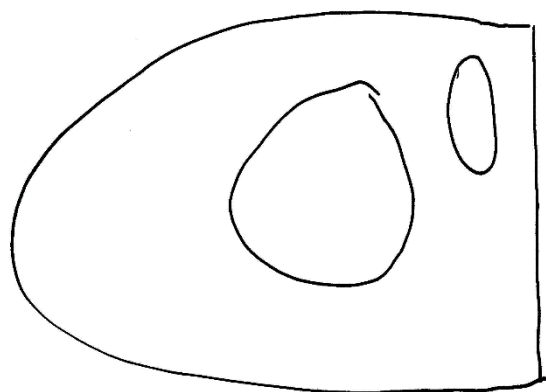


two drew maps of 3 de Febrero, as they were given the option of drawing whichever park with which they were most familiar and which they used the most. In this way four different perspectives were represented—those of a student looking for a place to exercise, a neighborhood resident looking for a place to relax and reminisce, a personal trainer looking for a place to establish his office, and a retired architect looking to preserve a place where he has many memories. As having a single map of Parque Centenario would not have added to the study of the Palermo parks, no map was obtained from the academic.

The informal interviews ended with a request for a map, and this turned out to be one of the most difficult processes. As I was more familiar with each of the persons mentioned in the above paragraph, the people in the parks were less familiar with the project and were largely preoccupied with their ability to accurately represent what was there. This in itself was quite fruitful in understanding how people viewed the parks, but here I will limit to those who accepted my request. It was explained that replication was not the goal, but rather their individual perspective on wherever we were at the time (in this case, mostly in 3 de Febrero). However, even when some of the interviewees came around, they were self-conscious to the point that they simply drew outlines of the general area of the park (an example which can be seen below).

Again, just as with the refusals to answer, this points to different ways of viewing the park—along with the anxieties about remaining consistent with “reality”—which have been fruitful to investigate. Similarly to the process mentioned above, I asked the park visitors why they were starting with a particular spot, but for the most part they were left in peace during this process.

**Figure 3: Mental map in the Rosedal**



After the maps were finished, they were kept safe together until returning to Oslo, where they were scanned and coded with data. No names were kept (and in the case of the informal interviews, almost none of the names were known to begin with), just data on the age, gender, reason for coming to the park, occupation, and barrio of residence. Once they were organized and digitized, it was able to analyze them with the help of GIS. They can each be turned into layers, the building blocks of maps and analysis in GIS, with differences between them investigated. In addition, it is also possible to overlay each—or all—onto a map of the city and the neighborhood in general by georeferencing the former to the latter, the result of which can be found in chapter 5. While georeferencing refers simply to the assignment of spatial significance to non-spatial data (Longley et al. 2005), here it is meant to describe the process of assigning the mental maps to the UTM system, allowing them to be compared. Additionally, while participatory GIS is standardly understood to be a process whereby citizens contribute to a single mapping system,<sup>9</sup> such as OpenStreetMap (Gerlach 2015), here the term is used as each of the informants were told that their mental map would be used to construct a larger picture of the park. In short, instead of each participant contributing one piece of data, individually they have given their complete pictures of the park, which are then pieced together. Again, this georeferencing was not done to provide a check on the quality of the maps, but simply to apply a standard which would allow them to be analyzed together.

The participatory GIS project was done mainly to aid in the answering of the second research question regarding definitions of modernity. Without wanting to delve too deeply into theory at this point, the mapping project allowed me to see how people perceived the space of the parks, whether it was more similar to a birds-eye-view navigation map or based on experiences of the area. This helped to complicate an assumption in participatory GIS and mapping which holds that those who view land differently will have different ideas on how it should be used. The resulting information was crucial in allowing me to build the different and competing definitions of modernity.

## **2.3 Concluding Remarks**

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<sup>9</sup> For an overview on participatory mapping, see chapter 3.3.

This chapter has been an attempt to list and justify the methods used throughout this research project as well as an exploration of my positioning relative to the site, the city in general, and my informants. Going back to the research questions—one asking about the function of Parque 3 de Febrero throughout history as a site that communicates modernity, the other asking about what these definitions have been—it was decided to adopt a methodology which reflected a constructivist point of departure. As will be shown in the analysis chapters, these definitions are many, meaning that every attempt was made to explain these definitions as clearly as possible. While the term “mixed methods” was considered to be inappropriate due to the lack of quantitative methods, the usage of a primarily quantitative technique in GIS brought me to introduce the term “multiple methods” in an attempt to stress the varied nature of my approach throughout the fieldwork process. The next chapter will focus more on bringing GIS’ role in theorizing these definitions to the fore in addition to an explanation of the theoretical framework in general which has been adopted for this project.

# 3 Theoretical Framework

*“Theory is our tool to master; it should not master us.”*

— *Raymond Madden (2010); Being Ethnographic*

Before examining the material from Parque 3 de Febrero, this chapter will set the theoretical framework for the analysis. This primarily surrounds an alternate theorization of infrastructure, its relation to space and temporality—in this case connections to modernity—as well as how a method like participatory GIS can contribute to this theorization. The definition of infrastructure used in this thesis, as mentioned in the introduction, is tied to the government’s communication of a move into modernity. This chapter will first explore this definition and what it means to tie developments in the park to socially constructed meanings of modernity. In order to understand these definitions and how they will apply to Parque 3 de Febrero, it might then be useful to look at definitions of modernity and how they relate to space. Buenos Aires has often been considered to be a city on the “periphery” of urban and landscape design movements (Martire 2012), but this thesis will attempt to put forward an understanding of the city which breaks from this movement. Finally, this chapter will move on toward the aforementioned discussion of GIS as theory. While the methodology has been described in the preceding chapter, GIS here will not be used as a value-exempt technique. In this thesis it has served a role in generating visual representations which, combined with material from interviews, have helped to shed light regarding the relationship between how people see the park and their reactions to Macri’s modernization projects. What follows will be a brief literature review of the different ways in which infrastructure has been used to explain relationships between the government and the governed.

## 3.1 (Re)Defining Infrastructure

Before touching back on this new definition of infrastructure, I will first explore briefly the genealogy of this form of thinking and its establishment in this particular context, namely its roots within what is commonly termed as the “ontological turn,” with the project of claiming “to reorient ethnographic inquiries toward the world-making

promise of difference while also refounding anthropology's capacity as a universal science of that difference" (Bessire and Bond 2014, 17). Although anthropology is mentioned explicitly in the above description, this "turn" is by no means limited to one discipline. Infrastructure in this tradition is thus not a background for transition, but an active enabler of the desired societal changes. For the sake of clarity, the main definition of infrastructure used in this thesis will be given now, although with a few caveats:

"Infrastructures are precisely those structures that are supposed to provide the stability necessary for the emergence of processes of a different order—alternately imagined as development, civilization, or simply progress—and progress itself is experienced as a comparison between places and times. In other words, infrastructure is that part of a series of complex processes to which one draws attention in a causal argument about linear history" (Hetherington 2014, 197-8).

I will approach this from the point of view of examining what these arguments about linear history are, not taking them at face value and studying their effectiveness. In this way, infrastructure can be generalized to other contexts. Additionally, "stability" here will be understood as producing a space which is conducive to the desired actions of the park's designers and bureaucrats.

I have previously stated that this thesis attempts to be novel in the way infrastructure is applied, if not in the usage of infrastructure as a theorizing agent itself. However, this project falls somewhere between social studies of infrastructure that look to expand the idea beyond physical objects, but still have a technical purpose,<sup>10</sup> and those which attempt to highlight its symbolic purpose, but look at objects which fit under the more traditional definition.<sup>11</sup> Infrastructural systems have long been studied in (STS), with scholars such as Bruno Latour (Latour 2005) arguing for an approach—widely known as actor-network-theory—where infrastructures such as financial markets, senates, and electrical systems should be understood based on the individual "actors" within the system and their role (or the role of their relations) in mobilizing the final result. This approach is taken in an attempt to fulfill the goals of the ontological turn, namely the banishment of the divide between human and nonhuman. However, there are issues with many aspects of the ontological turn which have resulted in this thesis pursuing

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<sup>10</sup> See Larkin 2008.

<sup>11</sup> See Star and Ruhleder 1996.

another route of inquiry. Keir Martin argues forcefully that the emphasis on non-human entities is nothing revolutionary or new, while also stating that the impact of material items or the environment (or parks such as Parque 3 de Febrero) does not necessarily have to be given an inordinate amount of agency, stressing the human role in shaping the site (Martin 2014). The following section will look at what significance this has when relating to the environment as infrastructure, which will be followed by a discussion regarding the importance of time in this definition.

### **3.1.1 The Environment as Infrastructure**

While the bridge between natural and social—if not their elimination as concepts—is an effect of the approach taken by this thesis, it is also intended to depict how parts of the environment are in fact highly linked to humans and how the goals of a nation or city can impact what is considered to be good governance as in relation to progress.

In looking at the Panama Canal watershed as well as its services which are offered to local communities, anthropologist Ashley Carse attempts to show how “infrastructure is not a specific class of artifact, but a process of relationship-building” (Carse 2012, 556). While this definition properly expands the discourse into more symbolic territory, and moves beyond considering infrastructure as being inherently stagnant and transparent, it can unfortunately become too broad. Focusing closer to the task at hand, Brian Larkin puts forward the idea that infrastructures “emerge out of and store within them forms of desire and fantasy and can take on fetish-like aspects that sometimes can be wholly autonomous from their technical function” (2013, 329). In this way, infrastructure takes on an action which is beyond the original intended purpose of the structure.

### **3.1.2 Time and Infrastructure**

The last, but potentially most important aspect of infrastructure is its temporal nature. As noted above, Hetherington describes how “causal arguments” regarding “linear history” (Hetherington 2014, 98) should be a part of describing how any piece of infrastructure functions; this is done in order to study how managers, mayors, presidents, or other decision makers communicate their competency rather than to take their accomplishments and rhetoric at face value. The parks are a place where bicycle

lanes, free Wi-Fi, Starbucks, and any number of new developments are communicating Macri's journey into the future whereas the slums of the poorer southern areas do the opposite. However, temporality impacts infrastructure in more than this way; that which is considered modern and progressive today might be considered passé one decade, year, or even month into the future. A useful anchor can be found, somewhat paradoxically, with a question: *when* is infrastructure? This question is addressed by Susan Leigh Star and Karen Ruhleder, who state that "infrastructure is something that emerges for people in practice, connected to activities and structures" (Star and Ruhleder 1996, 112). The original step beyond considering infrastructure as a stagnant, physical object toward being relational is key. Furthering this to being a relationship that is bound by temporal and social context is the final part which gives the term its full analytical power. The park is not just a greenspace designed for public health benefits. It is also not enough to say that it is a space which relates the government to the people. The final step is to show how it is a space which is loaded with context beyond its technical functions, and that, in this thesis, Parque 3 de Febrero has emerged over the past two years as a crucial site of communicating modernity.

## **3.2 Space and Modernity**

With a new definition of infrastructure set out above, there still remain problems with how to formulate Parque 3 de Febrero as such. Hetherington describes infrastructure as enabling the government to communicate a move forward, but how is this done? What does it mean to move forward, to progress, or to modernize? Without a clearer understanding of what is to be meant by modern, it will be difficult to describe how the park is used to communicate it. Additionally, even a clearer definition of modernity would be impoverished without a more precise understanding of what is meant by the space, here meaning Parque 3 de Febrero, which is meant to be doing the communication. This section will begin by tracing different theorizations of space—especially those theorizations which examine closely the relationship between space and urbanization—and will then explore how modernity is both claimed and produced in the process, thereby enabling a coherent theory of infrastructure as laid out above.

### **3.2.1 Producing Space**

At the beginning of Henri Lefebvre's seminal work *The Production of Space*, he gives the following overview regarding the then-status of spatial analysis:

“Not so many years ago, the word ‘space’ had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area. In scholarly use it was generally accompanied by some such epithet as ‘Euclidean’, ‘isotropic’, or ‘infinite’, and the general feeling was that the concept of space was ultimately a mathematical one. To speak of ‘social space’, therefore, would have sounded strange” (Lefebvre 1991: 1).

In the following section I will examine this shift away from looking at space in “Euclidean” or “mathematical” terms, through its understanding as spatialization in an anthropological sense, toward ideas of producing localities which can be understood as infrastructure.

First, I want to look at one of the first examinations of space as a social phenomenon with public repercussions. Michel Foucault looked at space as intimately tied with power, drawing attention to the impact of the built environment toward shaping not only social habits, but the biology of individuals (Foucault 1994). One example could be seen in the railroad system of Europe—a system which, due to greater connectivity, the French believed would be an agent possible of pacifying the continent near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, as Foucault notes, the Germans, who were “much cleverer,” realized that it actually made war “far easier to wage,” just one of a series of problems to be raised after a new reality caused by “the exercise of political power and the space of a territory” (Foucault 1994, 353). However, this analysis has a deficiency according to Lefebvre—the changing space of Foucault’s late century Europe should be more than a passive receptor of human input. In other words, there needs to be a way of theorizing space which gives it a more concrete position beyond being an empty area which is activated or revitalized by changing networks and power relations.

Criticizing what he saw as an overreliance on symbolism, Lefebvre highlighted the lack of reconciliation between the ideas of social space and mental space (1991). Specifically taking aim at this view of a purely symbolic explanation of space, he writes that “the ‘world of signs’ clearly emerges as so much debris left by a retreating tide: whatever is not invested in an appropriated space is stranded, and all that remain are useless signs and significations” (Lefebvre 1991, 417). Here he highlights what he believes to be the poverty of relying on a discourse-based analysis of space, additionally stating that “there are plenty of reasons for thinking that descriptions and cross-sections



of this kind... cannot ever give rise to a *knowledge of space*” (Lefebvre 1991, 7). Without this step, the idea of a park as infrastructure would lose much of its analytical power—it would simply be a reference to what already exists as an idea of infrastructure without attempting to formulate how the space itself becomes an agent in the process of modernization. The political theorist Timothy Mitchell, however, criticizes Lefebvre’s dialectic approach to space, as well as Karl Marx’s similar approach to land as a commodity: “Both are arguments of alienation that trace how a living reality is reified, turned into a mere thing. They are arguments of misrecognition, capitalist relations of exchange disguise the real social relations and natural values embodied in real forces” (Mitchell 2002, 79). By this, Mitchell points out that Lefebvre’s critique of Foucault ends by doing something quite similar—taking space and turning it into an empty repository upon which human agency is applied. For a definition of infrastructure, this is problematic in that the temporal nature becomes complicated to explain. Approaching space with a dialectic logic can offer powerful and convincing narrative, according to Mitchell, but its treatment of the history of a site complicates this project by, in the end, treating it as a stagnant object (ibid.). The most powerful implications of this argument can be found outside of the city, as in Mitchell’s diagnosis of the agency of dams and rivers in colonial Egypt, but it is relevant within the city and the built environment as well (Mitchell 2002). As will be shown in the following chapter, the physical situation of the park—beginning with its waterfront location, through its years as an oasis surrounded by residential towers—is not merely the consequence of Lefebvre’s dialectical history; the park itself has a very specific local context. As Appadurai states, the production of a site is “a context-generative rather than a context-driven process” (Appadurai 1996, 191). What is meant here is that a site produces a context (i.e. Parque 3 de Febrero creates the conditions for commercialization) rather than being determined by its outside context (i.e. that Parque 3 de Febrero is transformed into its current form solely by capitalism).

### *Spatialization*

In an effort to reconcile the emphasis on power from Foucault along with the more robust formulations of space by Lefebvre, the anthropologist Setha Low puts forward an idea of the commonly-used term spatialization, which is “to locate, both physically and conceptually, social relations and social practice in social space” (Low 1996, 861).

Alongside this concept of spatialization are the dual concepts of spatial production—coming from Lefebvre and having a materialist emphasis—and spatial construction, which is influenced by the thinking of Foucault and focuses more on “the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes” (ibid.). This focus on production is related to its emphasis on difference, as Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argue for turning away from a “pre-given world” of bounded entities, “and see instead a difference-producing set of relations”, and that in order to understand these differences, we must understand that “space and place can never be ‘given,’ and that the process of their sociopolitical construction must always be considered” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 6). In short, Low’s examination of a park in Costa Rica shows that “there is no unified experience of being in Parque Central, but fragments of its social production are reproduced in the everyday practices and feelings of its users” (Low 1996, 870). This emphasis on the material (the park’s physical existence), the social (relations between people in the park) and the mental (the individual perceptions of the park) is an attempt to bridge the gap mentioned above by Lefebvre. While this is a strong path which reveals many things regarding not only urban space but park space as well, this route of spatialization will not be the one taken for this thesis. The next section will explain why this is so, and its relation not to any shortcoming regarding space, but regarding the treatment of time and the modern, critical components of infrastructure.

### **3.2.2 Producing Modernity**

Modernity is a part of this thesis in two ways; the first, to be discussed here, is to establish what is meant in its communicative role in the definition of infrastructure. Second, to be discussed in the subsequent chapter, is how it relates to the design of Parque 3 de Febrero, and to trace the changing definitions throughout the park’s history.

#### *Formulating Modernity*

Looking for a basic and broad definition, it might be wise to follow one in particular handed over by Alberto Arce and Norman Long, when they state that “the term ‘modern’ connotes a sense of belonging to the present and an awareness of a past to which people can link and at the same time distantiate themselves” (Arce and Long

2000, 4). When dealing with Parque 3 de Febrero, the “distancing” depicted by Arce and Long is a theoretical idea which can help to understand the design and usage of the park. Originally meant to describe the ability of media to create a new sense of modernity for a group of people, this thesis will explore how Appadurai’s previously-mentioned ruptures occur on an individual basis, as well as the impact that this can have when certain individuals set out to design the urban environment in accordance with their idea of modernity. This will help below in describing the initial design of Parque 3 de Febrero under Sarmiento and later Thays, first director of the parks of Buenos Aires, but above all it will help to explain in the subsequent chapters the conflicts that arise regarding the governance and usage of the park.

Returning to the themes explored in the ‘ontological turn,’ Latour writes that modernity is wrongly understood as “doubly asymmetrical: it designates a break in the regular passage of time, and it designates a combat in which there are victors and vanquished” (Latour 1993, 10). Rather, modernists are those who create “hybrids of nature and culture” and then, in a sort of ironic turnabout, “purify” these two characteristics and turn them into “two entirely distinct ontological zones” (Latour 1993, 10-11). This is still a problematic definition, as there remains a rupture, returning to a before-and-after line of division. For the purposes of interpreting the historical record, the ethnographic material, and the mental maps provided to me in the parks, I will continue to use “modern” and “modernity” as understood by the first, “wrong” definition. Although the point that this double asymmetry is difficult to uphold (ibid.) is a salient one, this conflict and difficulty is precisely where it derives its analytical value.

In order to carry out this project, and similar to Lefebvre’s arguments for rethinking space, I want to reconsider how modernity and history are formulated. As Mitchell describes it, we should be “concerned not with the passing of modernity but with its placing, not with a new stage of history but how history itself is staged” (Mitchell 2000, 1). Coming from a post-colonial and area studies approach, this particular vantage point aims to remove the West, the North, or however one wants to describe the wealthiest countries, from the focal point of history. In this way space is fundamental in understanding time, as history has become a history of a geographic location, of Europe and its children in countries such as the United States or Australia. The concepts of peripheries and of differences, used by some to describe Buenos Aires even in positive connotations (Martire 2012), show that to be peripheral in geography is

also to be peripheral in modernity. The criticism of modernity as Westernism is not new, but pairing it with a critical account of the history of space itself provides the link for this new definition of infrastructure. In other words, “the experience of modernity is constructed as a relationship between time and space” (Mitchell 2000, 13).

### *Designing Modernity*

Design, in contrast, does not have the same contentious past regarding its definition. Put simply, “to design is to conceive of an idea and plan it out... before executing it in the world” (Otto and Smith 2013, 1). Although the practice of designing the urban environment did not become “Urban Design” as we know it until the 1950s (Larice and Macdonald 2013, xvii), there is still a rich history of design knowledge from the late-1900s which can set the stage for understanding how the parks became how they are. With both modernism and design described above, it will not be helpful to look at their relationship with each other more closely. If we accept the above definition of design, then it is clear that it can be impacted by the designer’s understanding of modernity.

### *Ruptures and Difference*

As mentioned above, this thesis borrows heavily on the idea of rupture. Although Appadurai’s definition differs in his emphasis on ruptures produced by quotidian events involving normal people, I still follow his recognition that “ruptures” are not inherently linear processes which lead to “rationality, punctuality, democracy, the free market, and a higher gross national product” (Appadurai 1996, 9). But while rejecting the determinacy of these ruptures as part of a rational process, it is still possibly a good idea to consider what these ruptures mean to those who experience them and have the power to operationalize them. What I will argue is that the modernization projects, which will be traced throughout the course of this thesis, are important not because they come from a rational world of urban planning, but because they *create* the worlds which are imagined to be modern. To continue with Mitchell’s argument, modernity becomes an “experience only through the structure of a replication—through a representation of the social, a mapping of the nation, a narrative of its history, a set of statistical images, or the varieties of the representational practice that structure modern politics” (Mitchell 2000, 22). By this it is not meant that there is, in Appadurai’s words, a teleological,

path with an end in modernization. But when those in power believe the opposite to be true, they replicate this reality into space, producing modernity and space at once. Yet where this definition differs from Mitchell is his assertion that “modernity, like capitalism, is defined by its claim to universality, to a uniqueness, unity, and universality that represent the end (in every sense) of history” (Mitchell 2000, 24). Focusing on British methods of quantitative rule, the “rule of experts” (Mitchell 2002), is far different than the quasi-post-colonial context of Buenos Aires. While modernity is often defined by its claim to universality, these claims are often different and dependent on the local context. In short, I will put forward that there is not one unity for modernization, but a multiplicity of unities (or multiple ideas of unity). This is not to be understood as a form of philosophical idealism, wherein those who are modern are modern simply because they believe it; the ruptures mark where a clear break is made which often has very real consequences for those involved.

The above represents the reasoning for the move away from Setha Low’s spatialization for this thesis. In many cases it treats space as part of the history of economic modes, today being capitalism, and subsumes these sites into master narratives which revert to the West. While incorporating trends from the US and Europe, the temporal nature of this thesis tries to center Parque 3 de Febrero not on capitalism, but only on itself and Buenos Aires.

### **3.3 GIS as Theory**

Cartography and GIS have both been fertile grounds for debates surrounding how to look at the ways that ontological background affects how we perceive places and space.<sup>12</sup> Strong arguments have been made which make the point that mapping does as much to create a sense of reality as it does to replicate it.<sup>13</sup> In response to this, I decided that participatory mapping would be a novel approach which could avoid some of the more pointed criticisms of GIS. This section will discuss GIS’ contributions toward reflecting worldviews, which allowed for the formulation of modernity used in this thesis.

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<sup>12</sup> See especially Smith 1992 for an overview of how the “science wars” affected geography, cartography, and especially GIS.

<sup>13</sup> Some examples include Appadurai 1996, Mitchell 2002, and Harley 2011.

Before delving into the history of GIS, an early criticism of the new technologies and of cartography in general can be understood through a short story by the famed Porteño author Jorge Luis Borges, written under the pseudonym Suárez Miranda:

“. . . In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.” (Borges 1999)

Mitchell, in a critique of quantitative ruling by colonial Britain in Egypt, described similar problems, although in a less hyperbolic manner, dealing with scale and the cartography of the British Empire: “As we have seen, the forms of social practice that gave rise to the new kinds of calculability, and that calculation attempted to format, also continually rendered the world more mobile, uncertain and incalculable” (Mitchell 2002, 118). In other words, the circumstances which led to improved forms of calculation were themselves associated with increasing mobility, rendering the world even more difficult to pin down in an exact manner. As a result, the cartographer who is in search of perfect representation runs into one of two problems: In the first, she gets lost in the race to calculate new variables as they rise—the problem of scale to which even—or especially—GIS is not immune. In the second, she devotes herself to an exact replica, a project which is so hopeless that it leads to nothing more than the fictitious Suárez Miranda’s aforementioned ruins and relics. This detour illuminates the argument which will follow—namely that GIS, rather than saving the day, gives new tools to qualitative researchers for representing their informants’ views in different ways. This section will first look into the background of qualitative GIS, which is a technique of using GIS in a way which coincides with qualitative research. Second will be an exploration of participatory GIS as a method borne from qualitative GIS. Finally, there will be a discussion regarding its merits for this thesis in particular.

### **3.3.1 Background of Qualitative GIS**

When GIS began to be more accessible and widespread in the 1980s and 1990s, an already-existing battle over whether to consider space as absolute or relative was taking place (Smith 1992, 264). With the advent of GIS, along came a technology which appeared ready-made to represent space as absolute and, crucially, could itself be the source of an objectivity which certain quarters of geography craved. The early battles of GIS are the subject themselves of entire books<sup>14</sup> as well as many articles,<sup>15</sup> but here will be a small background of the shift whereby GIS came to be used in a qualitative manner, looking specifically at the contributions made by feminist GIS and critical cartography.

### *Feminist GIS*

When looking at the qualitative side of GIS literature, one of the most prominent subdisciplines which promoted the qualitative use of GIS was that of feminist geography. Instead of rejecting GIS as an inherently quantitative technique, it became important “to ask whether GIS methods are inherently positivist, universalizing, and unable to be used to understand difference” (Kwan 2002, 647). To go against this, it became necessary to recognize that GIS could actually represent both qualitative and quantitative data as well as “multiple epistemologies” (Elwood and Cope 2009, 1). A common argument by early feminist users was that GIS’ usage could be conceived as positivist or masculinist only because of the lack of participation by researchers with alternative agendas. As Mei-Po Kwan states, “the critical agency of GIS users/researchers can play a role in reimagining and developing alternative GIS practices” (Kwan 2002, 648). This departure from looking at GIS as determinatively positivistic—i.e. that it, by definition, represents the world in a positivistic, scientific manner—would prove to be the crucial point in moving it beyond this very mode of usage. One of the critiques made by computer-literate (but qualitative-minded) geographers was simply—but powerfully—that computerization and digital analysis was not quantitative (Pavlovskaya 2009). While GIS was becoming more accessible—meaning more actions were executable through user interface rather than through command-line functions—researchers were simultaneously becoming more digitally literate. The end result of this was the loss of GIS’ mystical veneer and a greater

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<sup>14</sup> See Pickles 1995, *Ground Truth*.

<sup>15</sup> See Goodchild 2010 and Smith 1992.

exploration of its applications to usages which were, in the context of the 1990s, not as common. This coincided with—or was the cause of—a “delinking of epistemology and methods” which “enabled innovative and non-quantitative GIS practices” (Pavlovskaya 2009, 17). As Sarah Elwood and Meghan Cope argue in the introduction to *Qualitative GIS*, feminist projects are not to be considered as “add-ons” to “essentially quantitative projects,” but are to “offer substantial shifts toward framing questions, collecting data, analyzing results, and representing findings in a truly integrative way” (Elwood and Cope 2009, 4). In other words, qualitative GIS is not to be understood as a poor substitute for or a peripheral part of quantitative GIS, but the authors want it to be recognized as something which represents a different way of viewing data.

### *Critical Cartography*

Almost simultaneously, another strand within critical cartography and geography more generally was leading the discipline toward new questions regarding representation; in a seminal analysis of the history of cartography. Map historian J.B. Harley argues for “an epistemological shift” regarding the way that mapping is done in order to move away from the way that representation creates reality (Harley 2011, 274), and toward a more critical cartography (Harley 2011, 276). In this manner of thinking, the map moves away from representing reality toward representing the epistemology behind those responsible for its creation, as well as looking at how maps “*make* reality as much as they represent it” (Crampton and Krygier 2006, 15). The rise of qualitative GIS can be seen as a slight alteration in Harley’s shift, incorporating the movement of “the way we interpret the nature of cartography” alongside a shift in the nature of producing cartography itself. In this way, participatory mapping moves beyond being methodological and becomes at the same time theoretical. When this shift is combined with the powerful software which is available today, both proprietary and open-source, interesting lines of investigation can be opened. Before qualitative GIS’ emergence as a popular field, John Pickles saw promise—and apprehension—in how “digitality and representational technologies (like GIS) produce new codings and practices, and with them new geographies” (Pickles 1995, 226). Cartography and digitization both already had a certain amount of objectivity conferred to them—once they were combined with GIS, the potential for an objectivist geography was great. However, once geographers and other social scientists realized that GIS had the ability to add to the repertoire of



tools which could show *multiple* representations, the field of qualitative GIS—within which participatory GIS is a solid member—was able to expand and flourish.

### 3.3.2 Theorizing with Participatory GIS

If qualitative GIS was a project designed to reflect multiple epistemologies within academia, then participative GIS was a project which aimed to reflect multiple ontologies which are presented to a researcher by informants. One early exercise in participatory GIS comes from Trevor M. Harris et al., who argue for an operation “whereby local knowledge arising from social narratives is converted into data within a GIS for research and policy formulation” (Harris et al. 1995, 197). In their research area—post-Apartheid South Africa—the goal of being able to represent voices which had been marginalized and forcibly silenced was common, but their employment of GIS was novel for the time. By taking mental maps from locals, they were able to build a model, supported by remote sensing imagery, which described land-use practices amongst discriminated groups. However, this method of deploying participatory GIS featured a common flaw in earlier research, namely that GIS was used as a “check” on information provided by informants. As the authors write, “local knowledge is essential for *interpreting* the social production of space represented in a satellite image” (Harris et al. 1995, 213; emphasis mine). While the inclusion of marginalized groups and their mental maps were an important step, falling back to remote sensing as the default form of the land represents a problem for the project. Here we are left in an ambiguous zone—the land is open to interpretation based on which social group one interacts with, but in the end the representation and depiction of the land is the same. The only difference in this scenario regards how an absolute space is interpreted.

#### *Representing Worldviews*

There is a history of participatory GIS in the Latin American context, especially dealing with indigenous people and their claims to land. One of these exercises dealt with the Pemon of Venezuela, where the researcher recognized that “the map was the result of contested performances of *people* who in different ways embody this landscape and (re)produce its meanings” (Sletto 2009, 444). This is a departure in the purpose of participatory mapping, representing more of a theoretical shift than one of a

methodological nature. Whereas Harris had depicted an interpretation, Bjørn Ingunn Sletto was clear to describe his project as “a work of art, embodying, reflecting, and acting on the social as well as the material” (ibid.). However, when dealing with representation, this approach could also carry a problem. In addition to being a work of art, it was also “a technical product of local and scientific knowledge” (ibid.), replete with courses in scientific cartography which the Pemon could mobilize in depicting their contested worldview of the land. This method of participative mapping, while reflecting a contested idea of the land as it is and without being anchored in satellite imagery, is still tethered to “scientific” modes of producing information and knowledge.

Participatory GIS then runs into multiple problems regarding *how* the local knowledge is represented and *who* is being “participative.” This method is one which attempts to tease out the positives of “the contradictory capacity of GIS technologies to empower and disempower” (Elwood 2006, 198) at the same time. This effect is twofold: first, GIS can empower communities to represent their own images of the land while simultaneously forcing them to fit those representations into data which can be handled by the technology; and second, that GIS can improve a community’s communication of its rights while at the same time reinforcing power structures which already exist within. Especially salient to the first point is Renee Sieber’s statement that “not all traditional or local information should be reduced to fit GIS standards” (Sieber 2006, 499). It is because of this that Sletto remarks, “Ultimately, I realized that the *process* of making the map had been as important as the end product for what it had revealed about the entanglements of identities, social relations, landscape, and power in places on the margins” (Sletto 2009, 444; original author’s emphasis). Moving beyond these issues, there are other problems which present themselves to participatory GIS to which researchers must pay attention. Echoing Sletto’s conclusion that the process was worth studying in and of itself, there has been a stress on the group dynamics of any participatory exercise—there is a “politics of participation” (Gerlach 2015, 281), which serve to “disrupt a liberal ethos of participation as a pedagogical method” (ibid.). Rather than taking participatory GIS as an inherently democratizing activity, Joe Gerlach urges the researcher to dig more deeply into the process of mapmaking, especially when the researcher is at the helm of the project. Within these groups, those who have access to technology such as GIS, or to techniques such as formal cartography, are among those “within the sector of the technology savvy, educated, and

well off” (Haklay 2013, 66). However, despite these issues, the benefits remain. Techniques are becoming more common and “have spread from large public and private establishments into inner-city neighborhoods in the West and community-based organizations throughout the world” (Kyem 2004, 38). When it comes to representations and power relations, GIS is well positioned to portray them; regarding the “construction of meaning as a political practice” and the “representational flexibility of GIS as a technology”, Elwood claims that GIS is in a unique position which can synthesize the two, due to its flexible methods of representation in combination with the social scientist’s observations in the field (Elwood 2009, 73).

### **3.4 Applying a theoretical framework**

As an interdisciplinary project, this thesis takes its theoretical framework from various traditions and sources. Here I will offer a simple synthesis of the theory mentioned above, and explain how it applies to Parque 3 de Febrero.

First, I set out a definition of infrastructure to be used throughout this thesis. Parque 3 de Febrero is to be understood through the analysis chapters as a site which has been used by successive governments in order to establish a situation whereby they can communicate their idea of modernity to the public. In order to explain this, a thorough explanation of what is meant by modernity and the locality were subsequently offered. Crucial to these understandings of modernity are ruptures, which give rise to the understanding of modernity not as a coherent philosophy, but as something which is experienced and then operationalized through the park. This process is similar to the process described by Lefebvre in his production of space, but slightly different by taking Mitchell’s and Appadurai’s view that sites generate their own context. In the context of Parque 3 de Febrero, this will come to be seen in its functioning as a space which creates ideas of modernity rather than existing as a passive receptor. Finally, the question of *when* a park is infrastructure will be stressed in the next chapter, highlighting the fact that sites can be mobilized more in certain times than others.

Finally, this chapter looked at the role that participatory GIS can play in the thesis. By using mental maps and looking at them together, I have been able to question the idea that representing different worldviews means that a researcher can uncover different opinions on how a site should be used. While some of the park’s visitors might

share ideas on how the space is laid out, they might have very different ideas on what modern development entails. Using these maps will help to construct definitions of modernity, especially when used alongside the interviews and ethnographic observations.

The term modernity is fraught with conflict due to different definitions, but in this thesis modernity ceases to be a coherent philosophy which can be applied to a way of acting or an age of architecture, but rather a condition which is experienced by those who draw a break with the past, creating one of Appadurai's ruptures.

## 4 Designing Parque 3 de Febrero

*“... en una palabra, el gusto para los jardines, de cualquier dimensión que estén, es una de las más caracterizadas expresiones del grado de civilización alcanzada por una nación.”*

*“... in a word, the taste for gardens—of whatever dimension they may be—is one of the most characterized expressions of the degree of civilization attained by a nation.” – Carlos Thays (2002 [1891]); Enero de 1891*

The quote above comes from the previously-mentioned Carlos Thays, who was responsible for redesigning Parque 3 de Febrero into its current form. Gardens and parks, according to the French-born landscape designer, are more than spaces of rest and relaxation. They are spaces where one can literally ascertain the “degree of civilization attained by a nation” (Thays 2002 [1891], 199). Understanding the importance of these spaces in the words of their designer serves as an able point of departure for this chapter. This chapter will not function as a background, painting a historical “context” for analysis to come; rather it will attempt to be the first link in a chain which continues on to the present day. Sonia Berjman, an Argentinian historian of the parks, states that the parks had a relationship with the ideologies of power in each epoch of its development (Berjman 2006, 28). This chapter will take this into another direction, arguing that the parks have had a relationship not only with power, but with each era’s definitions of modernity and civilization.

I will attempt to paint a story of the different ruptures which have provoked different goals for Parque 3 de Febrero. First I will explore the park’s founding, primarily looking at its role as a believed civilizing agent. This civilizing theme is in many ways analogous to progress and modernity and so will be treated as forming the beginnings of the park as a site used to communicate the forward march of the state. Second will be a look at what corresponds to the architectural and design eras of modernism. While there are not as many primary sources regarding the park’s changes during this era, there is evidence in Buenos Aires of the impact of modernism, and so this section will feature an exploration of one of these projects. Finally, this chapter will look at the rupture of the 1990s, when progress and modernity were analogous to privatization. As Parque 3 de Febrero is not the only site to show the effects of this move, the example of

the revitalization of Puerto Madero will be included in order to depict more fully what was considered to be progressive usage of space during this era.

## **4.1 Site of Civilization**

I argue that the main park, Parque 3 de Febrero, has seen itself throughout history become a symbol for progress and modernity, as representing a clear break with some other more backwards time. The purpose of this is to develop a cogent understanding for how those with the power to shape it have been able to see it as representing a linear progression. This temporal nature is crucial for this thesis' definition of infrastructure, as it builds the blocks for the analysis of the following chapter. First will be an examination of the park in its infancy, when it was first articulated by Sarmiento up until its redesign by Thays. Following this will be a brief exploration of the park's treatment from the Perón years through those of military dictatorships, when it fell largely into disrepair. Finally, and crucially setting the stage for the next chapter, will be a discussion of its treatment during the Menem years and its relationship to the waves of privatization which hit the country and the city throughout the 1990s. This progression will show how the park has been used to communicate to the people of Buenos Aires throughout the years that those in power are capable of leading the city—and at times the entire nation of Argentina—into a more promising future.

## **4.2 1800s and Civilizing the Pampas**

As with many aspects of Porteño and Argentine life, allusions to patriotic heroes are often not difficult to find in the parks of Buenos Aires. The Third of February, in addition to being the name of the complex of parks in this thesis as well as a nearby municipality, was in 1852 the date when General Justo José de Urquiza overcame the totalitarian dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas. The park, although free of its namesake date's revolutionary past, is still a site of contest. With this background on the significance regarding the park's name, I will start to analyze what the park has represented throughout its history.

### **4.2.1 Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Civilization**

The story of Parque 3 de Febrero begins with Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888, President of Argentina 1868-1874) and Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877), two opposite sides of the struggle for Argentina's future in the mid-1800s. De Rosas was firmly entrenched in the caudillo culture of South America, where the caudillos represented often-romanticized visions of rural strongmen conquering foes for the prosperity of their home regions. Sarmiento, meanwhile, was an urbanized statesman, serving time as ambassador to the US in New York, where his exposure to urban parks there would influence many of his ideas on the role played by greenspace in an urban setting (Martire 2012, 262). During much of de Rosas' authoritarian rule, Sarmiento spent his time in exile in Chile, where he wrote prolifically, most notably *Facundo: o civilización y barbarie* (1961 [1845]). Before being in a position to propose a monumental park in Buenos Aires, Sarmiento used this book to criticize the caudillos—or warlords—which were alternatively trying to seize as much power as they could. In de Rosas' case, it meant the securing of the Río de la Plata, including the city of Buenos Aires and its eponymous province, along with much more of the area. Their rule of the pampas, the vast expanses of grassland and open range, represented barbarity to Sarmiento. The opening to this thesis contains a passage from *Facundo* in which the exiled statesman draws a distinction between the city and the countryside, describing the pampas as a “lousy” conduit for civilization and progress (Sarmiento 1961 [1845], 31). When de Rosas was defeated—on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, 1852—his lands were expropriated by the government in order to prevent any reconsolidation by his supporters of his vast sums of wealth. At this time, with the population set to more than double in the next two decades (Gutman and Hardoy 1992, 68), the city was in need of extra greenspace; as a result, the land seized from de Rosas would become a park. The name, in a move to further cement the victory over the latest caudillo challenge to Sarmiento's ideas of civilization, would be Parque 3 de Febrero.

As mentioned above, the goal of establishing the park was not only to erase any resurgence of the defeated de Rosas, but it was also an attempt by Sarmiento to spread civilization through Buenos Aires—the antithesis of which was rurality. In *Facundo*, he draws attention to the inability of a rural life to foster the values which he believes to make up a proper civilization, while at the same time recognizing their hold on the population:

If the conditions of the pastoral life, which have been established as colonization and negligence, give birth to serious problems for any sort of political organization, much less to the triumph of European civilization, its institutions and wealth and freedom—which are its consequences—it cannot, moreover, be denied that this situation has its poetic side, phrases worthy of the novelist’s pen. (Sarmiento 1961 [1845], 43)

Understanding the hold of the “natural” world, the idea was that the civilized and ordered parks and gardens could replicate the poetic beauty of the wilderness and the pampas while still maintaining a proper civic society. In a letter to the president Nicolás Avellaneda, who inaugurated the park and became president after Sarmiento’s term, Sarmiento makes clear this defeat of the life of the pampas. The 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, 1852 was to be “the last shot of ancient barbarity”, the end of “the tyrant of executions”, the end of “the man of the *pampeano*’ era” (Sarmiento 1875, 25).

In the end, it might not be enough simply to state what is in the past in order to create a rupture between now and before; there has to be some idea regarding what is in the future, or where society will go. Parque 3 de Febrero has been mentioned as a site where the memory of de Rosas and *caudillismo*—the political form of governance and life under the caudillos—were banished from the present, as well as a place where civilization had metaphorically conquered the pampas. But it is just as important to draw attention to the future, or the modern moment, to which Sarmiento was pointing.

### *Sarmiento’s “Civilization”*

Frederick Law Olmsted, included here because of his impact on Sarmiento’s original ideas for developing Buenos Aires and Parque 3 de Febrero, is one place to start in exploring the thought behind civic development in this era. Well aware of the many problems faced by urban areas in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, he would state that the “disease”, “misery”, “vice”, and “crime” in cities could “be a very dark prospect for civilization” (Olmsted 2000, 315). However, he was still described as a “champion of the city” who believed that civilization, “expressed through the city, evolves through a process of stage-by-stage emergence to higher forms” (Eisanman 2013, 300). As such, Olmsted would finish his previous statement by stating that “this would be a very dark prospect for civilization, if it were not that modern Science has beyond all question determined many of the causes of the special evils by which men are afflicted in towns, and placed



means in our hands for guarding against it” (Olmsted 2000, 315). Specifically speaking, this “stage-by-stage” emergence out of urban destitution is due to public greenspace, preferably in the form of patches of parks which are connected by green boulevards (Olmsted 2000, 318). This theme of civilization-through-parks is a crucial one to set early due to the temporal nature of infrastructure as a communication of modernization.

The reason for Olmsted’s importance is due to his design of Central Park, with which Sarmiento was familiar due to his time spent in New York City. Central Park, however, was not always so central, and it was this aspect—how the city grew around the park—which convinced Sarmiento that the location of de Rosas’ former estate was the right place for Parque 3 de Febrero (Martire 2012, 264). Sarmiento agreed with Olmsted’s idea that Science (with a capital S) was a capable agent for dealing with the ills of the era’s urban experience. The park was to be a place of gathering for the entire population, a place where national identity could be built not through a sense of belonging, but of how the land was to be used. It would be a “heritage of the people,” strengthen the public through exercise, and “cultivate the population’s sense of civility... through its beauties” (Sarmiento 1875, 26). Typical of utopian functions of greenspace at the time, Sarmiento would state the following regarding the park’s abilities, “only in a vast, artistic, and accessible park will people be people: only here will there be no foreigners nor natives, no oligarchs nor plebeians” (ibid.). Sarmiento’s statement regarding foreigners and natives is meaningful in its proper context; much of his criticisms in *Facundo* relate to de Rosas’ treatment of immigration from Europe. North America, in his view, was reaping the benefit by way of taking the best immigrants—usually according to Sarmiento meaning Northern Europeans—while Argentina was left languishing in civil war (Sarmiento 1961 [1845], 262-263). A modern Buenos Aires for him—excusing the anachronism—was one which had broken with the isolated Argentina which had existed for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a place where, as stated above, people from all over the world—not just Buenos Aires or even Argentina—could come to see what this nation had to offer. It was a site which showed to these new arrivals that Argentina had conquered its caudillo past and had turned away from the vast windswept plains of the pampas. It was where somebody could walk through “his Bois de Boulogne, his Hide Park or his Central Park” (Sarmiento 1875, 26). More simply, it was a place where Sarmiento could establish his

legacy and was a “tool” which could “erase old habits and create a new social order” (Martire 2012, 266).

#### **4.2.2 Carlos Thays and the Science of Landscape**

Eighteen years after the park’s 1875 inauguration, Thays would be appointed to the position of park director, not only for Parque 3 de Febrero but for the city as a whole. Like Sarmiento, Thays was a believer in how parks could be used as a civilizing agent in a city. However, he was not a statesman like the former President, rather he was interested in the form of the parks—the crucial difference being that he was interested in creating something new and novel in Parque 3 de Febrero rather than copying examples from elsewhere. Thays’ developments did not touch the original design, but added an immense area to what already existed. This included the entire northern area of the park, including the wide expanses of Plaza Holanda, where much of this research took place, to the northwest where the large lake is now used for regatta races. Apart from this, Thays’ influence included building other parks, including Parque Centenario, a park in the middle class barrio of Caballito.

One of the most striking aspects of his development of the parks was the scientific manner in which his work took place. In dealing with the Botanical Gardens in particular, not only was the space mapped, but he had noted how many species had been planted, as well as a grid showing the genus and family to which they belonged (Thays 2002 [1910]). His planning was total and totalitarian, governing everything from the maintenance of the plants, in which position to plant them, the proper structure of governance for the parks, how to renovate the smaller plazas, how to protect against insects, and even the proper method of policing and controlling the parks (Thays 2002 [1891]). Preceding the idea of parks as an area of circulation, Thays’ view of parks as the city’s lungs was one of his theoretical contributions to the era’s planning and design community (Martire 2012, 271). Although Thays rarely expanded beyond speaking of the parks and their role on society, his methods can be seen as a refinement of Sarmiento’s plans for a Scientifically-administered system of public space.

In light of his French heritage, as well as the push from influential Argentinians such as Sarmiento for more European and North American knowledge, it would be easy to surmise that Thays represented the influx of foreign expertise which was shaping the capital, and therefore describing the manner in which Buenos Aires developed as a

passive reception of European and North American styles. However, it might be more accurate to look at Thays and his work as an assertion of what it meant to be a “modern” Argentinian. Berjman describes him as “paradigmatic” of his generation—“foreign, French, professional, scientific, aesthete, and a maker” (Berjman 2002, 17). Parque 3 de Febrero then was turned into a sign not of foreign influence, but again fulfilled Sarmiento’s dream of what Buenos Aires and Argentina could be, in this case regarding the mix of European and American (here meaning the Americas), but with an anchor in the Buenos Aires context. While Thays looked back to Paris for some inspiration, his work was one that was distinctly “shaped by domestic reality,” and developed a place which “was also recognized abroad as an example that could be used internationally” (Martire 2012, 273).

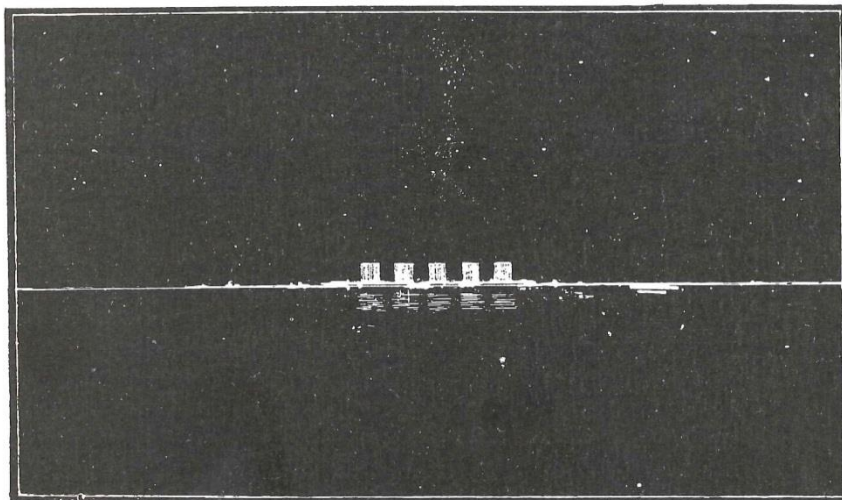
In Sarmiento and Thays, we see two prominent actors who represent a shift in thinking from the Buenos Aires and Argentina of the early- and mid-1800s. In contrast to the isolationist policy of de Rosas, Sarmiento promoted the mixing of populations and wanted Parque 3 de Febrero to be a symbol of this new Argentina. Following the establishment of the park, Thays in many ways embodied this push from Sarmiento, representing a native-born Frenchman who naturalized in Argentina. There were no doubts about his loyalties—he marked a special place for the plants of Argentina in his botanical garden, calling it the most important section of the complex (Thays 2002 [1891], 270). He personified the rupture from a backwards, caudillo culture which was so despised by Sarmiento, in the process enshrining Parque 3 de Febrero as a valuable piece of infrastructure for communicating this forward, progressive movement.

### **4.3 Modernization of the City**

In the next section I will discuss Buenos Aires in the context of modernist urban design, such as the tradition set by Le Corbusier. First I will look at a plan for the city which was formulated by Le Corbusier, in which he delivers an idea with striking similarities to his plans for Paris. This will be mentioned in the context of a Buenos Aires which was, at the time, attempting to reassert itself as a place of destination for European immigrants, a status which had been lost after the World Wars. After this, I will look at the themes of modernist design and the impacts they had on the park, looking especially at the governments of Perón and the subsequent military dictatorships.

### 4.3.1 Le Corbusier and the Master Plan for Buenos Aires

The discussion of urban design in Buenos Aires will start with a modernist plan which, while not adopted in its entirety, would influence city developments in Buenos Aires for decades. In 1929, Le Corbusier arrived in Buenos Aires, where he would deliver his Master Plan for Buenos Aires, pictured below. Although it never came to fruition, it is still considered significant enough in the design history of the city to warrant a place in a chapter of the government's history of urban thinking (Buenos Aires Ciudad 2011). The plan, which—as was typical for Le Corbusier—called for the division of function between different barrios as well as greater circulation between them, was eventually tabled, although bits and pieces have found themselves used in other contexts over the years. While some have argued that the plan exemplified modernism by displaying the complete oppression of locality by form (Scott 1998, 104), its similarities to his plan for Paris could also be explained by the desire of elite Porteños to copy the designs which were originally for the French capital in their own way—indeed, notes in his works “are eloquent testimony of the profound impression made on him by the landscape and the city” (Crasemann Collins 1995, 211). Again refuting the idea of Buenos Aires as a passive receiver of modernism, the goal of the Buenos Aires Master Plan was for Le Corbusier, alongside his two Argentinian protégés, to create an “awakening of the South” (Bender 2015, 447).



**Figure 4: Le Corbusier's Master Plan of Buenos Aires**

Accepting that form still played a part in his equation, as well as a certain “disownment of tradition” (Minuchin 2013, 239), I think it could be too simple to state that Le Corbusier's master plan represented a totalitarian makeover. While the plans

did not contain the same level of local knowledge as those of Werner Hegemann (Crasemann Collins 1995), another visiting urban designer from Europe, it is representative of Agustina Martire's thesis of mixed expertise, which states that even "foreign" influence and know-how can combine to create a discourse which is "shaped by domestic reality" (Martire 2012, 273). The modernist influence came not from a homogenizing effect of design, but through a "discourse that associated progress and social development with the technical and constructive ability to inscribe and disseminate impressive public interventions" (Minuchin 2013, 240). Indeed, other modernist projects proposed by European planners, such as the 1956 Plan for Barrio Sur, were struck down not so much because they lacked local context, but because the argument was a way for local architects to gain more power over the process (Bender 2015). Even though the Master Plan was not carried out, today it maintains a level of importance due to its linking of cutting-edge European thought to Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires Ciudad 2011), as well as the impression that his experiences in the city had an impact on Le Corbusier's thought (Queiroz 2013, 15).

#### **4.3.2 Modernist Developments in and around the Park**

Following from the Master Plan of Buenos Aires, here I will explore the impact of popular urban and landscape design trends on Parque 3 de Febrero throughout the middle part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Between the end of Thays' reign as Park Director for the city of Buenos Aires in 1913 and the spate of neoliberal reform enacted in the 1990s, few design changes were made to Parque 3 de Febrero itself. The park and its environs were home to some of the wealthiest Porteños, who greatly enjoyed living near one of the largest green spaces in the city. Again mixing activities from Europe and Argentina, fox hunting became an activity for a short while during the 1930s, although this practice did not last long (Berjman 2006, 30). Modernity, during this era, was mostly concerned with construction—and it is here where most of the indirect changes happened. It was also at this time when modernism had significance as an architectural and urban design style—such as the projects of Le Corbusier mentioned above—but here the definition will remain as the experience of a rupture between the present and some previous way of living. In 1945, the former military officer Juan Domingo Perón (1895-1974) came to power, promising to return Argentina to its position of wealth which had been lost during the wartime years. During the Perón era, the areas of

Palermo and Barrio Norte which bordered the park saw the development of modernist apartment blocks, which were in contrast to the smaller villas which had previously dominated the surrounding area. Perón, recognizing the potency of public space as political space, often used the Plaza de Mayo in the city center as a place of politics—a practice which would continue throughout the history of Buenos Aires (Berjman 2006, 30).

Throughout Perón's rule, his deposition by the military, his re-election in the 1970s, and the presidency of his third wife, this government according to modernist architectural and planning principles remained. The parks, as an already-functioning space of leisure, did not need much work beyond regular maintenance—however, the space around the park was gradually turned into an area of denser inhabitation, while the main boulevard to the south—Avenida de Santa Fé—became known as a site of commerce (Gutman and Hardoy 1992, 231). During the second military dictatorship, which took advantage of Perón's death in 1976 to seize power, the park underwent more extreme changes. Well aware of Perón's usage of the Plaza de Mayo as a space of politics, the junta set about altering the makeup of the smaller plazas in Parque 3 de Febrero and the surrounding neighborhood in order to avoid a similar development. In conjunction with architects and planners who wished to supplant “modern” design over the “Edenic” prairies and gardens of the many plazas, trees were replaced with concrete columns and much of the open greenspace was filled with the same material (Berjman 2006, 30). These developments represented a philosophy that was still rooted in the functional usage of space, but one that was wary of how leisure space could be abused as a site of protest and unrest. In addition, the junta sold land to its own high-ranking officials and business contacts in what were ostensibly transfers of public land to other public institutions, but which were in practical terms private organizations (AALP 2015, 12). However, one of the strongest impacts of the junta was not necessarily the physical change, but was rather the consequences it had regarding governance of the parks in the future. After the junta left power, the parks of the city—especially Parque 3 de Febrero—were far down on the list of what needed attending to. The resulting dilapidation set the stage for the city government under Carlos Menem and the supposed solutions of privatization, which are the final developments to be analyzed in building this narrative of the parks as infrastructure.

## 4.4 Menem and the Privatization of the City

Moving on, I will use the example of Menem to show the impact of privatization on the park. First I will explore the renovations of the old port at Puerto Madero in order to show an ideal type of privatized land. Following this will be an examination of the developments in Parque 3 de Febrero throughout the 1990s. Throughout this section I will try to draw a thread through the privatization which was rampant throughout the city, and tie it in with the privatization and sale of public park land in Parque 3 de Febrero.

### 4.4.1 The Renovated Puerto Madero

The next example which illustrates design principles in Buenos Aires comes in the form of Puerto Madero, a waterfront port which fell out of use in the early 1900s and was in a state of destitution until its redevelopment during the Menem era. The link is fitting, as part of Le Corbusier's original Master Plan called for the redevelopment of the space in much the same manner, creating a business center near the waterfront characterized by monumental office buildings. Emanuela Guano describes the decision to redevelop Puerto Madero in simple terms: "Someone realized that such cheap land so close to downtown Buenos Aires could be recycled productively and that the faint historical aura of the old port could exert some charm" (Guano 2002, 188). The picture is slightly more complex, as the opening of Puerto Madero was an attempt to show once more how connected Buenos Aires was with the international community—here meaning global capital (Larco 2010, 196).

The development of Puerto Madero was emblematic in many ways of the Menem years through the 1990s. The positivity often left an underwhelming ending. *The Wall Street Journal* sums up this decade with three headlines: "Argentina Casts a Vote for Freedom", from 1990; "The Americas: Argentina's Statist Nightmare is Over", from 1991; and, advancing six years to 1997, "Privatization in Argentina Sparks Outcry." This method of planning often involved not planning at all, as the goal became to open up public land to private interests. Puerto Madero was one of these ventures, with Laurence Crot arguing that it is "a paradigmatic case study of market revalorization of urban land through state promotion and private investment" (Crot 2006, 235). These developments were often presented as cases of rebirth in the city,

which was a seductive message after the military dictatorship of previous decades. The development was presented as a break with the past, a connection with the new world of global capital—not so much a nostalgic connection to Buenos Aires’ history as much as “the nostalgia for New York and for how champagne would taste over there” (Guano 2002, 189). The nostalgia is indeed for the future, but it is firmly located in Buenos Aires. The area was earmarked for development in order to relaunch Menem’s version of Argentina as a global, or at least regional, power (Larco 2010, 199). Thus hiring ‘starchitects’ to play a key role in the redevelopment of the port meant not that Puerto Madero was to become a homogenized place of globalization, but one where Buenos Aires could brandish its credentials as a place of modernity (ibid., 201).

#### **4.4.2 Privatizing the Park**

After the military dictatorship, the economy of Argentina suffered from hyperinflation and was deeply indebted. Menem, President from 1989 through 1999, ran successfully on a platform of privatization, ostensibly to get the economy under control. This plan of privatization was also present in the parks, and will be analyzed through two examples. The first will be a look at how public planning was outsourced, resulting in the proliferation of public service NGOs dedicated to preservation. This will be followed by an example which examines the sale of land in Palermo for the headquarters of the Rural Society of Argentina.

The Friends of the Palermo Lake Association was founded in 1990, the first full year of Menem’s presidency, in an effort to fix many of the issues found in the park at the time. While the municipal government had only focused on maintaining the Rosedal—a small rose garden at the center of Plaza Holanda, itself only a small part of Parque 3 de Febrero—the founding members of the association were concerned with the overgrowth and the safety of the surrounding areas (AALP 2015, 3). The Association developed links to other environmental organizations in Argentina, who themselves had links to international NGOs. The early 1990s saw many victories for the NGO, as around 15.000m<sup>2</sup> of parkspace was restored to its original usage (ibid.), removing many of the concrete structures which had been built in the preceding years of autocratic rule. I argue here that this development of civil society can be seen as another way in which the park functioned as a piece of infrastructure signaling a movement toward a more modern present. The replacement of government action by private groups and civil



society was a key part of Menem's privatization policy, with an imported plan from a successful renovation in Barcelona's waterfront district calling for more of these sorts of partnerships (Crot 2010). Although the organization wanted more responsibility from the government, their early successes painted a picture that the system was working, and Menem subsequently won a second term as President in 1995. However, more problems quickly arrived. It became apparent that the privatization and appropriation of public space was fast becoming one of the tenets of the Menem presidency. Despite the Mayor of Buenos Aires belonging to the opposition party, the economic crisis in general forced a reassessment of priorities, and NGOs such as the Friends Association became the only means of maintenance. Despite another 25.000m<sup>2</sup> worth of re-greened parkspace in 1997 (AALP 2015, 3), it became soon apparent that the privatization of the land would continue for the foreseeable future. The lack of power which was afforded to civil society in these plans beyond the realm of public opinion preempted any actual influence in the parks; Crot notes that, in attempting to transfer the previously-mentioned Barcelona public participation model, the consultation with civil society was often a ruse, designed more for appearances than for engendering any sort of genuine community participation (Crot 2010, 124).

One of the strongest examples of this transfer of land from public to private ownership, ignoring civil society, was the sale of land which had been set aside for management by the Rural Society of Argentina (La Rural), but which was still considered public and part of the Parque 3 de Febrero complex. The architect who was the subject of one of my interviews, Paz, recounts this era with pain as he describes the figure put in place by Menem to take care of parks as utterly incompetent; while they knew that something was probably illegal, they lacked the knowledge to do much other than protest and clamor for media coverage. While his ideal situation would be to spend more time on conservation and preservation, the Menem government of the 1990s forced more involvement. Regarding this time, Paz was blunt: "And then came a government from one of the ex-Presidents. I think you've heard of him, Menem. Carlos Menem. And he appointed a superintendent for the issues of the park, who was the absolute worst. He was incompetent." Menem transferred the land, which had been occupied by La Rural since 1878 on an unofficial basis, for 30 million USD. The price was not discussed in public until later in the decade, when it caused a scandal due to the appraised price of the land, which was 131 million USD (La Nación 2014, Clarín 2012).

In many ways, this was a crucial point in the fight for preservation. The land transfer is the subject of an ongoing lawsuit involving Menem and the then-Minister of the Economy, Domingo Felipe Cavallo. While this is one of many examples of corruption in Buenos Aires and Argentina over the years, more importantly for this thesis is its status as a symptom of the overall design paradigm of the 1990s, with Menem's low tax, low public spending policies. The park in this case is not an intentional symbol for communicating progress forward, but is in contrast a symbol for the consequences and ramifications for this particular brand of modernity which was served in the 1990s.

The developments listed above highlight two distinct moments in Buenos Aires where plans were delivered which would produce a rupture between the present—i.e. the modern moment—and the past. In the first case, Le Corbusier's plan leaves no direct trace on the city, but many of the ideas have been picked for other developments. The most obvious of these descendants was the redevelopment of Puerto Madero; a site where Buenos Aires was to be portrayed as a modern city. It represents a move for Buenos Aires away from public planning toward private development of space, a strategy which has been carried out enthusiastically by the Macri city government of 2007-2015. However, before we touch upon the previous mayor's impact on the parks, the themes which have been introduced above will be tied in with the role of Parque 3 de Febrero throughout time.

## **4.5 Concluding Thoughts**

This chapter has been an attempt to describe how the park has embodied ruptures at different points in its history. Beyond describing a coherent philosophy of modernism, whether regarding its architectural, design, or political connotations, modernism here is defined as the end result of a rupture which has broken the past from the current world. Sarmiento began the process of Parque 3 de Febrero as an attempt to solidify modern and progressive Argentina's victory over not only the caudillos and "barbarity" of the past, but the physical environment which created them: the pampas. Carlos Thays then refined his ideas, moving beyond this conflict toward a more exact definition of the science of parks while continuing the idea that "education and civilization of the urban dweller could be realized in urban parks" (Martire 2012, 274). This was the status of the park for some years and, while escaping an appropriation as a political space such as

that of Plaza de Mayo under Perón, it was still the site of development and the continued push of functional urban planning as high rise buildings and malls were constructed on its periphery. The changes by the junta were more direct—space was rendered less malleable to the public’s political will while the seeds of privatization were sewn. The crisis which continued through the late 1980s saw the election of Menem, who maintained his own idea of what it meant to be modern. Privatizing space was to be a panacea for the city’s ills, and Parque 3 de Febrero was only one site of many during this time to be parceled and sold to private individuals and corporations (Guano 2002, 186), in this case being exemplified by the sale of 123.000m<sup>2</sup> to La Rural, which itself is larger than the entire area claimed back by organizations such as the Friends of the Palermo Lake Association (AALP 2015, 3). Through these examples we can see Parque 3 de Febrero as communicating and producing, intentional or otherwise, the “modern” ideas of the different eras—or, more specifically, the modern ideas of those who had the power to realize them.

Revisiting Mitchell, while a ruling class of Europeans in a colony might produce modernity “as a staging of differences” (Mitchell 2000, 26) between the colonized and the colonizers, in Buenos Aires it is a different story. Modernity here is a staging of similarities, of erasing its role as a peripheral city and establishing its own history. Even in the case of Sarmiento conquering the pampas, the ‘barbarity’ of the caudillos is tied to other descendants of colonizers rather than the indigenous people. Modernity in this thesis will be understood as the ruptures which have been experienced by those with the power to operationalize it, and the effects will be seen in developments of Parque 3 de Febrero. With these understandings, infrastructure can finally become a useful analytical tool.

# 5 Consuming Parque 3 de Febrero

*“The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation.”*

– Guy Debord, (1994 [1967]); *The Society of the Spectacle*

In the following chapter I will try to show how the different contests over space and definitions of modernity have produced the park as it exists today. Especially important will be the role played by Macri during his time in office as Mayor of Buenos Aires. I will argue that just as meaningful as the contests over the park are the contests over the correct definition of progress and modernity, and in the process I will try to complicate the view that those who see the land in similar ways will have similar points of departure regarding their ruptures.

First I will revisit my interview of Paz, the architect who headed the NGO devoted to the maintenance and rehabilitation of Parque 3 de Febrero. Fifteen minutes into the conversation, while discussing threats to the park, he describes with measured cynicism the status of 3 de Febrero and its governance. “Las unicas leyes de la Parque 3 de Febrero que se cumplen en el parque son las leyes de la fisica.” In English, this translates as the following: “The only laws in the Parque 3 de Febrero that are fulfilled are the laws of physics, the laws of gravity.” This story sets the stage for many of the tensions to be discussed ahead. The developments, legally speaking, are often illegal. But what happens when laws get in the way of what people consider to be development and progress? Over the following chapter I will attempt to pull these threads before putting them back together, showing how the government has used these greenspaces as signs of its modernizing powers as well as analyzing the behaviors which are deemed acceptable alongside the barriers that are used to prevent those which are unacceptable, while also looking at how other actors use the space to try to articulate their own version of modernity.

## 5.1 Macri’s Buenos Aires

As mentioned in chapter 4 Parque 3 de Febrero can be considered as a vital piece of infrastructure for Macri's government, or in other words, as a conduit for modernity. In replicating the form of the historical analysis, an examination of Macri's plan for Buenos Aires in general will be undertaken, using his business background from Boca Juniors and his creation of the Ministry of Modernization in order to establish a precedent for the modernization projects in Parque 3 de Febrero. I will try to establish a precedent for Macri's behavior as a modernizer, and engage with projects which have taken place outside of the park in order to get to the core of his modernization platform.

### **5.1.1 Fútbol and a Run for Mayor**

Macri, as will be shown, eludes any sort of absolute portrayal. He is the scion of one of the wealthiest families of Buenos Aires, but was the club president of Boca Juniors who, with River Plate, mirror the north-south divide of Buenos Aires in the football world. Boca Juniors, being from the working-class neighborhood of La Boca, have traditionally been associated with this class, while River Plate—"Los Millonarios", or "The Millionaires"—represent the northern inhabitants from their stadium in Nuñez, a barrio which is not far from Parque 3 de Febrero. This section will look at Macri's ascent from President of Boca Juniors to Mayor of Buenos Aires, his accomplishments at both, and what they say about his ideas on modernity and progress for the city.

This thesis is here indebted to Carlos Forment, who has diligently compiled a record of the influence which Macri's football background had on his unsuccessful first run for Mayor of Buenos Aires in 2003 (Forment 2007). The most important development for the purposes of this project is to note the reasons for Macri's sudden celebrity and quick ascent in the political world of the city. At the turn of the millennium, Argentina was in the midst of a crisis within which Buenos Aires was the epicenter. Menem's spate of privatization, discussed more in depth above, touched many sectors of public life, but curiously football clubs—which in Argentina are public and member-based organizations, similar to the Spanish and German system—were spared. Macri, as Forment describes, gained plaudits for turning a dysfunctional Boca Juniors side, plagued with egos in the locker room—which for the first two years of Macri's presidency included the simultaneously famous and infamous Diego Maradona—as well as corruption in the board room, into a profitable organization. This sudden turnaround was accomplished in part because of changes to the sporting culture,

but more relevantly for this thesis it was done by resisting privatization while at the same time raising existing monthly fees and establishing new ones for services which had previously been given for free (Forment 2007, 92). This move was unpopular among some, but would be informative when looking at his political platforms as he moved more into the political world.

In the run-up to the mayoral election in 2003, Macri's public stance was not for privatization, not for public control, but for what he claimed was somewhere in between—he wanted to run the city as if it were a business, using his experience at Boca Juniors as an example of his (Forment 2007). He singled out the *ñoquis* (as the word is spelled in Castellano)—highlighting the middle-class tradition of cooking expensive *gnocchi* on payday every month—who had been “subsidized” by previous city governments and who needed to be done away with (Macri 2003). In short, he was targeting public service workers who he claimed were having a middle-class lifestyle subsidized by the state. His platform included not only keeping government ownership of key pieces of modernizing infrastructure such as the metro—or *subte* as it is known in Buenos Aires—but increased spending in refurbishing the cars, creating new stations and lines, and even doubling the amount of publicly accessible greenspace in the city (Noticias Urbanas 2003). This emphasis on efficiency and profit, rather than wholesale cutting of public services, is what Macri claimed differentiated him from Menem.

### **5.1.2 The Modernizing Mayor**

While Macri's first run in 2003 was unsuccessful, he was eventually voted to the city's Chamber of Deputies in 2005 before running again for the position of mayor in 2007, this time being successful. The theme I have presented throughout this thesis so far has been one of communicating modernity, and Macri attempted to accomplish this when he created the city's first Ministry for Modernization. One of the first orders of business was to divide the city, especially poorer areas in the south, into different *Distritos Económicos*, or special economic districts. The Audiovisual District, the only one to be in the north, is located near the border between Palermo and Villa Crespo. The others include the Technological District of Parque Patricios, The District of the Arts in La Boca, the Design District of Barracas, and the Sports District in Villa Soldati.

The Technological District is one which provides insight into Macri's definition of modernization, geared as it is toward entrepreneurship and business rather than basic

research. When explaining the goal of the district, the city's official report states the following, there will be "a new culture in which the tradition of the neighborhood and the position of this industry in Buenos Aires as a center of *modern business*, which is contemporary and in communication with the rest of Buenos Aires and the world" (Buenos Aires Ciudad n.d. b, 16). It was promoted by the city that the development of the neighborhood will see greater influx of capital, a reduction of crime, and a greater investment in transportation (ibid, 22-23). Perhaps not coincidentally, Parque Patricios features as one of the hubs of a new metro line, the first in the city which traverses the historic divide between north and south. Echoing the development of Puerto Madero,<sup>16</sup> the city government announced its presence in Parque Patricios, and Parque Patricios' presence in the global scheme of innovation, by enlisting a "starchitect" firm (or a celebrity architecture firm) from London to build a new city office building—housing the departments which deal with open data and economic development—in the neighborhood. The building attracted headlines from mainstream design blogs such as Dezeen (Dezeen 2015), while the official press release from Foster + Partners stated that "the building is a catalyst for the regeneration of the neighborhood" (Foster + Partners 2015), with Macri joining the chorus by claiming that, with the architects "we are making history" (La Nación 2015). Just as with Puerto Madero, I hold that Macri is redeveloping a barrio into a location for the investment of global capital, announcing its emergence in grand style with the help of big-name and big-budget architects. In contrast to Puerto Madero, however, the emphasis is on the commercialization of the space, of creating an industry which will make profit for the city rather than solely developing the land (although this, too, is a goal of the private-public partnership Corporación Buenos Aires Sur). However, it is not only developments to the built environment which elucidate Macri's march into the future, as other greenspaces apart from the parks in Palermo have been used as public symbols of an advancing city, always on the move toward progress.

### *Parque de la Ciudad*

The best example of his plans for modernization regarding the landscaped environment, Parque de la Ciudad, is located in the neighborhood Villa Soldati, which will be

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<sup>16</sup> Emanuela Guano (2002) mentions the impact of "starchitects" in lending credibility to the renovations in Puerto Madero.

mentioned below due to its position in political ads in the run up to the 2015 Mayoral elections, like Parque Patricios, functions as one of the special economic zones of the city. It is also near Parque Indoamericano, a place which will be discussed in the section dealing with belonging. In contrast to the indirect consumption located in Parque 3 de Febrero, here it is much more direct and overt; entrance is ten pesos, parking is twenty pesos, and riding up to the top of the Torre Especial will run a visitor sixty pesos (Buenos Aires Ciudad n.d. a). Similar to the “selection” strategies of the touristic Tren de la Costa in Palermo (Guano 2002, 200), one does not have to worry about those who cannot afford the cost of entry. It is a space of escape in an otherwise tumultuous barrio and one that the city has commodified and has subsumed under an official corporate structure. The location of an abandoned amusement park, a casualty of the crises which began in the 1980s in Argentina, is an echo from the days Menem. As a candidate in 2003, Macri had campaigned for a doubling of greenspace in the city, but when presented with some 75 hectares of abandoned open space, the land is instead commodified and is now destined to be one of the locations for the 2018 Youth Olympics, which are to be hosted in the city.

What we see from Macri then is, I believe, not all that different from designers, planners, and bureaucrats during the Sarmiento years. Instead of rationality coming from Olmsted’s Science, the governance of the city itself can be put into a rational business model. Rather than design, modernity comes from the way in which space is governed and commercialized. The extreme levels of privatization from the previous decade, as well as the ñoquis of the previous center-left mayor’s administration, are portrayed as irrational relics from previous and less effective forms of governance. Using his background as the head of Boca Juniors, Macri was (eventually) able to mobilize this perceived business acumen into a successful run for the office of mayor. This transition away from the dichotomy of less/more government, toward one of supposedly rational business management, will be discussed further in the conclusion as it relates to developments at other sites. But first, we will reenter the context of Parque 3 de Febrero in order to see how this “management” style of governance is realized in physical places, as well as what it does to the population’s understanding not only of public space, but also of time and what it means to be a modern city.



## 5.2 The “Laws” of the Park

In this section I will investigate the sets of behaviors which are considered to be acceptable. First, I will introduce material from my interviews with James, the personal trainer, who has a markedly different view as one who is both an expat and a worker in the parks. The relative ease of his work—regarding its facilitation by way of recent renovations in the park—will be looked at in contrast to the following section which will discuss barriers to undesired actions. Next will be an exploration of how the spate of privatizations has affected the park, especially concerning its transformation into a site of consumption and performance.

As an expat and one who works in the parks full-time, his perspective would be valuable in coming to understand the impact of the recent renovations carried out by Macri’s government. I originally thought that he would be aware of the recent protests in Parque las Heras, where much of his work is located, surrounding the proposed clearing of trees in order to build a subterranean parking garage. However, as we discussed his work and opinions, he had only this to say regarding the proposed structure:

And then Las Heras, it had some building site in the middle of it, and it's now taken away and all that's there is a big green hill. So it's kind of just for show or something.

As an expat with mostly expat clients, it might not be too unexpected for the controversial plans mentioned above to have little impact on his everyday life. His business takes place mostly in Parque Centenario—in Villa Crespo and Caballito to the south of Palermo—and Parque Las Heras, with some classes also in the Bosques of 3 de Febrero and the old barrio of San Telmo. His courses lead him to travel large distances throughout the city, but also to give him a good overview of the parks in the northern barrios where he conducts much of his business. With the government’s push toward park-users engaging either in consumption practices or exercise, the trainer’s business represents both. While greenspace is preferable, concrete is not necessarily a drawback; regarding an expanse in Parque Las Heras he said “it’s why Las Heras is good for boxing, because they’ve got that big, open concrete space.” How then does it come to pass that somebody who spends hours upon hours in these parks is unaware of the developments? Beyond the obvious language barrier as one explanation, I will put forth

the idea that there was no resistance to the activities in which he was seeking to engage. The city government, in pushing their idea regarding what a developed city looks like, has created conditions which allow the trainer to carry out his business with little opposition. Simply put, these activities are those that communicate development and are those that are tolerated and deemed to be legitimate. As a result, with no resistance to his usage of the park, there is no reason for him to be engaged.

### **5.2.1 Commercializing Space**

Although they have differing strategies, both the government and civil society—such as the NGO to which the architect Paz belongs—are attempting to move the parks beyond their chaotic and dangerous past. The drug dealing and prostitution—which is now spoken of in whispers and only takes place on the edges of the park after dark—used to take place during day and in plain sight. When describing the reasoning for the creation of the NGO in the 1970s, Paz said that “the association was formed when the parks were a mess. There was garbage all over the parks. Cars were parking over the green spaces. So it was in a very, very dire time for the park.” What followed was the decade of mass privatization in the 1990s, mentioned in chapter 4 in the context of the awarding of land to La Rural, spurring the organization to go beyond restoration duties and to get more involved in the legal situation. While this era was marked by its open corruption and obvious pandering to business interests, the privatization under Macri has been subtler but perhaps even more influential.

The methodology of the recent wave of privatization, which includes the giving of parkspace to social organizations and the development of Starbucks and McDonald’s franchises where it is ostensibly illegal, can be understood in terms of Foucault’s “enclosure” and “partitioning” (Foucault 1995). Regarding enclosure, “it is the protected place of disciplinary monotony. There was the great ‘confinement’ of vagabonds and paupers; there were other more discreet, but insidious and effective ones” (Foucault 1995, 141). What was striking to me, throughout my interviews, was how regularized the illicit activities of drug usage and prostitution had become. It was out of site, it was managed, and so it was tolerated—the vagabonds and paupers had been given their space. Most of my informants thought that these activities were bound to happen in any case, the better it happens in a designated space. With the worst and most destructive behavior confined to one area on the fringes of the park, the space

could now be partitioned. Each space in the parks had its own function, and it was surprising to me how much space was set aside with the obvious imperative toward movement. The trainer’s exercise bars, the roller skating track, the Rosedal which prohibited any sitting on the grass (the Botanical Gardens had similar rules), and of course the bicycle lanes surrounding the park. Any space which was not given to movement was afforded the possibility of consumption—the food vendors which were on the periphery of the Plaza Holanda, the new businesses opening up underneath the train tracks, and the free Wi-Fi which had just been launched throughout Parque 3 de Febrero. As Foucault writes, “each individual has his own place; and each place its individual” (ibid., 143).



**Figure 5: Sign Advertising Free Wi-Fi**

Commercialization, in this case, is different from privatization. Rather than go the way of Menem, who sold private lands in Parque 3 de Febrero famously—especially the Rural Society building as mentioned in chapter 4—Macri has instead focused on managing the city as a business, much as he did during his stay as President of Boca Juniors. In most cases, this means looking at public space as a value for charge. Discussed above was the example of Parque de la Ciudad, where the city has repurposed an old theme park into a profitable urban park, but in Parque 3 de Febrero there has been a proliferation of food vendors, rental agencies for bicycles and roller

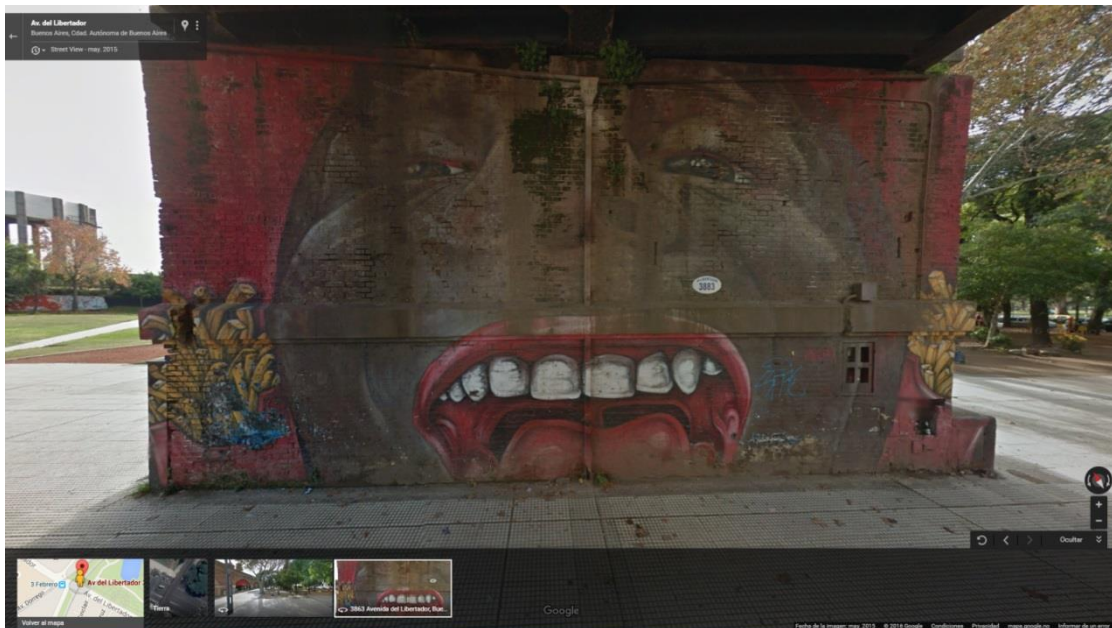
blades, as well as paddle boats. Additionally, it is now possible to remain constantly connected to the surrounding world through the Wi-Fi points, pictured above, which have recently been added throughout the city and the park.

This commercialization, rather than complete privatization, has been difficult for interest groups to combat. Paz noted how, in contrast to the open revolt against Menem's privatization and widespread media coverage, the struggle for the park has died down amid silence from journalists and reporters who once were considered to be allies. The reasoning for this, in his opinion, was that many in the center to center-right media (primarily the publications *Clarín* and *La Nación*) were happy enough with Macri's time as Mayor and did not want to print anything negative regarding his treatment of parks and other public spaces. This attitude could be seen through another informal conversation I had with the student, who stated that he enjoyed having the choice to buy things in the park as well as the option to relax with Wi-Fi.

## **5.2.2 New Privatization of the Park**

While there has been an increase in commercialization of public services, outright privatization still exists within the park where the former is impossible. Toward the end of our interview, when asking which developments Paz specifically wanted me to mention but had not yet come up in our conversation, he quickly jumped to the story of Panter. This corporation is significant in its function as a go-between for private enterprises as well as the national and civic governments. It deals primarily with the spaces which exist underneath the railway line which cuts through Parque 3 de Febrero. As part of the railway, the land belongs to the federal government, but as part of the park it is subject to civic laws regarding propriety, creating a complicated situation whereby it was difficult to develop greenery, yet it was technically illegal for the structures to be turned into stores. In addition, the national government at the time was headed by the Péronist Cristina Kirchner, while Macri represented the center-right portion of Argentina's political world. However, as Paz would tell me, "business knows no politics." Panter is a group that is difficult to trace, but which handles the deeds of the land which are then passed to companies such as McDonald's and Starbucks. This occurred in part due to the usage of the space by supposedly less reputable groups who simply claimed the land with no repercussions; tragically, in 1996 a young girl of six years was crushed to death by a statue which was put up by an

unregulated art gallery. Panter, in some parts, was seen as a logical party which could help to privatize the land while keeping it safe. Paz argues, however, that illegal is illegal; the space should be used for a gymnasium or even for a tourist bureau for the city, but profit-seeking ventures should be kept out as is set forward by law. Revisiting the point regarding the lack of media coverage, an editorial from *La Nación* displays this succinctly; rather than investigating the alleged legal irregularities, the author states that Panter has come in to “illuminate” the once-decrepit areas under the arches (Tomino 2012).



**Figure 6: Location of Panter; from Google Streetview and Paginas Amarillas**

The company’s background is interesting in itself. The address given on their registration, as told by Paz and verified by research, points to a simple location under one of the arches on the edge of the park where it borders Avenida Libertador. There is no office, mailbox, or any other sort of structure which would lead one to believe that the address is the headquarters of a company with the resources to broker these deals. As is seen above, there is a certain amount of poetry to the location; instead of an office, what remains is an impressive piece of street art depicting Voldemort—that famous villain from *Harry Potter*—surrounded by McDonald’s French fries.

### **5.2.3 Consumption and the Spectacle of the Park**

The beginning of this chapter displays the opening quote from Debord's (1994) *The Society of the Spectacle*, and here is relevant due to the displays within the park itself. It is possible to use parts of Debord's formulation of the spectacle, stating that "the self-movement of the spectacle consists in this: it arrogates to itself everything that in human activity exists in a fluid state so as to possess it in a congealed form as things that, being the negative expression of living value, have become exclusively abstract value" (Debord 1994, 11). By this it is meant that the acts of consumption and the display of consumption are now part of the fabric of the park. As consumption and commercialization are encouraged throughout the city and within the park, actions become "congealed" into a distinct thing.



**Figure 7: Fashionable Rollerskating**

One of the first things to be identified in my fieldnotes was the extent to which the parks functioned as a place to display items—whether clothes, roller blades, bicycles, or various other commodities. One day a young man rode his bicycle around the track, building up speed just before the speed bumps and launching himself into the air. A young boy nearby exclaimed "Wuuu!!!!" and the cyclist shot him a thumbs up, while during one of my first days I relate many of the actions to "peacocking." While this was obviously not what everybody was there for, it was still a theme which was visible throughout my visits.

The push for consumption thus does not have to be located solely within the parks—in the case of Parque 3 de Febrero, it is also related to the wider development of neoliberalism within the city in general. In the case of Puerto Madero, another beacon of modernity in Buenos Aires, Guano notes how “seeing and being seen is the constitutive practice..., where captive performativity is the dominant modality for participating in the neoliberal economy of appearance” (Guano 2002, 202). While the will to consume is most obviously illustrated by pop-up vendors, internet access, and the illicit global chains, I was struck by how similar the roller skating lanes were to a fashion show.

On a particularly warm day, I sat with two students from Villa Devoto who had come to the park to enjoy some drinks. They were affable and open to talking about everything, including their way to spend time at the park: “las chicas,” or girls. They were excited by the advent of spring, hopeful that they would soon be able to try to pick up women in the park. To be sure, they were there to be seen as well; both regularly worked out and were sporting the latest upper-middle class fashions. Similar to the nearby and touristic Tren de la Costa mentioned in the section immediately above, it is about ambiance. “It is the scenography that has been laid out for them to read with a captive gaze” (Guano 2002, 200). Just as with a movie, actors are influenced and pushed to behave in a certain way in accordance with the scenography. In Puerto Madero, it is crucial of the location to engage in the act of “seeing and being seen” (ibid., 191); in Parque 3 de Febrero, whether it is the newest exercise equipment or fashion from the nearby malls of Palermo, I believe that it is the same phenomenon.

### **5.3 Limits to Access and Participation**

The most obvious representations of limitations are the bars which have been erected around many greenspaces in Buenos Aires, but there will also be a discussion regarding belonging in the city. Citizenship, following its root and examining its relationship to a person’s belonging and ownership of the city, will be a helpful tool in analyzing these phenomena. Citizenship in this case will mean somebody’s status as a Porteño in modern Buenos Aires—the north/south divide will be discussed not as a physical barrier, but as a dichotomy in the mind which was mentioned in many interviews and is discussed in much of the literature dealing with Buenos Aires.

While the city government has done much in order to push members of the public toward behaving as it wishes, the parks are also sites of more overt attempts at controlling behavior. The “enclosing” of the more illicit visitors of the parks toward the northern fringes was done by tolerating behavior, but the iron bars which have come to characterize many of the city’s parks are examples of a different kind of control. The carrot and the stick are, in this context, a false dichotomy; both are used in order to give the parks a modern feel. Limits, however, are not always so obvious—in this section I will also discuss limits in their relation to the class structure of daily life in Buenos Aires.

### 5.3.1 Barring Entry



**Figure 8: Bars around the Rosedal**

The bars, which have recently surfaced in parks all over the city, are one theme which was addressed in many conversations and interviews. The landlord, who has taken a less positive view of the developments, had this to say:



“And another thing they did was to put bars in most of the – you know everything has bars and now closes at night? So in some places you kind of needed it for security reasons, but in others they didn’t. They just did it to put bars up and not let people in. Parque Centenario for example looks like shit with all the bars it has. It’s complicated to even find the entrance nowadays. So those things I don’t like.”

Metal bars have been put around portions of the Rosedal in Parque 3 de Febrero, and many other smaller areas in the complex. They have also been placed in Parque Centenario as well as others across the city, but these fall outside the scope of this thesis. Physical barriers erected in such a way impact space not only by creating borders, but by altering the space within. According to Foucault, in an interview with Paul Rabinow, architecture—primarily disciplinary and ordering architecture—is “only taken as an element of support, to ensure a certain allocation of people in a space, a *canalization* of their circulation, as well as the coding of their reciprocal relations” (Foucault in Rabinow 1984, 253). The landlord explains this distinction well—the government says that the structures are meant for security, to create a border which is supposed to protect; however, in reality they serve to regulate the flow of people inside, to make the space’s management easier.

### **5.3.2 The Parks and “Porteño Citizenship”**

Citizenship is here it meant in regards to a constructed idea of belonging to the different sections of Buenos Aires. Subsequently, it is meant to be that shared sense of identity which comes from a community, whether national or, in this case, affiliated with space. As presented in the introduction, there was an impression beforehand that Parque 3 de Febrero is an area open to others, whether tourists or those from other backgrounds, but in my experience those who visited the park were either from the area or from other middle-class barrios. Thus when discussing limitations to access, I want also to take into account those that are inferred and socially understood. Citizenship, especially concerning the civic level of governance, provides a useful lens through which issues of access can be analyzed. Pushing further, this section will discuss the definition of Porteño, a citizen of Buenos Aires, in terms of the north-south divide and the privilege of barrios such as Palermo—and by extension its public spaces—as being European, modern, and developed.

### *Belonging in Palermo*

Although most of my informants agreed that Buenos Aires needed more greenspace in barrios outside of Palermo, the matter of people coming from the outside to enjoy its parks could be a touchy subject. When I asked who was involved in the early days of the Parque 3 de Febrero rehabilitation, Paz was quite clear and almost annoyed in his answer—people from nearby, mostly Palermo and a few from neighboring Belgrano. It gave them a sense of ownership. This transitions to Porteños' classically held belief that the city is as much a part of Europe as it is Latin America. As has been described earlier, Buenos Aires has historically considered the terms “European” and “modern” to be interchangeable, which shows in the history of the design and planning of the parks. It has always, in this way, been a site of transnationalism. This term serves many purposes in contrast to globalization, not least because it takes into account a history of the city which often falls outside of the limits of what is considered to be the age of globalization (Guano 2002, 182). With this European and modern outlook, certain barrios of Buenos Aires (San Telmo before the Yellow Fever outbreaks of the 1800s, Palermo and Recoleta thereafter) have been able to separate themselves from a less civilized and chaotic surrounding (ibid., 183). I will thus not take this division into account order to examine the divide *prima facie*, but to take it into account as something which is a reference point for recognizing “the persistence of the dichotomy in social life” (Grimson and Segura 2016, 29). The divide is a powerful social phenomenon which shapes behaviors in the city; while it is uncommon for punishment to be undertaken in the event of an infraction, I believe that cultural isolation serves no less as a barrier. Most of my interviewees, taking into account both the interviews inside and outside of the park, were upper-middle class and either students or professionals. This was not by design, as I tried to sample based on the geography of the park rather than any sort of method based on the people themselves. While many came from different barrios, such as other middle class neighborhoods like Caballito or Villa Devoto, few came from the poorer areas, and only one family came from the provinces. They were intending to visit the Rosedal, but in an unfortunate turn it was closed for the day. As a result, they occupied themselves on the southern fringe of the park, away from the roller skating track and close to the large Avenida Libertador.

### *The Case of Parque Indoamericano*

Not enough empirical evidence exists for me to say for certain that the lower numbers of visitors from poor neighborhoods and the province were a result of engrained social limits. However, a dramatic case from Villa Soldati—a strongly working-class barrio on the southern border of the city—shows just how violent these concepts of citizenship and belonging can become. The neighborhood, which is located on the southern edge of the Federal District bordering the province, was the site of an occupation of the then-abandoned Parque Indoamericano. The enormous park, one of the largest in the city and comparable to Parque 3 de Febrero, was considered a dangerous space, one that had been “liberated” from the governance of the city (Lederman 2013, 16). Once it became occupied by even poorer segments of the population who finally put the space to use, the response was swift and direct. The usage of the space was deemed illegitimate, and the occupiers were described derisively by the city government as illegal immigrants. Macri, who had just won his second election on the platform of “*Vos sos bienvenidos*”—you are welcome here—demonstrated “once more who was ‘welcome’ in the city and who was not, condemning the occupation as an illegitimate use of public space” (Marcús 2014, 9). I believe that the divisions in Buenos Aires, real as they are, cannot be avoided even in the parks. When class is seen in relation to having the right “looks” (Guano 2002, 191), the population polices itself. Those with the right “look,” whether in Parque 3 de Febrero or Parque Indoamericano, “claim to embody the legitimate urban public” and “attempt to undermine the right to the city of those who fail to comply with the dominant prescriptions for belonging” (Guano 2004, 76).

## 5.4 Contested Spaces

In Parque Las Heras, the smaller neighborhood park of Palermo which lies to the south and east of Parque 3 de Febrero, there has been a battle over the proposed building of a parking structure since 2000, mentioned earlier in the context of James’ work in the park. A law, ratified in 2011 and put in force in 2012, states that the city government has a duty to build parking structures in order to alleviate traffic pressure over the course of the next 30 years (La Legislatura de Buenos Aires 2012). The neighborhood has thus become split between those who drive and need space for their cars and those who wish to protect the park. Those in charge of the building claim that trees would only be impacted in a minimal way, that the structure would be underground, and that

after it is built the park would look as good as new; however, the opposition states that there is no way to know this and that there are also valuable archaeological remains in the park that pertain to the city's early history and would be irretrievably destroyed (Rocha 2015). Protests against any sort of construction are ongoing while the decision-making process unfolds. One of my informants, Juan the student, spoke on the subject regarding the aftermath of the plan's uncovering.

“They [the neighbors] went into a rage. They started picketing, and it was so bad and so environmental, people saying ‘chain themselves!’—well I don't know if they chained themselves, but it was very much like this with boycotts and stuff—and they had to drop it. They had to drop it, which I think is shit. I think, yes it's bad that they're cutting down hundred year-old trees. But I think that is the way that a city grows... They're not going to make the park a parking lot. It's going to keep being a park, it's just going to be useful as well as another urban space. I really think the neighbors were wrong on that. They should have let it happen... When it's done, your apartment is going to cost more, and that's how a city grows.”

The idea of using a park as both a greenspace and a parking lot reflects the goal of the city to develop. Although emissions have been decreasing in Buenos Aires over the past years (Gallardo et al. 2012, 18), furthering private automobile infrastructure while potentially impacting the increasingly isolated parks of Buenos Aires is worrisome to some local residents. There is a long memory of promised projects which underwhelmed in comparison to expectations. The landlord, who was a native of the neighborhood, had this to say regarding the parking structure in light of previous developments:

“If they did a parking lot without harming the park, it would be ok. But you can't just throw down fifty year-old trees and replace them with brand new ones. And you never know what they could do with the park. I remember for example a plaza that's small and that's near here, near Salguero and Güemes. There's one that was green, and now it's all full of cement.”

The contrast between the two points of view deserves to be examined more closely. Although a student not from the area could be less pessimistic regarding the government, I do not believe that this is a sufficient answer. To begin with, Juan displayed a point of view which could be described as quite negative toward Macri and his mayoral successor Rodríguez Larreta, once describing the latter as running virtually

on a platform of tolerated corruption. In addition, *La Nación's* article on Parque Las Heras featured interviews which showed other locals as being much more receptive to the idea (La Nación 2015b). Furthermore, the landlord quite explicitly said that it was not the parking structure *per se* that was the problem, rather the history. I put forward that the difference is not necessarily politics, but how the space is experienced. The student is more preoccupied with using the space for exercise, and not as a space of memory. Moving away from Las Heras, while exercise has been one facet of 3 de Febrero's development, the other has been its expansion as a site of consumption. It thus moves away from being an escape toward being something akin to a shopping mall—even exercise activities such as roller-skating, group bicycling, etc., require rentals and market transactions. Guano notes how policy in Buenos Aires has been shifting toward a new cityscape, and that this “new cityscape of Buenos Aires is a locus, a medium, and a tool of the hegemonic attempt to mold *porteño* citizenship into the case of neoliberalism” (Guano 2002, 182). While the changes have been agreeable to the student, the longtime resident has seen spaces of active and intentional tranquility be transformed into sites of passive consumption. Las Heras had existed as something between the barred neighborhood parks of the south and the developed space of 3 de Febrero, but this was now under threat. I believe that it was a rejection of what it means to move forward, and it might be why newspapers and politicians have found it so difficult to understand exactly why the neighborhood is as divided as it is.

#### **5.4.1 The Contested City**

As has been mentioned before, Buenos Aires is a city which is commonly divided by north and south, with the north being perceived as rich and the south as poor. In the year preceding the mayoral election, a series of bicycle lanes had been put in place around the park and the surrounding area in Palermo. This structure will be used as a microcosm of the debate surrounding modernity in the city and who is privileged enough to access it. In order to do this, I will make an example of a political ad (Lousteau 2014) used by a young politician running against Macri's successor in order to show the power of the discourse surrounding modernity in the city, as well as an example of what modernity is meant to mean today.

The advertisement is polished and with high production value, typical of Martín Lousteau's campaign. He is young and affable, popular amongst young voters and the

middle-class. At the time of the ad's airing, he had claimed that his highest goal was to force a ballotage, or a run-off, as one of the two highest claimants of the popular vote. It begins with a ride around the bicycle lanes surrounding Parque 3 de Febrero, and in the background are the open greenspaces and museums of the surrounding neighborhood. The area is depicted as well-off, but suddenly he gets to a literal end of the bicycle lane. If the first part of the video was intended to portray the modern part of the city, the second part highlights its opposite. He wanders through a ramshackle school, a hospital that is strikingly derelict, and the trash-strewn streets of a slum in Villa Soldati. At the end of the ad is a slogan, which translates from Spanish as "the city that is unseen from the bicycle must also be alright." Lousteau's opposition is not that either the progress near the parks or their renovations have been in any way counterproductive. Nowhere does he mention the hundreds of cats which have vanished from the Botanical Gardens—alluding to the countless feral cats which called the park home during my first stay in 2010, and were now absent—or the renovation of old neighborhood houses into high-rise apartments. The goal of his campaign ad is to show that other parts of the city have been left behind, that those places out of mind of the richer north deserve to be included. He is not saying that the goal of modernization is itself a problem, but that its benefits need to be extended to other parts of the city. Appadurai writes that "space and time are themselves socialized and localized through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation, and action" (Appadurai 1996, 180). Under Hetherington's definition, infrastructure is "part of a series of complex processes to which one draws attention in a causal argument about linear history" (Hetherington 2014, 198); hence, it needs to be seen in terms of moving forward. Mauricio Macri's usage of the bicycle lanes, especially with the image of the renovated parks in the background, points toward a civilized city. Lousteau's counterargument was thus to change the scene and to put the emphasis on those places where "linear history" is absent.<sup>17</sup> In this section, and more broadly this chapter, I show how the city government uses the parks in a way to communicate their movement into a modern future, and how these deliberate practices of performance, representation, and action play key roles in this communication.

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<sup>17</sup> Although the campaigns were different—Lousteau was running to be the Mayor of Buenos Aires while Macri was running for the Presidency—Macri's history as the Mayor, and the fact that his ally and political partner Rodríguez Larreta was running to succeed him, meant that there was a lot of dialogue relating to the development of the city which ran between the two elections.

This anecdote is a shorter story and on a smaller scale when compared to Parque 3 de Febrero, but it is an accessible example which explains how modernity can be constructed and co-opted, later attaching itself to physical infrastructure. Transportation upgrades are no strangers to the term, but here it is used differently—both Macri and Lousteau use the lanes as a symbol for modernity and what it means to be a modern city. Lousteau attempted to co-opt Macri’s own symbol for himself, taking a tour of the poorer areas of Buenos Aires to show the side of the city where there are no bicycle lanes, where modernity has failed to reach. While he won the district, it was not enough to gain control of the city, losing the election to Rodríguez Larreta, Macri’s successor, by three points.

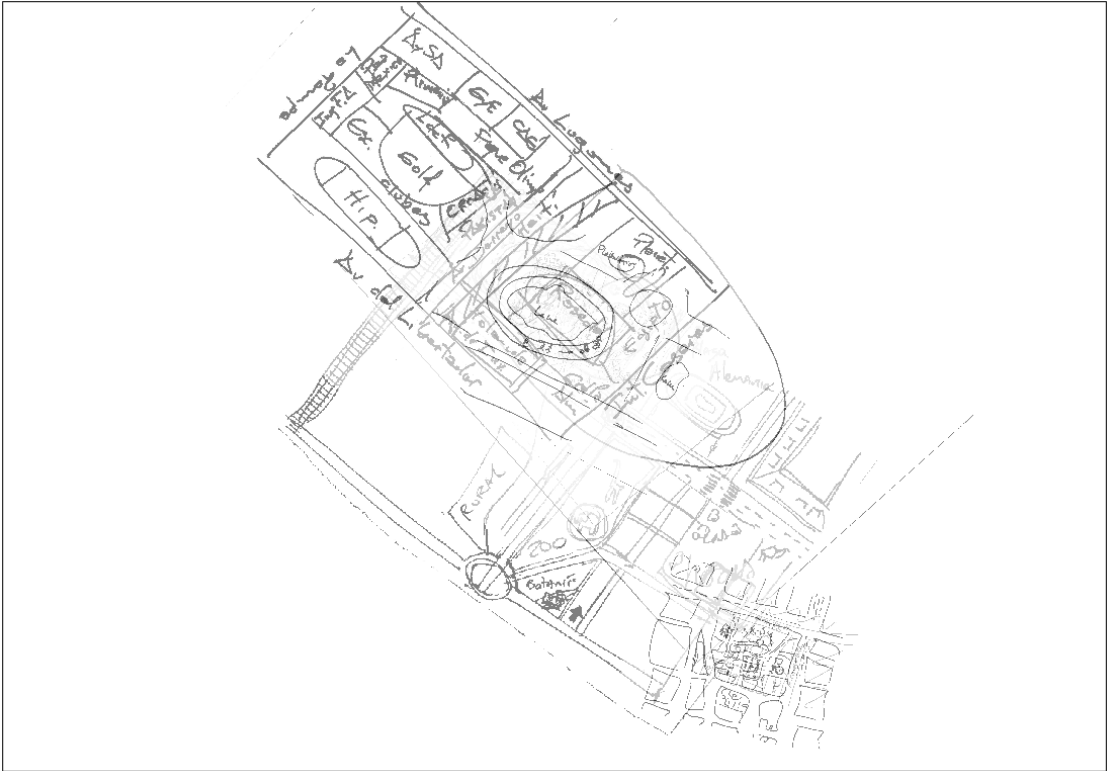
#### **5.4.2 Contested Perceptions of Space**

Themes such as design, usage, and overlapping perspectives of the park have been explored previously. However, in this thesis I explore this on a level which exists below the public discourse, below the existing laws, and out of the public eye where notions such as design and intention give way to practicality, pragmatism, and back-room deals. Despite happening out of the public eye, the laws which have been codified are assumed to have been broken, or at the very least to have been interpreted in a way which is advantageous to the government and those with connections. Whereas Paz the architect had reason and evidence for his claims, cynicism is a reaction even when there is no particular grievance. In response to the previously-mentioned development plans at Parque Las Heras, my landlord had this to say, “I’ve seen lots of this government, of the city particularly, they’ve changed a lot of green areas to places full of cement. So I... so whenever they touch any place. You get scared that they are gonna do a lousy thing, full of cement. Very hot and stuff instead of a green area.” Returning to a familiar word, I put forward that the park’s function as a crucial piece of infrastructure—one which communicates progress—is subverted by the very people who set out its purpose and usage. Although already described above, revisiting the definition of infrastructure used for this thesis will help in setting this chapter’s course. As Hetherington states, “infrastructure is that part of a series of complex processes to which one draws attention in a causal argument about linear history” (Hetherington 2014, 198). By using the word in this way, the parks can be seen almost as an event, one which is constantly

reinterpreted based on what is understood to be modern design, modern behavior, or civilized activity.

As I will show, different sides can have very different opinions regarding what this means, and indeed whether this is even a suitable goal at all. The mapping project led to the development of thirteen maps, each quite different from the other. Although the differences precluded much analysis at the beginning, over time there have been certain trends to be seen. First, there are what can be described as taxonomic maps—meaning those mental maps which have been created in an attempt to reproduce in an exact manner of what would appear on a remote sensing image and have then labelled the separate parts. After this, we can draw our attention to experiential maps—these encompass the maps which emphasize areas which have significance according to the informant’s experience of the park. Finally, there are two maps which are more akin to pictures, and so are not included in the condensed map represented in Figure 9. Although this first map is difficult to understand I have still included it due to its ability to depict what is a chaotic overlapping of usages and modes of depiction. The scale of the map is warped in many places as I intentionally avoided georeferencing more than two points in order to maintain the informants’ impressions of scale as closely as possible.

**Figure 9: Amalgamation of Mental Maps**





As can be seen above, some have tried grand replications of the entire parkspace, while others aim solely to represent their area of interest. In this section we will explore the separate responses and examine what their maps and words tell us about how the park's developments have been internalized and understood. How are modernity and progress communicated through greenspace such as this? How then is this message accepted or rejected? The most important observation, I believe, is that there is a slight flaw in the way that one aspect of participative mapping is taken for granted. Namely that ontologies are assumed to represent not only the way that people view space, but that they are more likely to agree with each other on how that space should be used. The three maps which have helped to build these archetypal classifications come from the architect, the student, and the landlord. Perhaps owing to the fact that they understood the project better than the informants from the park as well as the fact that they had a longer history with the area than the expatriate personal trainer, they can each be said to exhibit slightly different characteristics which can be seen through their maps.



**Figure 10: Mental Map of Landlord Armando: Parque las Heras**

The above map (Figure 10)—which depicts Parque Las Heras—belongs to Armando, and the most immediate and obvious difference is the orientation of the map; rather than

running from the South to the North, the base of the map is its most north-easternmost point. This is a traditional way of mapping the city of Buenos Aires, as older maps began with the Río de la Plata on the northeastern side of the city as the bottom border of the page. Unlike many of the other maps, nothing is labelled beyond his drawings—the streets are understood and memorized. The experiential nature of this map can be understood through his comments made while mapping the area:

“No, I usually see it from down under. Because I've walked here so much that I can now figure out the buildings and stuff, the corridors. I don't really see it as Google Maps. Like not from above. I remember myself walking the streets and I'm like - like how old people remember stuff. Like "oh there used to be a big house there!" (Laughing) That kind of thing.”

It can also be seen in the drawings—with the park in the center, it's possible to see children on a merry-go-round, a concrete football pitch, and the individual trees which were to be replaced for a parking structure. The mental map, combined with the interview, depict a long-time resident eager to show his history in the neighborhood.

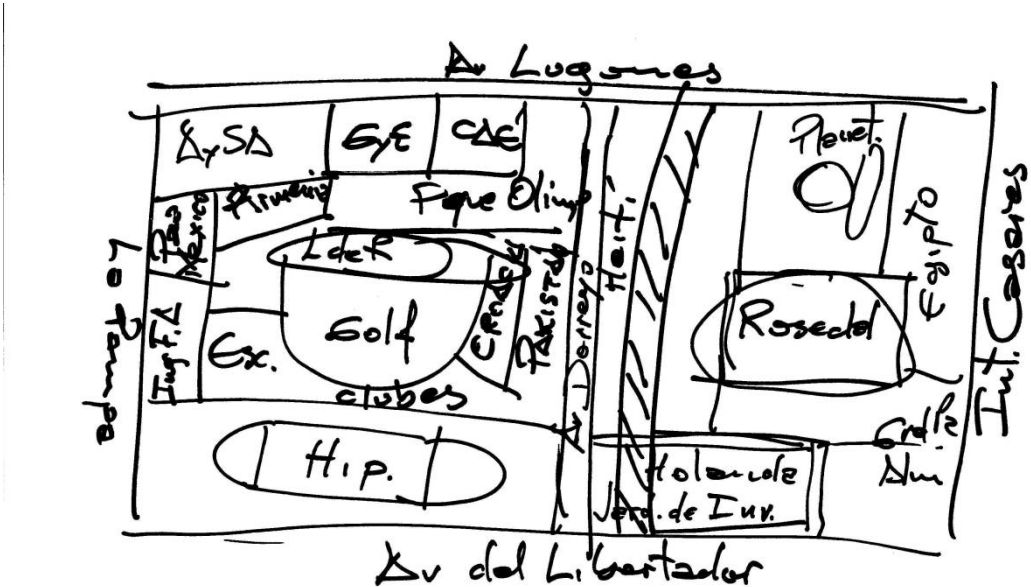
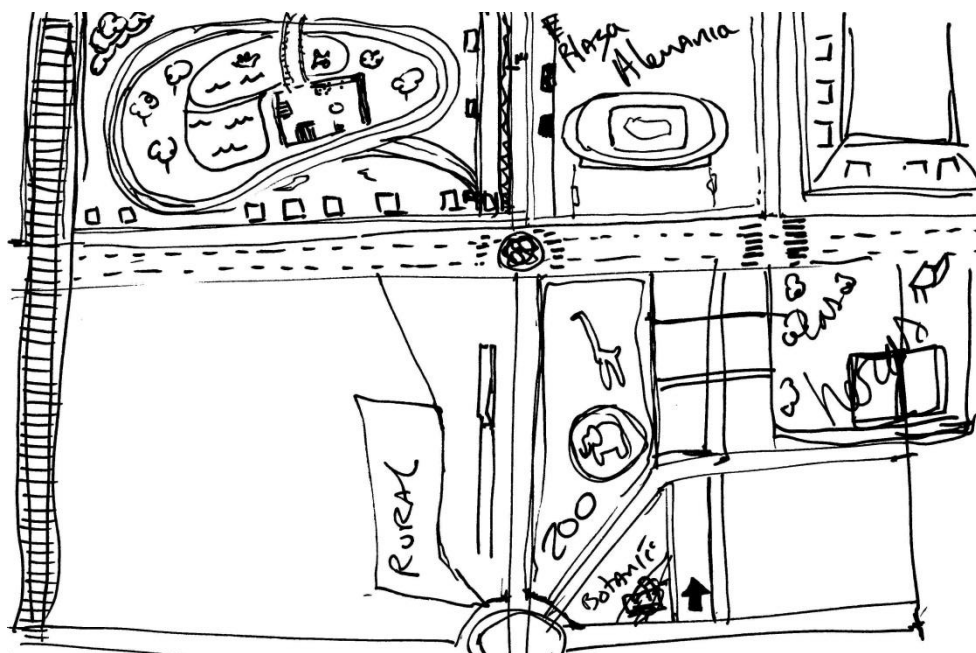


Figure 11: Mental Map of Paz: 3 de Febrero

The next map, Figure 11, is that of Paz, who was affiliated with the NGO attempting to preserve the park against the new developments by the city government. In contrast to Armando's map, there are almost no signs which point to activities or individual objects; rather it is a collection of the streets and plazas which make up the park as a

whole. Again in contrast, almost everything is labelled, with smaller plazas such as Plaza Mexicano and Plaza Armenia appearing here while being left out of official maps of the park. Finally, the map is orientated in a standard manner, where North is at the top of the map and West is to the left. When I requested the map, one of his first anxieties was regarding his failing memory and ability to recreate the park in its exactness. This was a common anxiety, but it was especially notable due to his position in the interview as an expert of the park. With all of this in mind, this particular exercise has been classified as a taxonomic map, due to its own reference to the types of places which are present in the area. Everything is ordered, neat, with the lines and boulevards providing straight lines to function as borders.

This is not to say, however, that the architect lacks experience or history in the park. He stated that he visits quite regularly, and that he has a long history of visiting the park, as the NGO first became active in the park during the 1970s. As will be discussed further below, different ways of representing space do not always lead to



**Figure 12: Mental Map of Juan, the student: Parque 3 de Febrero**

different ways of using the space. In the same vein, similar ways of representing space do not always lead to similar ways of using the space.

The final map, Figure 12, comes from the student, who has lived in the area of the park for the past five years. One of the most interesting things about this map is its level of

accurate correspondence to an OpenStreetMap base layer<sup>18</sup> on GIS. OpenStreetMap, an open-source online map analogous to Google Maps, provides free maps for GIS users to use as “backgrounds” for the phenomenon being measured. While georeferencing, effort was taken to avoid warping the maps in order to correspond to this base layer as the goal was to avoid using a more common representation—such as remote sensing or internet maps—to “check” the accuracy of the mental maps, which makes the level of exactitude all the more notable. This particular map aimed to represent the entire complex of Parque 3 de Febrero, doubling the size of the architect’s map but moving slightly to the east. As a regular runner through the parks, an experiential map might have included routes and trails, emphasizing the features which he sees every day. Like the architect, this map has been classified as taxonomic due to the goals of representation and ordering the sites based on name. While he has chosen to include symbols, just as the landlord but in contrast to the architect, they serve a slightly different function. Here they either represent an area, as would a symbol from a legend, or they are intended to mimic what is seen on the ground level.

The map also corresponds to his statements regarding how he sees space in this part of the city: “I see a map. I don't even see *a* map. It's *Google* Maps. I mean it looks like Google Maps. It doesn't look like a satellite view, no. It looks like Google Maps. Yeah, that's how I'm measuring distances in my head.”

### 5.4.3 Contested Perceptions of Modernity

With the three maps above, we can begin to tease out some of the themes pertaining to place-making and how modernity is experienced. One of the goals of participatory mapping, as mentioned above, is to give room to multiple ontologies in order to expand how we think of different places. In the context of Parque 3 de Febrero, this would include looking at the landlord’s map (Figure 10) in a different way from the others. While his was experiential, the latter two are taxonomic. Whereas he chose to focus on a small area surrounding the local neighborhood park, the other two attempted to replicate and label the entire complex as if it were a map as seen from above. Indeed, Paz echoed the sentiments of the student, stating that one of the only things he regretted about the park was his inability to get lost in it: he was always located, placing himself

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<sup>18</sup> A base layer in a GIS is the layer to which everything else is built on. It will frequently be satellite imagery or a map which shows the streets, parks, public buildings, etc. of the area.

on a grid which he had memorized after countless hours looking at maps of the area. Why, then, is it the student and the architect who disagree the most on Parque 3 de Febrero? Progress is mobilized in both of their stories regarding the park, so what is the crucial difference? Throughout this section I will argue that not only is space contested, but so are the definitions which govern it. I do not believe that it is enough to say that there is a battle between those who respond to the modernist project and those who do not, but it is equally imperative to explore just what is meant by the modernist project.

The park, as infrastructure, is used to communicate a move into modernity; this definition has been expounded upon at length above, primarily in chapter 3. Also discussed are the ways in which the government has done this—primarily through a mix of incentives and barriers. At one point, rupture communicated a definition of modernity which suggested a move closer toward Europe, but the transnational nature of the city has recently moved toward a consumption-as-modernity model, with clear signposts to North American urban design patterns (Guano 2002, 181). What can be seen in the difference between the student and the architect is not a disagreement on the modern project, but a disagreement over the point of departure regarding what is meant by modernization. When the founders of the NGO became interested in the park's dealings in the 1970s, modernity meant moving away from the chaotic life Parque 3 de Febrero's overgrown grass and general level of squalor. Paz had previously relayed to me that the community had rallied around a renovation project at the time which was designed to move the park away from a dilapidated complex populated by abandoned cars toward an open greenspace worthy of Palermo. The community had pride, he said, and so they wanted to take the space back. However, three decades later, modernity has changed—the space is safe and manicured, so what is needed now?

The commercialization of space is the new modernization project. It is why the architect and the student, both of whom are interested in development, are so clear in their opposite points of view regarding the park's development. Two older retirees from Palermo, interviewed in Plaza Holanda in Parque 3 de Febrero, spoke of how they supported the NGO in its early days, but changed heart when it protested the awarding of land to a social assembly to which they were members. And again, the student spoke of how the connectivity afforded by Wi-Fi and the new shops made the parks feel "new." The three positions are subsumed by the framework of the park's development, as well as the development strategy of Macri more generally. With an explicit linking

of the new Ministry's project with US-styled modernization (La Nación 2011) development and civic structure, Macri and his government laid the groundwork for a new modernity, and therefore a new rupture which displaced those belonging to the previous project.

### *Nostalgia*

Here I focus on the aspects of preservation and nostalgia, and how they relate to the experience of ruptures as discussed above. If we can go back to the beginning of this research process, the first park which I visited was the Botanical Gardens. This is the original Parque 3 de Febrero—where Juan Manuel de Rosas first had his estate, where Sarmiento repurposed it for his symbolic conquering of the pampas and where Carlos Thays would set his home in order to be as close as possible to his gardens. As with the Rosedal, the surveillance here was absolute, and the picture of pristine nature could be shattered with a wrong step. An Argentinian woman was wandering the premises of Thays' estate, which is now the museum of the park and its gardens, when she decided to take a picture of the house. Trying to put it into the frame, she stepped further and further backwards. Suddenly, from the top of the tower, another woman yelled in Castellano, "Stop! STOP!" in an attempt to make her aware of her transgression. Embarrassed, the photo-taker did not quite know what to do or what she had done wrong, so a nearby stranger ran toward her and motioned to get off of the grass. With the disaster averted, the gardens went back to their usual calm just seconds later.

On a guided tour, it was explained that extra care was being taken in the gardens these days in order to preserve Thays' collections. Weather was changing; some plants would flower in the middle of winter, confused into thinking it was spring. My arrival, again mentioned before in the introduction, was during the dead of winter, but the first week was a spike in heat and so had sent the trees and flowers confusedly further into the year. This was quite concerning for the park staff as they tried to manage the flora in accordance with Thays' original directions. I believe that the story fits with a narrative of nostalgia, one which is covered elsewhere in Porteño literature. A common line which runs through these analyses is the role which nostalgia plays in constructing ideas of modernity. Arnd Schneider discusses this in connection with Italian immigrants and their descendants in Buenos Aires, tracing how "notions of Italianness change with historical period, class, gender, and age" (Schneider 2000, 263). Puerto

Madero, too, was a project surrounding a constructed idea of nostalgia which informed a sense of modernity—Guano states that its “nostalgia is the nostalgia for New York and for how champagne would taste over there” (Guano 2002, 189).

This nostalgia is similar in many regards. Just as with the sense of Italianness amongst Italian immigrants, definitions of modernity are constructed differently across time. In addition, just as with Guano’s examination of Puerto Madero, these nostalgic memories are not just for reminiscing, but inform ideas of modernity going forward. Whether striving to maintain Parque 3 de Febrero in its natural form or the Botanical Gardens as Thays designed them over a century ago, the point of departure for this rupture is different than that of Macri or of those who support him. In Setha Low’s analysis of a similar space in Costa Rica, she remarks that “the citizens who are attempting to reconstitute Parque Central in its elite turn-of-the-century image are not the daily users or the municipal designers but professional and middle-class residents who yearn for an idealized past” (Low 1996, 869). In the case of Parque 3 de Febrero, I observed that the opposite is true. Paz mentions his history in the park, starting as a runner in the 1970s and becoming more interested in the area as time wore on. He mentions to me that he goes twice per week, each time picking a different area so that he can see the entire park over the course of any given month. Recently he has become much more interested in the flora and fauna, as Thays would certainly approve.

I believe that it might therefore be too simplistic to say that this is merely middle-class nostalgia in this particular instance. Likewise, it might be too simple to say that preservation means stagnation, in the case of Parque 3 de Febrero it merely means that the different informants are operating under a different understanding of what it means to be modern, or more exactly what a modern city and park should look like. Going back to the maps, we see that a supposedly modernist way of looking at the land can result in strikingly different opinions on how it should be used. Nostalgia here plays a part in reaffirming the “civilizing” role which the park was originally intended to fulfill. Rather than trying to reconstruct an idealized past, I argue that nostalgia here constructs an idealized *future* which is based on understandings of modernity present in previous ruptures.

In the section above, I have tried to show how not only is the modernist project being contested, but the definitions of modernism and progress are contested as well. This is significant in that, rather than creating two opposing sides, it complicates the picture by

admitting that neither side is set in stone, and that there are always struggles taking place for determining what is meant by modernity.

## 5.5 Concluding Thoughts

Taking a moment to revisit the theoretical framework for this analysis, we can look at Lefebvre's emphasis on searching for how space is reified and produced, Mitchell's call to adjust this by looking at how modern ideas are "staged" rather than when they took place, and Appadurai's usage of rupture as a moment leading not deterministically into the future, but as a condition which is experienced.

Revisiting the maps, we come across an interesting issue. Even when two people view the land in similar ways, with Paz and the student drawing their maps in an attempt at replicating exactly the form of the parks, their desires for its usage can be completely different. This has already been discussed above, but now we will reenter Mitchell's point about how "modernity, like capitalism, is defined by its claim to universality, to a uniqueness, unity, and universality that represent the end (in every sense) of history" (Mitchell 2000, 24). It was previously mentioned that this marks my departure from Mitchell's line of thinking, and the reasoning is this: I believe that claims to universality do not always have to be painted in terms of a unity in opposition. While this was true in the very beginning, with Sarmiento using the park as a space to represent the conquering of the pampas and the banishment of the caudillos who ruled there, with Macri it has been quite different. There are very clear ties between his modernization efforts and developments which occur elsewhere. So while it is accepted that the park deserves its own history outside of one dominated by Western capitalism, representing Buenos Aires as a peripheral location which is impacted only by residues of the global flow of capital, my point here is that this history is not necessarily in opposition to the dominant global narrative, but an attempt to position the city *within* the global narrative. Even with Sarmiento, this unifying perspective with Europe and North America was more important than a contrast to the pampas. This is not to say that the story of indigenous and *criollos*—the rural descendants of Spaniards who also had mixed with non-Europeans—is incorporated into the national identity—as Schneider says, there has been an effort to exclude these groups to the point of non-existence to the extent that Argentines draw a distinction between themselves and North



Americans, who are deemed to have a race problem unlike themselves (Schneider 2000, 226). It is simply to say that modernity can sometimes be motivated more by a claim to similarity than a claim to difference; an observation which is perhaps influenced by the aesthetic which is created by the majority of Argentinians who are descended of Europeans in comparison to colonists in Africa and India, who sought to maintain a distinct “modern” identity in the face of an overwhelming indigenous majority.

The trouble then comes when these definitions of modern, which are intended to unify, instead become sources of schism. Rather than portraying the preservationists as irredeemably nostalgic or stuck in the past, their point of view is instead forward-facing. Paz was clear with his desired plans—keeping the space public, but not empty.

In this chapter, along with the preceding, I have attempted to trace the production of Parque 3 de Febrero as a unique space. The goal has been to follow Lefebvre’s statement that the “underpinning” of social relations is “spatial” and to follow his suggestion that “in each particular case, the connection between this underpinning and the relations it supports calls for analysis” (Lefebvre 1991, 404). Macri inherited a city that was blighted by privatization, with the park’s biggest losses—mainly the ceding of the Rural Society’s headquarters—occurring during the 1990s. With the changing definition of modernity and civilization traced through the previous chapter, here we have been able to see its results in Macri’s design. As a result, I want to describe space as tied to conceptions of modernity and experiences of time, or in other words we should state that “the experience of modernity is constructed as a relationship between time and space” (Mitchell 2000, 13).

## 6 Discussion

This discussion will aim to pull the multiple threads of this thesis together. Granted that the many methodologies and theoretical strands stand the possibility of muddling the analysis, I want to ground the divergent happenings and developments of the park into a simple story. First I will revisit the history of the park, pointing explicitly to the ruptures which rendered different actions upon Parque 3 de Febrero. Then I will revisit the analysis conducted in the previous chapter in order to put Macri's time in office firmly within this framework, looking at the park as an infrastructural space which has communicated modernity since its founding.

First, I want to revisit shortly the empirical data for one last example. On one of my final days in the park, when spring was beginning to arrive and there were more people arriving to relax rather than to exercise, I met an older couple who lived close by in Palermo. Mentioned above due to their similar age and background but diverging interests from Paz, I will use this difference to start a discussion on what has been discovered throughout this project. They can be classified as regular visitors, visiting once or twice per week just like Paz. As with others who visit the park, they stated that there were not enough of these spaces in the city. Finally, and crucially, they were effusive in their praise for Macri, stating that the city government under him was working hard to improve the parks, and that the mayor specifically was working hard to improve the city. As mentioned above, they have a history with some of the NGOs working in the park, but became disenchanted when a club to which the husband belongs was granted land from the park, sparking protests from conservationists. This, to me, summarizes many of the conflicts regarding the direction of the parks today—their point of departure was the same as Paz, but somewhere along the way something changed, and their views of what the park should be became irreconcilable.

### 6.1 A Series of Ruptures

The following section will lay out the series of four ruptures outlined in this thesis. The first three—civilization, modernity, and privatized modernity—will follow from the historical analysis chapter. The final rupture—commercialized modernity—follows from the chapter which deals with Macri's vision for the city and the ethnographic

material gained from fieldwork. In addition, while one of the main themes is that the ruptures are as much about unity as they are about division, I will shortly give an overview regarding from what each rupture distances itself.

### **6.1.1 Civilization**

The title of this section reflects the observation that modernity does not hold a monopoly on these experiences of rupture. The early readings of Sarmiento and Thays have pointed to the view that the park had a role in civilizing the capital, putting an end to the caudillo past of the country. The first rupture then was between a civilized, cosmopolitan society and a world which was run by the caudillos, who drew their strength from the surrounding countryside. With feet firmly placed in Paris and New York, this rupture resulted not in forming a peripheral society, but forming one part of an emergent and international paradigm for “civilized” and “scientific” urbanism. The park, here seen as a civilizing force in its control over nature, its careful planning, and its allowance of leisure, is a direct result of the first rupture discussed in this thesis. Its symbolism furthered this idea, not only representing progress itself, but in being located on Juan Manuel de Rosas’ land—the caudillo who had been ruling Buenos Aires and much of the country at that point—it was meant to communicate the fact that Buenos Aires was moving toward a new era. Sarmiento claimed that “the last shot of ancient barbarity” had been fired (Sarmiento 1875, 25), while Thays drew a clear link between a given nation’s measure of civilization and its “taste for gardens” (Thays 2002 [1891] 199). In line with Lefebvre’s formulation for the production of space, the park was designed accordingly to be expansive and open—giving it its physical form—while the relations of the upper-class locals and their perceived high-status activities such as fox hunting and polo created the space as a modernizing force. In this way, following Appadurai, it generates its own context as much as it is a receptor of external inputs.

### **6.1.2 Modernity**

The following era was typified by modernist—in the architectural nomenclature—projects which aimed to functionalize the running of a city. During this time, which for this thesis begins with Le Corbusier’s Master Plan of Buenos Aires, the area surrounding the park increased greatly in density, while Avenida Santa Fé, which

borders the Botanical Gardens, increasingly became one of the commercial centers of the city. Throughout the post-war years and through military dictatorships, corresponding with the architecturally modern era, the parks fell steadily into disuse and disrepair. In the functional circulation models of the city, parks functioned as a place of leisure; however, in Buenos Aires, a series of governments recognized the political potential of open spaces to be used in popular demonstrations, so portions of the park were sold to those with connections to the government and greenery all over the city was replaced with concrete. During this period, Parque 3 de Febrero did not function as much as a communicator of modernity, but I believe that the lack of ability to organize in the space still served to stabilize the state, therefore allowing their particular understanding of progress to be delivered.

### **6.1.3 Privatized Modernity**

The story of Parque 3 de Febrero then brought us to the 1990s and the Presidency of Menem. While not serving in any capacity as the mayor of Buenos Aires, his decisions still had a great impact on the city and the park. As was shown with Puerto Madero, he drew a distinction between the past which featured government intervention and a future of private business revitalizing the economy. Similarly, Parque 3 de Febrero saw much of its land sold to outside parties. I used the case of La Rural to highlight the disregard for the law, as it technically broke proprietary laws of the park while also being for an amount which was far below the general appraisal of the land. One side-effect of the privatization and the new level of freedom in society was the proliferation of NGOs such as the AALP. These groups, as I will show later, allow for a study to be done in comparison of the different ideas of modernity which are being acted upon in the park.

### **6.1.4 Commercialized Modernity**

Finally, we come back to the story of Macri and his alleged different form of governance, whereby he claims to operate between complete privatization and heavy government involvement. Through his constant signposts to governance in the United States, he has made clear a vision of modernity which is based on connectivity and hyper-consumption. Over the past years, especially since my previous visit in 2010, the

parks have been cleaned, barred, and seen the installation of restaurants such as McDonald's and Starbucks. In addition, the recent contribution of free Wi-Fi enables park-goers to stay connected and to broadcast their visits to their social networks.

## **6.2 Producing Parque 3 de Febrero**

Here I will illustrate how the site of Parque 3 de Febrero is produced as infrastructure. First will be an examination of how modernity is built within the site, complicating ideas such as nostalgia and the supposed link between perception and usage of space. After this I will look at how all of these factors interact to produce Parque 3 de Febrero as it exists today.

### **6.2.1 Producing Modernity in the Park**

Having traced these ruptures, next I want to show how modernity is constructed, dealing primarily with the material gained from fieldwork in the park. One of the first themes I present is nostalgia; in this case, rather than functioning as middle-class angst it offers much more in formulating a vision of modernity. The nostalgic, such as Paz, look to the past not for an inspiration via replication, but for traits regarding what is desirable for the future. This is how it is possible for modernists, such as Paz and the student, to see the land in a similar way but to have such different desires regarding how the park should be used. Finally, I believe that modernity has been produced here not by drawing differences, but by drawing similarities between Buenos Aires and other areas, building Buenos Aires as a city very much in the middle of "progress." An example is Thays, who after becoming a naturalized citizen of Argentina developed techniques in the Botanical Gardens which would become adopted throughout Europe (Martire 2012). My argument is that this type of modernity has enabled Parque 3 de Febrero to act as a bridge throughout its history, one which has always been focused forward and toward reducing differences between Buenos Aires and other major cities in the world. Modernity thus becomes transient throughout time, changing its definition in accordance with the type of bridge that is to be built.

### **6.2.2 Producing the Park**

Finally, we come to the park, the physical and social space which is produced as a result of the above observations and conclusions. It has gone from a carefully-manicured open space, to an abandoned area which discourages visitation, to an area which is to be sold to private interests, to a large business area where the city government can enable citizens to be constantly connected and consuming. Throughout these different eras, the fingerprints of civilization, progress, and modernity are left on the physical state of the park. However, the park itself also impacts the way that people interact with public space, and generates ideas of what people expect from their government. The differences, while important, have not been as crucial to the formulation of the park as the ideas of unity between Buenos Aires and the rest of the modern world. While a rupture necessarily creates an opposite, I believe that less effort has been spent on the part of Porteños on this aspect of the park's production in comparison to the unities which are drawn to other cities and parks around the world.

## 7 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined how Parque 3 de Febrero, from Sarmiento to Macri, has been used as a way to communicate civilization and modernity. In the beginning, looking especially at the original design of the park, it was hoped that the physical place could play a role in civilizing the city. Later, under Macri, the park was developed and changed in order to fit a preconceived notion regarding what a modern city should be.

Actors such as Sarmiento and Macri had the ability to transfer their own ruptures into the physical form of the city, while those who had conflicting views (such as Paz) were left trying to reconcile their own version of modernization with what was transpiring around them. Viewing modernity as a condition is aided by the use of GIS, which has shown that those with similar views on the land and development can differ greatly on how to take care of it based on the experience of their particular rupture. This opens a line of inquiry where it can be possible to study these ruptures more fully in order to understand conflicts over the production of space.

The approach used throughout this thesis allows for an examination of space to happen without viewing it as an empty backdrop which is brought into being by human action. In the two analysis chapters I have analyzed a relationship between space, time, and actors by examining different “ruptures,” or points of departure, which are then operationalized and result in the production of Parque 3 de Febrero in its various forms.

This has been possible through two lines of inquiry. First, the goal was to establish a history which focused on Buenos Aires rather than looking at the city and the park simply as contingent actors in the development of capitalism. Rather than existing as the periphery, the city actively participated in design trends and the redevelopment of space according to various epochal norms. Finally, it was necessary to look at Parque 3 de Febrero under Macri’s government, again finding hints regarding new definitions of modernization embedded in various projects across the city. With this knowledge it was possible to see how this has been operationalized and then to ask those who visit the park questions regarding these developments.

This examination has been possible to do via various methods—first being the actual interviews conducted both within and outside of the parks. Second, it was important to examine the history of the park in order to build a record of these ruptures. The historical analysis was thus not an establishment for the “context” of Buenos Aires,

but an attempt to uncover the many meanings of modernity as they have related to the park. Finally, in this thesis I used GIS in order to get an additional insight into how people view the park. In this way it was possible to examine how individuals view the park, and how this understanding of space is relevant to their view on how the park should be used. This was crucial in moving on from the notion that those who wanted to see the park restored to its former status were “only” being nostalgic, or purely attempting to recreate a middle-class imaginary of Buenos Aires. It was rather still a desire to move forward and, while it was still important to recreate the status and prestige of turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires and Argentina, establish a future of the park which was based on alternative ideas of modernity.

What, then, is the wider relevance of this thesis? By removing the emphasis on a periphery-center scale—which is still present in accounts which are ostensibly critical of it as Mitchell shows—the idea is to treat space as comprising localities which are produced by different actors and their ideas regarding the functioning of society. Infrastructures, in this case, comprise those spaces which are produced with the goal of impressing society with a move forward toward civilization, modernity, or progress. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to follow Lefebvre’s “science of space”, which

“would stress the *use* of space, its qualitative properties, whereas what is called for is a knowledge (*connaissance*) for which the critical moment – i.e. the critique of established knowledge (*savoir*) – is the essential thing. Knowledge of space so understood implies the critique of space” (Lebvre 1991, 405).

Going back to Appadurai’s claim that localities are “context-generative” rather than “context-driven” (Appadurai 1996, 191), I would thus like to look at how sites like Parque 3 de Febrero are not only produced, but how they go on to reproduce certain social relations, whether by providing a space to show off the newest fashions or to connect the public wirelessly, to become exposed to the barrage of advertisements and signs of consumption which are common on social media and other commonly-trafficked websites, or to take part in active consumption at restaurants and shops. As Mitchell explains, the concept of modernity, or modernism, was in fact first used in a Latin American context to describe Latin American literary independence from that of Spain (Mitchell 2000, 6), and so in this thesis I have attempted to complicate its formulation as a coherent worldview and to reformulate it as something more often associated with postmodernity: a condition.



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# Appendix

## References for Figures

Figure 1: “Map of Parque 3 de Febrero and Parque las Heras.” Map data from Buenos Aires City Government.

Figure 2: “Parque 3 de Febrero with Palermo in the Background.” Photo credit to Tiffany Linn Utvær Gasser, printed with permission.

Figure 3: “Mental Map in the Rosedal.” Anonymous mapper, reprinted with permission.

Figure 4: “Le Corbusier’s Master Plan of Buenos Aires.” From Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City* (1967), p. 220.

Figure 5: “Sign Advertising Free Wi-Fi.” Photo credit to Tiffany Linn Utvær Gasser, printed with permission.

Figure 6: “Location of Panter; from GoogleStreetView.”  
Photo credit: Google Street View. 2015. *Avenida del Libertador 3883*.  
Location data from Paginas Amarillas.  
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Figure 7: “Fashionable Rollerskating.” Photo credit to Tiffany Linn Utvær Gasser, printed with permission.

Figure 8: Bars Around the Rosedal.” Photo credit Sean Michael Thompson.

Figure 9: “Amalgamation of Mental Maps.” Sean Michael Thompson

Figure 10: “Mental Map of Landlord Armando: Parque las Heras.” Reprinted with permission.

Figure 11: “Mental Map of Paz: 3 de Febrero.” Reprinted with permission.

Figure 12: “Mental Map of Juan, the student: Parque 3 de Febrero.” Reprinted with permission.