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THE SOCIAL DISPLACEMENT AND PUBLIC CENSORSHIP OF BUENOS AIRES

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Chapter 1: Bolivian Immigrant Hardships Explored Through Public Space Environments

The architectural elements that make up an urban space have their own origins, but what is most essential for consideration is the sociability of the space and cultural environment that is provided to whoever inhabits it. Any architectural work is more than a simple concrete object, its' impact pervades throughout any given city. Certainly, it is more complicated than what was just said, but what the goal of all of this is, is to explore how truly this phenomenon can be extended into a solid reality. Why is it that the physical design of spaces can become such a vital force in the daily life of a pedestrian?

This entire issue stems from the idea of urban exclusion. It promotes the sentiment of segregation because the neighborhoods and communities within them have such a distinct contrast from one another.¹ One of the ways in which this function is the idea and promotion of homogeneity. Many of the public spaces throughout Buenos Aires are home to mainly Italian/German/Spanish residents, which has become the demographic norm. The public spaces tend to pertain to a certain demographic, in this case the Argentinian, by establishing a homogenous space that only allows a specific type of practice to be performed rather than comfortably flowing in a variety, to make it truly “public.”

In a sense, the public space of a neighborhood tends to only embrace a certain culture. Any specific plaza or park in Buenos Aires tends follows suit. The limitation for a Bolivian to inhabit a space eventually displaces a community. In this instance, it pushes the community to a more rural area right outside of all the business of Buenos Aires.² This opens the issues of the

¹ Teresa Caldeira, *From Modernism to Neoliberalism in Sao Paulo* (London: Duke University Press, 2008), 55-77.

² Brenda Canelo, “La producción espacial de fronteras nosotros/otros,” in *Antipoda*, 2018, 18.

need for heterogeneity throughout social spaces. Urban culture is highly centered around public space, so if we can find a solution to physically design the space to appreciate and harness more than one type of practice, only then will homogeneity come into play.

Since the beginning of the 18th Century, when Argentina was founded, there has been an established manner regarding the relations of power and the appropriation of space. When the country was gaining more territory and constructing its borders, they encountered many indigenous populations. This increasing expansive logic was vital for territorial control. They were doing whatever they could to gain more land and improve their economic output, which thus began their treatment towards indigenous communities. This method of domination was sustained in order to construct a homogenized ideology.³ The state of this nation was only focusing on the fact that this area was susceptible to being occupied by a population that wanted to control it, therefore the capital owners developed new ideologies of utilization and appropriation of space.⁴ Even though Buenos Aires does not confront as much conflict like such, it constructed a subliminal prejudice regarding the treatment of foreign communities, or rather the ones that do not pertain the same amount of success. The Bolivian community has many indigenous origins as well, which makes this simply a modern and adapted version with this type of logic.

To give an appropriate context, we must first look at the current laws, what it says on paper regarding the politics of migration. This research is showing the reality of this policy because no matter what is demanded or allowed, one can find political loopholes. In Chapter 2, Article 3 of the 2010 Migration Laws of Argentina, regarding the admission of each immigrant,

³ Malena Castilla, "Territorios y Fronteras," in *Ciencias Humanas*, 2018, 550.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 552-556.

it says one must, “Oblige with the fundamental political orders...follow the strategic foundations...comply with the international agreements of the Republic in terms of human rights, integration, and mobility” and when they are admitted (the government must), “Promote the integration of the people who have been admitted as permanent residents into Argentinian society.”⁵ This is merely just a part of the introduction; however, it indicates a focus on the stability as a resident of Argentina being an immigrant. It is a rather extensive process to be admitted, but when someone finally is, their rights will be guaranteed and protected.

Furthermore, these current laws specifically focus on the sociability of immigrants as permanent residents, which demonstrates how easy legality can be manipulated because of its opposing outcome. In Chapter 1, Article 5, of the same document, it says, “The state will ensure the conditions that guarantee a genuine equality of treatment, provided only to the foreigners that can...complete their obligations, satisfying the established conditions of their income and residency.”⁶ In short, as long as they follow the conditions of being an immigrant, just like a resident of any city, they will be treated the same as the rest of the citizenry. It is rather interesting that they focus on society and equality with all of their circumstances. We will end up seeing the reality, or rather the irony of these fundamental laws. The legality of anything can be carried out in a just manner, but that in itself cannot control the social implications of the intersections of two different demographics. These are not sufficient laws nor are they carried out effectively.

The process of Bolivian immigration to Argentina has increased throughout the past few decades. Argentina currently contains the most migrant Bolivians, more than double than any

⁵ Cristina Fernandez, *Ministerio del Interior y Transporte* (Buenos Aires: Política Migratoria Argentina, 2010), 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

other country.⁷ In the 50s, in Argentina, it was the fifth highest migrant population, but today it is the second highest, behind Paraguay. Since the 90s, their rate of migration has doubled from 140,000 to 340,000 within the last decade.⁸ For the city of Buenos Aires, they are a minority, being 2.65% of the total population, and 20% of the foreign demographic.⁹ While this is not depicted as a majority, the common conversations say otherwise.

With there being multiple Bolivian communities with limited accessibility in bordering neighborhoods, spaces become socioeconomically discriminated and homogeneous. The social exclusion enforces certain characteristics, like their highest achieved level of education, which then categorizes them in worse circumstances on paper.¹⁰ As a Bolivian, it is so much more strenuous to find housing that has an equal number of resource/amenities, being 15% less than all natives. This is, not to mention the quality of such resources, being just one small factor that adds to their daily struggle. Their level of household income per capita is significantly smaller, creating another obstacle to find proper housing. Furthermore, along with having a lower income, the administering of social programs and plans is anywhere from 25-50% less in a Bolivian household than an Argentinian one.¹¹ The Bolivian Community already faces an aggravating time when inhabiting Buenos Aires, and what this public exclusion does is reinforce the factors of their daily struggle as displacement and marginalization rises.

In more specific terms, this is about how much architectural forms elicit broader political debates, such as the fight against inequality. Do public spaces of upper-class neighborhoods filter

⁷ Sassone, Susanna, "Escalas del Espacio," in *COINCET*, 2014, 78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰ Marcela Cerrutti, *Migrants and Migrations* (Buenos Aires: Clasco, 2018), 454.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 457.

out those who will ruin a certain atmosphere by imposing physical barriers that maintain the residents' peaceful community?¹² According to some scholars, this strategy or method is a continuous element that slowly becomes the de-facto plaza/park. This eventually demonstrates that certain architectural elements maintain the luxurious lifestyle of an upper-class community, ironically promote the segregation of communities, and imposes a socially limited atmosphere, in terms of communal gathering, onto those who earn less income.

The displacement and architectural barriers telegraph alienation, fear, and hopelessness to this community. Those could stem from being metal gated fences around a community, creating an upper-class hurdle, or a lack of foot paths preventing commuters to walk through a space, making it only for the residents. The hyper-capitalized politics, stemming from Latin American movements of modernization, come into play by shaping those who can inhabit or achieve the experience of an Argentinian urban space.¹³ The streets, sidewalks, and corners, all demonstrate the ability of which type of community belongs in that area by creating an environment that adheres to the daily lifestyle of an Argentinian while provides disengaging sentiments of unwelcomeness towards other communities. The fundamental services that the Bolivian Community could potentially receive then become not as high quality (education, public health, etc.).¹⁴ They can never achieve the same level of lifestyle as the non-displaced communities of Buenos Aires. When less resources comes into play as well as barriers to prevent a cultural/communal practice, it is a recipe for severe inequality.

¹² Guillermina Elissondo, "Fencing-Off the Poor," in *Worcester State College*, N/A, 109.

¹³ Teresa Caldeira, *From Modernism to Neoliberalism in Sao Paulo* (London: Duke University Press, 2008), 55-77 and Sergio Caggiano, "Inmigrantes en La Ciudad de Buenos Aires," in *Desarrollo Económico*, 2014, 108.

¹⁴ Sergio Caggiano, "Inmigrantes en La Ciudad de Buenos Aires," in *Desarrollo Económico*, 2014, 108., 115-116.

The structural layout of neighborhoods has led to a distinct design of public space and social inclusion that disregards many urban cultures and collective input. Buenos Aires, with this modern movement, continues to progress as such. In the modernization of cities, there is a tendency to privatize homes and eliminate some people from the public areas due to zoning districts and privatization to promote progress. The exclusion of communities has created less people to inhabit the said space which does not allow for as much creativity or collective communal input to these devices that unite them. It is more of a decoration than a resource¹⁵. The smaller use of a public space, depending on the neighborhood, does not create a welcoming environment because human interactions shape the public sphere just as much as structural design: more individuals draw larger crowds and maximize the use of public space. This modern trend creates a lack of an emphasis on aesthetic and social exchange.

With this being a factor, there are many instances when universal public space design is not emphasized as much in the planning process of urban neighborhoods. This causes a major drawback because the facades of buildings are a visible part of the architecture in public space, so it also influences the townscape and its communal sense for the meeting of people.¹⁶ The lack of artistic input creates a disengaging environment which makes it difficult for incoming residents to grow and adapt to. Public spaces are supposed to accommodate public activities, interactions, and practices to provide all citizens with a sense of belonging.¹⁷ Without this attention, public space does not serve its purpose any longer. Some neighborhoods are people's security, the safe space of everyone that is experiencing the same struggle.¹⁸ There is so much

¹⁵ Sergio Garcia-Domenech, "Urban Aesthetics," in *Theoretical and Empiricals*, 2015, 56-57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁷ Tali Hatuka, *Public Space* (New York City: Berghahn Books, 2016), 284.

¹⁸ Mariela Paula Diaz, "La Movilidad de Familias en La Villa 20," in *Revista Urbano*, 2020, 155.

depth to the daily challenges of prejudice and discrimination, but the focus of this is to show how political design barriers contribute even more to this struggle. As we dive deeper, one will see the scale and extent of everything that makes this possible.

When a design feature limits the urban accessibility of a certain demographic, it then becomes a tool to communal displacement. In the streets of this neighborhood there is a sharp contrast of the building design compared to the downtown of Buenos Aires. There is a trend of marginality that lingers in Latin America due to the need for modernization, which in change, propagates the segregation and unallocated distribution of funds from neighborhood to neighborhood. The minimal effort makes it much harder to achieve the same status as a native of the city.¹⁹ Just that has such a tremendous contribution towards exclusion and displacement.

There is also an architectural pattern of walling and gating up homes throughout the streets which defines the border between who can and cannot afford to access the said exclusive piece of property. It creates a border of us and them. The emotional sentiment of a physical barrier already provides so much exclusion to begin with.²⁰ The practices that surround these physical barriers as well as the culture that begins to adhere itself towards those standards creates a normality of this gap between those in the elite and the Bolivian. Their access must be granted to promote the dissemination of a major social gap as well as an homogenic culture. The lack of care for inclusion becomes a pattern to follow for the whole downtown and soon enough that design becomes the neighborhood itself.

However, there are many reasons that the Argentinian Upper Class strives to provide safety for their community, but the extent that it is brought to in this environment is beyond that.

¹⁹ Anabella Roitman, *Urban Policies: Innovation and Inclusion* (London: University of London Press, 2019), 505.

²⁰ Alejandro Grimson, "The Making of New Urban Borders," in *Antipode*, 2008, 507.

It is an aesthetic rather than merely for security purposes. Gates are supposed to eliminate any threat in order to create a safe space, coming out of fear of violence and crime. The increase in the social inequality between the immigrants and the Argentinians promotes more social polarization.²¹ The walling up of a community creates a tendency for one to protect their own living spaces and allows them to avoid tedious urban problems in the street (loitering, begging, drug use, etc.)²² It is true that this type of community does prevent issues as such and keeps children from harmful situations, however the essential question is this: are the extensive precautions worth the separation of two distinct communities?

People flee to these communities in order to integrate themselves with a homogenous group. There is a need to live in harmony without the worry for the struggles of the lower class. It is more comforting to exclusively socialize oneself with their own clan, rather than adjusting to less fortunate or even just different lifestyles. Living behind these barriers together creates the value for exceptional private education and communal resources. This new-founded gated community yearns for top-notch systems geared only towards them, which enunciate their separation from the outside world even more.²³ This sense of “security” is what drives the need to barricade oneself. This hurdle of inaccessibly structured spaces is what will create such a distance in cooperation, without any political implementation, in the design of the physical space.

To describe the process of communal exclusion in a public space is rather difficult, nonetheless, it still plays an essential role of their struggle as an immigrant. The processes and spaces have created a hierarchy of who can operate it, and eventually those spatial practices will

²¹ Ayhan Bekleyen, “Are Gated Communities Indispensable for Residents,” in *Urbani Izziv*, 2016, 151.

²² *Ibid.*, 153 and 155.

²³ Guillermina Elissondo, “Fencing-Off the Poor,” in *Worcester State College*, N/A, 108.

structure those who inhabit it.²⁴ But how can a space have so much power? The main reason is that the practices within a space correspond to the manipulations of an already constructed ordinance, or rather the norm in which a community acts begins to change the system of social construction. It could be the preferences, the rituals, or the local culture that is carried out in it. Either way, the practices drive what the space is based upon because they create the social order.

The way a design aesthetic become a norm in terms of architecture and socialization provides an extremely different approach for how anything will function as a place. The reason I bring this up is because these private areas develop a culture of security which eventually transitions into the method of how public areas are designed. A space can be physically designed and also adapt to the lifestyle and rhythm of one community more than the other. If one cannot persistently adhere to the identity and norms of public space or comfortably flow throughout it, then that cultural detachment serves the same function as a physical barrier. The privatization of a residential area leads to the privatization of the public sphere. This becomes a sort of political architecture on the space.

When there is a limitation to any given community, the social consequence becomes tremendous as time goes on. Already in the outskirts, the prejudicial hierarchy persists. This investigation will demonstrate the scale of how much this separation exacerbates the Bolivian refugees' struggles. The design qualities provide such a distasteful sentiment to those that want to enjoy the space.²⁵ The change in scenery from a simple main street to a space designed for those only privileged enough to enter provides an uneven urban space. This type of design soon becomes a design of security rather than using its initial purpose of providing for the common

²⁴ Michel De Certeau, *Practices of Everyday Life* (San Diego: University of California Press, 2011), 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

good of its citizenry, enveloping all residents into a single welcoming and accessible space. It is an expression of their “status and distinction.”²⁶ That contradicts how a city is made for those who dwell in it. How will one ever be able to rise up to the occasion of being allowed to cross that barrier if it designed to keep them out for good? There is a lack of comfort, in these defensive-like areas of urban centers.

The geographic location, the social implications, and the architectural exclusionary design all create an uneven playing field. Much more is needed to be done in order to draw such conclusions. The infrastructure persistently contributes to the inequality, but it is not the origin. Wherever this investigation will take us, it will demonstrate all of what is subliminal in the social issues of the Bolivian Immigrant in Buenos Aires.

²⁶ Teresa Caldeira, *From Modernism to Neoliberalism in Sao Paulo* (London: Duke University Press, 2008), 66.

Chapter 2: The Theoretical Mechanics of Spatial Sociability

In order to dive deeper into this theoretical approach, we must analyze where abouts of how this cross-cultural boundary arises to prefer one over the other in terms of the design of public space. The transformation towards the alteration of public space began with linking it to “productivity.” With a focus on Buenos Aires’s downtown, due to how much it supports its identity and efficiency, more than the bordering neighborhoods, there is juxtaposition between its various types of “zones.” The city would support a neighborhood as long as it contributes to its high-income production or protecting its image.²⁷ With the subordination and exploitation of the lower class, there is a homogeneity to its spaces, so the infrastructure and social practices are different as well²⁸. The governmental treatment of every area in terms of wealth and location alters the lives of these bordering communities to a tremendous extent. Every neighborhood becomes a mirror to enhance what their occupation or status is instead of their culture. The circumstances, struggles, and class that the neighborhoods belong to is reflected in their public space.²⁹ The homogenized demographics and infrastructure of Buenos Aires have become a tool to promote a spatial hierarchy that controls every aspect of a Bolivian immigrant’s daily life.

The physical and demographical difference creates a significant contrast in accessibility between Bolivian communities and those surrounding downtown Buenos Aires. The neighborhood’s reflection is tied with what they can access due to the circumstances of what they can afford and conform to.³⁰ This subdivision ensures the homogeneity and social preferences of the urban landscape. Systematically, Bolivians tend to be deterred from public

²⁷ Estela Valdes, “Apropiación diferencial del Espacio Urbano Residencial,” in *Revista Urbano*, 2017, 49.

²⁸ George Lipsitz, *Space* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 227-228.

²⁹ Valdes, *op cit.*, 50.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

spaces in downtown areas. This manner persists because this is what “improves” the environment of the city. With this zone separation, the Bolivian communities also begin to receive less amenities and resources that the upper class persistently get. This effect is not solely based upon Bolivian racism, but also spatial strategies on Buenos Aires. When there are two races in this “contact zone” the opportunity is presented to renegotiate the relations of the space.³¹ In short, the space becomes more than a place, it is a suggestion, a demonstration, and the manipulation of access to the public and private atmosphere.

The lack of attention towards the Bolivian community is a form of spatial appropriation because it is maintained as a segregated metropolis by physical strategies.³² This is not just through income and resources. When there is any increasing separation between two communities, that distinction becomes the identity of every aspect of its place and space.³³ With this identity, eventually that development becomes a power upon the space because every person that passes through or experiences it always associates the characteristics of it with the identity. In other words, the identity is the space.

All of this is an extensive process because it transforms into the subjection and objectification of communities that inhabit the space. This creates an exclusion hidden beneath the prejudices that are linked with its identity. When it becomes like this, every person that interacts with the space is accustomed and begins to adhere towards the expected standard. This standard is what drives the social practices. This can be defined as a “non-place” because this is not a space that reflects the authenticity of the community, it reflects the separation and norms

³¹ George Lipsitz, *Space* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 229.

³² Estela Valdes, *op cit.*, 54.

³³ Marc Auge, *Non-Places* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 68.

between the upper class and Bolivian community³⁴. It is not an authentic public space if it is only adhering to the political circumstances.

To give another essential perspective, there are many distinct ways in which one can analyze the construction of space. Many philosophers prefer that we look at all of this as a territory instead of a space because of the increasing homogeneous factors and social politics. With this method of analysis, one must look at what formulates this territory and sketches its borders. In a predominantly European society, Gramsci says that a hegemonic environment creates a social fabric that unfolds a social order, which characterizes its political labor, the categorization of each community.³⁵ Once all of this is established, it creates a political mobilization, or rather a common sentiment among daily activities.³⁶ This is the foundation to construct a territory because these intense standards are oriented and favored more towards a dominant demographic. The way in which the society is already made incentivizes the sociopolitical factors to construct themselves like such, in favor of the Argentinians. The daily life creates the social norms that one must adhere themselves to because the sociability of a place is what formulates its environment.

Social regulation is what also ends up forming the treatment of classes throughout any territory as well as maintaining its established foundation. These spaces are appropriated and organized by manipulating its daily practices and eroding its “antagonists”, which in the eyes of Buenos Aires are the Bolivians.³⁷ A geographer from Finland, Paasi, describes territory, “as a practice, a social construct sustained in time by the conjunction of institutional agents and

³⁴ Marc Auge, *Non-Places* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 72.

³⁵ Álvaro Buitrago, “Hegemonía...Territorialidad,” in *Universidad Politécnica*, 2013, 54-55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 56

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

mechanisms.”³⁸ These instruments are the practices that support and displace communities. To be a Bolivian in downtown Buenos Aires is so difficult when having to confront all the carried out social and mental institutions when they are persistently geared against their status. As Gramsci says, it is all a mechanistic facet for the treatment of classes.³⁹ All of these territorial and political processes are eventually translated into that manner, hidden beneath the norms of the zone, creating a direct impact towards those that do not “belong.”

However, territoriality is not the only way to analyze and observe the processes of public space in Buenos Aires, but rather a method of interpreting the urban landscape. It is a perspective on thinking critically about the functionality of a space. These “territories” serve to assure the interests of the dominant group. The socio-spatial order becomes solely based upon the superior community.⁴⁰ Many of these spaces belong indirectly to the elite class instead of everyone. This method of homogenized territorialism is just one of the many approaches to comprehend why these places function this way. To develop this explanation about an enormous urban downtown, one must look at every side of the argument and then join those together to depict the reality of the spatial planning.

In theory, public space should be the social dimension within its urban environment.⁴¹ The focus of this research is on these public spaces because they are the places that create the culture of a neighborhood, that conform to its identity, where life flows, connecting everything. It could also be used to promote equality and democracy of many communities, where social

³⁸ Álvaro Buitrago, “Hegemonía... Territorialidad,” in *Universidad Politécnica*, 2013, 61-62.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 63 and 65.

⁴¹ Martina Berardo, *Humanizar el Espacio Público* (Buenos Aires: Consejos Latinoamericano, 2019), 229.

classes disappear, or it can go in the complete opposite direction.⁴² Either way, public space is the center of all social interactions of its inhabitants therefore its impact is tremendous.

In the planning process, there is a tendency to construct a space based upon its recent past or “urban inheritance” which is characterized by unjust and subordinate political decisions with multiple firm consequences for the mobility and joining of the area.⁴³ The point is that this factor of a city is not just any typical feature of an urban landscape, it is the personality of its politics. It presents the opportunity to include or exclude. Whatever the administrative decisions are, they will create a platform for how everything will function as a society, and the politics of Buenos Aires have not always been the most representative or inclusive.

Looking more specifically, the society in itself could control all of what goes on in a space, but realistically the economics contribute even more towards the powers of who is benefited and weakened. With the socialization of political processes, Castells, a Spanish sociologist, says that this “reproduction” (of communal civic operations) is structured alongside capitalism to form a space based upon its collective consumption.⁴⁴ This role of capitalism has been existent in conjunction with Argentina’s political changes since the 20th century, or even with the start of indigenous subordination. This type of economic system creates a hierarchy, which is reflected in the social reproduction of territories. The more of a role this plays, a type of socioeconomic physiognomy eventually develops which changes the configuration of classes and communities.⁴⁵ The joining of these continuous processes with the sociability of space is then

⁴² Martina Berardo, *Humanizar el Espacio Público* (Buenos Aires: Consejos Latinoamericano, 2019), 234, 236.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁴⁴ Álvaro Buitrago, “Hegemonía... Territorialidad,” in *Universidad Politécnica*, 2013, 60.

⁴⁵ Carlos Vilas, “La Política en Gramsci,” in *Universidad Nacional de Lanús*, 2006, 2.

seen in line with the classification of the economic contribution from each group. This ideological process becomes the daily life of Downtown Buenos Aires.

The design and use of public spaces have a rather conflicting relationship. An example of this is the use of park equipment used for domestic purposes, such as fountains used for bathing. So many parks in Buenos Aires restrict access to these, or avoid placing them, in order to deter the gathering of homeless people.⁴⁶ This is an example of implementing security for young folks and families so that they have a space of leisure without worry, or rather a place of relief. People tend to want a space of enjoyment instead of one used for domestic purposes.⁴⁷ What these spaces do is a form of public displacement. Even though homeless people can disrupt the desired vision of a space, this method of control is oriented towards the lower class, which many times can be Bolivian immigrants. This is only a brief aspect of what they confront in public realm.

The appropriation of an environment drives the sociability of its inhabitants among the territory or zone. Its politics consist of constructing an order of the interactions within the zone to support the major force that defends the elites of the area.⁴⁸ In this context, actions are controlled to maintain the Argentinian homogeneity of a territory by exclusion, subordination, and marginalization. This theory is obviously applied within modern standards, but all of it exists through hidden methods. The Swiss geographer, Raffestin, refers to these places as zones being a space encrypted by a series of social regulations to maintain finalized relation of the social “actors” inside of it.⁴⁹ It is not a free space because its sociability must follow a specific order

⁴⁶ Carmen Jiménez, “Sociabilidad en las Plazas de Buenos Aires,” in *Estudios Demográficos*, 2020, 529.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 531.

⁴⁸ Carlos Vilas, “La Política en Gramsci,” in *Universidad Nacional de Lanús*, 2006, 3.

⁴⁹ Álvaro Buitrago, “Hegemonía... Territorialidad,” in *Universidad Politécnica*, 2013, 62.

because the characteristics are constructed that way. Even if this is a place of leisure or rest, it is still mirroring a concealed regulation that favors the hegemonic demographic.

These places are no longer used to bring communities together in a single space, instead they reflect its inequality. In downtown Buenos Aires, there are many expectations and norms to follow in the position of an Argentine in order to contribute to the status and image of its urban atmosphere. A Bolivian would not adapt as well to these conditions due to their race, educational background, and other characteristics. Therefore, they would be displaced to another area to not only live, but also to experience and wander as a pedestrian.⁵⁰ Even though Bolivians are oppressed, they still must mix their culture with that of Buenos Aires.⁵¹ These immigrants must keep working in various sectors and fields of the downtown, so there are parts of the city that by nature are incorporated into their culture. However, this does not imply that they are treated equally in this regard. They are assimilated into a marginalized culture that affects both their home and commuter life.

Furthermore, within this contact zone, transit and accessibility factor of a designated place affects its use intensely. Its spontaneity becomes completely altered. If there were less transit lines connected to a space, then it would be a more residential and local area, instead of being a busy destination spot.⁵² Therefore, a space like that would have an identity tied more with its own local community because they would be the people persistently occupying it in order to add to its culture and daily practices. With less accessibility, there is less of a sense of belonging or durability in the length of one's visit, which is detrimental towards the productivity

⁵⁰ Mary Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," in *Profession*, 1991, 38.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵² Carmen Jiménez, "Sociabilidad en las Plazas de Buenos Aires," in *Estudios Demográficos*, 2020, 534.

of being a liberating space.⁵³ What would happen to the bordering neighborhoods trying to reach a destination like this? Even if it were possible to travel to there, it would still be a decent struggle. This difficulty is what contributes to many people staying in their own area leading to the homogenization of public spaces.

In the context of a city, its administration tends to have a process of elimination with speculation and classification. There is an intent to integrate these forgotten parts (lower class areas), the ones that contribute something somewhat “essential” to the urban environment. Therefore, they develop another attempt to reintegrate them with governmental programs and urban unity. Unfortunately, this system almost always fails, which leads to poverty and inequality, which then becomes a socioeconomic blueprint afterwards for political strategies in very subtle methods, one of them being public space.⁵⁴ All of this implies how public space is very often seen in the perspective of a top-down approach. It is not solely based upon the culture of its inhabitants, but it also is a political tactic to control these said areas.

In public spaces, design of paths, streets, and the connectivity of spaces creates a pace of life, a rhythm to the sociability. Whatever it may be impacts its pedestrian mobility and character. Sociability is what creates the space because it reflects the norms and known rituals of the space. What connects the citizenry together is what constructs the spatial community.⁵⁵ There are many places that are only used for relaxation (like green space) and spaces that unite many inhabitants (like playgrounds), but both of them demonstrate a space’s functions in various manners. Many people have defined schedules, an implicit frequency, and a determined length of

⁵³ Carmen Jiménez, “Sociabilidad en las Plazas de Buenos Aires,” in *Estudios Demográficos*, 2020, 541.

⁵⁴ Michel De Certeau, *Practices of Everyday Life* (San Diego: University of California Press, 2011), 3-4.

⁵⁵ Jiménez, *op cit.*, 537.

stay which all contribute to a constant sociability, making the rhythm of its citizens⁵⁶. If the location of a space was rather far from the border, then it would be much harder to have a fixed schedule for someone residing over there.

Moreover, in a public space, the visual aspects can steer the sociability of the place. Someone that wanders throughout a public space, apart from the social interactions, will observe the space through its visual aspects. There are public spaces that have an enormous lawn with painted murals, kiosks, and small businesses behind it to depict a vibrant space full of life. Other places are made of only concrete with a few paths. Either way, these colorful visuals enhance the space's landscape and allows for conversation to arise among the inhabitants and entertainment.⁵⁷ This method of design can invite many people to the place as well as make it a place for the more affluent residents due to its beautification. If it were a popular spot, the planners could manipulate the space to make it only focus on the upper class so that it becomes a prioritized capital space. As of now we know who would belong in the lowest category in Buenos Aires, the ones not as welcomed towards the stunning imaged areas.

These places become a space with many social preferences because there is a sentiment of having a single identity. It is the idea of "synecdoche" where there are some parts or aspects that are selected to represent the whole, and everything else disappears.⁵⁸ The daily phrases and figures, whatever is realized to be a part of the identity, begins to be what formulates the social practices and stylistic construction of the space, like a spatial story. Eventually, it leaves us with only one identity attached to the place. The memories, the norms, and the political factors of the place drive what authorizes the spatial appropriations and creates a system of operation for the

⁵⁶ Jiménez, *Sociabilidad en las Plazas de Buenos Aires*, 538 and 543.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 532.

⁵⁸ De Certeau, *Practices of Everyday Life*, 8.

identity⁵⁹. When a space adheres to a single identity or aspect, whatever becomes a part of that will have to follow the norms of its affiliation. For the observer, the identity, whether it is inclusive or not, is all that matters.

All of this becomes a defined place. All the factors are a part of the structure of its identity, or rather the relation between the constructed order and spatial practices.⁶⁰ In short, what becomes the identity of the space controls and favors whoever contributes to it and excludes whoever does not. When we only focus on one aspect, we undo and forget everything else. The disappearance is what creates this spatial displacement. In Buenos Aires, the identity and culture of the high up Argentine becomes the spatial story.

When the norms of these places are established, whatever is not a norm is not seen as acceptable. It does not matter what it is, a place will always have something that constructs its social adaptation, or its feeling of belonging. However, these “norms” that I speak of do not necessarily always have to be elite related. A great example are the spaces of Buenos Aires where there are people smoking or drinking whenever they meet up in said park/plaza because that is its culture. What gives the sentiment of belonging and staying is what drives the environment of the space. This established manner constructs the profile of the space’s users.⁶¹ If those who inhabit the space accept it, then that activity becomes the norm.

Every public space has a grand contrast demographically and design-wise between itself and other areas of its city, even though, in theory, they should all serve the same purpose. We already know that the identity drives its desired goal of a place. However, its location can have a

⁵⁹ De Certeau, *Practices of Everyday Life*, 10-11.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶¹ Jiménez, *op cit.*, 540.

decent effect on the image of the city, and with that, the treatment that it receives due to political and economic terms. This is what creates the destination and also exit of displacement, like the contrast of the “ghetto” and downtown. They key factor in this are all of the physical features for the daily disinvolvement of certain demographics in regard to sociability.⁶² With all of this, the physical material, or rather, the planning of the space can create a completely new vision in every public space.

The connectivity, the accessibility, and the security with these essential features make the foundation for how a public space is going to function. Any space should provide the sentiment of wandering as well as being used to create a connectivity.⁶³ People want to have a space that does not require an extensive commute to reach as well as the calmness to smoothly move throughout every part of it, from the stations to the entrances, to the green spaces, to the physical paths.⁶⁴ Whether it is a space of leisure, or a place to pass through, it must give off the desired sentiment.

However, In Buenos Aires, it is true that Bolivians have done something to improve their domination of public spaces, but there is still so much more to reach the same level. However, this improvement is just the first step. The way that Bolivians are seen by Argentinians has maintained only as an acceptance of their distinguished presence, which is still not perceived properly. A perfect example of this is the Fiesta de la Virgen de Copacabana, which is a religious event that consists of thousands of Bolivians from all provinces of Argentina who travel with their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews, to celebrate in the city of Buenos Aires (Figure 1). Neighborhoods such as Charrua (a subsection of Nueva Pompeya) and Flores contain

⁶² Ana Elorza, *Representaciones y Practicas en Territorios* (Buenos Aires: Clasco 2019), 62.

⁶³ Jiménez, *op cit.*, 526.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 529.

the most participants until it ended up moving to the streets of the downtown. It was not until the last decade, when this event was seen and supported by the city. This event is a series of oaths and promises to the Virgen Mary in the month of October. There are many dances and “sikuris” which is an interpretation by many musicians using an instrument from their mother land.⁶⁵ It is crucial that this event happens because it is an expression of their own culture in a way that does not make them feel trapped nor uncomfortable.

All of this is a form of “inside integration” to coexist within this territory to come together “in the fruition of solidarity and identity in the migratory context.” This event has actually moved to the Mayo Avenue, a central and essential street that runs right through Buenos Aires, to feel part of the Argentine culture and preserve their diverse contribution. To be able to inhabit a space with an event or ritual that is so representative of their homeland, informs and transmits the diversity that constructs Buenos Aires. The event has been organized with the support of the Secretary of Political Sociocultural. Many times, the cultural and historical significance is ignored by argentines due to its lack of importance to them.⁶⁶ To generate space of legitimacy and validity have been denied for so many years, and this event is only the beginning of demonstrating that Bolivians are also Argentines. However, one must ask, is this event a spectacle or something seen as part of their own community?

With a focus on the improvement of space around downtown Buenos Aires, the majority of those spaces do not have Bolivian immigrants constantly passing through these places, therefore they are not a part of its identity. Obviously, there are certain public spaces around the border, but they are not seen in the same manner. These spaces do not receive as much political

⁶⁵ Natalia Gavazzo, “Sentirse Boliviano,” *in* *Crónicas y Relatos de no Ficción*, 2016, 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

concern due to its lack of contribution, making them not as much of a destination nor leisurely spot for the population. They do not have the same impact towards this skyline image of Buenos Aires that the rhythm of other spaces has.

Finally, no matter what tool is used upon the space, the most important factor that drives all the physical features is the manipulation of the physical variables that in the end create the atmosphere for the user. The way in which they are articulated is what creates the space.⁶⁷ All the connections between the various parts forms the sociability. If there were a big green space, any person could occupy that space, but if there were not very many stops or streets that lead to this place, the circumstances would be very different. The same thing goes for fountains, if they are physically gated off or not made to avoid homeless people from inhabiting it, or with the paths that have pedestrians walking through there on a fixed schedule verses those whose work or residency does not persistently pertain to the mobility of that space. All of the planning of a space's equipment will create the way it will function. There are many variables that one must consider in the planning process, but all of this is a part of the public displacement of marginalized demographics.

In Buenos Aires, the vast majority of the victims of exclusion from public spaces are Bolivians. Obviously, it is not the only demographic that is affected by this, but they confront this so much more than anyone else. As we know, the majority of Bolivians in Buenos Aires live in bordering neighborhoods. These areas are the first to be affected with any change of accessibility, being that they are the furthest from Buenos Aires's downtown. All the intentions of exclusion towards the poorer communities of a space are related to Bolivians because they

⁶⁷ Jiménez, *Sociabilidad en las Plazas de Buenos Aires* (Granada: Estudios Demográficos, 2020), 532.

receive less income, amenities, and program benefits than argentinians. It is so much harder to have a structured schedule in a popular space of Buenos Aires if you live in these bordering zones, therefore a Bolivian does not have the same privilege to show up and remain when their life and home is not related at all to the location of certain Downtown public spaces. As soon as a space is oriented towards the upper class, it immediately becomes much more difficult to occupy or partake in that said area.

Chapter 3: Four Spatial Stories

Regarding the in-depth analysis we have just conjured, the appropriation of space for Bolivians in downtown Buenos Aires is subliminally present yet hidden beneath the city's planning processes and abundant inequality. What has been researched merely depicts a theoretical approach. One must certainly weigh this into account to demonstrate the legitimacy of this in the field of academia. These theories allow one to open their form of thinking, to embrace other perspectives so that each and every key aspect is considered before forming a concrete conclusion. The social exclusion and planning are rather persistent; however, one must see what the reality of these formulated approaches are. What is their legitimacy and how are they altered once they meet with the tangible real world?

None of these discoveries could be drawn nor declared without taking first-person accounts into serious consideration. Whether they personal stories, testimonies, or the observed daily life, this critical lens will demonstrate why such theories are drawn and how the patterns of their normal life eventually conglomerate to these conclusions regarding the socialization of its urban center. This allows one to see deeply into how this society and its physical material is constructed around the Bolivian immigrants themselves.

To start off, the film, *Bolivia*, is crucial because even though it is not any particular true story, it is rather a cinematic lens to depict the daily life of a Bolivian in Buenos Aires based upon Argentine society. The story is about a young Bolivian man, who recently immigrated to Buenos Aires, that got a job as a griller in a small corner restaurant. This is all done to support his big family back home. His work tends to be rather dirty, the lowest position in the establishment, and even though he is respected by his boss, the customers recently harass him

with demanding orders at his every move. Even the police demand that he shows his immigratory documents and prohibit him from walking through certain areas. Almost every person acts as if he was disrupting their environment. Horrible words are constantly thrown at him, while customers try to fight him.⁶⁸ This is a cinematic culmination of all the oppressions that Bolivians confront when a new life is begun. His position is rather challenging to overcome, facing this type of persistent treatment.

This is not to say that all of this completely accurate, but this artistic viewpoint demonstrates how many forms that daily oppression can take. It happens to occur in almost every space he inhabits. No matter what he does, they are going to get angry due to their implicit bias. His life is a conglomeration of all physical, verbal, and visual confrontation. Nonetheless, towards the end of the film, there is a fight between him and a violent customer that escalates to the point that later on, the customer drives by and shoots him in the chest, killing him. The film ends with a sign in the windowsill, asking for a new griller, showing the vicious cycle of a Bolivian in Buenos Aires.⁶⁹

This escalation allows us to see the perspective of putting up with so much struggle in every aspect of one's life. Maybe one in this position is not killed directly, but this oppression brings them to less access, less resources, and eventually, a life that is so short, and unjust with so much death, all from their discrimination and grand disadvantage. This shows the oppression's reality, being carried out towards so many other aspects of life that worsen as they go on, like our common theme of public space exclusion. This persistence is so powerful and drives their daily life, like the one of the poor griller. However, the film's ending shows us that

⁶⁸ Adrian Catetano, director. *Bolivia*, Cinema Tropical, 2001.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

this is nothing out of the ordinary. There was a lack of support for this man, and when a community is economically inferior, it is too difficult to encounter something for their overall betterment. The Argentinian domination has established a norm for this type of demographical treatment, which lets this unfortunate pattern persist. This film analysis is getting everything set before releasing the truth.

Now to dive in even deeper, one must take into consideration what was investigated in person with these city's communities because reality is the best answer. Fortunately, there was an opportunity to interview Professor Luciana Castronuovo, Head Researcher for FIC Argentina (Figure 2), who for her doctoral thesis, focused on the Bolivian migration crisis for the Social Sciences of Universidad de Buenos Aires. Her research was made possible through other people's years of firsthand experience. It was intriguing how much and how little her discoveries related to the theoretical approaches of Bolivian integration.

There was quite a bit to consider when addressing the adaptation of a community to new urban landscape. Her discoveries were more related to the patterns of socialization between different groups rather than the physical concrete planning. We spoke on December 11, 2020. She started off by saying that it is true that there are certain appropriations of space that change throughout each neighborhood and community. With Bolivians, there are some "labor spaces" that lack room for leisure, just like places solely based upon a fixed schedule. Regardless, many other spaces are used for parties and festivals, especially in the neighborhood, Moreno (located near the eastern border of the city). There is quite a bit of a "religious component" to these performed rituals.⁷⁰ These events are the most preferred or common way to appropriate their

⁷⁰ Castronuovo, Luciana, "Personal Accounts of Bolivian Spatial Practices" Personal interview. December 11, 2020.

spaces, with quite a rhythm of life. Certainly, there is a contrast between the spaces of bordering neighborhoods and those of downtown. However, this is what only occurs among themselves, so one must look into the interaction and socialization with other neighborhoods and demographics.

The sentiments that are associated with recently immigrated Bolivians were not exactly as predicted. After Castronuovo investigated many communities, she claimed that Bolivians tend not “feel bad” regarding daily discrimination. Their true struggle is employment. They are at a disadvantage searching for anything to support themselves. There are certain processes that are not as inclusive with this demographic because of the structure of the job market. However, this is not solely based upon economics. There is much more depth involving this social integration. Due to their status, the neighborhoods that they live in are at a lower level, socially and financially. With more poverty, there of course will be more crime and violence to earn a living. With that violence, it becomes the popular dynamic of these distinct neighborhoods, which creates an invitation to stigmatize them.⁷¹ Rather than the people themselves, it is these areas that receive a bad reputation, which at many times is mostly Bolivian. This is an indirect manner of their received criticism.

With this topic of a dominating demographic, it is something rather common throughout all neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, according to her research. So many spaces in the public atmosphere are homogeneous or secularized, and these surrounding places are reproduced in that same fashion. According to her discoveries, most of the time, she would see “a single block in the city consisting of only Bolivians, the next one with only Paraguayans, and the next with only Argentinians, without ever even interacting with each other.” Segregation here is seen rather

⁷¹ Castronuovo, Luciana, “Personal Accounts of Bolivian Spatial Practices” Personal interview. December 11, 2020.

easily. Even if it is enforced, this society has begun to function without each other's integration. This does depend on and vary within each neighborhood, but in general, this persists throughout Buenos Aires.

Professor Castronuovo continued by saying that “the multiplicity of each space had an individual dynamic”, and that is what keeps supporting this grand separation. There are many characteristics that separate one group from the other by race, social stigma, or even the difference in the favored futbol team (something that is much more influential than you would think). It is a form of classification that continues giving reasons to remain apart. There are three neighborhoods next to one another: Flores, Villas, y Charrua being a primarily Bolivian (Figure 3). All of these areas, despite their proximity, are rather “separated” and homogeneous when passing from one space to the next.⁷² Without there being a legal implementation, they will still construct themselves this way. The borders from neighborhood to neighborhood is so intense with an “increasing polarization.”

After discussing this, one must think, why is it this way? What is the role of the government and city council to polarize demographics so strongly? Castronuovo said that all of this is based upon the inaction from the government. Whatever the government focuses on controls what the council shall decide, eventually creating an unequal city. In this situation, certain dynamics are favored more than others. With public spaces particularly, she said that the unfavored dynamic decreases overtime, so that the rest may remain on top. The appropriation is much different in downtown rather than what goes on in Bolivian neighborhoods. The transportation (in the bordering zones) contributes to this issue of inequal accessibility to spaces

⁷² Castronuovo, Luciana, “Personal Accounts of Bolivian Spatial Practices” Personal interview. December 11, 2020.

and the city in general. All of this is a product of immigration and how they adapt to a new urban landscape. “The governmental inaction for their integration creates an even stronger polarization within the social and economic processes”, which does not construct anything concrete for adaptation.⁷³ This issue will keep happening as long as the council keeps planning it like they have done. There is not nearly enough urgency in their positions to address migrant separation.

To alter perspectives of real-life experience, the viewpoint of an Argentine, without a degree in this material, would provide how this issue is seen by the great majority. There was an Argentine woman, Elidoe Vega, who was more than willing to share her thoughts (Figure 4). The conversation took place on February 16, 2021. She began by saying that the immigration system is rather bureaucratic with so much difficulty involved with the job search, causing many to live in run-down areas (villas). She also noted that for this demographic within the university setting, “it is very hard to have their degrees validated which causes them to not receive the same salary” due to technically not achieving this request. It is much more common to see Bolivians in any type of work out there because they are not selective when it comes to earn a living.⁷⁴ Their struggles seem to extend beyond the sectors of living and labor. When the reality is met, it is always so much more surprising than one could picture.

Regarding discrimination, she had a rather optimistic view. She did not think that Bolivians receive “worse treatment”, but instead they are very stigmatized by their skin color, work, or accent, being a rather subtle oppression. With all this, she thought that this stigmatization can cause a lack of self-esteem, confidence, etc. Despite that, this community gives their best effort to give their children the best opportunity. Moreover, according to her

⁷³ Castronuovo, Luciana, “Personal Accounts of Bolivian Spatial Practices” Personal interview. December 11, 2021.

⁷⁴ Elidoe Vega, “Argentine Observations on Bolivian Integration” Personal interview. March 25, 2021.

words, even though there is oppression, it is on a better track and has improved much more since the start of the immigration era. She continued saying that she does not believe Argentine politics on this matter are not exactly unwelcoming because “compared to other countries, they have been quite flexible and are now accustomed to the coexistence of other culture.”⁷⁵ These words seem to address both sides of this argument at hand.

When I asked her about places and spaces, she kept among a similar theme. According to her, there are definitely certain areas where you can find more immigrants, but with public spaces, there are not many social restrictions, and “they can interact with whomever just like anyone else in our country.” When she continued on, what tied it all together (after asking her on the social implication of public space and communal integration) was when she said, “I think there is relation between public spaces that are visited often and this social inequality, but it is not directly related to the immigrant population.” That is to say, argentines of a darker skin color receive some sort of oppression, even though they are not immigrants.⁷⁶ These responses of hers brings out some curiosity on what the real root of discrimination is. However, one must consider where she is coming from with her perspective.

Moving forward, I also had the privilege to speak with a Bolivian immigrant, named Maria Luisa Montero Alcaraz, who now lives in Buenos Aires (Figure 5). We spoke on February 18, 2021. She began to share that 15 years ago, she and her husband moved to be with her father-in-law. Right now, the rest of her family is still in Bolivia, which is that hardest thing for her to bear. When she had just arrived in Buenos Aires, she received much more discrimination that was apparently from rooted in not being accustomed to the culture, however now she feels

⁷⁵Elidoe Vega, “Argentine Observations on Bolivian Integration” Personal interview. March 25, 2021.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

significantly more comfortable there. Her opinion on employment was the only real thing that is frustrating are the endless amounts of papers and documentation that are demanded.

Furthermore, she continued by saying that their most common form of received prejudice is that “they don’t contribute anything...not even taxes...not anything.” They behave as if they are only collecting money from the government and nothing else (this is based upon many weak programs from the government that create a cruel dependency). She did say though, that these prejudices have decreased throughout her 15 years, but it is still something at hand.⁷⁷

Regarding public spaces, she said there is not much of this theoretical idea of inter-cultural socialization. Their integration is very little and “[they] stay among [them]selves.” Each community is very close and appropriates their own space, with dances and many festivals. According to her, the city councils do not pay out anything to change these issues. A solution she wanted was to take out the “current social plans and replace them with ones that” do not just provide low social benefits without work. Rather, they should provide more employment positions so that Bolivians do not need to rely upon the little money that is given out.⁷⁸ This pure truth that the lovely woman was willing to share demonstrated a unique reality that is not seen as well by anyone outside of their community.

To provide other forms thinking on these issues, it was important to seek perspectives that were not exactly alike. I had yet another opportunity to speak with a Bolivian immigrant, Denny Andrés Tapia Vásquez on February 22, 2021, who was raised in Buenos Aires since he was 7. He is currently rather successful at the age of 31 being a nurse, living in San Martín (just outside of the eastern city border). When he just arrived in Buenos Aires, it was “a different

⁷⁷María Luisa Montero Alcaraz, “Personal Immigration Stories” Personal Interview. December 18, 2021.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

world” and a difficult place to get used to, but he learned how to civilize overtime. During his youth, he received a lot of harassment for his physical appearance having super defined features through verbal abuse. He said that eventually, he learned to be patient with people and difficulties like those. However, unlike this, his opinion and experience regarding accessibility and socialization were the contrast of what was expected.⁷⁹

According to him, the Bolivians tend to have the same opportunity as argentinians. Nonetheless, the way that we view the employment field is based upon finding any possible type of work. He said that, as an immigrant country, it has many people that want as much as possible to the point that they get whatever is out there. In certain aspects it could be better being Bolivian because people know that you will not be affected by any work environment. He also said that “Buenos Aires is a very welcoming environment because of that exact reason” as well as there being so many Bolivian communities, making it hard to discriminate or avoid their demographic. With the socialization between them and everyone else, he continued saying that it is rather normal, but it does depend on the person. In theory, “it would be unlikely or unusual for a high-level Argentine to interact with a low-level Bolivian.”⁸⁰ However, it seems that in general, they can mix and mingle as they wish to, being a rather surprising perspective to finally listen to.

Furthermore, this young man was willing to share the unfortunate occurrences within these Bolivian communities. In part with discrimination, he also said the stereotype of “they don’t contribute anything” has been prevalent. According to him, the most common one is that “they come from upstairs work” (*a rough colloquial translation*), which means everything that they have fell from the sky into an illegitimate area. When they arrive to Buenos Aires, they find

⁷⁹ Denny Andrés Tapia Vásquez, “Youth and Adult Shared Experiences” Personal Interview. February 22, 2021.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

places that are Bolivian as well as being the most accessible live in. In areas owned by the state or province, there are many black-market communities, with Bolivian landlords and “everything being Bolivian” without any contracts, taxes, or papers. The houses and neighborhoods are constructed by themselves without being a part of any official transaction. He said that the fact that this happens is what hurts him the most.⁸¹ Under many circumstances, this is the most reasonable thing to do because of the tedious and sometimes demanding process of immigration.

Specifically, regarding public spaces, our friend did not have many intense comments or opinions about their social processes. According to him, in these places and spaces, people socialize amongst each other just fine. No one would ever say that you cannot be a part of a certain area, but we cannot see what someone is thinking regarding this integration. At times, there are rather bitter conversations about this melting pot, but every person is different. He kept on emphasizing that “it really does depend on the person.” Even in downtown, due to its focal point and growing Bolivian community, there are so many places where people of different demographics need to integrate, and there is nothing one can do to prevent this. With his opinion about the government, “they are already doing all that they can”, and he is rather content with it. It seems that his opinion indicates that this issue, if any, is based upon the mentality rather literal processes. A very optimistic gentleman provides us with some hope as to what will keep happening with Bolivians in Buenos Aires.

However, it was incredible to hear all of these firsthand stories mixing and matching with the profound research and predictions about Downtown Buenos Aires. Nothing could ever be portrayed as our imagined realities, which brings us to even bigger and better conclusions to

⁸¹ Denny Andrés Tapia Vásquez, “Youth and Adult Shared Experiences” Personal Interview. February 22, 2021.

draw. Professor Castronuovo highly expressed that this social exclusion and displacement exists through homogeneous spaces, highly competitive job markets, and stigmatized neighborhoods with a lack of governmental support while maintaining festive rituals within their own spaces. Ms. Vega expressed the community's difficulties of receiving educational diplomas and racism towards the color of people's skin rather than the rationality, potentially creating social displacement. Ms. Alcaraz expressed her concern with poor governmental programs and stereotypes of welfare collecting with a huge emphasis of the homogeneity of spaces. As for Mr. Vasquez, he shared the tragedy of black-market housing within Bolivian communities and spaces, while being super enthusiastic about the rest of the circumstances. All of our story tellers, while they may not be alike, unite this reality by highlighting every unique aspect within the spotlight of Bolivian social displacement. Now after listening one must ask, what now is the solution to this satisfy this social integration of downtown Buenos Aires?

Chapter 4: Cultural Resistance, Repression, and Resolution within Public Space

Regarding these interviews and expanded social theory, it is clear that they have not quite matched up because the imaginary and the truth cannot always be alike. These profound texts, philosophers, and analytics about the landscape of Buenos Aires always signal that there is a cold and unwelcoming environment. Why does the interviewees with whom I spoke with do not think nor feel that way? Throughout these discussions, no one felt so strong regarding the topic of racism, bias or social exclusion, even though it is evidently there. It seems that they are rather content nor are they bothered with the current situation. After reading everything, it seems so obvious not to avoid the immense presence of these stigmas. Is there something within the research that cannot be carried out realistically, or perhaps, its true shape is manipulated by social conventions and devices to become hidden?

The beliefs and mentalities associated with these communities do not follow the basic facts. For example, in this research, it shows that bolivianos receive 25% less social services than everyone else. However, in the interviews, the two Bolivians said that their reputation is that they do not do anything and only collect money from the government. Why would something like this arise from this environment? Following the words of De Certeau it appears that welfare has been labeled accordingly with this community. It is true that the government does provide them assistance, but clearly it is not enough. They have stereotyped the bolivianos by just one aspect of their life for its entire population. With the term, synecdoche, this assistance could very much add onto one single labeled identity. Due to their status as a foreigner, it is much more logical to adhere towards what is most known about this community, which apparently is welfare.

However, all of the interviewees continue not to feel bad in the context of discrimination, but at the same time, they say that there are still unfortunate circumstances that the community must endure. One must see every one of these perspectives in relation to social theory in order to find out the why it is this way. Returning to Lipsitz's "Contact Zone", it is important to know what there is within this zone, when urban characteristics like the homogeneity of spaces intersect with social preferences. But what is it that these preferences attach and base themselves onto and off of? According to discriminatory research, Bolivians that have immigrated at a young age often have an easier integration into their society or argentine zone because they adapt to the people's attitudes from early on.⁸² Our friend, Mr. Vasquez, immigrated to Buenos Aires when he was 7. It seemed that he has had a lot of success and has only faced a few problems of exclusion. In the context of social customs, if someone is exposed to whatever culture there is for a much longer time than everyone else, they will accustom and spend life in a much calmer manner. Mr. Vasquez has known the other side of this contact zone for quite a while.

According to these observations, on top of race-based discrimination, argentinians have a stigma that is rooted within cultural practices. Bolivianos that have recently come to Buenos Aires are still attached to where they have come from, thus the stereotype of being an outsider persists. However, this reputation is not only about their accent, facial structure, or other physical attributes, but it also involves their traditions, dances, rituals, or rather, their active culture. If they continue to stay among themselves, their practices will stay that way too without entering or inhabiting other public spaces. Going back to De Certeau, the practices are corresponding to a constructed order, and in the other way around, the order contributes to the practices. So, if the

⁸² Kelly Johnson, *El Derecho a Una Vida*, (Buenos Aires: SIT Graduate Institute, 2016), 23.
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3316&context=isp_

argentine mentality and this stigma within the social order does not support what these immigrants prefer to practice, they will never be able to carry out their rituals/events outside of their own neighborhoods.

Two of the interviewees (Castronuovo and Alcaraz) kept on emphasizing the notion of homogeneity and great separation in between each street and neighborhood throughout the city. With the notion of territoriality, especially that of Gramsci and Raffestin, the mobility and social mix contribute to the idea that communities stay among themselves. The neighborhoods, Flores and Charrua, are dominantly Bolivian. Their practices, customs, and lifestyle remain in their own place without seeing any of them occur in downtown Buenos Aires. The way that these neighborhoods around the downtown are constructed creates an environment to homogenize them. The codification and mechanisms correspond to the social practices to assure the secularization of these places. In certain ways, they function as a treatment towards different classes, which leads to this distinction between the two. If they both were treated equally, they would not have these sidewalks and parks that change drastically from one to the next, as Professor Castronuovo said.

This homogeneity also is contributed from these issues of accessibility and other physical designs of parks/plazas, but that also contributes to the lack of cultural presence. Following the research of Jimenez, the lack of transit lines that could connect bordering neighborhoods, makes it very hard to have a culture that could dominate or remain in a downtown space. As Castronuovo said, every space has its own particular dynamic, which allows for a different tendency to occur in the downtown compared to the bordering areas. If the physical design of public spaces and its sociability are based upon structured schedules, how could they adapt their social and cultural practice? They are already designed to support argentine practices, and these

unfavored dynamics end up decreasing if there is nothing to allow them to remain. They are constructed to prevent the mixture of two worlds, two forms of sociability, and that is the reason, like Mrs. Alcaraz said, there is little integration in any place.

The lack of accessibility plus the social force involved with these imaginary borders with the black-market circumstances provide even more of an ability to manipulate any public space. First off, this without a doubt contributes to this stigma that occurs within these Bolivian communities. Secondly, with the physical design of spaces to exclude the lower class (i.e., the gates on the fountains), these communities would then be part of the class that is not wanted to reside within the downtown. Also, being in a place that is within the black market puts a different social dynamic to inhibit adaption to the urban landscape. Moreover, the access to work outside of this community, or anything around the downtown is rather difficult to find when there is nothing official with their citizenship. The black market creates a space that has restrictions that not only prevents them from remaining in the downtown, but rather restricts them to leave or even inhabit places other than their own.

More importantly, these places develop the people's profile involved from the political and social eyes, creating an environment and reputation of everything being illegal and Bolivian. This grand contrast between these spaces and all the others continues to support this divide. Just to even transition from one space to the next can almost never occur because the separation creates social mechanisms that prevent so many people from moving easily within the notions of accessibility, politics, sociability, and design. There are so many facets within these territories and places constructed upon the manipulation of practices. Even though there is more of a social and legal obstacle than a physical one, both aspects contribute to the divide and immense

exclusion with these Bolivian communities, especially those of the black market. Even for such an optimistic person like Mr. Vasquez, it still hurts him so much.

So many circumstances have upholstered areas around the downtown to only support one fixed identity. Referring back to Ms. Vega, it is true that Argentinians can be welcoming because the city has become accustomed to their presence. However, at the same time, this demographic is expected to orient and fit a constructed social order with these downtown practices. In other words, many people, like Mr. Vasquez, will have an opportunity to get any type of work there is. This is only because they want whatever there is instead of achieving the same amount of success. Bolivians match the standard of seeking out low-level positions, which is needed, therefore their passiveness towards them in the middle of the chaos of Buenos Aires persists. Just because they are physically here, it does not mean they are on an equal playing field. The identity of being Argentinian adheres to the central activity of a space, even though there is a demographic mix, because it is designed for their own benefit.

The answer as to why Bolivians have not felt bad regarding discrimination is because of this indifference towards their growing population without noticing the disapproval of their spatial appropriation. The screams of hatred may have subsided, but this implicit bias still controls all their present circumstances. Even if they have jobs, communities in which they inhabit and streets on which they walk upon, their presence is still not the same as social acceptance and cultural equality. These communities keep interacting among themselves and depending upon each other. Bolivians have been able to be in each sector (housing, work, transit, education) within the Buenos Aires life without contributing to its identity or status. This is the reason why they do not feel discriminated. The facts demonstrate that their physical body has done this and that, but they do not realize it is carried out in an unjust manner. Their activities

and practices can for sure happen, but they are trapped within their neighborhoods. This goes on and on either in the lower-income work zones of the downtown or inside of the bordering areas without ever escaping. This indifference is a result of their increasing presence and easy exploitation for lower positions.

After connecting the real with the theoretical, this social displacement that has long been discussed seems to exist through the repression of cultural activities and practices in downtown Buenos Aires. In general, those spaces tend to be involved with surrounding residents, so by adapting them towards Bolivian culture is much more difficult to be carried out due less accessibility from neighborhoods like Charrua and Flores in the southern city border. The public spaces have always been constructed to manipulate parks, plazas, and streets to adhere accordingly. With our example of the Fiesta de la Virgen de la Copacabana, this has always occurred withing predominantly Bolivian neighborhoods because it is accepted there and has been incrusted into their urban landscape as to what gives their sense of place. But what effect does that give to downtown Buenos Aires?

Only in the last decade was this made into an event that took place in an essential spot of Buenos Aires. This only allowed them to demonstrate a spectacle for everyone to see. Many of whom were interviewed said the most notable way for Bolivians to manipulate space are with festivals like these. The Fiesta is only an isolated incident that happens once a year to look at from afar by everyone else rather than embracing it as their own. Spatial appropriation in the downtown keeps on adapting towards the majority's needs. This festival does not receive the same level of appreciation by its citizenry. It never has a continuation to develop it as part of the routine, of a fixed schedule, established in these spaces of rest or leisure to embed them within

the central socialization without a bad context. Nothing is designed nor enforced to let these types of practices become part of the place's identity.

Cultural activities are grouped into another category that has yet to make its way to the downtown. With the simplification of cultural customs of Bolivian immigrants, this can be become discriminatory due to denying their presence of other communal necessities.⁸³ The residents born in Argentina always refer to Bolivian customs as “their customs” rather than argentine ones.⁸⁴ In places like Flores, there exists an imaginary collective memory regarding what is thought to happen there created those only born in Argentina, which is how those communities can become too simplified.⁸⁵ The lack of involvement distances the joining of both communities. The vision of being a foreigner persists.

The minimum presence of Bolivian cultural activity prohibits it from manipulating spaces in the downtown towards their own urban involvements. All of the effects towards this community have been discussed within this single issue/factor. Without Bolivian culture, there is no knowledge of their crucial presence that increases the diversity of Buenos Aires, nor an acceptance of their practices, nor an adaptation to include them under the same argentine identity. Neither is the equality there to remain and inhabit the same communal space in an equal manner. Bolivians have not achieved any of these steps to carry out what they have brought from their mother land to this epicenter.

The great division will always allow social displacement to occur under the same circumstances. A public space is constructed to let all citizenry present themselves, act, and

⁸³ Johnson, *El Derecho a Una Vida*, 24. Ditto.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

contribute towards a single identity representative of all the demographics to make the city what it is. It is meant to be the center of culture. This identity has been broken and altered to demonstrate a false vision of what represents a diverse urban landscape. The way in which the layout is designed will only increase what already divides two neighborhoods, zones, territories, identities, ideas, people, demographics, backgrounds, spatial appearances/manipulations. A bias has been incrustated or rather a perspective has traveled so far along a powerful path to exclude a community in a method that for some reason goes unnoticed.

In order to solve all of this, if the Secretary of Political Sociocultural could create more than just a single event per year to demonstrate that Bolivians deserve the same opportunity to access the same place and carry forth what they desire. This type of event or festival must be extended towards other sectors of the government to bring the importance and reality that Bolivians are the same Argentine as everyone else. It is incredible that they have begun to consider its importance, but this act is not even enough. To make a concrete impact, one must include and acknowledge each part of this system in order to focus on Bolivians. The department of transit, finances, of commerce, are all as impactful as the social politics because they contribute to the daily life of a pedestrian, a citizen, a member of the same identity. If each sector incorporated more of a focus on Bolivians, the coming together would bring more legitimacy towards their social involvement.

Moreover, with these solutions, the city administration needs to focus on adding more lines of transit. First off, as Castronuovo said, they need to act upon this issue, which they are not partly because they believe they have already done plenty to support this community. By beginning to give accessible paths for Bolivians towards the downtown, this can allow their identity to unfold more. There is no subway that is connected to Charrua (the most southern

region of Buenos Aires with some exceptions), nor to the Eastern nor Northern border (Villa Devoto, Agronomía, Vicente López, Núñez). There are only commuter trains to these places which do not provide the same amount of accessibility as the subway to transport passengers to specific places throughout the city (Figure 6). If the subways could follow the rail line or at least the same path, Buenos Aires would be much more accessible for the neighborhoods around the border. Transit is the first step to access spaces in the downtown, however, to manipulate them to be inclusive is much more profound.

The goal of physically and socially transmitting the community's cultural presence, could be done by allowing more festivities and rituals to take place in downtown areas. Certain parks could become designated to focus on religious events in order to achieve similar communal status. Many more days could be considered as institutional holidays which would educate much more people about certain citizenry within their own city. Moreover, the design of parks/plazas could have more subway stations and the paths plus green spaces could be remodeled to coexist so that they are not just to pass through but to rather be a place to remain and perform much larger events. This way their presence will unfold slowly and strongly. With more frequency of Bolivians visiting them often, this culture would be accustomed as one.

Furthermore, many of these thoughts and roles of the city council/government are involved with this "inaction" and the weak nature of these modern social programs. Regarding what Mrs. Alcaraz said, we need to get rid of them and replace them. After discussing the welfare stereotype, the government needs to establish something that allows social mobility for Bolivians rather than the dependency on these programs. Even though it is true that they receive less assistance, the stereotype could influence that city council's satisfaction. The programs on their own only offer temporary support, rather than a structured position that give them a

platform to mobilize within this urban landscape. The law about migratory immigration says this is certain to happen, but the reality does not quite show that.

City Council programs must tackle each individual human right instead of minimum monetary solutions. To begin, it would be much better and logical to connect them to entry-level level jobs so they can eventually rise up to higher positions. This way, it can minimize potential future dependencies on welfare, but it also gives them the same opportunity as Argentines. Moreover, the city council should designate certain places around the downtown area to be affordable housing for the lower class and those who recently immigrated. Its proximity will create more involvement around the downtown area, and also prevent residential restrictions from the black market. This would encourage communities to smoothly adapt to a new urban landscape. With programs that focus on long-term necessities they will put Bolivians in a position to receive the same basic human rights.

With these brief recommendations, obviously it is much more difficult to tackle the reality than what is simply stated on paper. To enforce a shift in each sector of the city council would require such an intense mental adjustment that has followed a defined path for so long. At the same time, with the common belief of Bolivians receiving more than enough, it is a challenge to demonstrate these programs have not functioned properly. The same goes for holidays, parks/plaza, programs, and housing. The ability for institutions to adapt to these new standards is unfortunately such a long process. It was not until 2009 that this religious event took place in the downtown. This demonstrates what needs to be changed, therefore these small efforts must grow until the movement become legal and defined within the same social identity.

This research and discovery have demonstrated the necessity to ferment Bolivian culture within the Argentine identity in downtown public spaces through the exposure of their practices and religious and communal events. This demographic, or rather this family of Buenos Aires, has been restricted so much from expressing their own form of spatial appropriation, limiting them to stay among themselves in the bordering areas. These borders have been constructed between each neighborhood and blocked by territorialization and mental obstacles referring to the difference in customs and traditions which have greatly distanced themselves from one another. They do not have the same liberty to equally adapt to these spaces with their own cultural requirements. Even though they have a single special day, it does not give an equal platform, just the desire for its betterment. This has prevented their immersion to inhabit and remain in these places. They do not identify with everyone else because they are seen in this manner. For the moment, these beautiful rituals brought from their homeland remain trapped in the bordering zone. The hope lies within the increasing knowledge of their community and their initial customary presence. May it be the first of many.

Illustrations



Figure 1: La Fiesta de la Virgen de Copacabana

Source: Revista Anfibia, Universidad Nacional de San Martin, 2013.



Figure 2: Professor Luciana Castronuovo

Source: Luciana Castronuovo, N/A.



Figure 5: María Luisa Montero Alcaraz

Source: María Luisa Montero Alcaraz,
August 27, 2016.



Figure 6: Subway Map of Buenos Aires

Source:
<https://line.17qq.com/articles/erwrcqeax.htm>

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