

“This is Boedo” Stories of a lost football stadium, a Buenos Aires  
*barrio*, and how the *hinchas* of San Lorenzo fought to return

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology Specialization in Political Economy

Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario

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## Abstract

Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro is one of Argentina's largest professional football teams. In 1979, during Argentina's civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983), the club was forced to close its stadium the *Gasómetro* located on Avenida La Plata in the Buenos Aires *barrio* (neighbourhood) of Boedo. The property became a Carrefour retail store in 1985. Clubs in Argentina are large member-operated social, culture, and sport institutions offering a wide range of activities alongside professional football. Clubs are often identified with their place in the urban landscape. The idealized *club de barrio* (neighbourhood club) of Buenos Aires, in particular, has had a profound social and cultural influence on the production of the *barrio* as a space in the city. In turn, the historic relationship between the *barrio* and the club generates a sense of belonging that *hinchas* feel towards their club's *barrio*. San Lorenzo's *hinchas* claim that through the loss of the old *Gasómetro* their connection to Boedo was unjustly severed. Over the past fifteen years a social movement organized by the club's *hinchas* (supporters) called the *Vuelta a Boedo* (Return to Boedo) grew into a politically successful campaign to regain the property with the hope of one day building a new stadium. This dissertation examines how the *Vuelta a Boedo* generated a politicized narrative that draws from the history of the club, the performative solidarity of the football crowd, a politics of memory and justice, and the collective storytelling of *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. It argues that an intertextual reading of Argentina's football crowds and the country's political-economy more generally is required to understand how the *Vuelta a Boedo* emerges. Shared memories of the *Gasómetro* refract through the claims made by human rights organizations to articulate why the loss of the stadium should be perceived as a social injustice. This dissertation demonstrates how *hinchas* and their football clubs to contribute to the production of urban space. Finally, the dissertation argues for the centrality of the affective relationships between *hinchas* produced and mediated through their match-day performances.

## Acknowledgements

“Madmen open the paths which are later traversed by the wise.”

- *Carlo Dossi*

In an interview from 1999, Adolfo Res promised to the camera that with \$30 million pesos he would buy the Carrefour on Avenida La Plata and rebuild the *Gasómetro* out of wood. Later in 2011, members of the *Subcomisión del Hinchista* uploaded this video with the epigraph by Dossi.

This dissertation is indebted to the story crafted out of the “*loco*” dreams and actions of *hinchistas* of San Lorenzo. My deepest gratitude is extended to the many *cuervos*, too many to name individually, who shared their lives and passion with me. Thank you to the *Malditos* for letting me stand with you at your *paravalancha*, the long distance away trips, and the post-match commiserating, thank you to the *muchachos* at the Bar San Lorenzo for including me in your lunch-time banter and sharing your memories of the *Viejo Gasómetro*, to the members of the *Subcomisión del Hinchista* for your inspiring dedication to the vision of an inclusive sport and social club, to the *pibes* in the *peñas* of Salta and Matadores del Oeste, to the Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro, and to the residents of Boedo. I hope my retelling of your stories is worthy of their value.

To Peter Gose, you are a kind and patient mentor. Thank you for excitedly pulling ethnographies on British football supporters from your bookshelf when I mused about embarking on a new research project. Your confidence in this project from the very beginning reflects your passion for finding inspiration in the everyday lives and actions of others, a trait I hope to carry forward.

To Bernhard Leistle, thank you for teaching me new ways to think about human experience and to better pay attention to my senses. This self-awareness has made me a better *hinchista* and hopefully a better academic.

To Jill Wigle, you have been attentive, flexible, supportive, and intellectually stimulating during every step of this project. Thank you for encouraging me to be multi-disciplined academic and be more critical of my own gendered perspective.

The administrative staff of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Institute of Political Economy at Carleton University have done so much to bring this project to its conclusion. Thank you Paula Whissell and Marlene Brancato for all of your dedicated work to help students. Donna Coghill, you are a life-long friend.

Thank you to Silvio Aragón for our conversations about *fútbol*, *hinchadas*, and politics. And, thank you to Cristina Rojas and Laura Macdonald for your unending support for students at Carleton who conduct research in and about Latin America.

Thank you to Robbie “Titus” for opening your home to me, Rachel Lambrecht for being my first guide to San Lorenzo, Dani “Fletero” for the late-night *asados* and concerts, and Mariana Marcote *por apoyo y amistad siempre*.

My colleagues and friends in Ottawa have supported me intellectually and very importantly with their care during this project. In particular I want to thank Andrea Carrión, Alex Castleton, Rachel Crawford, Vladimir Díaz, Mariana Fernandez, Kirsten Francescone, Aaron and Lucy Henry, David Matijasevich, Nozomi Otsuka, Daniel Tubb, Marieka Sax, Kendra and Ryan Shannon, and Amy Wilson.

To my whole family, thank you for all of your support and love. To my brothers Michael Black and David Hawkins, you guys are an inspiration for me and true friends in life. I am deeply grateful to my parents Stephen Hawkins and Hilda Michel for everything they have given me, most relevant but probably least significant is their desire to see this project finished. I try my best to be the curious and compassionate person you have guided me to be.

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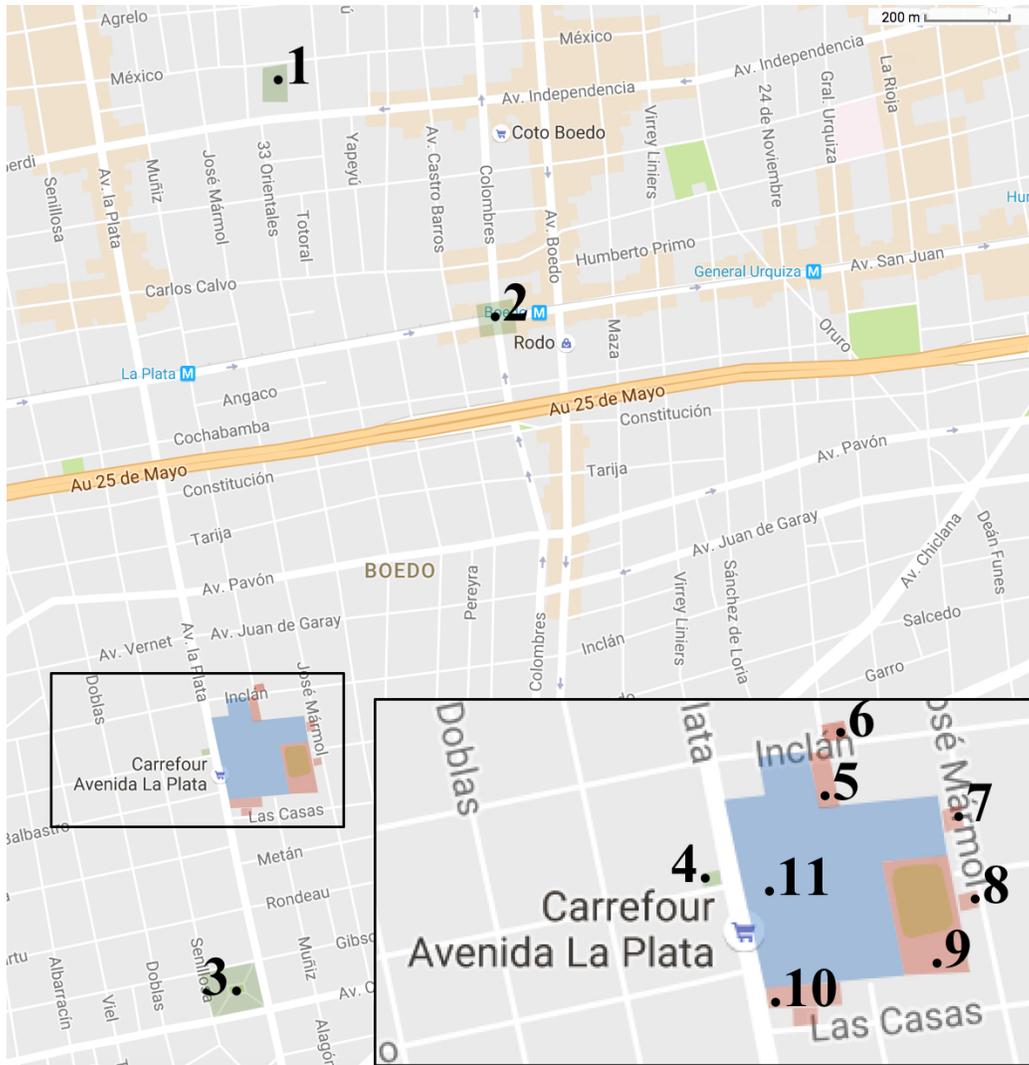


Figure 3: Boedo and Avenida La Plata (actual)

*Important Sites*

- 1. Oratorio San Antonio
- 2. San Juan and Boedo intersection
- 3. Plaza Buteller
- 4. Bar San Lorenzo

8. Casa del Ajadrez

- 9. Plaza Padre Massa / Polideportivo Roberto Pando
- 10. CASLA Sede Avenida La Plata

*Properties of San Lorenzo in Boedo*

- 5. Remnant of Viejo Gasómetro
- 6. Casa del Vitalicio
- 7. Casa de la Cultura

*Carrefour*

- 11. Carrefour Avenida La Plata 1700

## Chapter 1 Introduction

“*Tierra santa*” – Holy Land – reads the graffiti painted on the wall outside a box-store in Boedo, a *barrio*, or neighbourhood, of Buenos Aires. Blue and red ribbons on a construction fence blow in the wind around a poster: “YES to the Law of Historic Restitution.” Behind the fence, workers are replacing the roof on an ageing Carrefour store, which first opened on Avenida La Plata in 1985. Over of the recently repainted white wall there are other messages: “While you repair the roof, we cut out the floor,” “For Boedo what belongs to Boedo,” “Everything returns,” “For the return give everything”; each one in iconic blue and red shared both by Carrefour S.A. and the local football team Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro (CASLA). Above an abandoned cafe across from the gas station on Avenida La Plata and Inclán, the signboard reads “... We built two stadiums, we will build three... The Legend Continues.” For more than a decade of activism, *hinchas* (the local word for supporters) of San Lorenzo have dreamt of returning to Boedo and replacing the Avenida La Plata Carrefour with a new stadium in the location they once called home.

*Barrios*, or neighbourhoods, in the City of Buenos Aires are both important social-political categories of space, as well as specific mythical places in the historical narratives of the city. Professional football clubs have a special relationship to both understandings of the *barrio*. In the city, the idea of the *club de barrio* (neighbourhood club) continues to permeate the organization and cultural identity of the professional football team. Every professional football team in Argentina is owned and operated by a non-profit and member-run multi-sports club. Buenos Aires’ clubs, in particular, have

developed deep meaningful relationships with their immediate neighbours through the various activities they organize. San Lorenzo is considered one of the country's largest and most important clubs and its football team is one of the five *Grandes* in the professional league.<sup>1</sup> CASLA has a historical relationship with Boedo, the *barrio* where the club built its first stadium known by its nickname the *Gasómetro* (Gas-metre) in 1916 on Avenida La Plata, a major north-south artery in the *barrio*. Around the stadium a social, cultural, and sports club grew and reached its institutional pinnacle during the 1940s. The intimate relationship the club had formed with Boedo was disrupted and altered during Argentina's last civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983) and at a time of financial hardship for the club. In 1979, San Lorenzo was forced by the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, at the time governed by Brigadier General Osvaldo Cacciatore, to close and then sell its stadium and club facilities on Avenida La Plata. Four years later, as the civic-military dictatorship was coming to an end, the property was sold to Carrefour. The French multinational retailer's new location, which opened in 1985, was one of the first large box-stores in Argentina. The store benefited from Avenida La Plata's access to the nearby elevated 25 de Mayo highway built by Cacciatore, which cuts through Boedo and the city like a belt dividing the north and south of the city. For a while the location prospered but as competition led Carrefour to build even larger stores in the nearby suburbs and Argentina's urban middle-class began to suffer a severe recession starting in the late-90s the importance of the store diminished. Today, the Carrefour predominantly serves the surrounding residents and workers of Boedo.

<sup>1</sup> The other four clubs are Club Atlético River Plate, Racing Club de Avellaneda, Club Independiente de Avellaneda, and Club Atlético Boca Juniors.

San Lorenzo's football team, forced to rent the stadiums of their rivals, suffered through exile from 1979 till 1993. In this period San Lorenzo became the first of the *Grandes* of Argentinian football to be relegated in 1982, a potential moment of shame that was turned into a celebration by the club's *hinchas*. CASLA began construction of a new stadium in the club's *Ciudad Deportiva*, a large athletics campus in Bajo Flores, a semi-urbanized and transitional *barrio* located 3 km away. The Estadio Pedro Bidegain, more popularly recognized as the *Nuevo Gasómetro*, was opened in 1993. Over the following two decades the stadium, funded by the club's own members and followers, has grown to a capacity of 45 000 spectators. San Lorenzo's football team returned to league success winning national championships in 1995, 2001, 2007, and 2013 and international cups in 2002, 2003 and its first ever Copa Libertadores, the South American championship, in 2014. Over the past two decades, however, San Lorenzo has experienced institutional disruption and financial difficulty. Only in very recent years has success on the field been matched with financial stability off of it. Alongside the Libertadores, one of San Lorenzo's most significant wins occurred away from the stadium and in the halls of the Vatican. On 13 March 2013, the Archbishop of Argentina Jorge Mario Bergoglio, a life-long *hincha* of San Lorenzo, was elected to become the leader of the Catholic Church. Pope Francis is perhaps the most famous *cuervo* (crow), a nickname for San Lorenzo's *hinchas*, in the world.<sup>2</sup> Immediately after winning the Copa

<sup>2</sup> *Cuervo* (crow) is an allusion to the black robes worn by priests. The nickname indexes the influence of a priest Father Lorenzo Massa in the foundation of the club. Jorge Mario Bergoglio grew up in the nearby *barrio* of Flores, the son of Italian immigrants fleeing Italian fascism. His father played basketball for San Lorenzo in the 1940s; together they attended football matches at the Viejo Gasómetro. When he was elected Pope, images of his membership card both as a child and as an adult were circulated on social media. While Archbishop of Argentina, Bergoglio led mass at the newly constructed chapel built in San Lorenzo's *Ciudad Deportiva*, baptizing several children of members of the club. Educated as a child by the Order of Don Bosco and later ordained as a Jesuit, Pope Francis has become known for his humility and emphasis on good works for the poor. In 2009, in a letter to the SCH following the opening their Cultural House in

Libertadores, the club travelled with the trophy to the Vatican. For Pope Francis, a devoted follower of San Lorenzo, his fandom of football contributes to his image as a humble person.

Towards the end of the 1990s, a small group of San Lorenzo's *hinchas*, a person similar to fan, fanatic, or supporter in English speaking sport-cultures, began to talk about the club and its historical connection to the *barrio* of Boedo. In 2005, the *Subcomisión del Hincha* (Sub-Committee of the *Hincha*, SCH) was created by several hundred *hinchas* who wished to voluntarily contribute to the club. With the relatively small goal of creating a social space for cultural activities in the name of San Lorenzo, the SCH began to fundraise money to purchase houses and properties surrounding Carrefour. As the group grew more ambitious, the SCH launched a campaign, popularly known as the “*Vuelta a Boedo*” – the Return to Boedo. The group lobbied politicians in the legislature of the City of Buenos Aires eventually receiving support from several legislators for the proposed Law of Historic Restitution, which called for the expropriation and return of the Carrefour property to San Lorenzo.

To support their lobbying efforts, the SCH organized marches to the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires, located in the core of the city nearby the Plaza de Mayo and the Casa Rosada, the symbol of presidential power in Argentina. The first march on 25 November 2010 coincided with the introduction of the first legislative version of the Project for Historical Restitution and drew 2500 *hinchas* of San Lorenzo to the street in

Boedo, he wrote: “My cordial salutations... to all who have participated in this social project with the special goal of integrating and giving a sense of dignified belonging to our children. This objective is faithful to the ideals of Father Lorenzo Massa, founder of this prestigious club, who dedicated his life so that children of the *barrio*, especially the most poor, could grow up healthy in body and soul...” (Calvo 2013).

front of the City Legislature. A second rally on 12 April 2011 drew 20 000 to the same location, as the SCH and supporting legislators moved the project to the Committee for Sport and Tourism. Passing through the Committee with sufficient support, 40 000 *hinchas* spilled out onto the streets on 5 July 2011 surrounding the Legislature of Buenos Aires (Res 2011).

I arrived in Argentina at the end of October 2011 at a time when the *Vuelta a Boedo* was gaining significant momentum. A street festival in October blocked off the Avenida La Plata in front of the Carrefour drawing families dressed in blue and red, the traditional colours of San Lorenzo, to listen to live music, eat sausage and steak sandwiches, and support the campaign. Another night in mid-November, 500 people packed into a hall of the Oratorio San Antonio, the church where San Lorenzo was founded, for an Argentinian *asado* – barbecue. Alongside the large quantities of slowly grilled beef, supporters participated in auctions buying pieces of wood from the terraces of the old *Gasómetro*. The proceeds were destined to the purchase a fifth property around the corner from the Carrefour store on Avenida La Plata. At the beginning of December, 7000 people participated in an impromptu march to the French Embassy in the upscale and prestigious *barrio* of Recoleta to deliver a letter explaining the campaign and requesting the neutrality of the French government. Another mobilization occurred on 8 March 2012, which filled the Plaza de Mayo with an estimated 100 000 people. Over the following year, political pressure to pass the Law of Historic Restitution. On 15 Nov 2012, the Legislature of Buenos Aires unanimously passed the Law, marking a major step forward for San Lorenzo’s dream of one day rebuilding a stadium on Avenida La Plata.

Coincidentally, as the *Vuelta a Boedo* gained traction and support grew amongst *hinchas*, the club's football team entered into one of its worst periods in recent memory. Argentina's professional football league is organized by the *Asociación del Fútbol Argentino* (AFA) into a multi-tiered pyramid, where teams are relegated or promoted between the divisions based on their performance.<sup>3</sup> Relegation from the top-tier Primera A, along with financial consequences, is deeply felt by *hinchas*. San Lorenzo was the first of Argentina's five *Grandes* to be relegated to the second tier in 1982. In July 2011, River Plate was relegated. That club's historic relegation and subsequent riots, which damaged the club's national stadium, as well as the surrounding *barrio*, made international sports news. San Lorenzo's football team began the 2011 Apertura tournament in risk of relegation following upon two years of poor performances.

San Lorenzo's on-the-field performance produced anxiety amongst its *hinchas*. Several defeats led to the replacement of the manager. Following the final match of the Apertura 2011, a loss to Independiente at home, *hinchas* of San Lorenzo stayed in the stadium singing their support: "I swear to you that in the worst moments, I'll always be with you" over and over again. The club finished three positions from the bottom of the Apertura 2011 table. During the summer break between December and February, *hinchas* debated and analyzed the San Lorenzo's weaknesses, hoping that the club would find a way to improve its team. Many, however, felt the on-the-field performance was a reflection of the club's internal politics. Growing mistrust of San Lorenzo's President

<sup>3</sup> Relegation in Argentina is decided by a system known as the *Promedios*. Clubs in the Primera A are ranked according to their points-per-match average over the previous three years in the Primera A. According to the system, it is possible for a club to finish in last place over the year and not be relegated. At the time, Argentina's Primera A Division was organized into a double tournament of twenty teams: the *Apertura* (opening) and *Clausura* (closing). Each tournament featured nineteen matches and produced a champion.

Carlos Abdo, owner of a national sports advertising business and elected by club members in December 2010, led many to question his leadership of the club. San Lorenzo sliding further down the relegation table to start the 2012 Clausura, the club made its third managerial change in less than a year. The noted ‘relegation expert’ Caruso Lombardi was brought in to manage and save the team. The *hinchas* of San Lorenzo were very nervous. They were also angry. In Boedo, alongside the graffiti supporting the Vuelta, gravestones adorned with “ABDO” began to appear on the walls. The anxiety surrounding the football team and the club’s politics contrasted to the momentum and growing optimism of the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign. *Hinchas* attempted to reconcile their conflicted emotional experiences.

Passion is commonly used by Argentinian *hinchas* to describe their emotional connection to their club. It is often said that during a club’s “bad times” its possible to experience a *hincha*’s authentic passion. Endurance, known as *aguante* within the discourse of the Argentinian football stadium, and suffering through the “bad times” are emotional categories important to *hinchas*. The willingness to endure and suffer indexes the presence and depth of a *hincha*’s passion. The first of several conversations with a seller in one of the city’s regular book markets focused my attention onto the relationship of passion and suffering for Argentinian *hinchas*.

Book markets are vestiges of an encounter between Buenos Aires’ literary and *barrio* cultures: eccentric, open, and public spaces that occupy the corners of important parks and plazas. They are noisy libraries, archives of cultural artifacts, and sites of random encounters. Amongst the old wooden stalls, the green paint chipping away and hidden behind mountains of new and used books, discarded magazines, and pirated

copies of the latest movies and video games, I talked with the seller over an afternoon mate. We fell into a discussion about football when I saw the sky blue and white banner with the shield of a team placed in the corner of his stall. Furthering the smalltalk I asked him who he supports. He told me, “I am an *hincha* of Racing de Avellaneda. Do you know the team?”

“Of course,” I responded, “I have a few friends who are *hinchas* of Racing. People tell me it’s a team of suffering” and I laugh.

“Ha, you know that Racing is the most suffering team in Argentinian football? For me there are two teams that have *hinchas* in Argentinian football that suffer the most: Racing and San Lorenzo. They are very similar.” He takes a sip of the mate. And then fills it with steaming water from his thermos.

“Really? Why those two?” I asked, taking the mate.

“Go to the stadium. Look at all the people, Racing fills the stadium, but they don’t win anything. Ever.” He continued with what I noted as an odd sense of pride, “Racing is a big team in Argentina but we don’t win often. Racing went 34 years without a championship. And yet we still go to the stadium and are always singing. It is crazy. All the passion.” I nodded as he took back the mate from me, “And San Lorenzo, they lost their stadium and had to go around using other stadiums for a decade. Even now, they are fighting relegation and the people will still show up. You’ll see.”

We continued our infrequent conversations over the subsequent months, always returning to “How’s San Lorenzo?” And, “How’s Racing?” He told me he never misses Racing’s matches but these days he prefers watch the match on television or listen to it on the radio; going to the stadium he admits has become too complicated. He shares his

passion, and his suffering, with his son who has also become a *hincha* of Racing. Football entails strong emotional reactions; it is also, however, an ever-present part of the daily routine and smalltalk. The entanglement of football's extreme and mundane moments helps to explain its importance to the social life of Buenos Aires.

Willingness to expose oneself to the extreme emotions of passion and suffering is used to evaluate differences between *hinchas*. Many of the *hinchas* I interacted with described a distrust of casual fans, people who declare themselves followers of a team but “only check the table” to see where their team stands or watch the weekend's goals in a televised highlight package. Being constantly engaged by the team by going to the stadium, or watching or listening to every match, entails commitment and willingly exposing yourself to your team's potential loss. While it is not desirable to be a suffering *hincha*, as that means the team is not winning, it is often a trait that is noted and, in an underhanded manner, respected by other *hinchas*. To “always be with your team” through the “good and the bad” as many stadium songs note is the mark of a “true *hincha*.” The quality of a club beyond the number of the championships they have won can also be marked by the quality of its support.

### **1.1 Football Crowds as Philosophical Events**

Competitive football around the world, both professional and national, is a mass spectacle that generates high levels of devotion from crowds. Many followers claim a life-long affiliation to their team. A football crowd's expressive emotional engagement is a generalizable practice that nevertheless varies according to social context. At the centre of the crowd's emotional relationship is an on-the-field rivalry between two teams; a

controlled adversarial aggression is one of football's foundations. The crowd's dynamic relationship within this socially constructed rivalry expresses itself in a dramatic fashion:

The explosion of verbal and gestural expression, the emblems wielded and the insults that are hurled, are all part of the confrontational nature of the spectacle, and it would be wrong to overinterpret them. A football stadium is one of those rare spaces where collective emotions are unleashed... where socially taboo values are allowed to be expressed (the crude affirmation of one's dislike of the Other etc.) (Bromberger 1995:302).

Stadiums on match days can become spaces where an aggressive masculinity, influenced by and as part of football's surrounding social context, emerges. Sexualized swear words that pejoratively focus on the masculinity of the opponents are common-place (Archetti 1999; Caudwell 2011; Gil 2004; Spaaj 2008). Similarly, racialized insults in some stadiums around the world contribute to the hostile environment. Football, alongside its heightened emotional content, has also developed a reputation in many parts of the world for its organized fan-violence (Alabarces 2003; Dunning, Murphy, and Williams 1988; Roffé and Jozami 2010). The interwoven conditions that help us understand these transgressive moments, what they mean to participants in the crowd and how they are part of the dynamic relationship between the crowd and the match, are varied and historical.

Violence in football is used by Argentinian men to describe why women's participation with football is limited. Such gendering begins on the field of play. While boasting one of the world's most successful men's national teams, Argentina's women's national team suffers from underfunding and historical discrimination. Ironically (particularly from a Canadian perspective) football is seen as a violent sport suitable only to the body of men. On numerous occasions, men I was with questioned the ability of

women's bodies to withstand the physicality of well-played football.<sup>4</sup> Without the experience of playing competitively with peers, many men question the ability of women to fully understand the complexities of the sport from the perspective of a spectator. Nevertheless, many women attend matches carving out their own spaces on the stadium terraces and in the stands. Binello et. al. based on interviews with women and men that attend matches in Argentinian football stadiums argue that,

While women are able to participate and enjoy football, [men believe that] they have difficulties achieving the emotional states that are invested into the practices of men: the love, the passion, the soul, the 'shirt.' Men accept the presence of women but they don't believe that women can feel "like the men" the passion for football (2000:44).

I noted how young women seemed to be increasingly locating themselves on the terraces. Several young women who attend matches in groups of friends described to me personal histories of first attending matches in their childhood with their father. While not every woman in the stadium was introduced to the space by their father, such personal histories suggest that the understanding of the gendered space – and its exclusions – within the stadium is varied and constantly in process. For the women who attend matches, the gendering of the stadium is informed by a complex spatial configuration, at times, and simultaneously, challenging and open to them in different ways, which reflects but also challenges dominant masculine uses of space more generally. From interviews with women, Binello et al. argue that, "Women and their practices appear in the fissures,

<sup>4</sup> On the futsal courts of the *barrio*, I noticed some of the small local clubs organized mixed gendered teams for children. The documentary *Goals for Girls* (Released in Spanish as *Mujeres con Pelotas*, 2013) explores the difficulties and determination of young women in the poorest *barrios* to play football, as well as the discrimination both from peers and adults which limits their opportunities to play. Only a limited number of clubs have registered women's teams with AFA, which only admitted women's teams starting in 1991 (Fiorentini 2010). San Lorenzo's top women's team is one of Argentina's most successful and has received increased attention by the club's social media and press office over recent years. However the amateur team continues to receive comparatively much less attention than its men's teams.

seams, and cracks of the dominant masculine forms within football” (2000:48). The stadium’s gendered constitution, while hegemonically masculine, is constantly being remade, contested, related to and at times submerged within other intersectional processes of space-making.

The aggressive rivalry is not the sole foundation of the emotional expression. The collectively produced emotional space of the stadium is the most visceral component of a deep and complex social event. Gramsci notes, “For a mass of people to be led to think coherently and in the same coherent fashion about the real present world, is a ‘philosophical’ event far more important and ‘original’ than the discovery by some philosophical ‘genius’ of a truth which remains the property of small groups of intellectuals” (Gramsci 2005[1971]:325). Underlying this dissertation is the argument that football’s crowds reflect and refract hegemonic social conditions, which are historic and spatial. Football’s passionate followers can help us understand how masses respond, internalize, reproduce, critique, and transform elements of their social world.<sup>5</sup>

The social-political ambiguity of football cannot be overstated. Recent global events highlight the unpredictable consequences of social solidarity produced inside football stadiums. On the streets of Cairo and in Istanbul’s Gezi Park, organized groups of football ultras stood as the vanguard of significant protest movements against what

<sup>5</sup> I take inspiration from Voloshinov’s semiotic description of ideology as emergent from a historical social process of interactions: “Any ideological product is not only itself a part of a reality (natural or social), just as is any physical body, any instrument of production, or any product for consumption, it also, in contradistinction to these other phenomena, reflects and refracts another reality outside itself. Everything ideological possesses *meaning*: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a *sign*. *Without signs there is no ideology*” (Voloshinov 1986:9). Refraction, as a metaphor, provides the opportunity to discuss the unexpected ways in which meaning is redirected and reshaped through process of social encounters. Voloshinov’s (1986) historical-materialist understanding of language does not subsume meaning to a superfluous layer above the underlying conditions of production. Meaning for Voloshinov is emergent and dynamic in relation to the reality that it describes.

were widely viewed as authoritarian contexts (Dorsey 2012; Erhat 2014). Progressive, leftist, and anarchist politics have been part of organized football cultures around the world (Kuhn 2011). On the other hand, several supporter cultures are steeped in revanchist politics, supporting right wing and ethnic nationalist projects (Armstrong and Testa 2010; Martin 2004).<sup>6</sup> More broadly, the sport's popularity has led to its significant contribution to many nationalist imaginaries (Giulianotti 1999:23-38; for a case study see: Warner 2006). Sport more broadly has increasingly been understood as a controversial tool within the transformation of the urban political-economy. Big clubs have become big business, part of a transformation of football that has simultaneously become more popular and exclusionary (Bélanger 2009; see Church and Penny 2013 for a case-study of Arsenal's Emirates Stadium). Shifts in the commodification of football at its upper echelons of professional leagues and mega-events, from the increasing sponsorship contracts for teams and athletes to more expensive broadcast rights and ticket prices, have followed global trends that have impacted how crowds interact with and through football (Dubal 2013; Kennedy and Kennedy 2012). Giulianotti (1999:32) notes how the dramatic rise in transfer fees paid for players and the wage inequality between Europe and South America has led to a talent drain of South America's best players.

Against being swept up into a simplistic narrative of sport-as-business, Bélanger advocates for an open critical perspective on the "urban spectacle" of sport: "Rather than passively accepting the subordination of all social values to the singular pursuit of

<sup>6</sup> Fewer studies have been conducted with right-wing ultras reflecting an academic bias, rather than a trend of football's supporters to draw from leftist or progressive politics. Many European ultras over the past several decades have taken up an "apolitical" stance, part of an ideological shift to reduce intra-supporter conflicts. In Argentina where the left-right spectrum is disrupted by Peronism and clientelist organizing tactics, the alignment of a club's *hinchas* with a particular political party, is often seen as mutually strategic.

upscale retail and leisure, we should assert and analyze the urban sport spectacle spaces and events as multidimensional and ambiguous realities transforming over time and between localities” (Bélanger 2009:64). In this context, the processes of football’s globalization are uneven and at times contradictory, influential and powerful, but also ignored. Argentinian *hinchas* are exposed to and interact with the globalized business of football: they are able to watch games from around the world on numerous sports channels, have experienced their club’s best players being transferred to wealthier clubs abroad, their teams’ kits are manufactured by international sports brands and in some cases are sponsored by multinational corporations, and their clubs adopt international best-practices for marketing and generating revenues. Yet *hinchas* are also embedded in what locals call the “folklore” of Argentinian football and its terrace culture, which is part of a collective performance of the crowd. Here Argentina is much less globalized. In the contemporary context it is rare for *hinchas* to reference the fan performances of other football cultures. On the other hand, Argentinian football culture is a major source-material for many different football fan cultures around the world, with fans around the world known to imitate and adapt iconography and songs from Argentinian *hinchadas*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Argentinian *hinchas* are exposed to the fan-cultures of South American rivals, particularly the Brazilian *torcidas*, and different fan practices through international tournaments like the Copa Libertadores. There is a dialogic relationship between many South American football cultures. Argentinian practices and performances however are particularly influential in this relationship. Many South American football cultures are heavily influenced by Argentina, borrowing similar props like colourful umbrellas and flag designs, as well as adopting the melodies and lyrics popularized first by Argentinian clubs. A counter flow in this relationship, at least in recent years, has been limited in part because Argentinian fans express an arrogant superiority in their practices when compared to rivals. Outside of South America, Argentinian football culture has influenced many stadium songs in Europe, the United States, North Africa and Japan. FC Tokyo is one club in particular that has closely followed San Lorenzo, borrowing phrases and songs and adapting them to their club, which also wears blue and red. Large banners that proclaim “Soy de Tokyo” (I am from Tokyo) in reference to San Lorenzo’s “Soy de Boedo” have been prominently displayed by FC Tokyo’s fans. A more historical analysis is needed to understand the relationship between European and South American fan cultures, noting the obvious similarities in large and colourful displays made by ultras and *hinchadas* (Guschwan 2016a presents practices of Italian ultras in two Rome-based clubs, similarities to the practices of Argentinian *hinchadas* include the prematch preparations and displays, while the

At times, *hinchas* mobilize against trends in globalized football – such as against the privatization of their club – but rarely are the performative practices of *hinchas* intended to be a form of resistance to globalized football. Rather, *hinchas* are compelled by the significance of their performance and their emotional connection to their club, at times to the exclusion of processes that may interfere with or disrupt that special relationship.

Nationalism provides another context for football fandom. Football has been used at different moments to articulate an Argentinian national identity and reflect on the country's relative position in the world (Archetti 1997; 2008; Alabarces 2008; Frydenberg 2008; Sarlo 2002). First played in Buenos Aires' British private-schools, Argentinian football was transformed near the turn of the twentieth century by the participation of working-class immigrants and the emergence of Argentinian *criollo* teams. Burgeoning football leagues were sites of social integration but also competition. Teams gained large groups of followers as they came to represent their *barrio* in city-wide tournaments, eventually displacing the British expat private schools as the top teams in the country. A shift in playing styles sparked discussions that reflected and refracted debates about the characteristics of the ideal citizen.<sup>8</sup>

Successful teams consolidated and transformed their fanbases into large sport and culture clubs. These clubs developed in conjunction with the organization of urban space; the *barrio* was formed first and foremost as a cultural category of spatial organization

importance of large bands and constant complex singing is notably different. Similar comparisons and distinctions can be made with Turkish football fans see: Batuman 2012). I found if Argentinians did reference outside football cultures, it was often as a negative comparison used to demonstrate the unique qualities of Argentinians, particularly in contrast to their perception of British and European fans. Hooliganism and the representation of the English hooligan and continental European ultra may be one influential reference for Argentinian practices.

<sup>8</sup> These arguments are further developed in Chapter Two.

through a dialogic relationship, amongst other practices, with the rise of the sports and culture club. Clubs based outside of Buenos Aires often mirror the practices of this *barrio*-club spatial relationship but transform them to be significant to forms of claiming and representing their local city. Social and cultural activities in these cases help to affirm the spatial identity of a town or city rather than *barrio*. In cities like Rosario, La Plata, Avellaneda, and Cordoba, which are large enough to urban centres to support multiple teams, the major clubs have developed blended spatial practices. In these cities, clubs compete to represent the whole city, while simultaneously developing distinct spaces in the city where the club is dominant. Contemporary professional football teams in Argentina continue to be operated as sport and culture clubs that are non-profit civil societies led by a board of directors elected by the members. Members, known as *socios*, each pay a basic fee to belong to the club that entitles them to basic services and activities, which includes attending matches in the *socios* section of the stadium. *Socios* may pay more depending on their activities in the club, for example if they belong to one of the club's sports teams. As large member-run organizations, sports clubs are attractive sites of political engagement and organization.<sup>9</sup> At different moments political parties

<sup>9</sup> The general political-economic organization of professional football clubs is a major point of contrast between Argentina and most other major football countries. British football clubs have historically been privately owned and single sport clubs. More recently some British clubs have become publicly traded corporations. There is a small but growing movement to expand fan-ownership of teams (for discussions on ownership of British football clubs see: Dunn 2015; Sondaal 2013; Tobin 2016). Italy's major teams are single sport and privately owned (see: Guschwan 2016b; Hamil et al 2010). Spain during the 1990s moved away from the member-based sports club and almost all of the country's clubs were privatized (only four major clubs: Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, Athletic Bilbao, and CA Osasuna remain member owned and operated); some clubs continue to operate multi-sport activities for members (for broader discussion on effects of commodification of football on Spanish fans see: Hamil, Walters and Watson 2010; Llopis-Goig 2012). In Germany large member-run multi-sports clubs have been historically dominant. Today the vast majority of clubs comply with the 50%+1 ownership model, where private interests are allowed to represent a minority ownership of the club (see: Merkel 2012; Reiche 2013; Totten 2014). Many of the major clubs in Turkey and Greece are similarly multi-sports clubs, with varying degrees of membership-based ownership models (see: Koç et al 2017). While only a handful of Uruguayan clubs are comparable in size to Argentina's clubs, many are owned and operated in a similar manner. In Brazil, many of the largest

have been drawn into reciprocating relationships with clubs and their members. Several politicians first rose through the internal politics of a club; the most notable example is Argentina's current President Mauricio Macri (2015-) who was President of Boca Juniors during the 1990s. As a result, Argentinian football has always had an overtly political dynamic.

A *hincha's* emotional relationship to their club is historically and spatially contingent. Disentangling historical threads, as Gramsci notes, is a difficult task: “the starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (Gramsci 2005[1971]:324).

*Hinchas* reproductively engage with their fanaticism through an acute, though not always stated, awareness of their historical conditions. Storytelling and memory play an important role in how *hinchas* place themselves in time. Paradoxically *hinchas* proclaim a sort of timelessness to their devotion, as one song states “I follow you from the crib to the coffin, I carry you in my heart.” Such statements are backed-up by personal stories of devotion: suffering through losses, travelling great distances, and being involved in fights for the club. Stories of collective action – the actions of the club's *hinchas* as a whole – also serve to represent and affirm the quality of a *hincha's* personal passion. Narrative

clubs continue to be membership-owned multi-sports institutions though in several cases aspects of the club's football operations have been contracted to private companies (see: Dubal 2013 for comparative discussion on Corinthians). In Colombia, another major football-centric South American country, clubs are historically private companies, which is also the case for the majority of teams in Mexico (though several notable teams such as UNAM Pumas and Tigres UANL are owned by public universities reflecting the historic origins of those clubs). Globally there has been a trend towards concentrated ownership of sports teams. Significant variation in the structure and functions of sports teams and clubs, however, are persistent. Ownership and operating models and whether or not the football team is one of many different activities run by the club are ways in which football clubs are structured differently; the consequences of these variations on fan-relationships is an understudied topic (for discussions of other countries see: Ben-Porta 2012; García and Welford 2015; Holt 2007).

constructions of passion are dialectally engaged with through the meaningful practices of *hinchas* in the stadium and their daily lives between matches.

San Lorenzo's *Vuelta a Boedo* provides a chance to disentangle traces of historical processes contributing to Argentinian football fandom. First and foremost, the campaign articulates the meaningful return of a football club to a particular place: Boedo. Football's various contributions to the processes of place-making in Buenos Aires' urban landscape are eminently important. The historical formation of the *barrios* and the role football clubs played in the formation of this cultural and political category of urban space influences how contemporary *hinchas* of San Lorenzo think about their club's relationship to Boedo as a metaphoric home. More broadly, the campaign articulates the dialectic between the production of space and football by promoting the understanding of the stadium as a place that creates and facilitates social interactions within the complex urban landscape. The *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign argues that the *hincha's* sense of belonging has been damaged by the displacement of the San Lorenzo from Boedo. Awareness of this sense of displacement is reproduced through the social interactions of *hinchas* that promote an ideological understanding of what Boedo should mean to San Lorenzo. Reaffirming Boedo as the home of San Lorenzo, *hinchas* assert the importance of being properly placed in the city. To elaborate this claim, *hinchas* of San Lorenzo draw upon memories and stories of the Viejo Gasómetro.

The experience of belonging is central to being a *hincha* and is realized through strong emotional performances, which are at their most visceral during both home and away matches in the stadium. Performances are emplacé – where they happen has meaningful implications. Storytelling, however, allows *hinchas* to imaginatively

reproduce these experiences from afar. Stories of the Viejo Gasómetro often highlight the importance of the stadium to the social life of the *barrio*. Organizers argue that the stadium was stolen by the civic-military dictatorship in a broader effort to disrupt the social relationships, drawing allusions to the practice of disappearing as a way of creating absences within the social networks of its enemies. In doing so, organizers of the *Vuelta a Boedo* also connect their campaign to a politics of memory generated by human rights organizations as a response to the tactics of the civic-military dictatorship. By remembering the victims and the violence they faced, human rights organizations and their supporters have attempted to repair the absences created by the disappearances of loved ones. Similarly, activities organized by activists in the *Vuelta a Boedo* articulate their vision of a returned San Lorenzo as a site of social-life in the *barrio*. Marches and festivals on Avenida La Plata both affirm the club's presence, while also producing the carnivalesque experience that celebrates social relationships created around a football club.

San Lorenzo's *hinchas* translate their emotional experiences of matches to an imagined Viejo Gasómetro to infuse visceral and emotional meaning to the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Similar processes occurred around the translation of the stadium performances into the spaces of political mobilization, refracting the broader trends that have regularly brought football and politics into dialogue with each other. Activists in the *Vuelta a Boedo*, in particular those organized by the *Subcomisión del Hincha*, demonstrate an organic praxis or what Gramsci refers to as a "technique of the political" (Gramsci 2005[1971]:136). Activists adeptly mobilized other *hinchas* through a connection to a broad "common sense" of football culture that reflects an intimate and learned

understanding of the social world (Gramsci 2005[1971]:332-335). Through the actions of the *Vuelta a Boedo* aspects of football's significance to its political-economic context, such as: the privatization of public space and activities, football's relationship with local and national politics in Buenos Aires and Argentina as well as nationalism, and the economic globalization of football; have been engaged with, reaffirmed, and at times radically challenged. Throughout the development of the *Vuelta a Boedo*, the globalized context of football is not forgotten by the activists who have compared and contrasted football in Argentina to the sport in other parts of the world. I aim to show how the *Vuelta a Boedo* is historically and spatially placed in Argentinian football, refracting the complex contingencies that come together in the collectively produced phenomena and more broadly confront the argument that such mass spectator events such as a football match are ever passively received.

## **1.2 *Hincha, Hinchada, Barra Brava and Barrio***

Throughout this dissertation I chose to use the word *hincha* in place of “supporter” or “fan” which are more common English terms for close followers of a club or team. In English, fan, supporter, and follower are used to distinguish particular expectations, practices and relationships to a team within a sports culture. Particularly in global football culture the distinction between a fan and supporter is used to mark a perceived difference in the active engagement during a match and passively consuming a spectacle (Giulianotti 2002a). In Argentina I found that while *hinchas* could be distinguished from *aficionados* in a similar manner, it was more common to simply negate the status of *hincha* from people who were perceived dispassionate the club they claimed to support.

Further in using the term *hinchas* rather than supporter my intention is to suggest that the particularities of Argentinian football culture, in part related to the place of football within the imaginary of the Argentinian nation, are relevant to my discussion, as well as to draw attention to a rich body of ethnographic literature conducted by Argentinians on the subject.

Another term that does not get translated is *barra brava*, the organized group of *hinchas* that is often located within the stadium behind the goal. Members of the *barra brava* are often compared to hooligans (English football) or ultras (continental European football) because of the commonality of violence and other disruptive attributes. The first *barra bravas* were organized to protect spaces on the terraces, influence matches, and to intimidate rival clubs. After stadiums became increasingly securitized, many *barra bravas* engaged in battles against rivals outside of the stadium. Similar to many ultra groups in European football, and unlike the English hooligan firms, part of the authority of the *barra brava* derives from their ongoing visible presence supporting the team during matches. Members often self-identify with other terms in place of “*barra brava*”: the *banda* (band) or *hinchada* (mass of supporters). Members of the *barra* distinguish themselves even from others on the terraces of the stadium because of their performative roles during matches and their responsibilities to animate the stadium, in particular to provide the songs and rhythms that are the hallmark of Argentinian football culture. *Hinchada* is a complex term that at times expands to define the whole terraces or travelling-away section. Similarly the *banda* has a more positive connotation because it recognizes the importance of the group’s organization and performance of songs and

chants during a match time. I move through these terms of *barra brava*, *banda*, and *hinchada* in an attempt to capture these nuances.

San Lorenzo's *barra brava* is known as the *Gloriosa Butteler* (Glorious Butteler), named after the Plaza Butteler where the *hinchada* used to meet before matches when they were played at the *Viejo Gasómetro*. The *Butteler* is composed of roughly 200 participants, though this number is fluid and difficult to estimate, of men between the ages of 14 and 50 (Aragón 2007). Women's participation in the *barra brava* is usually limited or prohibited by a masculinized construction of violence. In most cases there is only one hegemonic *barra brava* within a club.<sup>10</sup> Famous examples include *La 12* of Boca Juniors, *Los Borrachos del Tablón* of River Plate, *Los Diablos Rojos* of Independiente. Within the large clubs, Racing Club is unique in that two *hinchadas*: *La Guardia Imperial* and *Los Rolling Stones*; have more recently formed a stable relationship. Internal conflicts between factions of a *barras brava* have been a major source of violence in Argentinian football.<sup>11</sup> Over recent decades the *barra bravas* of the largest clubs have transformed into revenue generating organizations. Control over the *barra brava*'s businesses, which can include ticket distribution, merchandise sales, parking outside the stadium, drug trafficking, muscle for hire, and extortion, is often seen as the prime motivation for the internal conflicts. Such revenue generating activities are also spatial, organized around the stadium and in the areas with a large concentration of a club's *hinchas*, usually the surrounding *barrio*. *Barras* are hierarchically organized with a

<sup>10</sup> There are also notable exceptions within lower division clubs of clubs with more than one *barra brava*. In CA Almirante Brown, there are three different groups each with their own space within the stadium.

<sup>11</sup> In July 2013, the high profile clash between factions of Rafael Di Zeo, former leader of *La 12*, and its current leader Martín Mauro resulted in gun violence before a summer friendly against San Lorenzo at the Nuevo Gasómetro. Two people were killed and five injured leading to the suspension of away fans at all league matches, which continues to 2016.

small core known as the *jefes* or bosses of the *barra* providing leadership to the group. *Jefes* can represent different factions and territorial groups within the *barra*. Often there is a singular *capo* that leads but unlike the *capos* of continental European ultras, they do not often figure prominently at the front of the terrace to lead the *hinchada* during matches. During my research the Buttelet was led by Cristian “Sandokan” Evangelista, whose leadership was periodically challenged by a faction known as *El Mastil*. *Capos*, for the most part, attempt to avoid attention from security or in the media. Below the *jefes*, the members of a *barra* are roughly organized into the first, second, and third lines, which reference both battle lines and positioning on the terraces.<sup>12</sup> Standing on the *paravalancha* – anti-avalanche bars – in the stadium during a match is a privilege for members of the *barra* and is part of the internal organization of space within a *barra* and the stadium. The practices of the *barra bravas* contribute to the gendering of the stadium by making spaces around the *banda* the exclusive domains of men affiliated to the *barra*.

Ethnographic studies with members of *barra bravas* reveal complex motivations for men’s participation in the groups and their associated violence. Several Argentinian ethnographic studies focus on the concept of *aguante*, which roughly translates as the ability to withstand, as a central moral principle common to Argentinian *barras brava* through which members of the *barra* are able to demonstrate their masculinity (Alabarces 2004; Alabarces et al 2008; Aragón 2007; Moreira 2008a; 2008b). The concept inscribes a particular socially constructed masculine body that is able to tolerate pain and inflict violent injuries on to others (Garriga Zucal 2005). Large fights known as battles between full *barra bravas* are relatively rare, in part because the use of firearms has increased the

<sup>12</sup> For a description of the organization of the *barra brava* of Independiente see: Moreira 2008.

life-and-death stakes. Large scenes of violence also draw attention and affect the businesses of the largest *barras*. Most *hinchadas*, however, continue to carry stolen flags from other clubs, trophies of past battles, that become symbolic identifiers of the honour and strength of the *barra brava* (Moreira 2007). Violent deaths related to football continue to regularly occur as a result of shootings between rival *barra bravas* as well as internal conflicts. Within the culture of the *barra bravas* a morality, known as *códigos* or rules, helps to organize the violence. For example, it is generally unacceptable to attack buses carrying children, families, or *hinchas* who are unwilling to reciprocate violence. Such actions are seen to be the activities of cowards reflecting the construction of masculinity that emphasizes a physicality against a worthy or preferably stronger opposition. Other *hinchas* are aware of the *códigos* and also use them to negatively judge *hinchadas* that are “without *códigos*” and to lament about a contemporary transformation of football violence that does not respect this basic morality with the stadium. Because violence is potentially part of the stadium culture, most *hinchas* develop an ambiguous relationship to the *barra bravas*. While most *hinchas* are strongly against violence, to not have the protection of your own *barra brava*, particularly when traveling to away matches, is seen as dangerous.

Another core concept which I have kept in Spanish is the *barrio*, or neighbourhood. I use the term to highlight the particular historical dimensions of the social, cultural, and political organization of Buenos Aires. *Barrio* is used to politically organize space within the City of Buenos Aires. The socio-cultural dimensions of the term *barrio* are central to my discussion. The particular spatial-political category of the *barrio* is argued in this dissertation to emerge from relational processes emergent in

peoples social-cultural practices over time. Underlying this argument is the understanding that the political-economic organization of space is dialectical with the processes of meaning making. The ubiquity of the phrase “*Barrio de Boedo*” within the songs and cultural artifacts of San Lorenzo’s *hinchas* serves to highlight the significance of the integral relationship between the *barrio* and the football club in Buenos Aires.

### **1.3 Research Methodology of Becoming a *Hincha***

I arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina in October 2011 with a basic knowledge of the city, the language and culture. When developing the research project I began with a general interest in exploring enduring bonds of solidarity between fans of a particular club and how football fandom intersects contemporary understandings on social movements. With this goal in mind I began to search out Argentinian football clubs, knowing the terrace culture to be one of the major references for supporters around the world.<sup>13</sup> I wanted to become familiar and involved with one club, to get to know the motivations of *hinchas*, understanding that *hinchas* of each club form unique qualities through how they distinguish themselves. I reviewed histories and fan websites of various clubs, while consciously avoiding Argentina’s two most popular, successful, and internationally well-known clubs: Club Atlético Boca Juniors and Club Atlético River Plate.<sup>14</sup> Turning my

13 I chose to use the word “football” rather than “soccer,” the common name of the sport in North America, to consciously place this dissertation between Argentinian *fútbol* and the predominantly European academic literature on football fan cultures.

14 River Plate and Boca Juniors compete to represent the largest fan-bases in Argentina. As a result, both clubs have a large number of casual followers. It is common, because of social requirements, for casual followers of football all-over Argentina to describe themselves as *hinchas* of either River or Boca. While all of Argentina’s clubs are supported by casual followers, the frequency of Boca and River’s popularity produces different dynamics in how *hinchas* relate to one-another. Further, the globalized representations of River and Boca, in particular the *Superclásico* played between the two clubs, through newspapers, books, and videos, dominate many outsider’s perceptions of Argentinian football. As a side-interest, I also wanted to recognize the diverse sites of passionate football support in Argentina, challenging the duopoly produced by these media representations.

attention to several clubs with large fan-bases, I watched videos on YouTube of the crowds of several clubs in the Primera A division. One video in particular caught my attention, posted on a YouTube channel run by a father and son who film the crowds of San Lorenzo's *hinchas* every match called Musicuervo – after one of the nicknames for the club's *hinchas*: the *cuervos* (crows). Directing their camera on to the popular-section of terraces behind the goal where San Lorenzo's band and most participatory *hinchas* are located, the Musicuervo's videos capture the repertoire of stadium songs sung by *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. Enthralled by the emotional and celebratory intensity of a video of the crowd's celebration of San Lorenzo's win over rival Club Atlético Huracán, my interest was piqued by *hinchada*'s complex lyrics. San Lorenzo's contemporary repertoire of songs and chants features several references to the *barrio* of Boedo and history of the club. Through the lyrics I began to familiarize myself with the important moments in the club's history, including the loss of the *Gasómetro* Stadium in 1979, and learned through the online presence of *hinchas* about the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign. I saw an opportunity to contrast the organization and motivations of football supporters to social movements. More significantly, references to Boedo and San Lorenzo's promotion of the idea of “returning” expanded the opportunities to explore how football contributes to the processes of place-making in urban spaces. Through the *Vuelta a Boedo*, *hinchas* demand political recognition of the broader social contribution of their collective fandom, such as the historical and cultural significance of place within the city to social solidarity, making explicit social dynamics that are often submerged by a focus on professional sport's political-economic rationalizations and debates.

The story of how I came to San Lorenzo is relevant for *hinchas* and reveals a simple observation about becoming placed in the field. *Cuervos*, perplexed by the presence of a Canadian, often asked how and why I came to San Lorenzo. My story as a researcher and anthropologist studying football culture was interpreted by others but often did not clarify to them my presence in their social-world. When introducing myself as an anthropologist I was often asked if I studied skeletons. In Argentina, anthropologists have had a very public role in uncovering and identifying the remains of victims of the civic-military dictatorship's clandestine torture and execution facilities. Recovering the bodies of the disappeared is one facet of a politics of memory that continues to motivate social justice activism in Argentina. I began to realize that as my interactions increased with *hinchas*, when people asked me "how did you come to San Lorenzo?" they were engaging with me not as a researcher or as a Canadian but as a *hincha* of their club.<sup>15</sup>

Most *hinchas* do not feel that they choose their club. A few months into my research, a father of a friend who is a *hincha* of Racing described to me how he had introduced and regularly took all of his daughters and sons, as well as several nieces and nephews, to the stadium. He told me how they use to play football below the terraces in the family section of the stadium. He then described how two of his nephews "came to be" *hinchas* of Racing's main rivals Independiente. I jokingly chided him on failing to make them *hinchas* of Racing. In a sharp turn towards seriousness, he asked, "make them what?" and he continued "you don't make someone a *hincha*." He lifted up his arm and pointed at his veins saying that it is in your blood when you are born. All that he can do,

<sup>15</sup> The common phrasing is *¿como hiciste hincha de San Lorenzo?*

he tells me, is help someone discover who they are meant to support and that he did his part in finding *hinchas* of Racing (his daughters and sons are *hinchas* of Racing). Many *hinchas* reference the famous line in the film *The Secret in Your Eyes* in which the protagonist's friend quotes Eduardo Galeano: "In life, a man can change his wife, political party or his religion but he can never change his football club." Such singular devotion to a club is almost always an exception, people's interest rises and falls and in some cases *hinchas* do become disillusioned with their club, but the aspirational life-long self-identification with a football club is a powerful symbolic identifier in Argentina. It is common for Argentinians when meeting strangers to ask: "to who do you belong?" which is immediately understood as asking about what football club you support.<sup>16</sup>

Storytelling influences how *hinchas* recognize authenticity in each other. Being able to tell stories of past participation in important away matches, recalling the names of players on championship teams, and describing spectacular goals or an emotional connection to a particular club earns respect. I realize I had another story to tell people about how I came to San Lorenzo. Before my research began my brother had travelled to Buenos Aires and on return gifted me a replica of a blue and red jersey. At the time neither of us recognized the club but my brother mentioned that the seller who had sold him the San Lorenzo shirt told him that few people outside of Argentina would recognize it but guaranteed that those who did would be very happy to see it. My story transformed my presence from a general interest in football by adding a sense of fate to my research and changed how *cuervos* recognized me. My own experience would be unfamiliar to most *hinchas*, who generally recounted stories of first attending matches with a family

<sup>16</sup> In Spanish the question is *¿de quién sos?*

member who introduced them to the stadium. Others may have first began attending matches with their friends. It is rare for an Argentinian adult without previous experience of the stadium to decide to attend matches, in part because of the stigma of violence and insecurity associated with football.

In total I attended nearly fifty San Lorenzo matches between November 2011 and December 2012 and a month of additional fieldwork in August 2013 and nearly two dozen matches of other clubs. I lived in Boedo to expose myself to the daily interactions within the *barrio*. I became a paid member – a *socio* – of the club, paying the equivalent of roughly \$10 per month, which granted me access on match days to the popular section for club members in the Nuevo Gasómetro. After three years of continuous membership *socios* are able to vote in the club's elections. I purchased the package of away-tickets for both the Clausura 2012 and Apertura 2012. The club sold roughly two thousands such packages, the number limited by the small away sections in some stadiums and the number of tickets set aside for the *barra brava* and fan-clubs known as *peñas*.

How I placed myself in the stadium was a methodological decision. Every stadium in Argentina has distinct architectural features that affects the space and how *hinchas* interact. Roofs reverberate sound, raising decibel levels but affecting oratory perception and accuracy; columns and fences obstruct views; towering terraces encourage degrees of vertigo; field sizes vary; and the layout of accesses all contribute to a stadium's unique crowd dynamics. The general form of the Argentinian stadium, however, requires a division between the standing *populares* and the seated *plateas*. A third space of a limited number of private boxes known as *palcos* are the domain of elites. In general there is an increasing level of comfort and cost associated with each

space. *Socios* of a club are granted general admission to the concrete terraces of the *popular*, often located behind one of the goals, as part of their monthly fee. For important matches San Lorenzo's popular section is be filled to capacity, over 12 000 people. Members arrive more than an hour before kick-off time to reserve their preferred space on the terrace steps. Seated *plateas*, which are either purchased as a season ticket on top of the club membership or as individual tickets, often provide the privileged lateral view of the field. One *hincha* described the difference to me:

Seated in the *platea* is like watching a match on television; you see it through the perspective of the camera. In the *popular* you watch the game as if you're on the field like one of the players, looking towards the goal on the other side. In the *platea* everyone just yells at the players, swearing and insulting them, as if they were at home on the couch. They think they're all managers. A *hincha* in the *popular* only supports because they feel like they are playing the game, as if they were on the team.

Because of the increased comfort there is a noticeable generational trend with older *hinchas* moving to the *platea* if and they are able to afford the price and physically prefer to sit. Some avoid parts of the *platea*, however, because it can become "very political" as influential figures within the club attend matches and network in the seated sector.<sup>17</sup> The spatial division in the stadium forms a social-class division in which different practices become more dominant (Gil 2007:31). On a few occasions I watched matches in the Nuevo Gasómetro from the *platea* and noted the difference of tone, the emotional tenor of the people around me, and a significant difference in the in-stadium practices. I found the social-world created through the practices of *hinchas* in the *popular* more compelling and connected to the notions of mass collectivity that I wanted to better understand.

<sup>17</sup> In some clubs, the divisions between *platea* and *popular* are recognized in songs and chants often coming from the *popular* against the *platea* who might be seen as not demonstrating enough vocal support for the team (Gil 2007:31). On a few occasions the 'politics' in the *platea* of San Lorenzo resulted in fist fights visible from the *popular*.

There is a “corporeal intelligence” (Wacquant 2005) to being a *hincha*: a way of moving in the stadium that can be challenging, even frightening, to those who are not familiar with the stadium culture. The transformation of particular socialized expectations and norms, in particular the removal of personal boundaries as physical contact in many different ways becomes common, expected, and necessary. For *hinchas* particularly in the popular section the concept of *aguante* – withstanding/putting up with – is visceral and embodied. Standing for multiple hours crushed between bodies takes endurance. Researchers, Wacquant reminds us, are not different from the people that inhabit an ethnography: “they [too] are suffering beings of flesh and blood who, whether they acknowledge it or not, understand much of their topic ‘by body’” (2005:467). Being present in the mass crowds on the terraces was part of documenting very literally on the surfaces of my skin the experience of *hinchas*. Match-days can be physically exhausting: from the non-stop singing and chanting, the pumping of hands into the air, and jumping; *hinchas* in the popular collectively produce a physical presence to back up the ideology of “always being present.”

Embodying practices, in my case, required a process of bodily training similar to an apprenticeship:

As a traditional and practical mode of knowledge transmission that gradually converts a novice into a recognized member of the craft through a total pedagogy imparting at once sensorimotor, mental, and social aptitudes, apprenticeship brings to the fore the antepredicative components of the corporeal intelligence that tacitly guides social agents in their familiar universe prior to entering the plane of consciousness and language (Wacquant 2005:465).

There are limits to the apprenticeship metaphor. Terraces have no assigned teachers nor is the criteria used to discern who is a recognized or qualified member easily understood,

though other *hinchas* do evaluate the qualities of those around them. Most *hinchas* have learned how to work and use their bodies through years of knowledge transmission and experience that began as children developing an embodied sense of space. Further, the idea of ‘converting’ into a *hincha* contradicts an ideological foundation: allegiance to a club that is close to a life-long devotion and not something that should be changed.

The metaphor of apprenticeship however did help me focus attention on my own body as part of a learning process: becoming accustomed to terrace-culture, and to have a better understanding of how *hinchas* relate to their football club. “Apprenticeship taken as a method allows us to probe into the makeup of *habitus* by studying not its products but its production; not the regulated strategies it informs but the coordinated techniques and patterned relations that form it” (Wacquant 2005:466). Through learning the rise-and-fall of a *hinchada* not just through the descriptions but as well as a participant in its production, through an auto-reflection, I began to understand connections between simultaneously shared emotional experiences and the complexity of the sensorial experience produced collectively by *hinchas* during a match. As much of the emotional content of being a *hincha* can be described through a descriptive reflection onto past experiences, many of the visceral extremes experienced by *hinchas* are achieved in moments of complete physical engagement that cannot easily be translated into language. *Hinchas* within a stadium are exposed to multi-sensorial communication apprehended through the body – bombarded by sonic shockwaves from the band’s base-drums, the smells of closely pressed bodies and cigarettes, the gripped hand on your shoulder as a stranger steadies themselves. Assimilating sensorial information, Downey argues in the

context of learning capoeira, requires bodily training. Speaking specifically about apprehending music into a dance, Downey argues:

Music occurs in proximity to bodily movement, and patterns of action form a foundation for pre-abstract sensual experience. In the case of capoeira, put quite simply, the distinctive sound texture of the berimbau is seldom heard outside of training or play. Practitioners' lived bodies, fashioned by patterns of acting in relation to the music, respond almost involuntarily to the sonic texture (Downey 2000:500).

Songs sung by the *hinchada* contribute to a soundscape (see Samuels et al. 2000) that animates the crowd. When a song peaks, in full dialogue with events happening on the field, *hinchas* on the terraces compulsively begin to jump en masse. At these moments there is no verbal command that co-ordinates the response, yet there is a Durkheimian “collective effervescence” in which the meaningful embodied practices of being a *hincha* compels the crowd to perform as one. By approaching the terraces as a space of bodily training I began to feel the emotional states of *hinchas* not necessarily as a product of shared practices but as embedded within the social processes and relationships of realizing oneself as a *hincha* of San Lorenzo.

Yet my conscious effort to be a part of the stadium, in reflection, raises the controversial issue of authenticity and whether it is possible or desirable to become a *hincha* through the process of conducting research. Football supporters and *hinchas* around the world are concerned about the authenticity – or how emotionally invested other people are in their club – of fellow supporters and *hinchas* (see Giulianotti 2002a; Porter 2011 for examples in the UK and Europe). In my experience, the concern of others about my status as a *hincha* of San Lorenzo faded as my participation increased. For Bourdieu there is a distinction between *mimesis* and *imitation*. What is reproduced by the

body, the *habitus*, is something other than an intentional or conscious effort to reproduce actions or utterances: “What is ‘learned by body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge,” Bourdieu argues, but rather “something that one is” (Bourdieu 1990:73). The body lives out its past experiences anew in the present; a becoming through self-realization. Conscious intention poorly describes the process I engaged in. By being with, around, and beside *hinchas* and their passion I exposed myself to a process of learning, that while at times was intentional and forced, began to transform my relationship to San Lorenzo. I did not consciously set out to become a *hincha* of San Lorenzo, though through the intensive practices on the terraces I found myself becoming more and more invested not just in the research but also in the success and failures of San Lorenzo. Because of the way social relationships are constructed between *hinchas*, such participation is valued by others. As my relationships with *cuervos* deepened into friendships and I gained an ability to demonstrate the experiences of a *hincha* through personal storytelling. In doing so, I grew more aware of the joys and sufferings of other *cuervos* as we dealt with the triumphs and losses of the team. During San Lorenzo’s worst moments I noticed that interactions with *hinchas* affected how I felt on a day-to-day basis. Strong sensations of depression reflected a shared mood amongst *hinchas* of San Lorenzo during the club’s dissent towards relegation. My personal experiences directed my attention to the connections between emotions and social interactions. Following my field-work, my attention turned towards a reflection on how the heightened emotional states during a match are connected to the processes of place-making implied by the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign.

This leads to a more general comment about theory as it is appropriated and deployed throughout this dissertation. In the ethnographic writing of this dissertation I foreground my experiences and interactions with San Lorenzo's *hinchas* during a particular historical conjuncture. I make use of relevant theoretical concepts and historical aspects of Argentinian political and cultural life with a goal, to paraphrase Malinowski (1922:25), of grasping the point of view of *hinchas*, the relation of football to life, and to realize the vision of the world created by *hinchas*. Theoretical concepts are used as tools to enrich the representation of the spatially and historically contingent world created by *hinchas*. Theoretical discussions are episodic and spread out within the dissertation; emerging to respond to and refract the ethnographic material. In this chapter, I introduce theoretical concepts by organizing them into thematic areas: narrative and memory, emotion and the crowd, and spaces and places in the urban landscape.

The connections and at times dissonance between theoretical concepts and thematic areas imitates and reflects the ways in which these themes interconnect in the lives of *hinchas*. Meaningful connections between the *barrio* and the football club, the political significance of the crowds, or the evocative and visceral performances of collectivity are all significant but not always emphasized or dominant; they emerge and recede through the contingent actions and meaning-making by *hinchas*. Memory and identity have come to have a particular configuration for *hinchas* of San Lorenzo through the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign but it is not always this particular configuration that *cuervos* will emphasize; nor is it necessarily coherent with other aspects of their fandom. More generally, the emergence of the *Vuelta a Boedo* reveals how political-economic connections made by and through football are episodic, rising to the surface and

submerging again. It is because of this general ambiguity, rather than in spite of it, that specific creative possibilities emerge as the social connections created by *hinchas* spill out with unpredicted significance.

#### **1.4 The People and the Sites of Research**

The urban setting of my research provided several difficulties. Buenos Aires is an urban metropolis. The City of Buenos Aires, with a population of nearly 3 million people, is the centre of a contiguous Greater Buenos Aires urban area of nearly 13 million people. The historic scale of the city is a relevant condition that makes Buenos Aires a unique city in global football. I lived in the *barrio* of Boedo, developing a familiarity with what many *hinchas* refer to as the “home” of San Lorenzo. I walked the streets, ate at local cafes, and formed relationships with neighbours and business owners. Hidenobu describes walking as a way of reading the city, encountering its historical layerings on a human-scale:

“Reading the city requires us to walk its streets and experience its spaces for ourselves.

Only then do we acquire a feel for the spirit linking the area's topographical changes with the development of its neighbourhoods” (1995:9). de Certeau argues that walking, like a speech act to language, has three functions to the urban system: as a “process of appropriation of the topographical system..., [as a] spatial acting-out of the place..., and it implies relations among differentiated positions (1984:97-8). In other words, walking is a practice that both emerges out of the city but also informs how the urban space becomes appropriated and understood. My familiarity with Boedo came with noting the changes on streets as I moved through the *barrio*, paying attention to the graffiti, which often proclaimed teenage love as it also marked the territory of a football club; the variation of

businesses from restaurants and retail stores to car-washes, mechanics and hidden warehouses, to abandoned factories; and the affluence of the houses. Walking is not just about the visual encounters but also the human encounters enabled by walking. Chance and planned encounters are created by walking the streets of Buenos Aires' *barrios*. Picking up a newspaper at the local kiosk, entering the corner vegetable seller, and stopping to talk to the mechanic on break all led to engagements and revealed how football is incorporated into the social life of the *barrio*. Strangers use football as a tactic to mediate social interactions and develop closer relationships; in many cases small-talk about football, even with *hinchas* of other clubs, developed into more regular and familiar conversations.

Encountering my 'field site' I quickly realized that a narrow focus on matches would be insufficient. Groups of *hinchas* may only come together at matches, which occur once a week, often on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Opportunities to meet people and develop relationships were initially very limited. As a result, I learned to look for alternative times and spaces where San Lorenzo was relevant: finding local cafes as places where older men regularly meet for lunch or an afternoon coffee to talk about football, organized weekly meetings of the *Subcomisión del Hincha*, and events organized by *hinchas* became opportunities to further my research. When invited, I'd follow *hinchas* during their daily activities. My research expanded into various spaces beyond the stadium that were occupied by *hinchas* but were not necessarily about football. Not all *hinchas* of a club devote as much time during their week to San Lorenzo as many of the *cuervos* depicted in this dissertation. For some, San Lorenzo only grabs their attention when the team is playing.

In my early interactions I often confronted the assumption that my research focused on football violence and the *barras brava*. *Hinchas* are aware of the particular image of the *barra* cast by the popular media, which at times is used to represent them as well. A conversation between David, a *hincha* of San Lorenzo, and his father highlights the apprehension *hinchas* feel about this representation. We were sitting in David's car heading to the meeting of one of the *peñas*, a fan-club, organized in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. We picked up David's father from work and were dropping him off at his home, near one of the more notoriously violent *barrios* in Greater Buenos Aires. David's father, upon hearing my research, suggested a quick thesis to my research: "I don't like football, the violence. For me, football is all about the *mafias*" – the code for the nefarious business interests, which include drug trafficking and extortion, of the *barra bravas*. Before I had a chance to respond, David launched into their rehearsed debate, "he has come to study the *real hinchas*, understand?" Looking at me through the rear-view mirror David continues to tell his dad: "It's not about the violence. I'm passionate about San Lorenzo but I don't support the violence. He is going to meet the *peña*, see that we work for San Lorenzo and that we don't ask for anything in return." Many *hinchas* feel they contribute their time, effort, emotions, money, and selves towards 'making' their club. They can feel at times that what they contribute as *hinchas* is misrepresented or disregarded alongside more sensational discussions of violence and football. My intention in this dissertation is not to disregard the violence or its influences in Argentina, rather I do feel a responsibility to show a different perspective on the motivations and practices of *hinchas* in Argentina. Violence in football is also a significant area of international and Argentinian research (Aragón 2007; Garriga Zucal 2005; 2007; 2010;

Gil 2007; Moreira 2005a; 2005b). In part this dissertation confronts the hegemonic image of the *barra brava* as representative of the *hincha*. My own research, however, is influenced by the encounters and the ways in which the *barra brava* and fan violence matters to Argentinian football and other *hinchas*.

Over several months of meeting *hinchas*, I identified three groups of people with whom I interacted with most regularly. First, I met a group of men, mostly above forty, who frequent the Bar San Lorenzo during their lunch hour. Most of the men grew up in Boedo and have maintained lifelong friendships, despite some disagreements about which club they love. Others have come to the Bar San Lorenzo because its iconic status and location across from the Carrefour on Avenida La Plata. I met several of the men for the first time at an *asado* (Argentinian barbecue) and fundraiser organized by the *Subcomisión del Hincha* (SCH). The SCH holds weekly meetings attended by between fifty and one hundred participants. More than two hundred people were dues-paying members of the SCH at the time, which was led by President Claudio “El Chivo” de Simone, and Vice-Presidents Marcello Culotta and Aldofo Res. Aldofo Res has been a central figurehead of the *Vuelta a Boedo*. A historian of San Lorenzo when not at work, he has written several books and hosts a weekly radio program *San Lorenzo Ayer, Hoy, y Siempre* with his brother Diego, which presents the institutional history of the club. The SCH became the second group of *hinchas* with whom I had extended interactions with. I regularly attended meetings and activities organized by the SCH as well as spent time in the *Casa de la Cultura* (Cultural House) where the SCH runs daily programming of classes for adults and children, as well as various presentations on the history of San Lorenzo. Third, through the SCH events I met Pocho who was promoting the *Vuelta a*

*Boedo* in downtown Buenos Aires. In his mid-twenties and under-employed, Pocho has attended San Lorenzo matches with a stable group of friends for more than a decade. The group often call themselves *La Banda del Maldito* (The Band of the Bad-one) after their tongue-in-cheek ironic leader el *Maldito Irlandes*, a man in his mid-forties.

Providing anonymity to the people in my research is complicated and raises ambiguous ethical concerns. On the one hand, fandom is a public action. Recognition of fandom has social significance and value for *hinchas*. On the other hand, part of the attraction of being amongst the crowd is the perceived public anonymity one gains. Given the public nature of fandom, I can only at best provide limited anonymity. Further, the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign raised the profile of several *hinchas*, who conducted public interviews. Names of people have been changed whenever the person has not figured publicly in the campaign for the *Vuelta a Boedo*. I use the actual names of the directive members of the SCH, while non-public members have had their names changed. I have removed identifiers of the speaker or generalize a comment when I interpret our conversation to have contained sensitive knowledge. Because of the interwoven complexity of place and identity, the anonymity I can provide through name changes is limited. Further, *hinchas* take pride in their public actions of support for their club. The Bar San Lorenzo is an actual place, its location and identity being an important part of its significance to my discussion. For the patrons, part of the Bar's allure is its history. Media attention on the *Vuelta a Boedo* represented the Bar as part of the legacy of San Lorenzo in Boedo; its patrons were often interviewed to provide stories and memories of the Viejo Gasómetro. To change facts about the Bar to protect anonymity in this case would I believe be a form of spatial violence, particularly when being properly placed in

the world is central to the topic of this dissertation. I understand that central to my ethical commitment to *hinchas* is to represent their passion and devotion to San Lorenzo.

*La Banda del Maldito* is a loosely organized group of friends. At home matches a varying number of friends (between twenty to forty) meet at the same spot in the popular section of the stadium. Women are a minority in the group: six regulars and on some matches several other women join. Only a few of the women travel to away matches with regularity. Men in the group would discourage women from travelling to particular away matches because of the perceived danger of violence in and around the stadium. In the wider group, a smaller core of twelve to twenty regularly travel to away matches, often in the back of a transport van operated by *El Fletero*. For longer away trips, which can be four hours to Rosario or up to twenty hours to cities in the Northeast of Argentina, the *Malditos* get together to rent a small bus or join one of the privately-organized long distance buses. Only a few of the regular members of the *Malditos* appear in the dissertation. Three members of the group, Maldito, Julián and Rodrigo are of a similar age, in their late-30s to late-40s, and have been friends for many years and provide a nucleolus to the group. *El Fletero* is in his mid-40s runs a small business with his cargo van during the week. *Fletero* is more independent, once telling me “I don’t care where I am in the stadium or who I’m with. I can go by myself, it doesn’t matter to me. I just want to watch live football.” Florencia is a recent *hincha* to San Lorenzo, she only began to attend the team’s matches with Julián around the same time that I arrived in Argentina. Her transformation into an *hincha* of San Lorenzo reveals some of the masculine tensions that occur within the stadium.

In the Bar San Lorenzo during the week I would regularly have lunch with a table of lifelong friends and associates of Román and Gallego, both in their late-50s. Román is animated, often with a large smile speaking loudly and waving his hands in the air, and trendy with stylized grey hair and colourful shirts. Gallego is much more reserved and avoids getting into heated discussions. Gallego prefers to have one-on-one conversations. The Bar is run by father and son Eduardo and Diego. Eduardo is often the most animated person in the Bar; he can go from bright red in anger to a warm-embrace in less than a second. Both were critical of the players, though travel great distances with friends to see most matches. Other regulars include Dicapua who runs a small museum to San Lorenzo in his home and worked at the Viejo Gasómetro. There are several other regulars who do not directly figure in this dissertation but were influential to my understanding of San Lorenzo. The Bar at midday is dominated by men. When a regular group of women from a local business have lunch at the bar, the conversations between the men is less boisterous and sexualized jokes are often followed by an apology.

The *Subcomisión del Hincha* meets regularly Monday nights at San Lorenzo's space in Boedo for retired members. President Diego Simone, also known as El Chievo, was once the leader of San Lorenzo's *barra brava* in the 1990s. Vice-Presidents Marcelo Culotta and Adolfo Res were often interviewed by the media on behalf of the SCH and at *Vuelta a Boedo* events. Adolfo is an unlikely public figure. In person he can be shy, avoiding eye-contact. He has an uncanny ability to describe rare moments in San Lorenzo's past, goals as they unfolded and stories of the crowd. Pocho described Adolfo as "the maximum" and he has gained a lot of recognition amongst *hinchas* for his quixotic passion for San Lorenzo. Behind these public figures there are several other

contributing members of the SCH who volunteer many hours to ensure the group's operation. Here the SCH is more diverse, representing a wider range of ages from 16 to over-80. While the group, publicly at least, continues to be represented by a core of very active men, many women also participate within the SCH. A Department of Women has been organized within the SCH to represent concerns of women *hinchas*. Various members of the SCH appear at different moments in my discussion.

I conducted more than a dozen recorded interviews with *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, in particular members of the *Malditos*, the SCH, and patrons at the Bar San Lorenzo. Only on a few occasions did I interview people with whom I had not already established a consistent and familiar relationship. I noted hesitation in a few people, often as a difficulty to arrange a meeting, to participate in a recorded interview. Interviews are a particular mode of intellectual production (Briggs 2011). While the interviews allowed me to gain insights and background information, in particular the interview with Adolfo Res illuminated his experiences of lobbying politicians, they often required a transformation of the social relationship. More often, I interacted with *hinchas* on a more informal basis through casual conversation, noting how and when people decided to talk about San Lorenzo and the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Throughout the dissertation I use excerpts from the interviews at times to represent common tropes and comments made by *hinchas*.

Beyond interactions with people, I have incorporated film, literature, music and news-media to reflect on football's prominence in daily life. A significant part of football's media presence is through newspapers and television broadcasts. Radio is another medium where football figures prominently, with both for-profit and volunteer radio programs that are club specific and general to football being an important source of

information for *hinchas*. The sports paper *Olé* is almost entirely dedicated to football. Despite being published daily, the content is relatively simplistic and few articles demonstrate in-depth research. *Olé*, however, is influential. It is almost always found waiting on a table in cafes and restaurants, offered to solitary patrons as a quick read while they drink their coffee. Its rumours and speculations often form the basis of conversation, even if many *hinchas* disagree with its editorial angle. On television, three cable sports channels offer several daily football programs. At the beginning of the week these programs focus mostly on the controversies generated by the previous weekend's matches. Goals and critical moments are replayed, analyzed, and debated. Towards the end of the week these programs switch to discussing match-ups and the managers and players preparation for the coming weekend of football. 24-hour news-channels often feature several minutes every hour on a particular news story related to football, often from one of the big five teams.

Media conglomeration means that there are direct connections between television and print. The largest media company in Argentina, Grupo Clarín, owns the most popular national newspaper La Clarín, *Olé*, and the television channels Todos Noticias (TN), the broadcast channel El Trece, and the cable sports channel TyC Sports, as well as 60% of the cable provider Cablevisión (Zunino 2013). From 1991 till 2009 Grupo Clarín and Torneos y Competencias, partners in TyC Sport, were the sole owners of transmission rights for the Primera football leagues in Argentina. A subscription package for the cable channel TyC Sport was required to watch football on television throughout the 90s. For many the price was prohibitive. During this period only select games each weekend were broadcast live over the air; goals from the weekend were only broadcast publicly Sunday

evenings. In 2009, the Argentinian government bought the transmission rights for Primera A matches, creating the program *Fútbol Para Todos* (Football for everyone, FPT), which later also picked up the rights for Primera B. In 2012, the Argentinian government provided \$ 1 087 135 487 (Argentinian Pesos) for *Fútbol Para Todos* and was part of a controversial debate between the private media companies and the government (Alabarces and Duek 2013; Casar González 2015; Palma and Annunzi 2012). The historical shifts in the political-economy of the media landscape in Argentina, as will be shown in this dissertation, contributes to how *hinchas* interact with football.

### **1.5 Thematic Concepts: Narrative and Memory**

My initial interest in the football culture of Argentina stemmed from questions about collective expression and solidarity. Similar ethnographies of football fandom and hooliganism in Europe completed in the 1990s (Armstrong 1998; Giulianotti 1991; 1995; Robson 2000) drew upon the combination of Durkheim's (2008) notion of collective effervescence in ritual settings, Bourdieu's (1990) habitus of bodily practice, Turner's (1974) concept of liminality, and the carnivalesque from Bakhtin (1980) to describe the content of the liminality within a football match. Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque provides a rich place to begin a discussion of the crowd:

The Carnavalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized in their own way, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socio-economic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity. This festive organization of the crowd must be first of all concrete and sensual. Even the pressing throng, the physical contact of bodies, acquires a certain meaning. The individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people's mass body. In this whole the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself; it is possible, so to say, to exchange

bodies, to be renewed. At the same time the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community (Bakhtin 1984:255).

The carnivalesque encourages us to think about the sensuality of the crowd, of being a part of the mass collectivity of bodies, and the creative inversions that emerge through the transgressions during a carnivalesque moment. The relationship between the crowd and the individual is one which inspired my ethnographic focus on San Lorenzo's *hinchas*. As my attention turned, however, towards the *Vuelta a Boedo* and what it means for *hinchas* of San Lorenzo I found the theoretical toolset developed for the match-day crowd to be limited. The ritualization of match-day does help reveal a repetitive structuring of the event (Chapter Four), however I became increasingly interested in the ways in which the football crowd is a dialectical product of a particular space-time. In particular, Turner's notion of liminality creates a sense that the football match is a separate moment in space-time, structured to provide inversions of social relationships. Yet the *Vuelta a Boedo* suggests that such separation draws our attention away from the dynamic links that football has to the everyday. I draw my inspiration from Stanley Tambiah, who emphasizes the ambiguity and conditional qualities of meaning making within rituals: "one of our tasks, then, is to specify the conditions under which rituals – which ordinarily convey both symbolic and indexical, referential and pragmatic meanings – take opposite turnings" (1981:166). By translating the stadium culture into a political event, activists in the *Vuelta a Boedo* reveal how football fandom is interwoven into historically contingent conditions that do not define but contribute possibilities to the meaning of being a *hincha*.

One way to approach the historical dimensions of being a *hincha* is through storytelling. Benjamin (2007) describes storytelling as a creative genre of reproducing the

past. In Chapter Five, I argue that storytelling is a central practice of *hinchas* that links them together in a social relationship. Pablo Vila (2014), while looking at identity through musical culture groups, argues that identification processes are fundamentally about narratives. For Vila “identity” is constructed by the music through a simultaneous double movement of articulation and interpellation (2014:21-26). Narratives provide a certain shared historical coherence: “Different people select varying articulatory elements or ‘nodal points’ to build their narratives, but regardless of such diversity, most people prefer to select and organize the events of their past, and to foresee their future in terms of these articulatory elements” (Vila 2014:38). Benjamin presents storytelling as an intimate relationship between the teller and the audience, who are both oriented through the compulsion of their positions. Voloshinov (1986) describes how the desire for intelligibility orients the producer of an utterance towards the other, the audience, and in the process incorporates the other. Such a dynamic relationship means that processes of self-identification have a fundamental social quality that does not homogenize diverse subjectivity.

It is important to consider the social conditions in which memories are produced. Memories elicit a form of the past into the present. Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot, exploring the broader implications of historicity, argues that “what matters most are the process and conditions of production of [historical] narratives” (1995:25). In the context of the production of memory, Trouillot (1995:15) states:

Both [memory's] popular and scholarly versions assume the independent existence of a fixed past and posit memory as the retrieval of that content. But the past does not exist independently from the present. Indeed, the past is only past because there is a present, just as I can point to something *over there* only

because I am *here*. But nothing is inherently over there or here. In that sense, the past has no content. The past – or, more accurately, pastness – is a position.

First, there is a relationship between what is considered the past within a memory and the present positionality of its production. The content of a memory is related to how it is brought into the present. Trouillot points to the production of history and the positionality of the persons producing history. Trouillot argues transposing the already problematic storage model of the individual's memory to the collective production of historical narratives misrepresents that “the constructed past is itself constitutive of the collectivity” (1995:16). He states that the “collective subjects who supposedly remember did not exist as such at the time of the events they claim to remember. Rather, their constitution as subjects goes hand in hand with the continuous creation of the past. As such, they do not succeed such a past: they are its contemporaries” (1995:16). The movement of time supports a discussion of the past that involves an understanding of processes of distancing and closing in on the past. History, as a social process, involves people in three distinct capacities: 1) as *agents*, or occupants of structural positions; 2) as *actors* in constant interface with a context; and 3) as *subjects*, that is, as voices aware of their vocality (Trouillot 1995:23). To explore memories both reveals and depends on its social context. By placing the memories into a social context, it is not just their initial production that is important but also their transmission and reproduction (Confino 1997). Thus memories are not only emergent in how *hinchas* make social relationships but also as they develop memory as a genre of the past.

Alongside other prominent historical narratives in Argentina, memory has a social-political presence. Emerging as a form of representing the past, memories are

deployed to address and engage with the consequences of the dictatorship and economic disruptions. Lindsay DuBois, an anthropologist who has conducted research in a working class suburb of Buenos Aires, explores how understandings of the past appear in daily life (2005). In a series of workshops organized with a community organization, memories were elicited to construct a historical narrative of the neighbourhood. Memories emerged in relation to how participants understood the difficulties that they faced: fear of insecurity, the material degradation of physical spaces and infrastructure, and issues of neighbourhood solidarity. Participants decided to produce a public mural emergent from how memories related to these issues. DuBois notes that the mural represents two central concerns: the preoccupation for space and the cohesion of the social community (2005:155).

Influenced by the Popular Memory Group, DuBois considers how memory is socially constructed beyond, around, and outside of the public representations of the past but still within conditions and processes of hegemony (2005:176). The Popular Memory Group (PMG) argues that social understandings of the past are in part constituted by process of defining what is “past.” Such processes include domination, exclusion, and inequality that condition what we understand to be history (1982). Drawing upon Gramscian concepts of “commonsense” and “hegemony”, the Popular Memory Group argues:

Private memories cannot, in concrete studies, be readily unscrambled from the effects of dominant historical discourses... Memories of the past are, like all common-sense forms, strangely composite constructions, resembling a kind of geology, the selective sedimentation of past traces... [Popular history] is concerned with the relation between dominant memory and oppositional forms across the whole public (including academic) field. It is also concerned with the relation between these public discourses in their contemporary state of play and

the more privatized sense of the past which is generated within a lived culture (Popular Memory Group 1982:211).

Personal memories are not conflated with nor are they necessarily in opposition to dominant productions of the past. In one sense, personal memories demonstrate divergent possibilities of the past and a multitude of variation in represented experiences, thus challenging the unified and/or selective perspective of official histories. Yet, as Halbwachs (1992) has argued, memories are never completely outside of the socially produced framework of memory. What Trouillot calls “pastness” cannot be put beyond the positionality inherent within the production of history. From this 'common-sense' has an important role in making memory possible as a shared form of the past that reflects and refracts its historical conditions.

According to the Popular Memory Group, the dialectics of memory results in a “selective sedimentation of the past.” Trouillot (1995) demonstrates that we often misinterpret processes of forgetting and miss how absences are also part of the construction of history. For Trouillot, the possibility of reincorporating these absences is part of the materiality of the past and what gives history a separation from the present. For example, even after its physical destruction the *Viejo Gasómetro* has left a material presence: in the topography of the Carrefour and in cultural artefacts such as images and records. But the ideas of places past also matter. Memories of the lost stadium provide an alternative possibility to what the Avenida La Plata property could be. History, or other processes of representing or recognizing the past, cannot be conflated to only acts in the present though we should always consider how and why the past is produced in its contemporary conditions.

## 1.6 Thematic Concepts: Emotions in the Crowd

By drawing upon the inversion of hierarchies that occurred during the medieval carnival, Bakhtin (1984) argues that Rabelais' novels contained a representation of the carnivalesque that prefigured the cultural and political transformation of the Renaissance. The medieval carnival, Bakhtin argued, concerned itself with the organic reproduction of society through its use of grotesque and inversive practices. Satirical medieval laughter of power and authority was transformed through Rabelais' literary form into a powerful critique of "all spheres of ideological life" (1984:97). Through its playful inversions of religious symbols of power, the medieval carnival did not negate the sacred (or hegemonic), rather it revealed that what is considered sacred is always relative and contingent within the social order. Carnavalesque practices, however, simultaneously prefigured the possibility that such conditions could be changed. Applied theoretically, carnivalesque practices do not necessarily result in the rupture or transformation of social hierarchies. Further, the ambiguity of the carnivalesque does not necessarily tend toward egalitarian or liberating ideologies. Within the football stadium, focusing on the carnivalesque practices that are part of the social cohesion of the crowd helps to orient a recognition of continuous possibility that such practices spin out into broader social relationships. Transgressive practices, including the violence and the grotesque, are simultaneously about the crowd's relationship to power/authority, as well as its basis of organic reproduction through processes of inclusion/exclusion.

The carnivalesque practices are generative of emotional connections between people in the crowd. The stadium is not the only place where the emotional content of being an *hincha* is learned. Michelle Z. Rosaldo (1980) argues that the symbolic

representation of emotions needs to be explored in the “everyday.” Researching the extreme ritual of headhunting, Rosaldo finds that the Ilongot people in contemporary Philippines, often talk about the practice in relation to *liget* – meaning “energy, anger, passion”. Rosaldo argues that to better understand the practice it is important to see how *liget* and other emotions are symbolically connected to broader understandings of sentimental living. Thus, while rituals are seen as moments of extreme emotional expression, such “rituals are at best but moments in a ‘sentimental education,’ rich but never wholly unfamiliar lessons in *how*, or what it means, among one’s elders, peers, and friends to entertain certain goals and dispositions, to induce, indulge, explore, and often to reflect upon things one feels” (Rosaldo 1980:25).

Matches are important ritualized events: the extreme emotional reactions elicited through the passions and suffering of being an *hincha* are rarely expressed, if not reached, similarly in daily life. A common refrain in Argentina is that the stadium is where where “*men* (sic) go to release” the stresses from the week. It was remarked to me on several different occasions that, “the stadium is the only place I saw my father cry.” As I describe later, I witnessed the crowd of San Lorenzo collectively cry twice in less than 90 minutes, first in extreme sadness and then later in celebration. In this sense, the stadium *is* a liminal space where it is permissible for particular emotions, rarely expressed elsewhere, to be shared in public. Part of the reason is that the mass crowd is a rare phenomenon outside of the stadium.<sup>18</sup> Emotions emergent within the conditions of being a part of

18 Crowds, however, are not as rare in Argentina as they are in North America. Street protests are regular organized urban phenomena. Crowds form at massive rock concerts and other music festivals, sharing overlapping performative practices with political and football crowds. The return of street carnivals, discussed in chapter two, has also created spaces for public crowds. I argue that these phenomena share particular qualities and forms with the crowd in Argentina’s football stadium.

carnavalesque experience, therefore, may tend towards the spaces inside and around the stadium.

Following on Rosaldo, however, the “sentimental education” of *hinchas* requires going beyond understanding the ritual and its phases. Rosaldo cautions the researcher:

having distinguished what appear to be symbolic forms from the transparent common sense on which to found translation, such analysts prove incapable of appreciating the ways in which apparently foreign and peculiar deeds may by themselves have common sense interpretations. And at the same time, their approach ignores the fact that common sense in other cultures is ultimately as demanding of interpretation as is apparently obscure ‘symbolic’ form (1980:22).

Thus it is not enough to describe the extremes and particularity of the carnivalesque stadium to understand its meaning for *hinchas*. By thinking of the crowds mobilized by the *Vuelta a Boedo*, I’m made aware of how football and San Lorenzo connect to other parts of the lives of *hinchas*. The collective form of the crowd on match days draws in on and spins out to the individual lives of the *hinchas* in unique but interconnected ways. The experiences of an *hinchista*, the emotional highs and lows, are dialectically produced with the understood reality. Such connections help to explain how football infuses place-making processes, like identifying with a *barrio* and home stadium, with emotional content and how football relates to the social-political world of Buenos Aires and Argentina.

By drawing into the discussion a reflection of the emotional education of *hinchas*, I hope to push beyond the ethnographies of European football fandom and hooligans (Armstrong 1998; Giulianotti 1991; 1995; Robson 2000) inspired by the carnivalesque. One way is to look more closely at how Bakhtin relates components, such as laughter, the grotesque body, and social hierarchies, to the inversions present in the carnival form. For

example, *hinchas* push the boundaries of the publicly accepted masculine ‘body’. Such practices emerge and contribute to the masculinized space of the stadium. Male public urination becomes naturalized within the spaces of *hinchas*, who relieve themselves – at times because they lack proper bathrooms – along the highways, parks, stairwells, and in extreme cases terraces of the stadium. The body is sexualized through the insults and chants of *hinchas* against their oppositions. Bakhtin describes that:

The theme of mockery and abuse is almost entirely bodily and grotesque. The body that figures in all the expressions of the unofficial speech of the people is the body that fecundates and is fecundated, that gives birth and is born, devours and is devoured, drinks, defecates, is sick and dying (1984:319).

The grotesque, however, is not simply about disgusting the hierarchy of the clean, healthy, and closed body that hides its excretions. The grotesque affirms an organic reproduction through an emphasis on the body’s lower strata. There is a metaphoric connection to reproductive capacity of society. Rabelais’ novels emphasize death giving birth to life, creating the cycle of social life out of the limitations of the individual’s mortal body (Bakhtin 1984). Emergent in the carnival is an ideology of the social reproduction over time; such an idea is reflected by *hinchas*. As one song goes, “eternal is this feeling, that I carry in my heart, I’ve had it deep down inside since I was young.” The presence of the men’s grotesque bodies, while on the one hand is exclusionary particularly to women’s bodies, is also used to form social relationships. An *hincha*’s sentimental attachment belongs to their life, the capacity for “San Lorenzo”, as the index of the collective potential, to generate this feeling is (from the perspective of the individual) forever.

### 1.7 Thematic Concepts: Space and Place in the Urban Landscape

The third theoretical theme that emerges in this dissertation is the relationship between football and the production of urban space. The importance of the Viejo Gasómetro stadium to *hinchas* of San Lorenzo articulates this relationship, in particular how the imagined Viejo Gasómetro symbolically emplaces San Lorenzo within the *barrio* of Boedo as ‘home’. The *barrio* is an organizing category of space, historically developed significantly through social-cultural processes alongside more recognizable political boundary making, and continues to contribute to understandings of Buenos Aires’ urban space. Football grew in popularity alongside the development of the *barrio*; each mutually affecting the other through their historical relationship. At the turn of the twentieth century, football, along with other social activities, was popularized in the newly built *barrios* housing the city’s exploding immigrant population. Historian Julio Frydenberg argues that:

One of football’s charms was its flexibility. It magisterially assembled the exceptional nature of the quick Sunday ritual with the regular routine of daily life. In the performance of this function, [football] also effectively influenced the construction of territorial identities that marked the fluid relation between the spectacle and the ordinary world of neighbours, the *barrio* and the daily life... and especially the realm of masculine sociability (2011:131).

One site for the formation of football teams was the local street corner or empty field.<sup>19</sup>

Friends and neighbours competed order to claim playing spaces and represent their *barrio*. Many who played football on the street were recent immigrants or the children of immigrants. As Buenos Aires’ football teams became institutionalized clubs and the sport became popular amongst spectators, clubs developed territorial spaces for themselves

<sup>19</sup> Other important sites in the formation of football teams were private schools, factory teams, workers associations, as well as social and cultural clubs (Frydenberg 2011).

from which they drew their immediate fan-base. Territorial boundaries emerged out of the competitive claims made by the clubs and their fan-base, which contributed content to an urban imaginary of bounded discrete *barrios*. Other social processes also contributed to this socio-territorial formation, including political parties that found discrete space as useful for organizing political support. From this historical perspective on the relationship between football and the *barrio*, this dissertation begins to trace the relationship between Boedo the *barrio* and San Lorenzo the football club.

Space becomes a place through a process of defining meaning (Tuan 1977). Harvey identifies the double meaning of place: “(a) a mere position or location within a map of space-time constituted within some social process or (b) an entity or “permanence” occurring within and transformative of the construction of space-time” (1996:294). The relative stability, or permanence, of a place is itself part of the social constructions of space. As such, the meaning of a place is often interwoven with memories and emotion-laden experiences. The “home”, a particular category of places, provides a useful metaphor for thinking about the relationship between Boedo and San Lorenzo. Homes can be thought of as intimate spaces (Bachelard 1994) that come to be meaningful through the lived-in relationships developed over time (Tuan 1991). Home, as a place, organizes memories of intimate and personal relationships and in turn the concept of home becomes meaningful through the social relationships articulated through memory (Truc 2012:148). We come to think about the home as a special place because of the ability to reflect on emotional relationships associated with such places. Homes may carry a positive connotation as a place of security and belonging, though this is not necessarily always the case.

Football cultures around the world relate to the metaphor of home. Meaningful allegiances to a team are framed around various scales of the home-as-metaphor: the home-nation, the home-city, the home-district, and the home-stadium (Bromberger 1995). In each of these examples, there is a dialectical relationship between the identity of the “home” and the identity of the football team and its supporters that is interpolated by the scale of space. Particular ways of organizing space lend themselves to the formation of a “spatial identity.” The nation is a powerful example, which is “deeply felt” by its community (Gupta 1997). National football teams contribute to the living-out of the imagined community of the nation (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1983). World Cup events provide a chance for spectators to interact with and perform out their national sentiments, developing a shared sense of what it means to be a part of a national identity. Such experiences are engaged with the territorializing processes of the nation-state. In Argentina, football’s prominence as a social-cultural event articulates a national sentiment that is most often strongly felt in rivalries against neighbouring countries and the corresponding territoriality of the state.

Domestic football, however, creates fissures and separations in the national sentiment. Rivalries between professional football teams, arguably in several contexts around the world, consist of even more deeply felt divisions. In Argentina, such rivalries are often between spatially close teams. Outside of Buenos Aires, two or three clubs often compete to represent the city. Within Buenos Aires, a unique dynamic of territorialized clubs representing *barrios* contributes to the division of the urban space. For *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, transgressing through the neighbouring *barrio* of Parque Patricios on match days is potentially dangerous. Groups of *hinchas* from CA Huracán, San Lorenzo’s

*clásico* rival, have on occasion attacked passing buses carrying *hinchas* wearing blue and red. San Lorenzo's *hinchas* have reciprocated the violence on numerous occasions. The territoriality of clubs is not only expressed through violence. Other day-to-day interactions in and through club-related activities also contribute to a socially constructed understanding of space.

San Lorenzo's physical connection to Boedo as its home-*barrio* was radically transformed when the club was forced to sell its stadium. The displacement of the club's facilities meant that significant aspects of the social world built around San Lorenzo in Boedo were affected. Through the *Vuelta a Boedo* San Lorenzo's *hinchas* have come to reconstruct their understanding of the *barrio* as a meaningful place for social interactions facilitated by the club and a metaphoric home. Lived experiences and emotional connections retold through the story-making of the Viejo Gasómetro contribute to an imagined connection with Boedo, which in turn has influenced meaningful contemporary social relationships amongst *hinchas*, as well as Boedo's residents. The processes of place-making are embedded within a wider context. "The special challenge here," Gupta and Ferguson write, "is to use a focus on the way space is imagined (but not *imaginary*) as a way to explore the mechanisms through which such conceptual processes of place-making meet the changing global economic and political conditions of lived spaces – the relation... between place and space" (1997:40). In the case of football in Buenos Aires, at a local scale, place-making entails work that reterritorializes the clubs, simultaneously reiterating the spatial divisions between clubs, while also informing a sense of belonging. At the national and international scale, this social process encounters other political and economic considerations that influence the spatial imagination of *hinchas*. Place-making

thus contributes to how *hinchas* behave within the stadium, the city and the country, and, as I will show, interacts with *hinchas*' understanding of the political-economic questions that surround football in Argentina.

The stadium is a particular scale of space relevant to this discussion. Stadiums according to Bale (1991) are compartmentalized containers for the mass spectating crowd. A stadium, in its physical form, is a generalizable category of space, as well as a unique place. The public domain of a common Argentinian football stadium is divided into five different sectors: two popular terraces one each for home and away fans, a seated section for home fans, private boxes for club politicians and wealthy businessmen, and the field of play. Each section is separated by barriers, which are designed to limit or prevent the flow of people from one section to the next. The popular sections, in particular, are surrounded by large fences often topped by barbed wire. In some stadiums a moat separates the field of play from the rest of the stadium. Such techniques of containing and dividing the crowd segments people into different classes of spectators. Each segment is interacted with in different ways and is often performatively distinct within the stadium; yet people also come together within a shared identity as *hinchas* of a particular team.

Awareness that a shared social past inhabits a place lends collective identities a form of temporal stability, which is attractive to football supporters. The social reproduction of the shared identity of football fandom while ideologically is often thought of as timeless is often fraught with complex risks that go beyond the successes and failures of the team on the field. Tuan notes that it is common that “permanence is an important element in the idea of place” (1977:140). Permanence in a place is, in many

ways, always illusionary, as the social relations that imbue places with meaning are constantly changing. While social relations are historically contingent, place helps to mark a collective claim to permanence. The idea of a place can become particularly significant in moments of displacement.<sup>20</sup> When San Lorenzo lost its original stadium, *hinchas* lost access to the physical place where they came together. As the team moved from stadium to stadium, rented from San Lorenzo's rivals, many *cuervos* associated their consistent experience of dislocation with fears that their football team was on verge of disappearing. In the absence of a permanent home to host matches, San Lorenzo's *hinchas* focused on bonds of social solidarity between fans to construct their sense of permanence. Similar to other displaced people, *cuervos* developed a mythical sense of Boedo as San Lorenzo's home. When the club opened its new stadium in 1993, San Lorenzo once again had a home to host matches. The emergence of the *Vuelta a Boedo* only a decade later, however, reveals the significance of reclaiming a physical connection to the club's *barrio* for *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. Subsequent chapters explore the historical relationship between football clubs and the *barrios* of Buenos Aires, as well as the social and cultural practices that gave rise to the significance of Boedo.

## **1.8 Structure of the Dissertation**

The dissertation moves fluidly between ethnographic description, theoretical interventions, and literature reviews to highlight the complex spatial-historical tapestry woven to create the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Chapters are developed around thematic threads and supporting theoretical components. Chapter Two presents the history of football in

<sup>20</sup> Homelands have become increasingly important concepts for spatially displaced nationalist groups. Bisharat (1997) notes, from the case of Palestinian refugees, that places become particularly important to the social identity of displaced people when there is a contest between groups for the control of space.

Argentina and of Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro. The club's formation in 1908 by a group of youth with the help of a parish priest represents a major transformation in the social-cultural position of football in Argentina and Buenos Aires in particular. The sport's dramatic growth amongst working-class immigrants and Argentinians through workplace-teams and newly created clubs challenged the dominance of private-schools, where the sport was initially played in Argentina. At the same time, Buenos Aires' rapid urbanization following unprecedented waves of immigration contributed to social-cultural dynamics that led to the rise of the *club de barrio*. Football clubs over the next two decades grew into large multi-sport social and cultural institutions with thousands of members. Football clubs were both a reflection and had significant influence upon processes of urban formation. As places of significant public gathering, clubs also became sites of political organizing, which is demonstrated through the influence of Pedro Bidegain, President of San Lorenzo in the 1920s and member of the Radical Party, and who helped expand the facilities at San Lorenzo's newly purchased property on Avenida La Plata. By the 1940s, during the Juan Domingo Peron's government, San Lorenzo had grown into one of Argentina's largest sport and social clubs. Football from the beginning of the twentieth century was gaining prominence as an articulation of Argentinian nationalism and had become entrenched as part of the national imaginary during the Peronist period. Political-economic transformations began to shift this relationship during the 1950s and 60s. San Lorenzo's success in national championships during the 1960s and 1970s belied institutional struggles that contributed to the eventual loss of the *Viejo Gasómetro*. Argentina's civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983) had a direct role in the sale of the property. Over the following fourteen years San Lorenzo did

not play in its own stadium. The chapter concludes by describing San Lorenzo's more recent context, which is expanded upon in following chapters.

Chapter Three explores the historical foundations of Boedo as a *barrio* in Buenos Aires. This chapter argues that the *barrio* has come to be a relevant and influential category for organizing urban space that is particular to the historical context of Buenos Aires. Clubs have both influenced as well as been influenced by the territorialization of the *barrio*. Other social-cultural activities have also played a role in the formation of the *barrio*. Today the *barrio* is stereotypically associated with cultural practices such as the carnival and tango. It is through the spatial association to the *barrio* that the interwoven relationship between the football club and other cultural practices is established. I note that the *barrio* is also the site of nostalgia and used to express a longing for times and places lost in the past. In particular the *murga*, street-performing groups of the Buenos Aires carnival, have a relevant relationship to the cultural practices of the Argentinian football stadium. These relationships strengthen the bonds that a club forms to a *barrio*. San Lorenzo's *hinchas* refer to Boedo as their "home" in the city, which opens a discussion on the metaphor of exile and return. In the case of San Lorenzo, the particularities of Boedo as a *barrio* of tango, carnival, and literature have all been picked up by activists in the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign to articulate the close relationship between the club and the cultural life of the *barrio*.

Chapter Four turns towards the stadium. Using a match against Newell's Old Boys in 2012, crucial to the club's escape from direct relegation, I represent both the place of the *Nuevo Gasómetro*, San Lorenzo's current stadium in the club's athletic campus in Bajo Flores, as well as the terrace culture of Argentinian football stadiums. Here I expand

on how matches become moments of extreme emotional expression. Links to the cultural practices of the *barrio*, in particular the influence of the *murga*, contribute to San Lorenzo's *hinchada* being recognized as one of Argentina's most creative. Coming back to the notion of the "home" developed in the previous chapter, I look at the ambiguous relationship *hinchas* have to the *Nuevo Gasómetro* as their current home but as a place that many are contemplating leaving. The description of the match serves to advance several arguments about the performative significance of emotion for *hinchas* within the space of the stadium.

In Chapter Five, I turn to the content of being a *hinchas* outside of the stadium. Identity is a controversial concept often used by *hinchas* to describe their relationship to their club. "Our identity," a *hinchas* explained to me "is Boedo." I argue that storytelling is an important component of how *hinchas* identify with their club. Stories, according to Benjamin, rely heavily on a social memory. I explore how the past is made into the present through the act of storytelling. *Hinchas* use stories to articulate their values and connect to their past. I describe a protest on 30 November, 2000 which occurred against efforts to privatize San Lorenzo's football operations. The day is now commemorated as the Day of the *Hinchas* by the club, reflecting how the club's past is brought into the present through acts of memory.

Chapter Six argues that in Argentina memory is not only an abstract concept but has also come to have political significance. In the wake of the human rights violations of the civic-military dictatorship, which included torture, the violent disappearance of people, and the kidnapping of young children, memory took on a political significance through the mobilization of the past in the call for justice and restoration. Immediately

following the end of the dictatorship, memories of torture and state-led violence were documented by a truth commission. Initially the report, titled *Nunca Más* (Never Again), was used to pursue legal cases against members of the military and the dictatorship's security apparatus. That process was halted by President Menem in 1989, only to re-emerge as a political issue again in 1995 following the publication of a confession of a member of the armed forces who participated in the dropping of bodies of victims from airplanes into the River Plate estuary. In the wake of the 2001 economic crisis, in part created by the neoliberal economic policies of Menem (1989-1999), a politics of memory was mobilized by the Kirchner governments (2003-2015) as part of broader critique of political-economic trends. New trials against members of the military dictatorship were coupled with other symbolic activities such as the memorializing of the places where disappearances occurred. For the families of the disappeared, memory became a way commemorating and giving continuing presence to the lives of their loved ones. The metaphor of rupture created by the act of disappearing provides a parallel to how *hinchas* think about the San Lorenzo's loss of the Viejo Gasómetro. Memories become about filling in the absences created by historical ruptures. In this chapter I also look at the ambiguous relationship between football and the civic-military dictatorship. *Hinchas* of San Lorenzo experienced a "revolution" in 1982 when the club was relegated to the second division in what was described to me as a popular response to the atmosphere of repression and fear created by the dictatorship.

Chapter Seven ties together the previous two chapters to argue that storytelling and the politics of memory come together in how *hinchas* relate to the *Viejo Gasómetro* in the present. I present memories from an older generation of *hinchas* who remember

their experiences of the stadium. The circumstances of how San Lorenzo came to sell the *Viejo Gasómetro* are related through storytelling, which describe the influence and prejudice of the civic-military dictatorship. Because of this, many *hinchas* feel that the restitution of the property to the club is not only about the relationship between the club to Boedo but also about justice for San Lorenzo. This chapter describes the emergence of the *Subcomisión del Hinchas* and Adolfo Res' influence on constructing a narrative out of the club's past, that emphasized the non-football history of San Lorenzo. I then turn to how such memories and the past have been transformed into narratives that influence how particularly younger *cuervos* identify with and through San Lorenzo.

Chapter Eight engages with the *Vuelta a Boedo* as a political social movement, looking both at the practical organization of the *Subcomisión del Hinchas* and the vision of San Lorenzo on Avenida La Plata presented by Adolfo Res. The political engagement, I argue, emerges out of a performative enactment of the what San Lorenzo's *hinchas* think of as their "identity." The sense of belonging articulated by *hinchas* of San Lorenzo in previous chapters comes to the fore as a political act through the translation of football's emotional content into the realm of a social movement. Compared alongside other political uses of the crowd, this chapter argues for an intertextual approach to understand the translation of the football stadium into a political movement.

The final chapter ties together these arguments by recounting the moment the *Ley de Restitución Histórica* was passed. Rather than becoming the final chapter in San Lorenzo's struggle to return to Boedo, the *Ley de Restitución Histórica* has since enacted a new phase in the efforts of San Lorenzo's *hinchas* to re-form their historical relationship with Boedo. Nevertheless to receive political support for the *Vuelta a Boedo*

campaign was an achievement that demonstrates the importance of thinking through the places of fandom within the urban landscape. The campaign also provides an opportunity to think about collective social organizing otherwise, the importance of emotional bonds between activists, and the possibilities of football fandom within fluid political-economic conjunctures.

## Chapter 2 Historical Dimensions of San Lorenzo

Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro was founded on 1 April, 1908. The young working-class men, many of whom were children of immigrants, who formed the club were part of a significant transformation occurring in Argentinian football. Many social-cultural particularities of the sport have their historical roots in this period. In particular, historian Julio Frydenberg (2011) argues that the deep territoriality of Argentinian club football, reflected in the importance of the *barrio*, goes back to the rivalries between the Buenos Aires clubs that were formed in this period. Eduardo Archetti identifies how the working-class masculinity of these football players combined with other social trends in the first decades of the twentieth century to produce a cultural imaginary around the sport, which continues to influence how Argentinian football and masculinities are interpreted and performed (Archetti 1995; 1999). Others have expanded upon Archetti's analysis to look at how football has been affected and incorporated into country's national imaginary (Alabarces 2008; Alabarces and Rodríguez 1999).

Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro was founded amidst dramatic changes happening within the city. The story of San Lorenzo's foundation features significantly in the contemporary mythology of the club. Many *hinchas* refer to the club's formation to describe the core values and foundational characteristics of what it means to be from San Lorenzo. I come back to storytelling as a form of a *hinchas*'s ideological creativity in a later chapter. In this chapter, I use the club's story to illuminate the social-economic dynamics of football's transformation in Argentina, in particular how an expat dominated sport played in the spaces of private schools shifted to one played in public spaces of

fields and streets by predominantly middle and working-class men. Early dynamics of claiming space in the public realm as well as practices of social inclusion organized by newly settled residents continued through the period of club formation and consolidation that preceded the era of professional football. During that transition, newly formed clubs in Buenos Aires came to develop a strong connection to their surrounding *barrio*, in turn contributing the club's sense of territorial space to the wider social significance of the *barrio*.

Sport, in general, was enmeshed within the ideological constitution of Argentinian nationalism and modernism; football had a particular and shifting role in how Argentinians thought of their national identity (Alabarces 2008; Archetti 1995; 1999; 2008; Frydenberg 2011; Frydenberg et al 2013). Reflecting social-political concerns about Argentina's progress towards modernity in a globalized political-economy, football came to articulate the national concern of a duality between civilization and barbarity, a metaphor that emerged in the literary text *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie (1845)* by President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, and overall political anxieties about Argentina's national project. I argue this duality is imperfect and ambiguous reflecting how the people involved in football, its politicians, players, and emergent spectators, are shaped by as well as influence Argentinian notions of modernity and nationalism.

Attention is given to the political and social spatiality of the football clubs. The *barrio*, or neighbourhood, is a relevant socio-spatial formation in Buenos Aires that demonstrates how football's actors are not simply conditioned by the political-economy of Argentina but also contribute to its historical formation. Spatial particularities are central to the sport's development in Buenos Aires. Ideological and practiced territoriality

of many football clubs today traces a lineage to the formation, consolidation, and growth of the clubs in the first two decades of the twentieth century. This chapter eludes to the foundational processes in the relationship between club and *barrio*, which comes into greater focus in the following chapter.

## **2.1 Football in Argentina**

Football as a modern sport emerged in British public schools in the first half of the nineteenth century. Played alongside other variations, association football's first iteration of rules was codified in England in the 1860s. Football accompanied the expansion of British capital around the world, shared by British workers and educators. The first recorded football matches were played in Argentina as early as 1867. In many parts of the world, the sport was initially associated with the bourgeois modernity of Victorian Britain (for an expansive history of football see Goldblatt 2006; Brown). The United Kingdom became significantly involved politically and economically in Argentina during the nineteenth century. Argentina declared independence from Spain on 9 July, 1816 and fought a nine year war across the South American continent. The United Kingdom became the first European power to recognize the independence of Argentina in 1825. Over the subsequent decades political conflicts and a civil war were fought over the relative power of Buenos Aires and the federalist composition of Argentina. In 1880, the City of Buenos Aires was separated from the Province of Buenos Aires and put under control of the Federal Government; an influential factor in the historical formation of the urban city.

Economic connections between Great Britain and Argentina facilitated the emigration of British engineers and managers who worked in private and state-owned railway companies. An important British expat community developed in Buenos Aires and the surrounding satellite towns in the Province of Buenos Aires. British private schools and private-member athletic clubs were founded as early as 1830 but their numbers grew significantly between the 1850s to 1900. Members of the exclusive athletics clubs played sports such as cricket and polo and it is in these clubs that the first documented matches of football took place. The sport, however, was not popularized in the clubs. British private schools in Buenos Aires provided the institutional stability for football's growth. Alexander Watson Hutton arrived in 1882 to become the headmaster of Saint Andrews school and encouraged the adoption of British codified team sports as part of his school's curriculum. In 1884, Hutton founded the Buenos Aires English High School, whose graduates would go on to form Argentina's most recognizable team of this era: Alumni. Hutton helped to form the Argentine Association Football League in 1893 with teams from private schools and elite athletic clubs.

Hutton, born in Glasgow and educated at the University of Edinburgh, was a proponent of using recently codified team sports as part of the education of young men. The codified rules of football revolved around the idea of "fair play," which provided a disciplining structure to the competitive team game. According to football historian Julio Frydenberg the sport's arrival in Argentina was initially viewed as a "civilizing agent" (2011:32), though this attitude had been restricted to the private schools attended by the expatriate community and the children of Buenos Aires' upper-middle class. Argentinian public schools, part of a wider nationalist project, promoted a militarized and

individualistic physical education based upon perceived scientific ideas of the male body (Frydenberg 2011:30).<sup>1</sup>

Newspaper articles from the period reporting on matches between travelling international teams and Argentinian representatives reveal how ideas about Argentinian-ness were seen to emerge through football. Alumni, as the country's premier team and champion of the Argentinian Football League, often took up the mantle of representing the country. Progress towards defeating international competition was seen as an opportunity to evaluate Argentina's overall progress as a country. Newspaper reports of the matches often drew upon the idea of "fair play" to evaluate the comportment of Argentina's players. Using the criteria of gentlemanly football: respect for the rules, clean physicality, and a disciplined team play; the journalists wrote about how Argentina as a whole was adapting to modern values (Alabarces 2008). Even in defeat the traits of "fair play" were seen as useful criteria to evaluate the progress of the country (Frydenberg 2011).<sup>2</sup>

At the same time of football's emergence, Argentina was shifting in its position in the global political-economy. Many of the forces that brought football to Argentina were connected to rising foreign investment, which was part of a restructuring of the country's economy. Towards the end of the nineteenth century new industrial packing methods allowed Argentina to become a major global producer of beef. Cattle production in the

1 Warner (2006:60-64) describes how bourgeois Iberian training particularly in gymnasiums inscribed its own ideology onto the (male) body. The type of body produced through sport changes depending on the activity, reflecting and incorporating the ideas around the activity into the physical body, enhancing or creating new practices.

2 Ironically, many of the club's Alumni faced from England were part of the social-class transition occurring within English football at the time. Professionalization of many of the top English clubs began towards the end of the nineteenth century, as competition encouraged team owners to entice skilled working-class players to their teams with wages and other financial favours.

recently conquered interior *pampas* exploded. Large sheep ranches in the southern Patagonia also made Argentina one of the world's most important wool producers. An extensive railway was built to bring cattle to the slaughterhouses near the Port of Buenos Aires. British investments from London were having a big impact on the spatial organization of Argentina and Buenos Aires.<sup>3</sup> A national landholding elite also greatly profited from access to the global market, expanding the wealth in upperclass parts of the city. Strongly oriented towards aesthetic trends in Europe, the wealthy elite began to model the architectural design of their construction projects after the capitals of Europe.<sup>4</sup>

Investments in Argentina increased to such speculative levels that in 1890 a global financial crisis was sparked by the default of Argentina's government.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, British investments in Argentina continued till 1914, establishing Argentina as a significant part of the global political-economy.<sup>6</sup> By that time, a supporting middle-class

3 Francis (2013) notes three waves of British foreign investment. The first wave (1865-77) was precipitated by the ability of Argentinian companies to be floated in London and the government's promise to repay loans made in London in sterling. Public railways expanded with the capital raised by government bonds, as well as new private railway companies. Argentina went from 47km to 2200km of railways in this period. The shift in power from liberal and centralizing politicians from Buenos Aires to provincial federalists in 1874 produced a second wave of investment that expanded the railway network in the interior of the country. Profitable lines encouraged investments in private companies that surpassed that of government bonds. The government, however, continued to construct less trafficked railways owned by public companies. By 1893 there were 13 900km of track in Argentina, with 47% of British investment going directly to railways companies. The third wave, following the Barings Crisis in 1891, expanded the railways to 32 500km with the largest share of investment (67%) going into the private railway companies. The expansion of the railways facilitated the connection of the national government to previously more remote parts of Argentina, importantly expanding the reach of the country's military (Francis 2013:152-5).

4 The notion of Buenos Aires being the "Paris of the Americas" emerged in this time period. Many of Buenos Aires' largest construction projects, such as the Teatro Colon, featured architects from Europe and much of the materials and skilled labour for these projects were imported from Europe.

5 Baring's Bank in London, which had underwritten a significant portion of Argentina's foreign debt issues, was over exposed and on the verge of bankruptcy. Central banks across Europe, as well as London's financial sector were organized to provide a major bail-out to Baring's Bank to provide a larger collapse of the financial market in London. The crisis affected investments in developing markets, particularly in South America.

6 Argentina's political-economic relationship with Britain goes back to attempted invasions of Buenos Aires in 1806 and 1807. The long history exposes the contradictions of British financial imperialism, the role of local landed elites, and internal conflicts that have also contributed significantly to the formation of Argentinian nationalist ideas. Simultaneously, Argentinian elites can be seen pursuing investments and

of British engineers was living in the industrializing peripheries of Buenos Aires and in Rosario, Argentina's other major industrial city. The economic transformation at the turn of the century was supported by massive waves of immigration. Between 1881 and 1930 the net migration to Argentina was 3.8 million people (Sánchez Alonso 2007). Italians and Spaniards were the largest group of migrants, but significant populations also came from Eastern Europe, Germany and the British Isles.

The waves of immigration created urban dynamics that profoundly shaped football's growth and the sport's social-political significance. In particular, football influenced the evolution of urban space of Buenos Aires and how immigrants were incorporated into the Argentinian national imaginary. Besides the role of private clubs and schools attended mostly by British expats, Frydenberg credits football's rapid expansion, particularly in Buenos Aires and Rosario, to two other distinct types of teams: clubs formed by industrial companies or workers associations and *barrio* teams formed by migrants and their children. In both cases, football facilitated social connections and integration into urban living for young men. The dynamics of immigration and industrialization were integral to the urbanization taking place, influencing the social and political organization of the modern Argentinian city.

## **2.2 Football on the Streets and the Formation of San Lorenzo de Almagro**

The streets México and Treinta y Tres Orientales intersect at the south-west corner of the *barrio* of Almagro, an often described quintessential *porteño barrio*. On that corner in 1906, a group of young men, teenagers, and boys met to play the increasingly popular

participation in a global British modernity, while also attempting to promote a distinct and unified Argentinian nationalism in opposition to British influences.

game of football. Almagro at the time was at the edge of Buenos Aires' urban expansion, straddling the imaginary north-south divide of Buenos Aires: Avenida Rivadavia.<sup>7</sup> Light industries and large warehouses were built in the southern and western reaches of the city, away from the northern *barrios* of the city, where wealthier elites had relocated their homes after the Yellow Fever epidemic in 1871, in which more than 13 000 people died (Meik 2011). The *barrio* of San Telmo, immediately south of the city centre, the *conventillos* (tenement houses) in Barracas and La Boca, and the slaughterhouses built along the River Matanza, the southern boundary of the city of Buenos Aires more commonly known as the Riachuelo, were cited in newspapers and medical reports as sources of the outbreak (Meik 2011:47-52); expanding an association of the “south” as dirty, unsanitary, and unsafe.

Faster means of public transportation facilitated a more interconnected urban space. By the 1900s, tracks of the recently electrified tram-line ran down the middle of México as part of a large and growing network of trolley cars connecting the newer outlying regions of the city to the historic centre. In contrast to the older and densely populated working-class *barrios*, such as the port of La Boca, urbanization in what at the time was the periphery was more spread out. Low-rise family homes instead of the multi-story and apartment *conventillos* of the old city were built by recent immigrants drawn to the economic opportunities promised by Buenos Aires. Several blocks to the north of México, the Ferro Carril Oeste de Buenos Aires (Western Railway of Buenos Aires) running parallel to Rivadavia cut through the middle of Almagro. Passenger trains

<sup>7</sup> Jorge Luis Borges in his short story *El Sur* (The South), which juxtaposed the urban ‘south’ of Buenos Aires to the national south of Patagonia, wrote: “No one ignores that the south begins on the other side of Rivadavia.”

transported people from the downtown core to the western satellite towns and beyond. British investors bought the railway in 1890 during Argentina's financial crisis and aggressively expanded the tracks into the rural Pampas and to the Province of Mendoza.

In 1973, football journalist, author, and *cuervo* Osvaldo Soriano interviewed the last surviving members of the group that played football at the corner of México and Treinta y Tres: Juan Giannella and Francisco Xarau. Both were founding members of Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro. Giannella described:

In 1907, México Street was made of earth. The houses were all single story and modest. The number 27 tram passed by there. Us kids played football because it was cheap. We all lived on México or Treinta y Trés. Everyone worked to help out at home; I worked in a small ironworks on Avenida La Plata and Rosario. When my work ran late, I'd have to leave running to meet up with the group and play. I had the ball, one of those made with leather strips, you know? I later sold it to Federico Monti, who was the leader, for two pesos fifty... (Soriano 2010:125).

Their playing conditions were not unfamiliar for many of the youth of working class families who played football on the streets. The regulated daily schedule of work and school created a common leisure time for the youth (Frydenberg 2011:55) but playing space in the city was limited. Parks and plazas were frequently not part of planning in the working class *barrios* and private clubs that owned grass fields were prohibitively expensive to join.<sup>8</sup> Public streets and open fields became the football pitches of boys and young men. How football became popularized is on the one hand a consequence of the layout of urban space. On the other hand, where football was played influenced more broadly how and why the *barrio* became important to the city. Places where football

<sup>8</sup> Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires (GEBA) was founded in 1880 by local elites in the northern neighbourhood of Palermo. The large expanse of land owned by the club now contains several rugby and field hockey fields, as well as tennis courts and other athletics and club facilities. Notably GEBA resisted the professionalization of football and continues to operate without a professional football team to this day.

could be played became over time important sites of social activity. San Lorenzo's particular place-making in the city is interwoven with the spatial formation of Boedo, reflecting broader trends that date back to football's emergence.

Football as social practice occurring in space simultaneously draws together as well as distinguishes groups of people. Football is both a symbol of Buenos Aires' unique urban formation as well as a contributing practice to the production of urban space. Social distinctions that emerge through football are commonly marked by the form and use of space. As boys and men came together to play, other social distinctions emerged in space. Most obviously, gendered differences in the use of spaces were influenced by how the practice of football was appropriated for the male body. Social class represented through the football teams was also spatialized. Teams that formed on the streets and in the open spaces were most often composed of players who lived nearby, whereas teams formed at the private clubs, in private schools, or at places of work or by associations drew players from further away. These distinctions affected how rivalries formed and how football expressed itself territorially within the urban space.

Partly in response to a limited access to public space, teams began to make symbolic claims to the space around the places they used for playing matches. One of the more easily created but effective symbols was to name the team. Team names were needed to organize competitive matches through the local newspapers, as well as required by newly created independent leagues. While several work-place teams used their company name, street teams often created names that represented where they came from, political ideals, and connect to global culture. Federico Monti, one of the older members of the group that played at México and Treinta y Tres, insisted that they include a

reference to their *barrio*, calling themselves: *Los Forzosos del Almagro* (the Forceful Ones of Almagro). By including Almagro in their name, the teenagers made a claim to represent their *barrio*. As a game of two teams, football requires a competitive opposition and rivalries developed between the teams that claimed to represent the same part of the city.<sup>9</sup> Street teams would publicize their rivalries by issuing challenges in the local newspapers to nearby rivals.<sup>10</sup> Matches were often played without officials leading to a different relationship to the 'rules of the game' and emergent styles of play. Local competition was fierce; winners were able to strengthen their position as representatives of the *barrio* and increase their opportunities to face more prestigious challengers. The rivalry between competing teams from the same *barrio*, in some cases, produced enemies. Frydenberg points out that this competitive form stood outside of the "rivalry" promoted by the model of "fair play" used to define competitive matches in the private schools (2008:77-80).

Street football developed a negative reputation. Xarau told Soriano:

I worked as a basket-weaver, making *ranchos*, which are small baskets made of wicker. I made a peso per day. I had to support my mother and my sick sister. I didn't have problem playing, my mother actually liked it. Playing football at the time was seen as something for criminals, gangsters, but my old lady didn't care. Before I was 10 years old, I left school to work. By 1907, we were the *Forzosos* but we didn't play other teams yet. We'd play amongst ourselves, young players versus older players. We were kids between twelve and fifteen years (Soriano 2010:125).

Playing on the street was considered illegal by the city, though the limited expansion of police services meant that the rule of law was unevenly applied to the kids playing

<sup>9</sup> Frydenberg (2008:157) shows how by the era of professionalization of Argentinian football, in most cases, seventeen *barrios* of south and west Buenos Aires that combined contained 91 clubs came to be each be represented by a single club.

<sup>10</sup> La Argentina newspaper was one such paper. In 1907, the paper counted more than 300 teams in Buenos Aires outside of the formally recognized league (Frydenberg 2011:46-7).

football. Xarau tells Soriano how he and Giannella ended up in jail while returning from the store after purchasing a new ball. The three boys had passed a football game being played in the street.

In this moment a guard appeared and we got nervous because you weren't able to play in the street. We weren't doing anything but the *botón*<sup>11</sup> was fuming. 'Do you own the ball?' he asked me. I said yes but we didn't have anything to do with the game... He took us anyways. The other kid got away and went to tell my old lady who came to the police station at 24 de José María Moreno y Rosario and made a scene. Cried, what do I know, just drama. The officer got angry and told the *botón*: 'Are you crazy? You bring me kids and then I have put up with their mothers.' He let us go (Soriano 2010:127).

The event was remade into a scene in the 1954 film *El Cura Lorenzo*, though several details were changed. In the film, it is the parish priest Lorenzo Massa, who had taken an interest in providing moral guidance to the youth, that negotiated the release of the boys. The creation of the Father Lorenzo Massa within the foundational myth of San Lorenzo reflects how storytelling draws upon the club's history, reproducing representative values of the club for its *hinchas*.

Lorenzo Massa is a central figure in San Lorenzo's foundation and continues to be one of the most revered persons in the club's history. The introduction of Lorenzo Massa marks a point of transition that for the Forzosos, which led to the creation of the Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro. San Lorenzo is representative of what was happening to many street teams that made the transition towards organized football. In the interview, Giannella recounts the day in which Massa become involved:

Giannella: San Lorenzo was born the day that Juancito Abondanza fell in front of a tram. We were playing the oldest versus youngest in the street right in front of the Oratorio de San Antonio. Father Lorenzo Massa was watching from the sidewalk. Juancito got the ball and he took off like crazy. He was all alone and

11 Literally "button", a colloquial reference to the brass button-up jackets that were worn by police officers. The word continues to be a commonly used to refer to the police.

didn't see the tram, or thought he could dribble by it; the thing is he couldn't beat it. The motorman tried to break the tram but it still knocked him to the ground. The driver and the guard, both furious, got down to hit Juancito but the kid was quick and got away, telling them off. I was standing beside Father Massa because I always played on the leftwing along the sidewalk where he stood. When he heard Albondanza insult the guys from the tram, he said to me: 'Hey che, what barbarity. What a poorly educated kid.' He asked me right away who was leading the group. 'Him,' I pointed at Carbuña, who we respected a lot. Federico Monti was a kid that worked as a coal man... He called over Carbuña and said, 'Look, behind the chapel I have some nice land. If you guys clean it up you could make a small field. I can make you goals in the carpentry of San Carlos, what do you think?' (Soriano 2010:126).

Establishing Massa as a founding figure of the club, the story also infuses a moral foundation that *hinchas* reference in conversation to this day.<sup>12</sup> Club historian and football journalist Enrique Escande writes, "Massa, displacing the rigidity that characterized priests of this epoch, dedicated hours and hours to the club, mobilizing his connections whenever it was necessary to get what was needed. He gave money, organized the first documents, supported dozens of projects and was always available to give advice when an idea was worked over in discussion" (2004:14). Many *hinchas* refer to the relative marginality of the youths and the paternal figure of Massa when advocating for a sense of social responsibility in the club today.

Lorenzo Massa was born in 1882 in Morón, a town beyond the western border of the City of Buenos Aires, and was the son of Italian immigrants. He attended Colegio Pío IX de Buenos Aires, a Salesian school located near the tracks of Ferrocarril Oeste in Almagro. The Salesian Society of Don Bosco was formed in Italy during the mid-nineteenth century. Salesian schools had followed Italian immigrants to Argentina, opening important educational institutions in the working class neighbourhoods,

<sup>12</sup> I come back this specific story in Chapter Six in discussing the relevancy of story telling to the social lives of *hinchas*.

specializing in industrial and agricultural education for boys.<sup>13</sup> Salesians viewed their missionizing activities within the working class as a response to the rising secular influence of anarchism and communism. Massa's later involvement in the creation of the Explorers of Don Bosco, a group similar to the Boy Scouts, suggests he understood there to be a connection between physical education and religious education (Scharagrodsky 2009).<sup>14</sup> Generally, the Salesian schools were quick to allow children to play football. Inter-collegial tournaments were organized by teachers in which alumni also participated, creating an alternative space outside of the official and independent leagues. Comparatively, football was seen as a disciplinary and educational tool within the Salesian colleges. Teachers, often with less experience of the game, provided a ball for children to play on the patio, seeing the game as a way of providing physical activity while encouraging discipline (Frydenberg 2011:108-9). Rather than controlling the cultural development of football, organizations like the Salesians as well as workers associations, had interests that converged with the game. The structure they provided facilitated football's development, which was coming to be defined by the culture around the sport created by the boys and young men through its mass popularization within working and middle-class Argentinians.

13 The Salesian Society at this time was a male order but was connected to the Sisters of María Auxiliadora.

14 The Exploradores de Don Bosco were formed in 1915 by Fathers José Vespignani and Lorenzo Massa following the model of the Scouts, where boys would come together for long walks and nature excursions, music and theatre coupled with Catholic-Christian practices. Such linkages were in part practical: Massa saw the influence of organizations like the Boy Scouts as potentially competing with the religious education of boys. Rather than create an opposition between lay physical activity and religious education, the Explorers of Don Bosco proposed their integration. There were also ideological inspirations that were productive of ideas about the masculine body, reflecting modernist (a healthy body) and nationalistic (militarized marches and uniforms) ideas. Participation in the weekly mass and the catechism was mandatory for explorers. Scharagrodsky (2009) also identifies the characteristic embodiment of a modest and masculine heterosexuality through the physical and spiritual activities of the Explorers, suggesting Massa's ideological motivations when he helped to create San Lorenzo de Almagro.

Gaining access to an open field was one of the biggest challenges to the survival of a team formed on the street; many teams would travel across the city to secure a field, a *cancha de fútbol*, meaning both the pitch and open field.<sup>15</sup> Holding onto a *cancha* was often the next problem. Expanding urbanization meant that open fields were lost to the extension of streets and new construction projects. The regulations of the more competitive leagues made their own demands on the fields of play. To play in the official Argentine Association of Football League, the top competition in Buenos Aires, teams needed to own a field with the proper dimensions, goal posts, change-rooms with running water and space for spectators. The requirements for change rooms and a large enough pitch were difficult to meet for many teams' fields. Other independent leagues had lower requirements and would also allow teams to use the field of another team. Massa's offer of a field, while not meeting the regulations of more formalized leagues, provided the teenagers of the *Forzosos* a secure place to play that was conveniently close to their homes, a luxury that many teams could not afford. As a result, the social bonds between the players were strengthened, the other condition that Frydenberg identifies as central to the long-term survival of a street team. Players switching to other teams because of personal relationships or competitive advantages became common. Teams that were forced to travel across the city in search of a *cancha* could not rely as easily on the proximity of their homes as a reason for maintaining strong social relationships between their players.

<sup>15</sup> Another local term used for the informal fields used by to play football is the *potrero*. The *potrero* is an enclosed space on a ranch where horses are raised. Archetti (2008) argues that the reference to *potrero* as a football pitch represents a metaphoric connection to the rural pampas of Argentina and the mythical freedom of the gaucho. The popular use of *potrero* to indicate the football field combines with an effort to describe the unique characteristics of a *fútbol-criollo* (Argentinian national).

After several victories against nearby rivals on the field at the Oratorio San Antonio, the team began to look toward more organized competitions.<sup>16</sup> Through Federico Monti, Father Massa voiced his concerns about appropriateness of the name Forzosos. The youth began to think about a new name for their team. Giannella remembers responding in jest that they wanted to be called “San Lorenzo de Almagro,” maintaining their connection to the *barrio*. Lorenzo Massa initially rejected the name. The boys returned with a more convincing story, claiming they wanted to honour the Battle of San Lorenzo, the first engagement led by San Martin in Argentina’s War of Independence. Father Massa relented. On April 1, 1908, Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro was born. At the age of fifteen, Antonio Scaramusso was elected president, Luis Manera the secretary, and Federico Monti the treasurer. The rest of the players, as was typical of most clubs of the era, made up the rest of the membership. Soon after, Massa organized a match between the newly renamed San Lorenzo de Almagro and Colegio San Francisco. Massa provided each team with jerseys: San Francisco played in green and white stripes and San Lorenzo in blue and red stripes. The winning colours, Massa proposed, would become the new colours of San Lorenzo. Blue and red are the colours of the María Auxiliadora, the Marian devotion promoted by Don Bosco. San Lorenzo went on to beat San Francisco and adopted the now iconic red and blue striped jersey. The club has since has carried the nick name *Azulgrana* (blue-deep red). San Lorenzo de Almagro

16 Giannella describes, “We never lost at the [Oratory]. We beat Jorge Brown, the *Laureles Argentinos*, who were from the streets of Agrelo and Boedo. We’d go to the papers to post the results but the paper didn’t want to receive them because we didn’t have a stamp. They said if you don’t have a stamp you aren’t a team. Since Father Lorenzo obligated us to go to mass every Sunday, we talked with the neighbours after to raise seven pesos, the price of a rubber stamp. During mass, the Father made sure we were all there, because if not, we weren’t allowed to use the *cancha*. So many of us went to mass that it started to fill with girls but we weren’t that preoccupied with women, not like now.” (Soriano 2010:128).

played in the Salesian Don Bosco Alumni Football League in 1910 winning the championship and again in 1911. Several players went to play with other clubs in 1912, leaving San Lorenzo without a team. In part, the breakup of the team occurred because their *cancha* did not meet the requirements of more competitive leagues from where teams courted the skilled players of San Lorenzo.<sup>17</sup>

This period represented a rare moment in Argentinian football history in which clubs with “markedly dissimilar social origins competed in the same space” (Frydenberg 2011:113). The official league, which had been dominated by the British expat and *criollo*-elite team Alumni, was beginning to accept teams composed of working-class immigrants and Argentinians. Racing Club de Avellaneda became the first non-elite all-Argentinian club to win the championship in 1913. Some of the shifts were aided by institutional turmoil within the leadership of the league. The Federación Argentina de Football (FAF) broke away from the Asociación Argentina de Football (AAdeF), which had recently translated its name into Spanish (except for the word “football”), in 1912. For two years the AAdeF and FAF operated parallel leagues creating an opportunity for many of the clubs in the independent leagues to join one of the federations before the leagues were once again unified in 1914.<sup>18</sup> The inclusion of the previously independent clubs created a cultural shift within the official football league. The concept of fair play, with its roots in the construction of the gentlemanly sportsman, was challenged by the

17 Giannella and Xarau played at Vélez Sársfield, who lost in the semi-finals. Giannella told Soriano how if they had won Vélez would have been promoted and San Lorenzo would not have reformed the following year (Soriano 2010:130).

18 The division was sparked when the AAdeF attempted to collect gate-fees from members of Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires (GEBA). GEBA, challenging the AAdeF, de-affiliated and created the FAF. The new federation lowered stadium requirements and provided some financial support to clubs to bring their fields up to an acceptable standard, creating more opportunities for the independently affiliated clubs to join first division football.

emotionally charged competitive affair: “The field of the official league stopped being the exclusive space of the sportsmen, transformed into the heterogeneous conglomeration of young men who had never been taught the rigid rules of emotional constraint” (Frydenberg 2011:117). Players in the official league began to reflect the people who were becoming passionate spectators and fans.

Articles in the *La Nación* newspaper reflected the conflict over this apparent change. Noting the rising influence of the *crack*, a label given to the stylistic attention-grabbing players stereotypical of street football, one article published January 27, 1913 stated “the *crack* is a player well-known to the public influenced by his pirouettes, always ineffective, who doesn’t pass the ball but sometimes scores with beautiful form after a lot of dribbling and always by himself.” The article continues, “The *crack* is not an efficient player ... he puts up a fight, imposes conditions, makes demands at odds with the game, on match days its necessary to go find him at his house ... and is rarely faithful or is negligent and contrarian” (quoted in Di Giano 2010:22-23). Di Giano notes the article uses a contrast with the difficult and selfish *crack* to establish an underlying “civilizing” narrative. Elite and British ex-pat players are said in the article to demonstrate an “obviously superior sporting spirit” (2010:22). I later return to how representations of players and their styles of play reflect and refract notions of Argentinian national identity, particularly the concern over political civility.

The original players of Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro came back together in 1914 to compete in the regional second division of the AAdeF. The club used the *cancha* of Club Atlético Ferro Carril Oeste, a team formed by the railway company for its workers with a stadium built near its workshops in the *barrio* of Caballito to the

northwest of San Lorenzo. San Lorenzo gained promotion to the Primera División of a reunified AAdeF in 1915 after defeating Honor y Patria de Bernal 3-0 on the field of Ferro Carril Oeste. Twenty-five teams competed in the championship, seventeen from the City of Buenos Aires and the rest from the growing provincial suburbs of Buenos Aires and the provincial capital of La Plata.<sup>19</sup> In that year Racing Club continued its dominance of the first division; San Lorenzo finished in thirteenth. The club notably played its first competitive match against Club Atlético Huracán on October 25, 1915. Club Atlético Huracán was founded in 1908 in the barrio of Pompeya, later moving to Parque Patricios.<sup>20</sup> The two clubs would go on to form one of Argentina's most recognized rivalries in competitive football and the historical relationship between the clubs' *hinchas* is recognized as one of the most violent in the country.

Between 1916 and 1921, the *canchas* of San Lorenzo and Huracán were separated by only two blocks. Huracán built their first *cancha* at the corner of Avenida La Plata and Chiclana in 1914. Two years later San Lorenzo, going into their second year in the Primera División, inaugurated their *cancha* at 1600/1700 Avenida La Plata near the corner with Inclan. Escande writes, “a team in the Primera needed to own a playing field. Like a good number of romantic dreamers, they didn't have the resources, but that did not matter to them” (2004:18). Financial disagreements with Ferro Carril Oeste over the rent

19 In the Province of Rosario, clubs formed the Liga Rosarina de Fútbol in 1905, which included Atlético del Rosario, Newell's Old Boys, Rosario Central, and Atlético Argentino. Many of the original clubs were associated with the railway companies in the province. Teams from Rosario, dominated by the duopoly of Newell's Old Boys and Rosario Central, were the only clubs to challenge the hegemony of football based in the City and Province of Buenos Aires in Argentina.

20 Pompeya, where many of the players of Huracán grew up, was known for its slaughterhouses. They named their club after the balloon Huracán, flown by Argentina's most famous pilot: Jorge Newbery who became honorary president of the club. Huracán's *barrio* of Parque Patricios has long carried the nickname “La Quema” – giving the *hinchas* of the club their other name: Los Quemeros. At one time, large amounts of the garbage produced by Buenos Aires was burned in part of Parque Patricios giving rise to the name La Quema – the Burning.

of their *cancha* led the members of San Lorenzo to explore options near the Oratorio San Antonio to build their own *cancha*. Father Lorenzo Massa negotiated with the College of the Sisters of María Auxiliadora and the Oneta family, who together owned nearly four *manzanas*, the square blocs produced by the grid layout of Buenos Aires' streets. The club initially paid a rent of 50 pesos per month to the college and 10 pesos per month to the Oneta family to use the space. Money was raised from members; Massa allegedly offered to contribute 300 pesos of which the club accepted 150. In total 2500 pesos were raised to build the first installations needed for an official *cancha*. The first match was played May 7, 1916 against Estudiantes de La Plata. San Lorenzo won 2-1. *La Argentina* reported, "An effort worth recognition has been realized by Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro. Last Sunday they inaugurated, while not officially, a new field on Avenida La Plata at 1700. The land was well levelled and with thick grass completely covering the field in a condition that could not be improved. It has a large capacity for spectators and in front of the dressing rooms they've built a large stand, from which on high its possible to get a complete impression of the game" (quoted in Escande 2004:22).

The move to the *cancha* on Avenida La Plata established a relationship with the *barrio* of Boedo immediately to the south of Almagro, separated by Avenida Independencia. By the time of the stadium's construction, Avenida Boedo several blocks to the east had become a central commercial street with cafes, shops, and banks. Avenida La Plata was seen as the western boundary of the *barrio* and Avenida Chiclana divided Boedo from Pompeya. Huracán experienced a period of instability after 1921 when the rent on their field on Avenida La Plata increased and the club moved. In 1933, Huracán purchased property on Avenida Amancio Alcorta in the *barrio* of Parque Patricios and in

1947 opened the Tomás A. Ducó stadium, built out of concrete in an art deco style. The years close of proximity between the two clubs sparked the rivalry, which continued when the clubs became neighbours (Fabbri 2006:79-81). Both clubs in the subsequent years became the two largest social, cultural, and athletic institutions in the southern *barrios* of Buenos Aires. On the boundaries between Boedo, Parque Patricios, and Pompeya, people continue to be divided predominantly between San Lorenzo and Huracán.

During the amateur period, Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro won three championships: 1923, 1924, and 1927. The wooden stands around the *cancha* on Avenida La Plata were expanded several times including the construction of a general admission stand for 2000 spectators in 1922. On 24 June, 1928 the club completed the purchase of the remaining portion of the property. San Lorenzo's board of directors immediately began an expansion of the stadium and facilities. Towering wooden terraces fifty steps high were raised around the field bringing the stadium's capacity to 49 000. New dressing rooms, clubs offices, a ballroom and later a garden, basketball and tennis courts, and a swimming pool were built. Walls were built around the stadium and fences were put up to separate the crowds from the field-of-play. The stadium became the premier venue in Argentina, hosting the 1929 South American Championship Final between Argentina and Uruguay, with Argentina winning. San Lorenzo's stadium was given the nicknames the "Wembley of Buenos Aires" after the famous stadium in London and its most recognized name the *Gasómetro*. The exposed frames of the terraces that stood over the single-story houses recalled the gasometers built to supply the street gas-lamps.

### 2.3 Football as Mass Spectacle

Competitive football from the 1910s onwards was a mass spectator event, leading to several new social dynamics around the sport. First, football clubs began to develop significant relationships with political patrons that sought to form clientelist relationships with the supporters of a club (Frydenberg 2011:126). In San Lorenzo, one of the most successful political allies during the club's rapid expansion was Pedro Bidegain. Vice-president of the club from 1918 till 1928, Bidegain was a well-known and (according to *hinchas* of San Lorenzo) well-respected organizer in the *barrio* of Boedo for the *Unión Cívica Radical* of President Hipólito Yrigoyen (1918-22; 1928-30) and a national representative for Yrigoyen's Radicales from 1929 till 1930, when the president was deposed by a military coup. During that period he also served two years as President of San Lorenzo.<sup>21</sup> Political relationships with the clubs involved a complicated reciprocating give-and-take, with businessmen and politicians rising within the club's board of directors by successfully negotiating financial and material favours for the club in return for popular support. Politics within the clubs often was a balancing act between the interests and demands of the board of directors, the club's *hinchas* and socios, the players, and local politics. Emilio Ramos, a central defender of CA Quilmes, for example, accused Bidegain of attempting to fix a match in 1927 and the newspaper *Crítica* reported in 1929 that San Lorenzo's Juan Maglio threatened to leave the team if someone other than Bidegain won the club elections that year. Despite a facade of amateurism, aspects of professionalization had seeped into football with clubs providing fictitious work or payment under the table to attract and keep top players; San Lorenzo reportedly

<sup>21</sup> Bidegain played a central role in negotiating a 250 000 peso loan that was used for the outright purchase of the Avenida La Plata property and the stadium's expansion in 1928.

was paying players as far back as 1925 when players confronted the board of directors looking for an increase in wages (Frydenberg 2011:210-212).

Second, mass spectatorship of football diversified many clubs' revenues. Most clubs were founded by a small base of dues-paying players. The financial costs of securing a *cancha* encouraged many clubs to look towards expanding their membership base. *Socios*, who paid a monthly fee to be members, at first numbered in the hundreds. Gate-revenues collected on match days for the most part sustained many clubs. Clubs like San Lorenzo, River Plate, and Vélez Sársfield became models for clubs with a large number of dues-paying *socios*. Entitlements included general admission to home matches as well as political participation within the club.<sup>22</sup> To entice membership the clubs also expanded their non-football facilities. During Bidegain's year as President of San Lorenzo in 1929, the club made several improvements to its facilities and expanded membership to 15 616 *socios* (Res 2008:73).<sup>23</sup> The expansion of the Argentinian club facilities followed the desires of the club's *socios*. Many of the working-class *socios* during the 1920s were rising out of poverty with more varied demands for their leisure time. The five clubs with the largest numbers of *socios* in 1930: River Plate (~15 000), San Lorenzo (~15 000), Boca Juniors (~8500), Independiente (~4200), and Racing Club (~3000); became known in the press as the *cinco grandes* (big five), a denomination that continues to be used to this day (Frydenberg 2011:165).

22 In 1915, the largest club River Plate had around 700 *socios*, Vélez less than 100 and Huracán just over 400. River had grown to 3500 *socios* by 1922 and 5000 the following year. San Lorenzo had reached 1200 *socios* by 1922, Vélez 700 (Frydenberg 2011:164)

23 Pedro Bidegain, as an influential ally of President Yrigoyen, was exiled to Montevideo and later arrested and imprisoned in Ushuaia, Patagonia by the military dictatorship following the September 6, 1930 coup. He returned to Boedo only to die of lung cancer on November 21, 1933 at the age of 46.

Third, the mass spectatorship produced new social dynamics within the stadiums, in particular the rise of the *hincha* as an active participant in the match. *Hinchas* developed several novel practices, the most sensational was episodes of violence in the stadium. The term *barra* – bar – was associated with the more vocal and organized *hinchas*.<sup>24</sup> Violence was periodically used to disrupt matches and intimidate opposing teams and the referee during crucial matches. During the 1927 championship, San Lorenzo’s infamous “*barra de goma*” – bar of rubber – was formed by men who met regularly at Café Dante on Avenida Boedo. The men concealed rubber bicycle tires under the waistband of their pants, which could be filled with sand once inside the stadium to create make-shift clubs. According to interviews conducted years later, the men formed the *barra* to ensure San Lorenzo’s success at the top of the table, which had been threatened with violence by rival *hinchas*, in particular those of Boca Juniors and Huracán. Popular histories of the club have since credited the *barra de goma* as playing a crucial role in San Lorenzo’s championship that year (Escande 2005; Res 2008). Frydenberg notes the changing disposition of the crowds: “the *hincha* was not a passive consumer, rather an active participant willing to share their opinions on sporting justice and openly intervening in the spectacle with the clear intention of influencing it” (Frydenberg 2011:234). *Hinchas* commonly yelled to support and insult players and referees, threw objects like oranges and bottles onto the field, and innovated coordinated chants and creative displays using their team’s colours. These practices in many other places and contexts in the urban city would have been considered serious

24 The “bar” of the *barra* refers to several different concepts: literal metal bars that could be used as weapons, the metal bars installed onto stadium terraces to prevent human avalanches, behind which *hinchas* would stand; and metaphorically to the supporting strength of metal bars used in construction.

transgressions; the growth of the carnivalesque crowd suggests that public authorities reluctantly accepted such practices when they were performed in the stadium. The engagement of *hinchas* reflected a desire for a strong emotional connection, beyond one of passive distraction, that could be formed between *hinchas* and their club.

#### **2.4 Nationalism in Football *Criollo*, the *Potrero*, and the *Pibe***

Some newspapers reacted against this active *hincha*, representing them as ignorant, irrational, and at times savage. Frydenberg notes how some lamented football's transformation from a sport played by *caballeros* (gentleman) to one that had become a spectacle of disorder (2011:227-230). Descriptions of the *hinchas* reflect a broader concern about football's role within the moral project of the nation. Football, again, is situated within the dialectic of incorporation and distinction experienced by residents of the city. As a "proletarian cult", Hobsbawm notes that in England "football operated both on a local and national scale, so that the topic of the day's matches would provide common ground for conversation between virtually any two male workers" (2012:288-9). At the beginning of the twentieth century, football, where it had become a successful participatory and spectator sport, articulated divisions of social-class. Elements of the public morality promoted through football reflect and refract its historic relationship to working-class living. On the one hand, there are "top down" disciplining conditions placed on football related to hegemonic processes of control and order. On the other hand, ideologies emergent from working-class experiences are articulated through practices in football spectatorship. In Argentina, the connection to ideas about "suffering"

in football represent the sport's broader connection to a working class morality.<sup>25</sup> Football's transformation into a mass spectated event reveals contradictory aspects of Argentina's complex social-class history (Duke and Crolley 2001). Processes surrounding football were simultaneously about incorporation and division in Argentina's national imaginary, as well as simultaneously part of hegemonic processes and emergent from alternative worldviews. The way in which football acted to incorporate immigrant populations into the city and the nation articulates the dialogic encounter between how economic and political actors sought to incorporate people and how working-class men wanted to be recognized. As a result football in Argentina became a particular shared tradition through media consumption, conversation, and experience.

Focusing on the broader context, the modernist project of Argentinian nationalism articulates a particular concern about Argentina's founding conditions. Of note is the influence of the imagined dichotomy between "civilization and barbarism" exemplified by President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's (1868-1874) text *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie* written in 1845, which contributed to an ideology of a progressive modernity (Svampa 1994). Parallels to the concept of order and disorder appear in moral concerns about football's disruptive actions and attitudes. I explore some of the historic parallels through the archetypes of *fútbol criollo*, *el pibe*, and the representation of the *hincha*.

25 Suffering and football is discussed further in Chapter Four. Beyond the scope of this dissertation, when interacting with people I came to understand that many lower-class Argentinians articulate a demand for dignity as a central component of their politics. Suffering emerges from conditions – political and economic – that are for the most part outside (geographically and socially) of their control. A working-class morality based on dignity, however, implies that people demand recognition of their capabilities to adapt and transform difficult conditions to their favour. Actions, from this perspective, can be meaningful in ways other than defined by their political-economic position in society, outside and beyond hegemonic social politics.

The sport's own popularity among the urban working class made it a very successful component of populist politicians seeking democratic support. Pablo Alabarces (2008) argues that football in Argentina is a historical “cultural machine”; a social phenomena that “produces the ideas, practices, configurations of experience, institutions, arguments, and personalities” (Sarlo 1998:207). Argentinian nationalism broadly involved the making, reproduction, and imposition of an imaginary, which included the importation, translation and dialogue of ideas, as well as moments of rejection and criticism (Sarlo 1998). Alabarces (2008) uses textual documentation from major football newspapers and magazines, as well as dramatic films involving football, to show how football contributed to a mass-consumed narrative that reflected and produced an idea of Argentinian national identity. Often the narrative relied on comparisons that used ideas on the national projects of Europe, which were viewed to be more successful.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, journalistic descriptions of successes and failures of teams representing Argentina often reflected and refracted a broad nationalistic narrative that worked to establish Argentina as a simultaneously European but distinct nation undergoing a project to be modern and prosperous (Alabarces 2008; Alabarces and Rodriguez 1999; Archetti 1996; 1999; Frydenberg, Daskal and Torres 2013). In the first international matches, amateur teams that represented Argentina often played against travelling clubs from England. Argentina's early losses were depicted as metaphors for the failures of the country to develop a modern industrial capacity. Visiting English players were described, ironically as football had become a working-class sport in England, as gentleman who exhibited the qualities of fair-play. As more of Argentina's players started to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds and the club leagues

became more diverse and competitive, the teams that represented Argentina against international teams also became more successful. Journalists used the opportunity to express the emergence of a distinct Argentinian style: that of the *criollo*, which comes from the racial category of Spanish colonialism that signifies locally born but of pure-European descent. *Criollo* often referred to the several-generation old population of white colonialists who lived mostly in the interior of the country and from an urban perspective was associated with the economic practice of cattle ranching by *gauchos* (cowboys). *Criollos* were also powerful landholding families.

Ironically, the *fútbol criollo* described by Argentinian newspapers was most closely associated with the teams composed of first and second generation immigrants from Buenos Aires' working-class *barrios* and factories. In those descriptions, *criollo* was used to connote rugged independence as a distinctly Argentinian quality. Reflecting the style of the street football, players were seen to be less refined, prone to rash tackles, but they were also considered to be more cunning, creative, and aggressive. Teams on both sides of River Plate estuary used the language of *fútbol criollo* to describe their distinct style of play.<sup>26</sup> The symbolic claim made by *fútbol criollo* incorporated immigrant football players into the national imaginary as representatives of Argentina; their incorporation, however, depended on their success. Failures were also blamed on the lack of discipline and emotional excesses in *fútbol criollo*. Blending *fútbol criollo* with the

26 Football in Uruguay developed under in a similar context to Argentina. Montevideo is a much smaller city than Buenos Aires and during this period received less immigration. Nevertheless, many other factors were similar such as the role of British railway companies and their workers, the composition of immigrant populations predominantly from Italy and Spain, as well as the social, cultural, and political links between Buenos Aires and Montevideo. These similarities led many to argue that Argentinians and Uruguayans playing football were developing a similar style. International rivalries between Argentinian and Uruguayan teams were also a significant reason for this convergence.

discipline of English gentlemanly team-play was perceived as key to Argentina's success on the pitch (Archetti 1999; Alabarces 2008; Frydenberg 2008). Similar social and economic commentaries were made of Argentina as a whole: disciplined international capital was needed to harness the rugged and natural interior of Argentina.

Despite Argentina's political-economic transformations over the years, there are continuities in how the national character is expressed through football. The *pibe*, which translates as young boy, is a central archetype player in Argentinian football (Archetti 1999; 2008). Common in contemporary Argentinian Spanish, *pibe* has particular connotations both in the stadium and on the streets of the poorer regions of conurbation of Buenos Aires. Young players who are seen to be tactically naive and relatively undisciplined but energetic and technically gifted are often referred to as *pibes*. *Hinchas* to yell out "*Dale pibe!*" – let's go kid – during matches to encourage the aggressive play of younger players and will demand that the manager play *los pibes* from the club's academy during extended periods of losses.

The *pibe* was established as a character in Argentinian football in the decades leading up to professionalism (1933). In a 1928 publication of *El Gráfico* (no. 470), an early and influential football magazine in Argentina, well known journalist Borocotó describes the monument he would build to the inventor of dribbling:

*A pibe with a dirty but intelligent face, a mane of hair rebelling against the comb; a roving trickster with persuasive eyes and a sparkling gaze... a few roughly sewn patches cover holes in his pants; his shirt in Argentinian stripes... His stature must be characteristic: it must seem as if he is dribbling with a rag ball. That is important: the ball cannot be any other (quoted in Archetti 1999:181).*

The narrative about the *pibe* expressed the idea that he was a product of his social conditions and poverty (Archetti 1999:119). The *pibe* played outside officially organized football both physically and metaphorically. Without a formal space to play, the *pibe* made a *potrero*, a reference to a horse-training enclosure, from whatever was available to him in the urban space: a dirt lot, the street, or the uneven grass of an open field.<sup>27</sup> The *potrero* was not, however, a space of learning, which implies institutionalized and routine practice, but rather the abilities of the *pibe* became honed through the unpredictable experiences of open play. Romanticized poverty was essential to the development of the *pibe's* skills; organized football the *pibe's* antithesis. The rough field and poorly formed ball were challenges overcome by his creativity. The *potrero* was also a space where the rules of the organized game were not enforced by a referee. Rather, the game was structured by the loosely agreed upon guidelines shared between players. Trickery and self-expression became valuable traits.

The archetype of the *pibe* is essential, Archetti argues, to *fútbol criollo*. In the same edition of the *El Gráfico*, this emergent Argentinian style was contrasted to that of the English teams:

In English football, everything about individual personal action must be destroyed in order to form a solid whole in such a way so that the team is not composed of separated players but rather a uniform action of everyone together. That is how British football has become truly powerful: with the regular and impulsive force of a true machine. But, it is monotonous because it is always uniform and the same. *Rioplatense* football, however, does not entirely sacrifice individual play; it uses more dribbling, the generous individual effort, as much in attack as in defence, and as a result it is a football that is more agile and attractive (quoted in Archetti 2008:265).

<sup>27</sup> The *potrero* as a space for football has metaphorical links to the *pampas*, the wild flatlands of the interior of Argentina where *gauchos* drove cattle. The *potrero* in the context of the gaucho is the fenced in space used to domesticate and train horses, revealing compelling images of the wild *pibe* domesticated just enough to become a successful football player.

While unable to compete with the processes of industrial socialization which appeared to underpin English football, it was believed Argentinian and Uruguayan football had countered with an unpredictable element: the art of dribbling. Archetti notes that the author saw British football as “perfect” but also “industrially perfect,” like a machine where repetitive practice lead to routinized performances. The individualistic flourishes of the *criollo*-style was seen to lack such discipline but, in light of emerging international victories, was cited as the reason for Argentinian success (Archetti 2008:266). Figuring out how to best incorporate the *pibe* into a football team thus became an important challenge for Argentinian teams. In the formative period of Argentinian football, success was argued to come from the right balance of contrasting 'styles', where the deficiencies of the stylish but individualistic *pibe* were covered by determined and selfless contributions by other players on the team.

While the creativity of the stereotypical *pibe* finds its place within the play of football, in other contexts similar traits have been presented as a hinderance to Argentina’s progress. Maristella Svampa (1994) argues that a historic and polemic dichotomy of “civilization or barbarism” is socially and political reproduced through Argentinian nationalism. The intellectual origins of the dichotomy lies in the influential book *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie* by Domingo Sarmiento. Through Sarmiento’s representation of *caudillo* Juan Facundo Quiroga, a political and military leader of federalist forces from the La Rioja in the interior of the country and assassinated in 1834, Sarmiento sought to understand the motivations of charismatic political leaders and why they were so influential in Argentinian politics. The book was seen as an indirect critique of the *caudillo* Governor of Buenos Aires Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829-1832; 1835-

1852), who has been controversially has been described as the Dictator of Argentina. Rosas had the political backing of other *caudillos* like Quiroga from the interior of the country. Advocating for the civilizing effects of the city, and in particular a Europeanized lifestyle and education system, Sarmiento believed that a modernist project for Argentina was endangered by populist conservative strongman leaders. Svampa finds that within this emerging discussion of civilization, there has always been a corresponding “spectre of barbarity” ascribed to the masses, who are coopted by charismatic leaders. Barbarism is often accompanied with characteristics of being socially maladapted, poorly educated, prone to emotional reactions, and generally dangerous to social stability.

National political projects develop ideological concepts, such as the dichotomy of civilization-barbarity, in relation to collective practices (Hobsbawm 2012). Arguments about the *pibe* in football suggest such a reflection/refraction, though the application of the concept is often more ambiguous. The *pibe* is undisciplined and disruptive but his contributions on the football field could be harnessed by a civilizing structure and organization. Football’s popularity as a mass-spectator event in Argentina also engages this ideological dichotomy. Violence amongst *hinchas* is interpreted as demonstrating the savagery of the masses. The image of the savage *hincha* is used in various media to reproduce a social fear of lower-class men, which also refracts the elite’s dissolution about football’s “civilizing” capabilities. Simultaneously, however, the emotional devotion displayed by *hinchas* is interlinked to other social practices that are crucial to the urban city. Important to the civilizing project of the city, football both as a practiced sport and spectated event historically has been part inclusionary processes. Immigrants were claimed as representatives of Argentina through *fútbol criollo* and *hinchas* came to

claim a sense of belonging through their social participation in the making of the *barrio*, an argument explored further in the following chapter. Ideological ambiguity around ‘modernity’ and ‘barbarity’ in Argentinian nationalism is part of meaningful interactions created both by football players and *hinchas*.

## **2.5 From Football’s Professionalization to Peronism**

Argentinian football’s turn to professionalism in the 1930s refracted class dynamics of football’s players, the sport’s relationship to the masses through the spectacle continued to be infused with concerns about an inclusive democratic Argentina. In the lead up to professionalism, the clubs were consolidating their membership base and building institutional infrastructure. In 1931, eighteen clubs including San Lorenzo and the other *cinco grandes* broke away from the official *Asociación Argentina de Football* to form the *Liga Argentina de Football* as a professional league.<sup>28</sup> The separation lasted three years as several clubs in the official league attempted to maintain their amateur status. When the leagues merged again in 1934, several clubs such as Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires did not form teams. Professionalization signalled an end to the great expansion of football clubs in the City of Buenos Aires as clubs began to consolidate their territorial base. Over the following three decades the creation of new football teams shifted to the suburbs in Greater Buenos Aires but few clubs founded after the professional era have ever reached the *Primera División*.

San Lorenzo in this period was an influential club. Lights were installed at the *Gasómetro* in 1935, the first illuminated stadium in Argentina. Two years before, San

<sup>28</sup> The *Asociación Argentina de Football* continued to operate an amateur *Primera División* league till 1934, when the leagues were once again merged as the *Asociación del Football Argentino* (AFA). In 1946, the organization changed its name to the *Asociación del Fútbol Argentino*.

Lorenzo won its first professional championship. “The streets of Boedo last night presented an extraordinary show. Everyone in this populated neighbourhood where the club San Lorenzo has planted itself went out on the streets to celebrate the triumph of their favourite team: women, men, children, young and old together cheering San Lorenzo, champion,” the *Diario Noticias Gráficas* reported. “It was impossible to pass through the streets of Boedo. There were so many people celebrating; chants against Boca accompanied the festivities” (cited in Res 2008:83-84). The victory was also accompanied by a tango: *El Ciclón*. The title has since become one of the most recognizable nicknames of San Lorenzo, used regularly in songs and conversation to refer to the club.<sup>29</sup>

Recognizable *hinchas* also started to emerge out of the mass anonymity of the football crowd to become notable characters in the club’s mythology. *El Gráfico* reported in 1935 on one of the most recognizable *hinchas* of San Lorenzo: Baldomera O’Gorman, also known as “*La Negra Petronila*” in reference to her favourite player and one of the club’s stars Afro-Brazilian Petronilho De Brito. In the interview O’Gorman described her emotional investment made as a *hincha*:

I don’t deny it. It was a match against Independiente in which Lecea was killing the kid Arrieta... As you can imagine, I was furious. It’s not something you do, even less when you are winning. In front of me was the Independiente manager. He got up, sat down, got up again, so I yelled “Move over!” and nothing. He looked at me and laughed. I told a kid to “get me a rock” and I threw it. I was suspended; its too bad I didn’t hit him (in Res 2008:96-97).

O’Gorman was a regular in the women’s section of the stadium, she was known to swing her scarf embroidered with “San Lorenzo: Campeón 1933” above her head and yell out

<sup>29</sup> The music was written by Anselmo Aieta and the lyrics by Anyico y Pipo. San Lorenzo’s nickname *el ciclón* has outlasted the song.

“*Arriba San Lorenzo!*”. Recently “*La Negra Petronila*” was memorialized in a mural by a group of *hinchas* who have been covering the walls of the *barrio* in images from the history of the club.

In the 1930s, San Lorenzo also became involved in other athletic and team sports, producing several national champions. The club won its first weightlifting championship in 1934, a title it held for the following 18 years. Members started to train in boxing and track and field events. San Lorenzo’s roller hockey team joined the first division in 1935. Women’s basketball achieved a championship and athletes from the club won several long-distance roller-skating and artistic roller-skating trophies in the decade. The club also competed successfully in the national chess league. During this period Delfo Cabrera, who would eventually go on to win the marathon gold medal in the 1948 London Olympics, began to train under Francisco Mura. Match-day revenues, which were amongst the highest in Argentina and the membership-dues of 20 640 *socios* by 1939 supported a diversifying number of activities, which required the club to expand several of its facilities around the *Gasómetro* stadium (Res 2008:79-134).

The period of football’s professionalization coincided with a global economic crisis. The crisis greatly affected Argentina’s agricultural industry and precipitated a large internal migration towards the cities and their suburbs. Argentina’s first civic-military dictatorship began in 1930, following a coup d’état by the military against the Civic Radical government of Hipolito Yrigoyen. The successive presidencies of Lt. General José Félix Uriburu (1930-32), Agustín Pedro Justo (1932-38), Roberto María Ortiz (1938-42) and Ramón Castillo (1942-43) are known together as Argentina’s “Infamous Decade.” The period was marked by electoral fraud, the strengthening of the military as a

dominant political actor, a revanchist political incorporation of the conservative Catholic church, and the dramatic reshaping of the urban landscape through the emergence of what were later called *villas de miserias* (shantytowns).<sup>30</sup> The *villas* have become an enduring part of the urban landscape of many Argentinian cities, particularly Buenos Aires, providing housing to successive waves of migration from other parts of Argentina and neighbouring countries. Associated with significant poverty, a lack of public services, and on the margins of state regulation (though often the focus of state repression), the *villas* have developed a reputation as spaces of insecurity, drug trafficking, and organized crime. Many of the *villas* and similarly marginalized *barrios* have also been associated with some of Argentina's greatest footballers, reflecting the enduring character of the *pibe*, including Diego Maradona who was born in Villa Fiorito and Carlos Tevez who grew up in Fuerte Apache both just beyond the border of the City of Buenos Aires.<sup>31</sup>

The "Infamous Decade" was bookended by another coup d'état by military officers. Juan Domingo Perón, a member of the coup in 1943, rose to power first as a Minister of Labour and later Vice-President and Secretary of War. Perón won the 1946 general election, starting a period of Peronist policies supported by the populist presence of his wife Evá Perón. Labour unions had a strong relationship with Perón's governments (1946-1955). The *Confederación General del Trabajo de la República Argentina*

30 Journalist Bernardo Verbitskey published *Villa Miseria También es América*, a descriptive novella about life in the shantytowns, in 1957 that imprinted upon the imaginary of the city the *villa* as a particular spatial form. Informally built homes and businesses with available materials on unclaimed or under-utilized land, have in several cases, developed into communities of tens of thousands of people and have established themselves as relatively permanent parts of the city despite their unregulated formation. *Villas*, despite their longstanding presence within the city, continue to be spaces of precarity and ongoing debate in terms of public policy, with some politicians and sectors of Argentinian society calling for their demolition.

31 Fuerte Apache was built by the state from 1966 into the 1970s as part of a plan to displace residents of *Villa 31*, one of Buenos Aires most famous *villas*. The *barrio* has since developed a similar reputation and culture as the informally constructed *villas*.

(General Confederation of Labour of the Republic of Argentina, CGT), founded in 1930 by socialist unions, developed deep ties with Perón's *Partido Justicialista* (Justicialist Party, PJ) and grew into the largest federation of Argentinian labour.<sup>32</sup> The relationship between the PJ and the CGT is often cited as one of the central principles of Argentinian corporatism. Argentina's working class developed a mythical position within the national imaginary. The state, committed to an industrial transformation, drew upon the symbols and representations of the factory workers. The PJ also developed significant organizational capacity at the local level through reciprocal material as well as social relationships between political representatives of the party and residents. In particular, Peronist politics incorporated previously marginalized people from the rural areas into the political structure of the country. Large public housing projects were also built. Nevertheless, *villas* continued to expand.

The government promoted symbolic representations of a unified and integrated Argentinian nation as part of its overarching political project. Many of these general facets of Peronist politics have a continued historical presence in Argentinian political and economic relationships today (Auyero 2000), while consistently being dynamic in relation to changing social conditions and political contexts. Since the end of Perón's first period of presidency in 1955, Peronist politics has oscillated between left and right wing versions of itself, most notably in the contrast between the neoliberal government of Carlos Menem (1989-1999) and the Kirchner governments (2003-2015). Because of the prominence of Peronist politics in Argentina, alternative political parties and ideological

<sup>32</sup> Other federations were also formed in this period, representing a diverse spectrum of leftist political perspectives from anarchist, communist, social-democratic, to social-Christian.

currents have formed in opposition to these oscillations, but often reflect a similar focus on local-level organizing.

Sport was central to the Peronist national imaginary. During the Peronist period between 1946 and 1955, football clubs developed direct political relationships with the PJ (Rein 1998). Club officials would often cross from club politics to state politics (Duke and Crolley 2001). On a symbolic level, football helped to express a vision of the emerging “modern” Argentina, with a growing robust middle class with more material wealth and greater amounts of leisure time. Football as spectacle emerged as a collective public activity for the masses.<sup>33</sup> Many large stadiums were built during this period, including the construction of Racing Club’s concrete stadium named after Juan D. Perón and Huracán’s art deco Estadio Tomás Adolfo Ducó.

Several popular films during this period reflect the significance of sports, in particular football, to the national culture (Alabarces 2008; Conde 2005). *El Hincha* (1951), starring tango composer and actor Enrique Santos Discépolo, is an iconic representation of the football clubs of the period and of what *hinchas* see as eternal characteristics of their fanaticism. In one of the central scenes, Discépolo’s character Ñato bursts into his club’s ornate board room; well-dressed men in suits are sitting around a large wooden table debating the declining fate of the football team. Ñato wearing the club’s jersey below his disheveled jacket believes he has a plan to save his club from relegation. He recommends a young *pibe* from the club’s reserves who he has watched and believes to be a talented passionate player who will care for “the colours.” He is

33 From 1946 to 1950, an average of 3 330 000 spectators attended 266 matches. Between 1951 and 1955 the yearly average was 3 092 000 people at 245 matches (cited in Conde 2005:23).

tossed out of the meeting by the executives and is confronted by the secretary who asks Ñato: “What do you want? The *hinchas* can’t decide anything.” Ñato emotionally counters the secretary: “What, the *hinchas* can’t do anything? What would the club be without the *hinchas*? An empty vessel! The *hinchas*, who isn’t seen, is the soul of the colours and who gives everything without wanting anything in return. This is the *hinchas*!” In part the film underlines the dynamic consequences of football’s transformation, the rise of the professional footballer and the club as a business. At the same time, there is a seemingly timeless representation of the *hinchas*: the defence of the “colours” and a selfless devotion to the club. Analyzing the film’s representation of the *hinchas* on the stadium terraces, Mariana Conde observes “the ‘*hinchas*’ becomes an anonymous protagonist of the consecrated space of the nation, made by the imaginary of the Argentinian style” (2004:27). Simultaneously, Discépolo’s character stands out – the noble protagonist of the *hinchas* – with aspirational responsibility to provide a moral compass to his club in its darkest moments.

The Peronist imaginary of the nation represented through football was expansive but also limited. As a public activity for mostly men, football produced a masculine image of the nation (Archetti 1999). This reflects other aspects of representations of women in Peronist Argentina. Despite recognizing women's right to vote for the first time on September 23, 1947, women's public participation in society often was related to roles in the household and representations of motherhood (Grammático 2010:127-9; Palermo 1997). There is a transference of this gender-relation to football. Stadiums continued to contain separate sections for women and children labelled “family sections”. Women who did not attend matches often developed a relationship to the sport through their husbands

and sons. Media representations in Argentina of women in the stadium, María Graciela Rodríguez argues, only began to shift during transmissions of the 1994 World Cup in the United States. In the 1990 Italy World Cup cameras focused on the mothers, wives, sisters, girlfriends or daughters of the players. Images since 1994 have increasingly shown women as supporters of the national team, wearing jerseys and showing an emotional interaction with the team often, however, from a masculine “viewpoint” (2005:238). While still a minority, changes to the gendering of the stadium is in large part because of the active presence of women, who transform the masculine hegemony of the terraces. At times this relationship is one of confrontation against sexism, at others women *hinchas* reproduce the characteristics of the masculine *hincha*, in particular also communicating the devoted and selfless characteristics depicted by Discépolo.

## **2.6 San Lorenzo during Peronism and the Dirty War to the Present**

Historian Adolfo Res suggests that institutionally San Lorenzo began a slow decline starting in the late 1940s. The football team won the 1946 championship and concluded two successful tours of Spain in 1946/47 and again in 1949/50. Contested presidential elections in 1949 led to disruptive political divisions within the club. San Lorenzo continued to build infrastructure at its Avenida La Plata property: the Salón San Martín auditorium and new offices were inaugurated in 1950 and a four lane bowling alley in 1953. By 1959, club politicians during elections proposed the construction of a modern 150 000 person olympic stadium on Avenida La Plata. Modern concrete stadiums built by other clubs, including the Bombonera (built by Boca Juniors in 1940 and expanded in 1949) and the Estadio Monumental (by River Plate in 1938 and updated for the 1978

World Cup), replaced the wooden *Gasómetro* as the premier stadiums in Argentina. While the club experienced limited success in professional football, other areas of the club continued to be highly competitive: the men's basketball team won 9 championships between 1942 and 1960. San Lorenzo's next championship was won in 1959 after a decade of obscurity with the spectacular rise of San Lorenzo's all-time leading goalscorer José Francisco Sanfilippo, nicknamed El Nene.

In a wider context, Buenos Aires was dramatically reshaped by the political-economy of the Peronist years. Laura Podalsky (2004) notes how an elitist unease with the militancy of working-class organizations and the migration of rural workers to the city was translated into the literary and film culture: "After 1945, the middle and upper classes were forced to recognize not only new features in the cityscape (e.g., the presence of new people, new buildings) and new urban practices (e.g., changes in the ways people moved about the city and used the urban sphere), but also shifts in the city's cultural sphere" (Podalsky 2004:5). In response, conservative forces within the military, Catholic Church, and elites organized to overthrow Perón in 1955, sending the leader into exile. Working-class wages were depressed during three years of military control. Arturo Frondizi was elected in 1959 in Argentina's return to democratic elections; the Peronists, however were banned from organizing a political party. Frondizi began a developmentalist turn that emphasized Argentinian automotive and petroleum industries backed by foreign direct investment. A "public-private" divide was re-inscribed onto the post-Peronist city by solidifying methods of social stratification: increased land values in upper-class *barrios*, quasi-public enclosed private shopping arcades, an increased emphasis on the automobile, and the rise of consumerism to articulate self-identification

(Podalsky 2004:118-137). A consumerist “middle-class” rather than the working-class become the central mode of social recognition and incorporation.

Governments oscillated between presidents elected from limited elections who were deposed by conservative military forces before the end of their term. Growing popular resentment of the dictatorship of General Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970) led to several general strikes in 1969 throughout the country. Left-wing armed groups formed in resistance both from the left-wing of the Peronist Party: the *Montoneros*; as well as several revolutionary left groups. State-led repression sparked broad condemnation and in 1973, the military relented to open elections that were won by Héctor Campora, who represented the left-wing tendencies of the Peronist PJ. Fearing the alignment between Campora and a more radical left, as well as escalating tensions in the region in the wake of the coup d'état against Chile's President Allende, Juan Perón's exile was lifted and new elections were almost immediately held, allowing for Perón's third term. Social instability due to an intensifying armed conflict including state-organized repression against its opposition and worsening economic conditions contributed to the most recent civic-military dictatorship in 1976.<sup>34</sup> Isabel Perón, who had become president in 1974 following the death of her husband, was deposed and the junta led by General Jorge Videla began the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (National Reorganization Process). Targeting economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of Argentinian society, the *Proceso* was a radical revanchist transformation most notably marked by its

<sup>34</sup> Expectant crowds at Ezeiza Airport turned up in large numbers to meet Perón as he stepped off the plane in 1973. Snipers attacked the crowd killing 13 and injuring hundreds. The incident, amongst other targeted assassinations by the *Alianza Anticomunista Argentina* (Anti-communist Alliance of Argentina, Triple-A), a right-wing paramilitary group, led to the remobilization of left-wing *guerrillas*.

violent suppression of dissent, in particular the arrest, torture, and clandestine assassination of working-class and student activists.

Football throughout the tumultuous and violent political period continued to be an important part of Argentinian society. How the sport and social clubs facilitated relationships within Argentinian society did, however, shift. In part the changing relationships were affected by the political situation but other factors were also important. Automobiles helped to transform the spatial relationship to the clubs and de-emphasize the importance of the immediate *barrio*. The largest and most successful clubs – in particular the *cinco grandes* – also developed fanbases through radio and television broadcasts beyond the frontiers of their *barrio*. Such clubs developed extravagant plans to construct *ciudad deportivas* (sports cities) and spectacular facilities dedicated to leisure. Modernism, as a changing aspirational definition of urban living, continued to be a central focus of planners. The *Ciudad Deportiva* of River Plate was an early model for the evolution of the clubs (Res 2008:369). Aligned with the City of Buenos Aires, Boca Juniors began to plan a massive *Ciudad Deportiva* built on islands made from infill from construction projects within the harbour. To the south-west, the city began construction of a large urban park. San Lorenzo entered into negotiations with the City of Buenos Aires to gain control of a property in Bajo Flores (Lower Flores), less than 4 km away from their main campus on Avenida La Plata, where the club proposed to build a new modern *ciudad deportiva* including a massive new stadium for over 110 000 spectators. Urban planners envisioned the large member-owned clubs acting as centres for leisure activities. The economic downturn in the 1970s led Boca Juniors to eventually abandon their half built *ciudad deportiva* and refocus on their club's property around the Bombonera. San

Lorenzo, which had already built swimming pools and several buildings, halted its transition towards the *ciudad deportiva* in Bajo Flores but maintained existing facilities for its members.

Without a new stadium and no resources dedicated to renovations, the *Gasómetro* began to show years of neglect. Nevertheless San Lorenzo's football team had its most successful period between 1968 and 1974. At the beginning of the 1960s, five young boys: Doval, Areán, Veira, Casa and Telch; rose through the ranks of the club's youth teams and were nicknamed the *Carasucias* – the dirty faced kids, recalling the style of the *pibe* and the Forzosos in their street-inspired play. Two remained, Roberto “Oveja” Telch and Héctor “Bambino” Viera by 1968. They were joined by a diminutive Uruguayan Sergio “El Sapo” Villar. The 1968 team would go undefeated for the first time in Argentinian football, winning the Metropolitana tournament. The press called them *Los Matadores*, the killers. Another first for San Lorenzo: the double Metropolitana and Nacional in 1972.<sup>35</sup> Another championship in the Nacional was won in 1974. In all four championships, Telch, a dominant central midfielder, Agustín Irusta, Victorio Cocco, and Villar were a constant presence. El Sapo wore the Azulgrana jersey in 461 competitive matches, more than any other player. Players like Telch and Villar are emblematic of the mythical player who reflects the *hinchas*' emotional attachment to their club. Nostalgia for time when “players truly felt for the colours” is today a common refrain against the “mercenaries” of contemporary football.

<sup>35</sup> Between 1967 (when a national tournament was organized for the first time) and 1984, Buenos Aires clubs continued to participate in a regional tournament: the Metropolitana. In 1984/85, the tournaments were merged into a single Primera División.

Despite the successes, the club's finances were in disarray. Beginning in 1975 the club began to sell several of its veteran players as debts mounted. San Lorenzo's decline reflected both broad trends in leisure and people's access to wealth, as well as the diminishing stability of the club. Factions within the club's board of directors fought over the economic future of the club. On 6 July 1978 Moisés Annan, a businessman in the textile industrial and a relative outsider, led a unified list of several opposing factions to become San Lorenzo's President. Annan declared at his inauguration his intentions for the club: "I am convinced that what is all important right now is football, first football, then football... and everything else is secondary. The priorities will be: to sell the property on Avenida Rivadavia and everything we have on Avenida La Plata with the possible move to the *Ciudad Deportiva*, leaving a small piece for a future social office" (Res 2008:368). What would become a controversial plan amongst *hinchas* was backed by members of the club's assembly. Adolfo Res argues that the Municipal government since the 1960s had misled the club on two points that had significant influence on San Lorenzo's planning for the club's facilities on Avenida La Plata. First, when the City of Buenos Aires had transferred the property of the *Ciudad Deportiva* in Bajo Flores it had been accompanied by plans for significant public and private investment in the area that remained unrealized by the 1970s. The 99 year lease for the property in Bajo Flores with the City in 1965 was accompanied with wording that would allow for the expropriation of Avenida La Plata. During this period San Lorenzo failed to refurbish its Avenida La Plata facilities, with the board of directors preferring to invest in new projects in Bajo Flores. Having only partially moved to the location in Bajo Flores, by the late 1970s San Lorenzo started to fear that it would lose both properties. Second, and more controversial,

the Municipal government in 1972 passed an urban plan for the southern *barrios* of Buenos Aires that proposed to build a major road through the middle of San Lorenzo's property on Avenida La Plata (Escande 2007:172; Res 2008:367-369).

On 2 December 1979, a year after Argentina hosted and won the 1978 World Cup, San Lorenzo played its last match, a 0-0 tie against Boca Juniors, in the *Gasómetro*. Inspectors for the City had ordered the stadium closed, citing safety concerns about the physical state of the stadium and its wooden terraces. Enrique Escande quotes Carkis Ferreira, a journalist for *El Grafico* who covered the match: "If the news had been that the *Gasómetro* was going to be closed for good you'd imagine it would have been on the front page of the magazine but there was nothing that suggested we needed to print it" (Escande 2004:180). The club's vice-president Juan José Passo had suggested that it was only "rumours" that the stadium was ordered to be demolished. By 1980, however, it was clear that neither the City of Buenos Aires or the club's board of directors were going to save the *Gasómetro*.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless the stadium remained standing until 1982; several *hinchas* recall its looming presence behind locked gates.

Brigadier General Osvaldo Cacciatore was installed by the military junta as Mayor of Buenos Aires on 2 April 1976, a position he held till the end of the civic-military dictatorship. Cacciatore's urban plan for Buenos Aires called for factories to be displaced out of the city, the *villas de miseria* to be dismantled, numerous new elevated

<sup>36</sup> On 21 February 1980, the club released its Memory and Balance in which one paragraph of 80 pages, described the motivation of the Board of Directors: "There are many objective left to complete. The number one priority is the construction of our sports complex, a project for the whole community, as much for members and sympathizers of San Lorenzo, which it justifiably deserves to be. With this outlook, the Board of Directors has decided that our glorious *Gasómetro* is the next to disappear (*desaparecer*) in the unyielding march of progress. This progress takes with it terraces and fields, silent witnesses of the history of San Lorenzo that will live on in the hearts and feelings of every San Lorencistas" (quoted in Escande 2007:181).

highways be built on expropriated land, and new plazas created to beautify the city (see: Jajamovich and Menazzi 2012; Menazzi 2012). The elevated 25 de Mayo highway, which cuts through the middle of Boedo running on an east-west axis, was completed in 1980 several blocks north of the Avenida La Plata property. In the end it was one of only a few major highway projects realized by Cacciatore's administration. A week before leaving the Presidency of San Lorenzo in 1980, Annan agreed to grant the City of Buenos Aires 4501 m<sup>2</sup> of the Avenida La Plata property in return for written recognition of the club's ownership of Bajo Flores. In a letter addressed to Annan, the municipal government stated the land given by San Lorenzo would be used to build an elementary school and housing complex. Neither was built but the agreement was the first step to the eventual sale of the rest of the Avenida La Plata property. After playing for one year in the stadium of Huracán and with the *Gasómetro* was still standing, newly elected President Vicente Bonina attempted to re-open the stadium for the upcoming championship. Reportedly, Cacciatore aggressively rejected the possibility saying "*La gente se puede ir a la reputa madre que los parió*" and personally threatened Bonina (Res 2008:370). The courts ordered in 1982 that a second portion of the property, 7 760 m<sup>2</sup>, be sold to cover unpaid debts for the 1969 construction of swimming pools (Res 2008:377). On 30 December 1982, the Board of Directors decided to sell nearly 27 000 m<sup>2</sup> to Banco Mariva, a company registered in Montevideo, Uruguay for a total of \$9 billion pesos or approximately US\$900 000. Carrefour would pay close to US\$ 8 million for the property (Escande 2004: 188; Res 2008:372-376). It is speculated but not proven that members of the City of Buenos Aires government had interests in Banco Mariva. The southern corner

of the property, 1782 Avenida La Plata, and a small sliver on the north-side remained in the ownership of Club Atlético San Lorenzo.

The closure and loss of the stadium and the surrounding property forced San Lorenzo to rent stadiums from its rival clubs at significant cost and lost revenue. In 1982, San Lorenzo became the first *grande* of Argentinian football to be relegated to the second division. The club played a single year in the second division, which revolutionized its fanbase, but it was not until 1993 that San Lorenzo inaugurated their new stadium, the Estadio Pedro Bidegain, more commonly known as the *Nuevo Gasómetro* (New Gasmeter) within the *Ciudad Deportiva*. Club President Fernando Miele (1986-2001) was an instrumental figure in initiating the construction project. On the remaining corner of the Avenida La Plata property, the San Lorenzo built a gym, swimming pool, and club store maintaining a small connection to the *barrio* of Boedo. Besides this site, most of San Lorenzo's facilities have migrated to the Ciudad Deportiva. San Lorenzo's football team won its first national championship after twenty-one years in 1995, followed by another championship in 2001 and the international Copa Mercosur.

By the end of his term, Miele became a highly controversial figure. Miele proposed a plan to privatize operations of the first team by contracting out operations to Swiss-based International Sport and Leisure (ISL). Protests by *hinchas* on November 30, 2000 outside the club were violently repressed by the Federal Police. ISL went bankrupt before the plan was complete and Miele lost the subsequent elections to Alberto Guil (2001-2004) who promised to cover the club's debts, which had increased under Miele's last years, from his own funds. Rafael Savino, an owner of an electricity company in Boedo, became President in the 2004 elections. While efforts to directly privatize the

football team were halted, third-party ownership of player contracts increased as football became the central focus of the club's board of directors. While San Lorenzo won a championship in 2007, the overall financial status of club had deteriorated further and Savino stepped down citing poor health. In 2010 a fourth businessman, Carlos Abdo, owner of Grupo Estática Internacional, a major sports marketing company, became President with plans to expand the small facilities on Avenida La Plata, construct a roof over the Nuevo Gasómetro, and grow the club's membership to over 25 000.

In 2011, San Lorenzo's facilities in Bajo Flores included several football fields, a synthetic field for field hockey, swimming pools, picnic tables and barbecues, a covered roller-hockey court, gymnasium with seating for several hundred spectators, tennis courts, change-rooms and cafeteria, club offices and a dormitory for the football program's youth teams plus parking for over one thousand cars. Much of the facilities in the *Ciudad deportiva* had deteriorated. Few of Abdo's central promises were realized, though there was a small growth in the number of *socios*. More concerning for San Lorenzo's *hinchas*, the football team was in its worst position since 1981 and began the Clausura 2012 on a downward slide towards relegation. In July 2012, following the closure of San Lorenzo's facilities due to the inability of the club to pay its employees, a faction organized by Marcelo Tinelli, one of Argentina's most recognized and influential television presenters, pressured Abdo to resign. Matías Lammens, a relatively unknown 32 year-old, became President backed by Tinelli as Vice-President.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> At a televised press conference to address the economic situation on 17 July 2012 in San Lorenzo's board room in the club's offices on Avenida de Mayo, a well known *hinchas* approached Vice-President Jorge Aldrey and took the microphone out of his hand. Claiming that the political leadership had been stealing from the club and labelled the rest of the leadership as "traitors", the *hinchas* knocked over a jar of water onto the table, and demanded their renunciation. The incident was repeated on all the major news outlets that evening and led to the transition administration of President Lammens and Vice-President

The political shifts within San Lorenzo from Miele to Lammens are explored with greater depth in the subsequent chapters as various elements of the club's leadership come into dialogue and conflict with the organization of the *Vuelta a Boedo*. The *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign began as a grassroots campaign organized by *hinchas* independently of the official leadership of the club. By 2010 club elections, the campaign received verbal support from all presidential candidates. Particularly between the Presidencies of Miele to Abdo, San Lorenzo's operations emphasized the primacy of the football team. This vision was challenged by the *Vuelta a Boedo*, who reference San Lorenzo's history as a social-cultural athletic club and are inspired by the institutional grandeur achieved during the 1940s.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Over its more than one hundred years of history San Lorenzo has received many different nicknames: *los santos*, *los gauchos de Boedo*, *Azulgrana*, *los cuervos*, *los matadores*, *las carasucias*, and *el ciclón*. These nicknames index important moments in the San Lorenzo's history and are used in the lyrics of songs sung by the team's *hinchas*. The club's history influences *hinchas*. The layering of San Lorenzo's historical trajectories and transformations informs the club's identity in the present. *Hinchas* infuse their own historical perspective with content from San Lorenzo's past remade through the act of storytelling and they intertwine shared memories into defining what it means to be a *cuervo*. What it means to be an *hinchas* in Argentina more broadly is historically contingent.

Tinelli. Elections were held on 2 September 2012, in which their list San Lorenzo Siglo XXI won 80%, followed by the SCH's political wing Cruzada Por San Lorenzo and a third list of Por San Lorenzo.

San Lorenzo's history is both specific, as well as part of general trends in Argentinian football. The enduring characteristics of the non-profit, member-owned social-athletic club as the central institution of Argentinian professional football established during the 1920 and 1930s creates important social-political dynamics. The structure enables *hinchas* to articulate political demands within their club. In turn, this institutional legacy motivates an activist relationship for *hinchas* within their club, which is relatively unique to Argentina, that becomes particularly expressive during moments of historical conjuncture. At times, such activism appears to correlate with crises of Argentina's national political-economy. At others, the relationship between football and politics is relatively obscure.

As a significant socio-cultural component of Argentinian nationalism, football helps to articulate broad notions of masculinity and Argentinian cultural distinction globally. Within Argentina, football has contributed to projects of social and political recognition, particularly of men who were new immigrants. Intertwined with political projects of nationalism, football reflects and refracts Argentina's place in the world by representing its connections to modernity and position in the global political-economy. These dynamics, alongside the sport's popularity, help to explain why the civic-military dictatorship used the 1978 World Cup as a symbol of Argentinian modernity and its political legitimacy, particularly at home.<sup>38</sup> The large crowds drawn to football, each with a fierce loyalty to its club, however, also inspire fear and distrust. Masses as represented through the dichotomy of civilization and barbarity can be seen to be easily manipulated. Such a representation of football and its principle actors: its players and its *hinchas*;

<sup>38</sup> This discussion is developed further in Chapter Six.

continues to infuse contemporary discussions on the sport in Argentinian. It is common to hear in everyday conversations people blame a base Argentinian-ness as the root cause of violence and corruption in football. While there is a historical continuity to violence in football in Argentina, the actions of *hinchas* and the football crowd is argued here to emerge within its spatial-historical conditions, which requires an analysis of the social context. As shown through the innovation of playing styles of the *pibe* and *fútbol criollo*, football in Argentina has inspired innovative social transformations that emerge from participants in the sport in dialectic with political projects rather than because of them.

Finally, the way football emerged in Buenos Aires in particular established the tradition of the *club de barrio*, or neighbourhood club. The enduring idea of the territorialized football club influences how San Lorenzo's *hinchas* think about their relationship to Boedo. When San Lorenzo was forced to leave the *Gasómetro* stadium and surrounding facilities, its relationship with Boedo was transformed as social activities in the *barrio*, such as attending matches and playing sports at the club, were curtailed. In later chapters, the experience of being displaced from Boedo is shown to relate in the perspective of *cuervos* to the politics of memory and justice that emerged in response to the atrocities of the civic-military dictatorship in Argentina. Activists within the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign point to the actions of City of Buenos Aires under Brigadier Osvaldo Cacciatore in the lead up to the sale of the Avenida La Plata property as politically motivated. As a consequence, many *cuervos* claim San Lorenzo's return to Boedo is an act of historical justice.

### Chapter 3 The Barrio of Boedo in Buenos Aires

In February 2012, as the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign grew in support amongst *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, a small group of *cuervos* began decorating the walls of Boedo. On the street-facing walls of a house near the former away-fan entrance to the Viejo Gasómetro, youths in the *Grupo Artístico de Boedo Roberto Arlt*, as they would later name themselves, began to paint. They dedicated their murals to the cultural history of Boedo and San Lorenzo. With humble abilities they painted two murals side-by-side: the carnival dancers of the Buenos Aires *murga* (a group of street performers) acrobatically leaping into the air contrast the evocative controlled embrace of two tango dancers. Tango has long contributed to the cultural identity of Boedo, with lyricists referencing the *barrio's* street corners and cafes. The former scene is a clear reference to a popular stadium song: “I come from the *barrio* of Boedo, *barrio* of *murga* and carnival. I swear to you that in the bad times, I will always be with you.”<sup>1</sup> Belonging is a central ideological concept to *hinchas*. *Cuervos* have a sense of belonging in their fandom to San Lorenzo and spatially to Boedo as their mythical home. *Barrio* translates as neighbourhood, but in the context of Buenos Aires, the word takes on a unique meaning that evokes an emotional connection to place and images of spatialized practices and sites of social interaction: tango, the *barrio* café-bar, the community-based *murga*, and the football club. Beyond a category that is used to topographically organize the city, the *barrio* is a space

1 In Spanish the lyrics are, “Vengo del barrio de Boedo; Barrio de *murga* y carnaval. Te juro que en los malos momentos, siempre te voy a acompañar. Dale dale Matador, Dale dale Matador, Dale dale dale dale Matador!” The song uses the melody of CCR’s *Bad Moon Rising* and was first sung in 2010 by San Lorenzo’s *hinchada* and became very popular during the 2011-2012 season.

of cultural activity, the refuge of familiarity in a chaotic city, and to your football club. This chapter explores what is the *barrio*, what is Boedo, and begins to expand upon the relationship between San Lorenzo and Boedo.

Every football club in the world is uniquely placed and generates its own particular spatial dynamics. The club's stadium is physically placed in the landscape. People generate ideas about what that place means as they move in and around the stadium. The stadium can become for many clubs a symbolic anchor for the community of fans and supporters and used to index the people who through their fandom belong to the club.<sup>2</sup> People interact with and through the club producing social practices in and about the space. In turn, the practices with and around the club are transformed by the spatial understandings. Harvey writes, "Processes do not operate *in* but *actively construct* space and time and in so doing define distinctive scales for their development" (author's emphasis 1996:53). *Hinchas* of Buenos Aires teams through practices associated with their fandom produce a distinct sense of space. One significant spatial scale of several Argentinian football clubs is their territorialization of the surrounding *barrio*. In this chapter I argue that the football club's process of territorialization interacts with other social-cultural phenomena in Buenos Aires to produce the "*barrio*."

Boedo is synonymous with San Lorenzo. The relationship is historically rooted; while the club was founded in Almagro in 1908, when the Club Atlético San Lorenzo de

<sup>2</sup> Harvey talks about the use of place as the "Locus of Being" (1996:299), the "Locus of Collective Memory" (1996:304), and the "Locus of Community" (1996:310). Place as a relative constant within dynamic and transforming space-time contexts relate to notions of permanence that people ascribe to particular places (Harvey 1996:294). Being a part of a community that is ascribed a sense of continuity is helped by having a place, physical and imagined, which belongs to the community and to which the community belongs. Such places are known through experiences (memory) and stories.

Almagro migrated to its facilities eleven blocks south to 1700 Avenida La Plata, it shifted the club's place in the city. Boedo is stereotypical of a *barrio porteño* (of the port, the adjective for Buenos Aires' residents). This chapter argues that the *barrio porteño* has distinguishing characteristics that are emergent through a shared cultural history.

Historical sedimentation occurs through the dialectical processes, which include but are not only political or economic, that produce an understanding of the lived space of the *barrio*. This historical content within the spatial understanding of the *barrio* becomes a foundation for the creative production of space. For *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, their club's particular history influences how they are able to make claims on the significance of the Viejo Gasómetro and Boedo as a home for their club. Boedo was predominantly settled by Italian and Spanish immigrants during Buenos Aires' great urban expansion during the early 1900s and gained recognition for its carnival celebrations, contributions to tango and literature, and its numerous café-bars interspersed on street-corners – meeting places where particularly older men in the *barrio* debate politics and football in the distinct and exaggerated tonal cadence and vocabulary of the Buenos Aires dialect of Spanish.

Historically, small factories and warehouses in the area used to employ many of the residents. Others were transported to the city-centre on newly built electric trams. During the 1930s, Avenida Boedo was the site of an influential literary movement of realist authors and poets. At the height of tango as a popular music and dance, lyricists and composers were known to frequent the cafés and bars in the *barrio*. Popular libraries and social organizations contributed to the centralizing of social activities along the *barrios'* main streets. But perhaps it is historical presence of San Lorenzo de Almagro that most

defines Boedo as distinct *barrio*. The almost total physical separation created by the closure of the *Gasómetro* and its surrounding facilities in 1979 has not broken this relationship, though the contemporary reality raises questions about how that relationship is imagined.

This chapter develops the concept of the “home” as a particular kind of place, which is useful to understand how *cuervos* think about both Boedo and the Viejo Gasómetro. In thinking about the “house”, Bachelard compels us to turn our attention to the “simple localization of memories” within the intimate space of the house (Bachelard 1994:8). While Bachelard is describing a physical house, an expanded metaphor of the house as home helps to understand the significance of the stadium as a place within the *barrio* where intimate experiences generate meaningful and shared memories. *Hinchas* refer to emotive memories that are referential to two different kinds of relatively fixed spaces: their *barrio* and their stadium. Home is not only an academic metaphor. Recurrently *hinchas* refer to Boedo and the Viejo Gasómetro as their lost home (*casa*). Such intimate familiarity between *hinchas*, their stadium, and the *barrio* is historic. The past lingers both in the memories and in the built space of the *barrio*. Pulling on threads of the interwoven development of football and the *barrio* in Buenos Aires helps to understand how contemporary *hinchas* in Argentina form relationships to each other and the homes of their club through space.

### 3.1 Contemporary Boedo

Recognized as one of the forty-eight *barrios* within the *Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires* (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, CABA), Boedo has a population of over 45 000 people and its political boundaries are defined by the streets Independencia to the north, Sánchez de Loria in the east, Avenida Caseros in the south, and Avenida La Plata in the east. The E Line of the Buenos Aires Subte travels underneath Avenida San Juan towards the downtown core. Water drips down the tiles and plaster chips off the original mural in underground station of Boedo as trains from the 1960s with wooden benches screech down the tunnel. Boedo is a middle-class *barrio*, benefiting from its transportation connections to the city centre but less affluent than many of the *barrios* to the north. Above ground, ten story apartment towers are interspersed between two and three story buildings, some with ornate stonework from before the 1930s, which line San Juan on both sides. Small businesses: laundromats, butchers, lottery venders, ice-cream shops, auto-mechanics, a small theatre group, and convenience stores; occupy much of the street front.

The intersection of San Juan and Av. Boedo is the epicentre of the *barrio*. Restaurant-cafes occupy three of the corners. A covered facade above one of the restaurants advertises the historical restitution of San Lorenzo to Boedo. The fourth corner belongs to a national bank. Many of Argentina's largest banks have a branch on Av. Boedo, the main commercial street of the *barrio*. Discount fashion boutiques are found in small shopping arcades, a sports store prominently displays San Lorenzo's jerseys for sale, and an old movie theatre has since become an evangelical church.

Several of the cafes along Av. Boedo are recognized as historic places in Buenos Aires. Café Margot, which opened in 1904, is the oldest; friends and couples sit at the outdoor tables drinking beer facing windows painted in the *porteño* style proclaiming the home of the *pavita* – a traditional turkey sandwich. On the weekend Café Margot, like a few other small bars in the *barrio*, becomes host to a *milonga*, a small tango dance hall. Painted tiles throughout the *barrio*, created by the local historical society, mark important sites. One nearby indicates the Popular Library Mariano Boedo. Away from the bustling avenues of Boedo and San Juan, the *barrio* becomes much more residential, an eclectic mix of historic houses and newer apartment buildings. In most blocks there is a narrow doorway that when opened reveals an alleyway leading to apartments within. Young neighbours sit on the steps out front smoking and chatting. Old warehouses, also interspersed in the residential area, have since been converted into parking garages.

The elevated 25 de Mayo highway is a defining feature of the *barrio* and cuts Boedo in two. Below the concrete highway, people have built temporary apartments out of cardboard and abandoned furniture. In the distance a whistle stops the squeaking shoes on one of the dozens of futsal courts, also hidden under the highway. The southern part of Boedo, sometimes referred to as “Lower Boedo”, on the other side of the 25 de Mayo appears less affluent and is more residential, dominated by two story homes, than the northern half of the *barrio*.

The Bar San Lorenzo is located on the corner of Avenida La Plata and Avelino Díaz, across from the Carrefour. Murals decorate the outside of the bar depicting famous tango singers and the *Viejó Gasometro*. Above the door the number 1908 is painted. “We

don't know when the bar was first opened" the owner told me, "but 1908 makes sense." It was, after all, the year San Lorenzo was founded. When looking out from a table inside through the glass door, it's possible to see the Carrefour through the crest of San Lorenzo painted on the doors. The windows frame two H-shaped apartment buildings that loom over the corner of the Carrefour. The densest buildings in the *barrio* at twenty stories tall, the Torres de Inclán stand over the houses and the neighbouring Carrefour and dominate the skyline of Lower Boedo. The towers have been a source of controversy for the *Vuelta a Boedo*. The last remaining building of San Lorenzo's complex on Avenida La Plata, a small office and a section of the compound's wall, occupies a narrow lot between the apartments and the boxstore. A few San Lorenzo flags hanging from apartment windows flutter in the wind. In front of the buildings someone has painted the concrete posts in the club's iconic blue and red. Others from the apartment buildings, however, have been vocal about their opposition to the project. Newspapers cited the neighbour's concerns about the level of noise and insecurity that might come with being beside a new stadium.<sup>3</sup> Many in the *Vuelta a Boedo* frame the argument as between new and old residents of the *barrio*; the towers will be built only a few years before the *Viejo Gasómetro* was closed.

Amidst the low-rise houses there is a faint sweet smell that intensifies as you wander deeper into the heart of Boedo. The longstanding factory bakery of Jorgito Alfajor, makers of the traditional Argentinian biscuit with the *dulce de leche* centre and covered in chocolate, is hidden amongst the two story homes. On the southern edges of

<sup>3</sup> One resident of the Inclán apartments, Eve described to a *Clarín* reporter how she suspected *hinchas* of San Lorenzo of destroying posters she had put up to organize a meeting of neighbours against the construction of a stadium as part of the *Vuelta* (Gallotta 2012).

Boedo there are other factories, some of which have been abandoned. The roof of one such factory has been painted in bright red and blue. Homes in Boedo in many cases have been in the family for many decades; property ownership being a source of economic stability that few are reluctant to give up. It is not uncommon to encounter elderly residents who can remember “when the stadium was still there.” One such man lives at the corner of Salcedo and José Mármol where the visiting fans entered and retells stories of yelling at them from his balcony as they passed by. Local business, restaurants, and cafes occupy random street corners amongst the houses. Vegetable stalls and small *chino* supermarkets every few blocks provide produce and daily staples.<sup>4</sup> Beyond the western boundary of Avenida La Plata on the corner of Tarija a simplistic but powerful mural painted by a group of friends using the tag Boedo Pinta states emphatically “*ESTO ES BOEDO*”: This is Boedo. The word Boedo, painted in the colours of blue and red on a white background, indexes the territory of San Lorenzo and extends the symbolic space of the *barrio* beyond the boundary-line on a map.

### **3.2 Buenos Aires, Urban Form, and Place within the City**

The CABA is a Federal District of nearly 3 million residents in an area of 200 km<sup>2</sup> governed by the Legislature and the Mayor of Buenos Aires. Before 1996, the Mayor of Buenos Aires was appointed by the Federal Government of Argentina.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-four

<sup>4</sup> Locally, small neighbourhood supermarkets are called *chinos* because many of the small businesses are owned and operated by Asian immigrant families. Fruits and vegetable stands are often independently operated but located inside or near a *chino*. Meat is often purchased at a local butcher. Boedo has two larger grocery stores: a Carrefour and a Coto; which are less frequently used but provide a wider variety of products, including non-food items.

<sup>5</sup> The city of Buenos Aires officially became the *Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires* in 1994 as part of constitutional changes that distanced the political relationship between the city of Buenos Aires and the federal government, giving the CABA powers and responsibilities analogous to those held by the

*partidos* (legal district or municipality) with 9.9 million residents surround the CABA in the Province of Buenos Aires and compose what is known as the *Conurbano Bonaerense* (Greater Buenos Aires), an area of 3700 km<sup>2</sup>. The CABA and the *Conurbano Bonaerense* together are known as the *Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires* (Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, AMBA), which is used as a limited administrative category.<sup>6</sup>

The AMBA resembles urban form more generally described by Lefebvre (2003) as a centralizing mass that draws in people and goods. The urban form is “a place of encounter, assembly, simultaneity” (Lefebvre 2003[1970]:118) emergent through social processes. The centripetal forces that create urban form, Lefebvre argues, generate a contradictory expansion and fragmentation. For example, the Port of Buenos Aires has long been the main point of export and entry to Argentina’s economy, drawing in the country’s material production and organizing foreign capital. Political control that governs access to the port and its tariffs continues to be a contentious issue amongst Argentina’s political elites. Political-economic centralization has contributed to the mass migration to Buenos Aires, both international and national, as people sought economic opportunities around the city. Construction projects, both formal and informal, to house the increasing population expanded the urban space into the concentric sprawl of the city’s peripheries, as well as upwards in the already built city. Political conflicts related to provinces.

<sup>6</sup> Several municipalities in the AMBA encompass subdivisions of cities and towns. For example, the *partido* of La Matanza directly to the south-west of CABA has a population of 1.7 million and is composed of fifteen administrative subdivisions. The *Región Metropolitana de Buenos Aires* (Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires) is composed of a third ring of almost contiguous urbanization of an additional nine municipalities to the north, west, and south of the AMBA including the city of La Plata, the capital of the Province of Buenos Aires, and its metropolitan area. In total, more than 14 million people live in the Metropolitan Region, roughly one-third of Argentina’s total population, in an area of 18,380 km<sup>2</sup>.

Buenos Aires' wealth and power, however, have led to the political fragmentation of the region. Significantly, the separation of the City of Buenos Aires from the Province of Buenos Aires in 1880 was the consequence of the protracted political conflict between the decentralizing Federalists and the centralizing Unitarists. This historic fragmentation has generated political territories that influence how politicians govern, provide services, and politically organize (see Pírez 2002).

Population growth in the CABA plateaued at 3 million residents by the 1930s. The urban expansion continued in the periphery municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires as migration to the city from the interior of Argentina increased. Political-economic policies in the 1940s and 50s associated with Peronism that favoured the import-substitution model of economic development transformed labour relations in the rural economy and led to the construction of new factories in urban periphery of Buenos Aires and Rosario. Many people in this wave of migration built their homes on marginal land that was in many cases poorly connected to the urban centre by transportation infrastructure (van Gelder et al. 2016). A neoliberal political-economic transformation has its roots in the Argentina's civic-military dictatorship. Urbanization was disrupted as factories were shutdown. Following the civic-military dictatorship and the return to electoral democracy, Argentina's successive governments brought an intensification of the neoliberal economic reforms. Gated communities, known locally as a "*country*", began to appear in the urban periphery, particularly to the north of the city (Pírez 2004:431).<sup>7</sup> Neoliberal policies were particularly influential during the Presidency of

<sup>7</sup> From the English "country-club".

Carlos Menem (1989-1999), who initially campaigned on a populist Peronist platform and control of rapid inflation. During the reforms of the 1990s, the Argentine peso was pegged to the US dollar, state-owned companies were privatized, many industries including the agricultural sector were deregulated, and foreign capital was courted (for a general discussion see: Carranza 2005; Grimson and Kessler 2004; Manzanal 2000). The political-economic changes had dramatic effects creating unemployment, ghost-towns in former industrial areas and where the formerly state-owned railway used to operate, and civil unrest, particularly experienced in the interior of Argentina (Manzanal 2000). The economic reforms also contributed to a reshaping of Buenos Aires and its peripheries: a new “*barrio*” of sky-scraper towers emerged on reclaimed land beside the downtown in Puerto Madero (Centner 2009), enclosed shopping centres were built for a consumerist upper-middle class (Carman 2006; Guano 2002), the proliferation of *countries*, *villas* expanded (Grimson 2009), and many factories were shuttered, particularly in the south of the city (Cerrutti and Grimson 2004; Grimson and Kessler 2004). The exclusive space of Puerto Madero, with its tall condo and office towers, chain restaurants and stores, and slick-international marketing challenged the traditional characteristics of the *barrio porteño*, which are characterized by their densely built housing of two to four stories, with taller apartment buildings only on the major streets alongside the *barrio*’s small businesses (Guano 2002). The population living in informal housing, *casas tomadas* (occupied homes) and *villas*, increased.<sup>8</sup> By 2010, the population living in *villas* in the

<sup>8</sup> An estimated population of more than 250 000 people live in *casas tomadas* and abandoned buildings in the CABA. While literally translated as squatting, the significant number of residents living in informal housing (over 400 000 including the *villas*) reflects the complex and ambiguous history of property ownership in the City of Buenos Aires. In many cases, residents have lived in buildings for significant

CABA had reached 163,587, approaching its high of over 200,000 in the early 1970s. The population in the *villas* is associated with immigration from neighbouring countries, in particular Bolivia, Paraguay, and Peru (Grimson 1999; Van Gelder et al. 2016:1967-68).

Fragmentation of the urban space of Buenos Aires can be described through the uneven social and economic conditions within the AMBA. Poverty, economic exploitation, and social exclusion are experienced unequally across the region (Grimson 1999; Grimson 2009; van Gelder et al. 2016). Pérez (2002) argues that the city of Buenos Aires is structured along “two-axes”: the centre-periphery and north-south divide. The north-south imaginary particularly relates to the uneven distribution of wealth created during the period of the CABA’s urban expansion (1880-1930) and the differentiated economic activities that emerged. The south and south-west of the city became associated with factories and slaughterhouses, while wealthy elites moved to the *barrios* such as Recoleta, Palermo, and Belgrano in the north of the city. This imaginary has since been extended into the conurbation, where municipalities like Tigre and Olivos to the north are associated with extreme wealth, while Avellaneda in the south and Matanza in the southwest are associated with low and middle class workers. Pérez notes, however, how political-economic transformations initiated during the 1980s onwards particularly in the urban periphery led to “micro-fragmentations” in the spatiality of inequality. Many gated-communities have come to be located close to low-income areas in the *Conurbano*

periods of time, in some cases for multiple generations but are unable to demonstrate or claim legal ownership to the property. In such cases, there may not be a legally recognized owner of the property. In cases where a party presents legal documentation of ownership, an eviction may not occur because of the relative strength and influence of well-organized community groups, as well as laws preventing evictions in specific situations (see: Carmen 2006).

*bonaerense*. Examples of this micro-fragmentation has also occurred within the CABA. The Villa 31, one of the largest informal settlements in Buenos Aires, is located beside the exclusive *barrio* of Recoleta.

While the above description of the urban space of Buenos Aires suggests the various ways in which Argentina's political-economy has influenced urbanization. Massey cautions against ascribing economics with an over-determination of space: "there is a lot more determining how we experience space than what 'capital' gets up to" (1994:148). Urban space emerges through its constituting social forces, the "result of a history that must be conceived as the work of social 'agents' or 'actors,' of collective 'subjects' acting in successive thrusts, discontinuously (relatively) releasing and fashioning layers of space" (Lefebvre 2003[1970]:127). From this starting point, the *barrio porteño* is approached as a historically contingent fragmentation within Buenos Aires that has occurred because of particular social interactions. The history of football in Buenos Aires resembles the contradictory fragmentation and expansion described above, particularly as the sport grew in popularity as a spectator sport, creating new spatial divisions through the rivalries that developed between clubs. While related to the political-economic context, it is through the social action of people engaged in spatialized social-cultural activities, which includes the *club de barrio*, that the scale of the *barrio* as a particular and influential fragmentation of the urban space occurred in Buenos Aires. While there have been dramatic shifts in the daily activities of residents of a *barrio*, the importance of these activities, present and past, contributes to the experiential relationship residents form to and with their *barrio*.

As a result of the historical sedimentation of the spatial organization of experience, the *barrios* have become places in the imaginary of Buenos Aires as relatively fixed spatial constructs, through which social activities of shared experiences and memories emerge as significant to and from a spatial identity. Harvey notes that:

Places are constructed and experienced as material ecological artefacts and intricate networks of social relations. They are the focus of the imaginary, of beliefs, longings, and desires (most particularly with respect to the psychological pull and push of the idea of “home”). They are an intense focus of discursive activity, filled with symbolic and representational meanings, and they are a distinctive product of institutionalized social and political-economic power (Harvey 1996:316).

The making of a place’s identity and the sense of belonging to that place is a dialectic construction. Experiences connect to an idea of space, which in turn helps to perceive an experience’s spatial significance. While the social contingency of a particular place goes beyond well beyond constituting political-economic relations, it is important to recognize how a place can come to have significance in terms of political-economic power in unexpected ways because of, rather than despite of, the dialectical process that constitutes power in space over time.

While an understanding of place can be perceived as emergent from spatialized processes, there are also limiting processes that help to define what is not part of a particular place. Many places, such as the house or the stadium, are bound by their physical features, which are helpful to defining their limits. When perceiving the *barrio* as a place, such limiting definitions of space become even more complex. People continuously move inside and through the *barrio* during their daily activities. Thinking about the *barrio* as a territory suggests ways in which particular activities are perceived

to constitute a place, while others are not. Territoriality in space necessarily includes some ambiguity. Harvey describes: “Bounding activities are nearly always partial in their effects (where does a city or neighbourhood begin and end?) and the socio-ecological processes that constitute space ensure that all places (even those with strictly controlled territorial borders) are to some degree open.” (Harvey 1996:310). Recognizing the ambiguity and partiality of boundary making processes, particularly at the edges of a spatial encounter, reveals aspects of how spaces can become limited. While maps of Buenos Aires’ *barrios* are drawn with fixed boundaries, the social processes that constitute any particular *barrio* are never as neat. How transgressions are perceived as such and engaged with, while complicating what constitutes a *barrio*, can also contribute to boundary making and the distinctions in space.

Boundary making processes of the Buenos Aires football club occur in relation to those of a *barrio*. Clubs make a claim to representing space within the city. The club’s boundary-making emerges at the liminal space that marks the contact, friction, and transition from an area where one club is the dominant site of social interaction with football to that of its neighbouring club. Often in Buenos Aires, this liminal space between clubs is mutually influenced by other boundary-making processes, such the historical political organization of space. Spatialized rivalries between football clubs in Buenos Aires often lead to acts of transgression, which can be violent but also more mundane like the playful chastising by friends for wearing the wrong team colours in the *barrio*. Addressing such transgressions often entails the work of boundary making. The contribution made by clubs to this boundary-making process within an urban area is

relatively unique to Buenos Aires in world football, which reveals the particular role clubs play through their claims to spatial territory around their facilities.<sup>9</sup> Why and how football club establish territories in Buenos Aires relates to the social history of football clubs and their *hinchas*. The football club, however, engages with other socio-cultural activities to produce the “*barrio*”. The rest of this chapter explores a broader discussion of the socio-cultural processes that have contributed to making Boedo a traditional *barrio porteño*, in the process making the *barrio porteño* an identifiable space, and how the relationship between football club and the *barrio* generates a meaningful place – a “home” for *hinchas* – within the city.

### **3.3 The *Barrio Porteño***

The oldest *barrios* of the city centre: Belvanera, San Telmo, San Nicolás, and Monserrat, amongst others; are closely associated with the boundaries of the parishes of the Catholic Church established before the mid-nineteenth century. The rapid urban expansion that followed waves of immigration from 1880 to 1930s was accompanied by new social organizations, such as popular libraries, immigrant-community associations, and clubs,

<sup>9</sup> Football clubs in London, UK and the Ruhr District in Germany demonstrate a similar phenomena where football clubs form spatialized identities that become intertwined with the fracturing of space in a contiguous urban area. The Ruhr District of 7.8 million people is composed of thirteen different cities in a moreorless continuous urban area. Borussia Dortmund, VfL Bochum, and FC Schalke 04 are the largest and most successful clubs in the region but each city is represented by one or two football clubs. Several cities in wider Rhine-Ruhr Metropolitan Area include important clubs Borussia Mönchengladbach, FC Köln, and Fortuna Düsseldorf. Rivalries between clubs in the region are among the most celebrated, contested, and at times violent in German football. In London, with a metropolitan population of 13.8 million similar to the *Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires* has a high concentration of professional and semi-professional football clubs: 41 clubs over 8 divisions. There has long been an association between club and district or geographical location in London. Arsenal and Tottenham, for example, are associated with their districts and north London and are considered major rivals, competing in the North London Derby. Most of the city is geographically represented by at least one club in the Premier or Championship. For clubs in lower divisions, local representation becomes even more important as their fan-base is even more geographically limited.

which began to influence the spatiality of social life (Gutiérrez and Romero 1989; Gorelik and Silvestre 1991). Adrián Gorelik contends that when new immigrants arrived to what was at the time the urban periphery of Buenos Aires at the turn of the twentieth century they encountered a city, “without traditions nor prestigious or picturesque geographies, [as a result] the *barrio* came to exist as a product of cultural processes of violence, as articulating at its emergence and apogee a political reality and cultural myth, as a new mass culture, and as a vanguardist project” (1999:38). The speed and scale at which the city was growing meant that an established cultural life in to which new residents could adapt was less hegemonic; the resulting creative encounters generated by this opportunity were conflictual and at times aggressive – exemplified by the competition between football teams on the street. Making a claim to space in the city through the identification with a *barrio* was a social-political act.

On the other hand, the built city also influenced the formation of the *barrios*.

The *barrio* generates a specific type of boundary that could not be developed elsewhere in urban areas built up as suburbs with their epicentres of malls, in cities made for cars, with their wide streets and highways. In territories like Buenos Aires, where the urban design was constructed in a tradition that valued local space and, different from [the surrounding municipalities], built from of a formal homogeneous urban plan: that of the grid (Grimson 2009:11).

Urban planners extended the grid pattern established in the core of Buenos Aires outwards (Gorelik 2010). The core was emphasized by significantly wider east-west avenues built at regular intervals to carry traffic to and from the city-centre.

Perpendicular streets running on a north-south axis, on the other hand with a few notable exceptions such as the iconic Avenida 9 de Julio, were designed with a fairly uniform

width.<sup>10</sup> Adrián Gorelik (2010) highlights the influence of city planners who decided to extend the urban core's grid pattern into the newly forming *barrios*.<sup>11</sup> A ring of urban parks and plazas at the edge of what was at the time the periphery of the urban area was meant to provide a green belt around the city. The grid of north-south and east-west streets is an enduring physical form in Buenos Aires. Disruptions of this pattern, where they occur, such as the *villas*, are notable. The centre of a *manzana*, a square block roughly 100m by 100m formed by the perpendicular streets, became the principal space of construction. Factories, warehouses, businesses, cafes and residences were built in side of a *manzana*. This physical foundation led to particularities in the urban social life and imaginary of the city. In the centre of the *manzana* a core of green space, known as a *pulmón* or lung, walled off by the encircling street-facing buildings was often envisioned. The height and size of buildings facing the street often reflected the density in the area of the city and importance of the street. Over time, many of the *pulmónes* have been infilled with buildings, particularly residential spaces accessed by alleyways. Planned public spaces were limited.

It is valuable to interpret the *barrio* as a symbolic space. The boundaries of a *barrio* are easily marked on a map but are complicated by history of social interactions and relationships that constitute over time the general concept of the *barrio*, as well as a

<sup>10</sup> *Villas* notably are not built following a grid pattern. Streets and alleys can across on angles and curve around natural features. A short description of the *Villa 1-11-14* beside San Lorenzo's *Ciudad Deportiva* in Chapter Four highlights some of the unique features of that settlement.

<sup>11</sup> The ideas of urban design expressed through Buenos Aires' grid and core-periphery form are not unique. Many Spanish colonial cities were first built on grids, while Buenos Aires' urban planners of the nineteenth and twentieth century were heavily influenced by the ideas of modernist European planned cities (Gorelik 2010). While the combination of these two influences is not unique to Buenos Aires, particularly in urban planning in the Americas during this time, the overall commitment to the physical form means that much of the built area within the CABA has a strong regularity. Nearby La Plata is a completely planned city.

*barrio* as a specific place within the city (Gupta and Ferguson 2001:37-42). The ideas that are associated with the limits of each *barrio* are most often confirmed, but can be transgressed, by the social practices of people. Transgression, particularly in the sense of football rivalries such as the one between San Lorenzo and Huracán, discussed later in this chapter, can also be seen to be part of the consolidation of the frontiers. In part such transgressions become meaningful because of an abstract idea of who belongs within a particular *barrio* and who does not. Ramiro Segura (2009) describes the inside-outside metaphor created by boundaries as relevant to how residents understand their *barrio*. In Segura's ethnographic study of a lower class informal *barrio*, residents described how work was located "outside" their *barrio* and how many outsiders will never enter their *barrio* (2009:48). Such transgressions are referential to experience and context. Moving easily throughout the city, from one *barrio* to another is not a universal experience and self-imposed as well as relational limitations influence how citizens of Buenos Aires move within the city. Grimson notes it is common for residents to not cross boundaries that represent socio-economic divisions in the city (Grimson 2009:21). In practical terms, the physical layout of Buenos Aires can also be seen to discourage particular movements; for example between the north to south is made complicated by poor circulation.<sup>12</sup> The north-south axis of the city is both a metaphoric division as well as one emergent through limitations on movement.

<sup>12</sup> Until recently there was no underground metro connection between the north and south of the city. Wide avenues run parallel east-west towards and out of the city-centre but the arteries that go north-south are often two lanes and one way, which become clogged with daily traffic. In some cases, even within a *barrio* the word *bajo* (lower), which indexes the bottom of a north-oriented map, is used to identify a poorer part of the *barrio*, which is the case in Bajo Flores where the Nuevo Gasómetro is located.

Formal bounding of the *barrio* occurred in part because it was useful when organizing political relationships (Landau 2014). As the city was expanding, local organizations such as parishes, workers' associations, clubs, popular libraries, brought nearby residents together, and provided politicians and political operatives sites in which relationships with residents could be developed (Gorelik 1999:47; Gutiérrez and Romero 1989; Romero 2006). Political operatives of various parties and ideological currents sought personal relationships with residents to build a popular base. This mode of governance, Landau argues, was not one of decentralized power in Buenos Aires. Rather, political parties intended to establish direct contact between the central offices to local political organizing (Landau 2014:158). *Barrios* became useful categories through which space could be organized politically. At different moments, the government of Buenos Aires has sought to formalize the territory of the *barrios*, delimiting and redrawing topographic boundaries to the *barrios*. Peronist organizing tactics developed by the *Partio Justicialista* evolved at the local level during the 1940s, heavily influencing today how many of Argentina's political parties organize and how services and goods from the state are distributed (de Privitellio and Romero 2005; Landau 2014:158).<sup>13</sup> Today many of these organizing tactics are broadly described as "clientelist", though that connotation should be explored through a lens focused on the process of political negotiation that occurs between local actors (see: Auyero 2000; Szwarcberg 2013).<sup>14</sup> The practices of

13 The contemporary *barrio* continues to be a politically recognized category of space. There are 48 *barrios* officially recognized by the CABA. In 2005 reforms to the CABA combined *barrios* into administrative units known as *comunas*, that are used to deliver public services.

14 This point is explored in Chapter Eight in relation to tactics of social-political organizing.

local political organizing generate dialogic relationships between clients and agents, which in turn is productive of a spatial relationship as well.

The political dimensions of the *barrio*'s spatial institutionalization emerge within a milieu of socio-cultural organizing practices. Grimson suggests that even in the contemporary institutionalized *barrio* we need to pay close attention to the social constitution of that space:

The *barrio*, defined by social-spatial urban boundaries, in Buenos Aires is a constitutive category of the forms of perception, signification, and action... This does not just imply a cultural recognition of the social practices... but also that the political is culturally constituted, as the cultural is interwoven with the political and transcends it, in the sense that it encompasses or can influence diverse aspects of the social life (Grimson 2009:14).

The social creation of the *barrio* is perhaps most recognizable through the unofficial *barrios* of the city, which are *barrios* that do not have their boundaries marked on official maps of the city and often contained within an official *barrio*. Abasto, one such unofficial *barrio*, is located around the old central market in the larger *barrio* of Almagro. Abasto was once the centre of Buenos Aires and is associated with the cultural legacy of Carlos Gardel (1890-1935), an internationally famous tango singer. Gardel grew up and performed regularly in Abasto, which has been used in recent decades to associate *barrio* in touristic advertising to the cultural legacy of tango. While such processes generate a re-imagined presence of Abasto, they obscure the experiences of residents. Abasto is historically a *barrio* of commerce and home to working-classes and a long-standing population living in *casas tomadas*. When private capital transformed the old central market building into a modern mall with high-end shopping and a movie theatre during

the 1990s, the re-envisioned cultural image of Abasto created through the marketing campaign excluded the *barrio*'s actual residents, representing them as undesirables (Carmen 2006). In this case, the outsider's recognition and signification of the *barrio* was used to challenge the resident's sense and experience of belonging. What is particularly significant about the example of Abasto is that the activities and symbols associated with the traditional *barrio porteño*: an older architectural style and tango; were used in such a way through marketing that they disrupted the socio-cultural activities of residents who otherwise constitute Abasto as a meaningful place in the city. The specificity of a particular *barrio* in Buenos Aires, that which makes it a 'place' emerges out of its particularities in the "perception, signification, and action" that define the socio-spatial category of the *barrio*.

### **3.4 Boedo and the Historic Cultural Practices of a *Barrio***

Boedo was politically recognized by the City of Buenos Aires in 1972 when it was divided from Almagro, the *barrio* to its north. Boedo, however, existed socially and culturally as a *barrio* space long before then.<sup>15</sup> In 1880, the fields that would become Boedo were at the urban periphery of the City of Buenos Aires and formed the boundary with the neighbouring municipality of Flores. The following year, Flores and Belgrano were amalgamated with the City of Buenos Aires to create the Federal District.

Commercial and banking activity for the rapidly expanding urban periphery was located

<sup>15</sup> "El Barrio de Boedo" by Alfredo Luis Soncini published in 1984 as part of a series on the "Barrios of Buenos Aires" covers the history of Boedo with a focus on San Lorenzo, the Grupo de Boedo, tango and the associated performers, the historic cafes along Avenida Boedo, and the theatres as the institutions that generated the historic characteristics of Boedo (Soncini 1984).

on Avenida Boedo.<sup>16</sup> In 1908, Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro was founded two blocks north of Avenida Independencia, the eventual northern political boundary of Boedo on the street of México. In 1918 the club moved eleven city blocks south to the four *manzanas* on Avenida La Plata between Avenida Inclan and Las Casas, where it built the football field that would grow into the Gasómetro stadium. The club's facilities eventually surrounded the stadium. On the other side of the *barrio*, Avenida Boedo had developed into a noted site of political foment, literary production, tango and theatre, all of which contributed to the spatial identity of the *barrio*. San Lorenzo's significant growth as a social-sport club during the 1920s coincides with this cultural consolidation of Boedo. Social-cultural practices of *hinchas* of the club were enmeshed into the daily life of local residents more broadly.

Popular culture was transforming the urban landscape, and social narratives produced in activities like tango drew people's attention to the culture of the *barrios*. A creative image of what defined the city was emerging. Tango, like the *fútbol criollo* that came to define Argentinian football by that time, was seen as a unique cultural creation from the cities on the River Plate: Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Uruguay. The global popularity of tango and the successes of *Rioplatense* football were being incorporated into the national imaginary, in turn influencing a recognition of the mythic spaces where a masculine Argentinian national identity could be seen to be in formation. The *barrio*, and its constituent sites of cultural activity, became an urban counter-point to

<sup>16</sup> Named after Mariano Joaquín Boedo (1782-1819), Vice-President of the Congress of Tucumán in 1816 and part of Argentina's independence movement.

the rural *pampas*. The lyrics of the tango Boedo by Julio de Caro (music) and Dante A.

Linyera (music), for example, describes Boedo as an *arrabal* (low-class *barrio*) idealized home of the romantic “scoundrel and the poet”:

Sos barrio del gotán y la pebeta  
el corazón del arrabal porteño  
cuna del malandrín y del poeta  
*rincón cordial*  
*la capital*  
*del arrabal.*  
Yo me hice allí de corazón malevo  
*porque enterré mi juventud inquieta*  
junto al umbral en el que la pebeta  
*ya no me espera*  
*pa' chamuyar.*

You're *barrio* of tango and the young girl  
the heart of the *arrabal porteño*  
crib for the scoundrel and the poet  
the warm refuge  
the capital  
of the *arrabal.*  
There I made my scoundrel heart  
because I buried my restless youth  
at the doorstep of that young girl  
that wouldn't wait for me  
to flirt.

The lyrics themselves are filled with the *lunfardo*, *porteño* street slang, that tango popularized in everyday conversations. The creative play with words evident in tango is also demonstrated through lyrical innovation of the carnival's *murgas* and football *hinchadas*. Archetti, following on the description of 1920s football journalist Borocotó, sees similarities in the descriptions of the *arrabal*, a *porteño* working class district, to the footballer's *potrero*, the rough and informal field of play, as liminal spaces occupied by a marginalized population (1999:126f5). As urbanization, however, consolidated the working class *barrios*, the descriptions of the *barrio* in literature, music, and other cultural forms began to change. The *barrio* became a place that rooted the football club and the tango artist within the city, as a home and refuge. Forms of sentimental attachment represented a nascent sociability developing within the cafes and bars, the popular libraries, and clubs.

Boedo's symbolic connection to tango articulates the spatial transformation occurring within the city and the rising prominence of the "*barrio*." Football and tango in many ways parallel each other for their contributions to the cultural life in the city (Archetti 1995; 1999). The music and dance form has its roots in the working class *conventillos* of the old city, but by the 1920s had become popular across Buenos Aires (and around the world).<sup>17</sup> Tango suggests the changing uses of urban space particularly in the gendered relations of the working class *barrios*. Archetti identifies the stereotypical masculine narrator of tango as a: "middle-aged, single, lower-middle-class or, perhaps, just middle-class; that he has grown up in a *barrio* and is now living in the centre of Buenos Aires, enjoying leisure time with his friends (*la barra*) in a coffee house which he visits daily (in many tangos called 'the home'); and that he has had 'great' love affairs or, at least, 'one' that has marked him profoundly" (Archetti 1999:150). Archetti traces how changing performances of femininities and masculinities infused 1920s tango both as a dance and as a lyrical performance. The woman portrayed through the "male discourse on gender relations" of tango was fictitiously sought after in the cabaret (Archetti 1999:139). This construction posed an opposition between the restrictive private home to a semi-public space of sexual liberation. Sites of social activity in the *barrio*: its cafes, bars, cabarets, clubs, and street corners; are represented through the lyrics as encounters invested with emotional significance and liberation. Many lyrical tangos raised themes of romantic love, passion, as well as a corresponding masculine anxiety to the dangers of

<sup>17</sup> Tango, for Archetti (1999), is marked by its hybridization of musical and dance forms: mixing instruments and lyrical performances that have varied roots in the African-Argentines and European encounters.

love and betrayal (Archetti 1999:152-155). This mixture of professed passion with an underlying tension of rejection and failure has parallels to the emotional tenor of a football match. What is immediately relevant is how these emotions are incorporated into the idea of the *barrio*.

The increasing significance of the cafes and bars as sites of social interaction in Buenos Aires reflects the upward mobility of the lower classes in the 1920s, who were gaining more leisure time, and the emergence of a middle class. Authors, political activists, tango performers, and *hinchas* of football intermingled in the cafes along Avenida Boedo. Café Dante at Boedo 847 is noted as the location of San Lorenzo's first *barra* of organized supporters, as well as a meeting place for authors and poets associated with the *Grupo de Boedo*. Literary artists in the *Grupo de Boedo* played contributed to the production of the "north-south" divide of the city through their distinct representation of the social-cultural life in Buenos Aires at the time. Realist literary artists such as Elias Castelnuovo, Raúl González Tuñón, and Álvaro Yunque formed the group, which became known for its intentionally political focus on working class in an urban setting.<sup>18</sup> Many of the authors had anarchist views or were members of the Communist Party of Argentina and published in the *Revista Claridad*, located at Av. Boedo 836. The group was formed in opposition to another literary circle, the *Grupo de Florida*, which included Jorge Luis

<sup>18</sup> Literary critics formed an imaginary opposition in style, substance, and significance between the Grupo Boedo and Grupo de Florida, which included many of Argentina's noted authors: Jorge Luis Borges, Oliverio Girondo, and Norah Lange. Based around the cafes in the city centre, the Grupo de Florida also became known for their publications in Martín Fierro. Grupo de Florida became known for its surrealist and fantastical literature and poetry. Well known authors Roberto Arlt, Raúl González Tuñón, and Nicolás Olivari circulated in both groups. The opposition of themes and styles in part reflected a spatial divide that was occurring within the cultural life of the city (Ferreira de Cassone 2008; Gorelik 1999).

Borges and published in *Martín Fierro*. The surrealist vanguardist literature of *Grupo de Florida* is attributed with imprinting the symbolism of the pampas and the gaucho onto the national imaginary (see Ferreira de Cassone 2008; García Cedro 2013; Gorelik 1999). In representations of the difference between the literary circles, the *Grupo de Florida* through its connections to bourgeois cultural institutions was associated with the upper-class *barrios* in the north of the city, whereas the *Grupo de Boedo* was associated with the working classes of the southern city.

At times heated, the conflict was for the most part a performance through writing and the aesthetic distinctions between the groups contributed to an important spatial imaginary of the city. Alejandro Grimson (2009:17) notes that to this day one of the dominant operative social-spatial binaries in the imaginary of Buenos Aires is between the ‘north’ and the ‘south’ of Buenos Aires. “The north,” Grimson notes, “is filled with *barrios* of upper and middle class sectors, full of advanced industries, while the south is characterized by as having several *villas miseria* and popular *barrios*, as well as numerous bankrupt companies” (Grimson 2009:17). While more markedly middle-class in the contemporary city, at the time Boedo culturally represented the south, as a *barrio* populated by working-class immigrants, social organizations, literary and artistic activism, and importantly also had an emblematic football club.

Much of Boedo’s cultural activities intersected with San Lorenzo in some way, which had grown its facilities on Avenida La Plata as an important pole of social activity. In between the two poles, Boedo’s density increased and the *manzanas* were infilled with low-rise residences, artisanal factories particularly in the leather industry, warehouses,

small workshops and stores, and the corner café-bar. In a 1937 article for *Caras y Caretas*, an influential cultural magazine, Néstor Osvaldo Parodi writes, “we cannot talk about Boedo without drawing a bold hyphen to its club, its San Lorenzo, which appears to give reason to its existence.” Parodi continues, “This is Boedo... the constant anticipation for the hopeful goal! The intense expectation every Saturday, when everything is quiet on the corner... Its the obligatory question when the ‘*hincha*’ wakes on Sunday: ‘Tell me my wife, is it a nice day?’ And then the hasty march to the ‘stadium’” (cited in Res 2008:105). Away from the commercial activities and cafes on the Avenida Boedo, the club’s expanding facilities created spaces for dances, carnival celebrations, swimming during the summer, pick-up football games under the terraces, a popular library, and other activities. An open and relatively democratic membership reflected a period of economic, political, and social progression both for the *barrios* and their residents. Football clubs grew in financial and social clout with their expanding membership, which they drew predominantly from the area immediately surrounding their facilities. As constituted by local residents, San Lorenzo’s cultural presence reflected the demographics and cultural activities of Boedo more generally.

### **3.5 *Club de barrio* and its Historical Formation**

Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro, while its fan base has come to extend well beyond Boedo, is identified by its relationship to the *barrio*. Buenos Aires’ contemporary culture and sport clubs have evolved significantly from their foundations. The concept of the *club de barrio* – roughly neighbourhood club –, however remains symbolically

significant. Today “*club de barrio*” is most often associated with Buenos Aires’ smaller clubs like CA Argentinos Juniors in Paternal, All Boys in Floresta, Nueva Chicago in Mataderos, Ferro Carril Oeste in Caballito, and Atlanta in Villa Crespo.<sup>19</sup> In these examples, the social, economic, and political activity of the club is focused on a spatially immediate relationship to the majority of their *hinchas*. Clubs in the lower divisions are particularly attuned to their place in the city. Their *socios* predominately come from the immediate *barrio* and in turn these clubs focus most of their activities in that space. As a result, the cultural particularities of the smaller clubs are often interwoven with the social and cultural composition of their supporting *barrio*. Larger clubs have diverse fan-bases that spatially extend well beyond a *barrio*, connecting to a large number of *hinchas* in the rest of country and around the world. Even the largest Argentinian clubs, however, continue to make territorial claims of their club’s immediate area, for Buenos Aires clubs that means their *barrio*.

The football club in Buenos Aires, according to Adrian Gorelik, is a “territorial creation” (1998:301). The historical relationship between *barrio* and club suggests a symbiotic formation, where the football club contributed to the creation of the *barrio* as a space within an urbanizing Buenos Aires, while simultaneously being affected by the contiguous processes that contributed to the making of the *barrio*. The political, economic, and social processes related to the mass migration of people at the end of the

<sup>19</sup> In the *partidos* of the *Conurbano Bonaerense*, the administrative cities and towns form a similar relationship with as the *club de barrio*, for example CA Lanús to Lanús, CA Tigre to Victorino, or CA Quilmes to Quilmes. In the lower divisions of Argentinian football, the number of *clubes de barrio* proliferates. Historic clubs like CA San Telmo, CA Almagro, Comunicaciones, etc. have all relocated their stadium outside of their historic *barrio* but maintain symbolic ties to their historic *barrio*.

nineteenth and start of the twentieth century condition how and why the *barrio* became a cultural form of urban space. But these processes are also reciprocally shaped by social activities. Few public activities reveal this dialectical process as clearly as football; a particular formation of urban space that is markedly masculine.<sup>20</sup> Young working class men who formed the first football clubs in the *barrios* had culturally transformed the sport at the turn of the century. By the 1930s, the sport and social clubs they had established were providing social activities to men and women and had become an important part of weekly leisure activities in the *barrio*. Match days were attended by thousands of people, requiring larger permanent stadiums. Facilities were expanded to provide opportunities for neighbours to engage in physical activity and in other team sports. Social dances and carnivals were also hosted by the clubs. These activities meant that the club was a significant site of social interaction that led to friendships and other meaningful relationships and produced social linkages within space.

Outwardly, football clubs produce a strong sense of territory. In contrast to the pulling together of social interactions, the emergent *clubes de barrio* pushed outwards as they attempted to establish an area from which they dominated the social interactions with potential *socios* and *hinchas*. Technologies like the radio, television and the internet have allowed clubs to interact with people at greater distances; in Buenos Aires, however, such technologies also transmit the idea of territorial claim and imagined spacial activities of a club. Living in Boedo, it was common to meet *hinchas* of Huracán who

20 Daskal (2010) traces the financial and legislative support that several sports clubs received from politicians between 1895 and 1920. Football-based clubs began increasingly received develop their non-football activities and facilities.

also lived in the *barrio*. The close proximity of clubs and family histories often led to this blurring of territorial affiliations. *Hinchas* of San Lorenzo who lived outside of the *barrio*, however, had a harder time imagining this possibility and would sometimes ask how it was possible that any *hinchas* of Huracán could live within Boedo. While difficult to imagine from a distance, in fact it through the ambiguity of territory generated by the proximity of two clubs that territorial boundaries become important.

Boundaries that distinguish the *barrios* of Buenos Aires are eminently important to the football clubs. While the grid pattern of Buenos Aires' streets creates straight and clearly defined boundaries on a map to represent the limits of one *barrio* to the next, the social content of a *barrio* often blurs overlapping ideas about who and what belongs to each *barrio*. Frydenberg describes that "the official organization of football was built on the relationships between the clubs and, in turn, they built new forms of sociality connected to the life of the local community. The clubs became representatives and 'defenders' of the *barrio*" (2008:168). Clubs translated and expanded the practices that had been developed by the street teams to claim their playing space. The deepest rivalries in Argentinian football developed between clubs with close proximity. *Hinchas* took up the rivalries between the teams by incorporating themselves as actors in the match and participating in the successes and failures of their club. Homogenizing and egalitarian forces emerged within the phenomena of the football crowd. As *hinchas* became more alike, other forms of social distinction became less important. In turn, however, as practices to influence a match become popularized the development a moral code of conduct and honour between rival *hinchas* occurred, allowing for social distinctions to be

through the practices of the rival crowd. Collective performances by *hinchas* as part of their participation with the match became a competition, evaluated by the shared understanding of what that performance meant. This productive opposition both in displays of support and efforts to intimidate opponents deepened the personal relationships to one's club and intensified the emotional reaction to rivals. For Frydenberg (2008:236-237), the phenomena of distinction through homogenization also contributed to the identification with a *barrio*.

Others have demonstrated how violence between Argentinian *hinchas* is foremost an articulation of rivalries emergent in territorial conflicts (Aragón 2007; 2011; Garriga Zucal 2009; 2010; Moreira 2007). The extremes of violence in Argentinian football highlight the visceral embodiment of clubs' territories. *Hinchas* will symbolically mark their club's territory. Graffiti in team colours often covers walls indexing the presence and popularity of a particular club in the *barrio*. Graffiti insulting the local club is used by rivals to mark their transgression. Towards the boundaries of one club to another, the graffiti can become transitional and often becomes more focused on insulting the nearby rival. For the *clubes de barrio* area of transition often coincides with, though imperfectly, a boundary between *barrios*. The marking of a club's territory suggests that the boundaries of the *barrio* are part of a complex social construction that is fluid and dynamic. Not all rivalries in Argentinian football are founded on territorial competition between neighbours but there is often an aspect that is spatially articulated. In cases

where clubs compete to be hegemonic within a space, there is a fragmentation of space creating pockets where one club is more dominant than another.<sup>21</sup>

The dialectical relationship between a *barrio* and its *club de barrio* is also articulated through politics. During the 1920s, municipal politics incorporated the football clubs into discussions that were institutionalizing the *barrio* as a category of spatial organization. Urban planners, with a vision of transforming Buenos Aires into a “modern city,” began to focus on the *barrios*. The Municipality of Buenos Aires formed the Commission of Building Aesthetic in 1923, which produced the “Plan for the Regulation and Reform of the City” two years later. In the document, sport was presented as an issue of urban planning. A section titled “*barrios* of workers, gardens, sports stadiums, suburban beautification” outlined the need for public parks and spaces for sport to be built.<sup>22</sup> The undeveloped spaces of the *barrios* were to be set aside for new parks as part of a plan for public health through “clean air” and exercise and team sports (Gruschetsky 2012:150-154). The municipal government was often processing requests by football clubs to access public green space wherever it was available (Gruschetsky 2012:161).

21 One of Argentina’s most intense rivalries is between Avellaneda teams Racing Club and Independiente. Ironically, while these two teams have stadiums separated by just 400m, their rivalry is based on a hegemonic competition for Avellaneda that produces fragmented territories rather than two concentrated halves with a division of the city. The rivalry between Rosario Central and Newell’s Old Boys, similarly, is spatially expressed as an attempt to establish hegemony over Rosario, Argentina’s second largest city. The rivalry between Boca Juniors and River Plate simultaneously articulates both phenomena, as Boca Juniors is strongly associated with the *barrio* of La Boca and River with the *barrio* of Nuñez. The efforts of both clubs to be the largest in Argentina, however, also generates a fragmentation where pockets of *hinchas* of Boca or River have become the most prominent.

22 During this period, newer *barrios* in what was at the time the urban periphery were described as “suburban”.

*Barrios* like Almagro and Boedo were well developed by the time planners began considering the need for parks within the city.<sup>23</sup> Similar situations across the city led the Commission to highlight sports and social clubs as spaces for physical and leisure activities. In certain cases the municipality extended financial resources to local clubs. At the beginning of the decade in 1921, San Lorenzo received a grant of \$3000 pesos to develop its field and social facilities. The grant, facilitated by the local political organizer and later San Lorenzo President Pedro Bidegain, was part of a general period in which the political relationship between the clubs and the municipal government were expanded (Gruschetsky 2012:162). City documents described the municipal relationship to San Lorenzo:

The performance of the Club in its particular sport is brilliant and its economic situation has improved in a simply commendable manner, such that the number of members constantly increases. But with such a rapid increase in membership, as a logical and natural consequence, a series of new obligations have significantly increased the club's expenses such that it is almost impossible to conveniently satisfy, in a timely manner, the insistent demands of members and the match attending public. The situation requires the aforementioned Club to effect several improvements and enlargements, which do not remotely meet the necessary needs imposed upon it (quoted in Gruschetsky 2012:162-163).

San Lorenzo's political influence, was in part, attributed to its successful growth of membership within Boedo. As popular spaces in the *barrios*, clubs also facilitated the organization of political support for local politicians. While favours were extended to clubs, a simplistic interpretation of 'vote buying' might misrepresent the politicization and public role of the clubs (Horowitz 2014). Gruschetsky (2012) suggests that the planning committee turned to the football clubs because they, rather than the state, more

<sup>23</sup> Boedo's first public plaza was opened nearly a decade later in 2011. An abandoned trolley-car shed once occupied the space.

effectively articulated the demands of local residents for leisure activities within the *barrios*. The importance of the clubs to the social-political organization of the city and to national politics would continue to grow over the following two decades.

Reading the *barrio* into the stories on the mythic formation of the *club de barrio* is another way to see their spatial contribution. The foundation stories of the football clubs contribute ideological content to the idea of the *barrio*. In the case of San Lorenzo, *hinchas* have developed a mythology around the team of youths who played on the streets of the *barrio*. The club's humble beginnings and the moral education provided by Lorenzo Massa through the relationship between football and religion are read as part of the making of the club. These ideas also contribute to the idea of Boedo. The creation of a place, Tuan argues, is a linguistic and symbolic act:

Myths have this power to an outstanding degree because they are not just any story but are foundational stories that provide support and glimmers of understanding for the basic institutions of society; at the same time, myths, by weaving in observable features in the landscape (a tree here, a rock there), strengthen a people's bond to place (Tuan 1991:686).

The process of storytelling particularly as it relates to the expression of experiences, however, is also embodied (Connerton 1989:72-104). The territoriality of football clubs is commonly experienced in the conversations that occur from the regular social interactions of *hinchas*: in the stadium, in the cafes and bars, and around the club facilities. *Hinchas* use ideological expressions and symbolic references to place. In turn the football club contributes ideological content to the embodied presence (both remembered and lived) of the *barrio* as a place within the urban landscape. Thus, the

boundaries of the *barrio* emerge in part out of the relationships between rival clubs and their *socios* and *hinchas*.

### 3.6 Nostalgia and the Barrio

The intense urban industrialization and the construction of larger factories, which began during the 1940s, physically transformed Buenos Aires, changing how the *barrio* was connected into the city. A recurrent theme that emerged after the 1940s in the imaginary of category of the *barrio* is a lament for its social decline. The *barrio* is often used to articulate a nostalgia for changes of life within the city and to oppose the city's transformation. Renowned tango lyricist Homero Manzi (1907-1951) in the 1948 tango *Sur* parallels his lost young love to the changes of experience in the *barrios* of southern Buenos Aires. Manzi, speaking to the woman, recalls their first romantic encounter as they moved through the southern *barrios* starting at the corner of San Juan and Boedo. Down by the river Riachuelo, in the muddy fields surrounded by flowers the couple romantically embraces. The lyrics, then in the present, return to Boedo's now iconic intersection:

<i>San Juan y Boedo antiguo, cielo perdido, Pompeya y al llegar al terraplén, tus veinte años temblando de cariño bajo el beso que entonces te robé. Nostalgias de las cosas que han pasado, arena que la vida se llevó pesadumbre de barrios que han cambiado y amargura del sueño que murió.</i>	San Juan and old Boedo, lost skies, Pompeya and arrive at the embankment your twenty years trembling in love under the kiss I just stole. Nostalgia for things that have passed, sands that life has taken sorrow for the <i>barrios</i> that have changed And the pain of the dream that died.
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The lyrics capture a sense of loss within the city's expansion. Gorelik notes how many tango lyricists idealized the intimate space, protection, and sense of belonging instilled in

the idea of the *barrio*. Through the act of reflection, the *barrio* came to articulate a nostalgia for the loss of protection and belonging felt in the past and in a lost social life (Gorelik 1999:49). This nostalgia, however, connects an imagined past to the present, proclaiming the value of what seems to be lost. While rooted in the past, such forms of nostalgia elicits emotional content to promote an idea of what the *barrio* should be.

Andreas Huyssen suggests that the contemporary use of memory is ultimately a futile response against the entropy of “traditions” through the processes of modernity: “memory and musealization together are called upon to provide a bulwark against obsolescence and disappearance, to counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the ever-shrinking horizons of time and space” (2003:23). Huyssen sees the use of memories as a tactic to grab hold, particularly of and in space, of what modernity transforms and destroys. In this way memory emerges as a response to an emotional and experiential disorientation in time-space. Similarly, there is a sense that the dynamic and changing *barrios* over time elicit a sense of loss to the place-past; memories in turn express the cultural artifacts of the lost *barrio*.

Manzi’s lyrics remain compelling within the context of Buenos Aires because they prefigure an almost cyclical reappearance of nostalgia which seeks to continually memorialize spaces within the city. Plaques that mark places lost, written laments in the newspapers about the disappearing café-bar as a site of social life in the *barrio*, and the small and large memorials to the disappeared victims of the dictatorship are some ways in which the past have been emplaced in Buenos Aires. The remaking of urban space, while contributing to a spatial disorientation and a phenomenological sense of loss, are also

about addressing the future. Within this context, the ideological content of nostalgic references to the past, when mobilized, become part of re-imprinting of ideas onto the imagined spaces of the city. Paradoxically, nostalgia for the *barrio* reproduces what was but also signals a regeneration of the *barrio* as a referential way of understanding the city. New possibilities of interpreting the city through the *barrio* draw upon such representations of the past. On the corner of San Juan and Boedo, the Bar Homero Manzi now occupies the space that has long been a café-bar of various different names. With tango dinner-shows, the space is notably touristic, yet also rooted in the culture of the café-bar as a meeting place and urban respite. Such contradictions represent a conflict about the use of memory, where the power to represent memories is used to produce space (Carmen 2006).

Through the use of memory, the *barrio*, and its cultural foundations becomes a political site. The economic reforms of the Menem government contributed to Argentina's economic collapse in 2001 and the re-emergence of a centre-left Peronist government under Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez Kirchner and their *Frente para la Victoria* (Front for the Victory, FpV) faction within the *Partido Justicialista*. Following a national sovereign default in 2003 and economic growth backed by higher commodity prices and increased trade with South American economies, the Kirchner governments sought to re-establish the state in several key sectors of the economy including the energy and transportation sector by re-nationalizing several companies that had been privatized. Simultaneously a new political party emerged to govern the CABA. The *Propuesta Republicana* (PRO) led by Mauricio Macri, owner of several family

companies and former President of Boca Juniors. Macri became governor of the CABA in 2007, from where he led the main opposition to the Federal FpV government. Until the 2015 national elections, when Macri became President of Argentina, the PRO's political influence was limited to the CABA. During this period, political conflict between the FpV and PRO generated several political opportunities and challenges within the City of Buenos Aires. Cultural activities were one site in which the competing political visions, with different programs supported by both levels of government, created a complex entanglement of *barrio*-based community organizations. The CABA government engaged in a politicized rebranding of the city starting in the early 2000s as the South American cultural capital, which led to an expansion of public concerts and more prevalent cultural performances. Local community organizations, from the bottom up, strengthened by their collective responses to the 2001 economic crisis provided their own initiatives “from below” (Dinardi 2015). Many of these responses turned to the *barrio* as a relevant spatial category through which they could organize. One relevant example is the re-emergence and strengthening of the *barrio*-based carnivals.

### **3.7 Boedo a *Barrio* of *Murga* and Carnival**

*Boom-da-da-boom*. Cymbals clash. The sound reverberates up the surrounding apartment buildings into the night air. A few short blows on the whistle marks the transition. The base drums go silent underneath the clashing cymbals. A new rhythm is beat out on a single base drum, and in an increasing wave the rest of the drums join in. The sound is of the *bombo y platillo* – a base drum with cymbal – the typical percussion instrument of

the Buenos Aires *murga* and football stadium. Brass instruments layer in a recognizable melody, often taken from a pop song, over the rhythmic drumming. Once in a while a note pitches out of key, seemingly unnoticed. Every Wednesday night for several months leading up to the February carnival, the Cometas de Boedo, who were founded in 1959 and one of six *murgas* in Boedo, practiced at the futsal club beside the elevated highway that cuts through the neighbourhood.

At any given practice there are fifty to sixty participants across many generations but during carnival the Cometas number swell to several hundred performers. Dancers are separated by gender and age; the youngest dancers are taught the most basic steps, a trial of patient repetition for their teacher. In the corner near the drums, a group of teenage boys practices acrobatic kicks in the air. Their legs flail like cooked pasta. The young women seem more concerned about the synchronization of their steps, lined up in equally spaced rows. Their hips move to the drum beat as their feet slightly kick-out. As the intensity of the drumming builds, almost unexpectedly they drop in unison to the ground – legs splayed out – as one hand goes back to catch their controlled fall before bouncing back to their feet. The oldest members of the *murga* move from group to group, picking up the rhythm of the drums with their feet and hips. Family members sit off to the side, chatting and laughing. The *murga* has a familiar feel, caught between organized practice and a chaotic gathering of friends and acquaintances. Endurance, rather than perfection, from a distance seems the central motivation behind the monotonous repetition. During the carnivals, numerous *murgas* compete on the parade-like *corsos* set up in several *barrios* around the city. The *murgas* are judged on their dancing, rhythms,

costumes and flair, inclusion of young and old members, and their satirical lyrics; there is a competitive rivalry between *murgas*. But importantly, as a member of one *murga* described to me it is about the sense of community and friendship that one gains by being a part of the group. During carnival time, *murgas* will criss-cross the city, performing three or four times a night in various *corsos* using rusted and retired school buses, the very same types of buses used by *hinchas* and political mobilizations, to move around the city. The intersections between football, politics and the *murga* are historically significant, more so because the *murga* has seen a resurgence in the past twenty years after being banned during the civic-military dictatorship.

The particularities of River Plate carnivals emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century as a syncretic tradition melding of Mediterranean, in particular the *murga* (street bands) of Cadíz Spain and Italian *corsos* (parade routes), and local Afro-latino elements, most notably the rhythmic drumming (Manrique 2005; Martín 1997). The *murga* of Cadíz is composed of a small group of performers: instrumentalists and singers who dress as clowns that comically satirize social-political issues through their lyrics. Two distinct forms of *murgas* developed over time during carnival time in the River Plate region: the refined stage performances typical of Montevideo and Buenos Aires' large *murgas* composed of hundreds of dancers, musicians, and animators – similar in size to the samba blocs of Brazil. Carnivals, like football, were part of the public integration of working class immigrants into *barrio*-based associations (Martín 1997). Links between football and the contemporary *murga* are sonically evident but as the

mural by the Grupo Artístico de Boedo suggests the relationship between football and murga is also one that passes through the *barrio*.

During the nearly month long carnival, the *barrio's* principal *corso* is setup with a small stage, metal barricades, and wooden bleachers along Avenida Boedo. Performances are set for each weekend evening during the month preceding Lent. Buses drop off the carnival performers at Avenida Independencia, where they will assemble into their procession formation. Large banners at the front declare the *murga's* name. Various animated characters are in unique costumes but the majority of the performers share a similar style: pants with feathery tassels, a long jacket in the style of a tuxedo with tails, and a top hat. The particular colours of the *murga* dominate the costumes. Jackets and vests, however, demonstrate the individuality of the performer through the decorative beadwork that symbolize the performers favourite football club, television show characters, bands, and activities. Once assembled, the *bombos* announce the *murga's* arrival to the expectant crowd lining the barricades. The *murga* parades three blocks, in front of the banks, principal restaurants and shopping of the *barrio*, towards the main stage. Periodically the procession stops so that the dancing troops can perform their more intricate and acrobatic moves. In the crowd, children run up and down the street in little gangs, spraying foam at unsuspecting people passing by. Groups of teenage friends share bottles of beer and young couples attempt to avoid the attention of adults and wayward sprays of foam. The *corso* is a public display of the *barrio's* social connections.

Once the *murga's* musical section reaches the space in front of the stage, a small group of singers take their place at the microphones. The banner carriers receive a special

place of honour beside them on the stage. And then the *murga* performs their prepared songs. The melodies are taken from familiar and popular songs. Lyrics are changed to proclaim the performers' love of *murga*, their happiness, their *murga*'s particularly unique qualities, as well as the place from where they come from in the city. Other songs, following on the tradition of the Cadíz *murga*, satirize the year's social and political events, often from a view point of those with relatively little power, while reaffirming the community around the *murga* and *barrio*. The mixing of joyous, at times carnal, revelry with timely political commentary in the lyrics is a source of pride for the *murgas*' leaders.<sup>24</sup> The creativity that *murgas* display is related to a similar desire of San Lorenzo's *hinchada* to be recognized for their ability to craft meaningful lyrics.

Reclaiming the *murga* as a cultural activity within the *barrio* of Boedo is part of a wider political and cultural shift that has occurred over the past twenty years. The *Chiflados de Boedo* is one of the other large *murgas* in the *barrio*. They formed in 1998 and have grown to over 250 performers, becoming one of the most recognized *murgas* in Buenos Aires. Decorated in blue, red and white, the *Chiflados* index Boedo as their home in the city through their colourful connection to San Lorenzo. Throughout Buenos Aires, it is common for at least one *murga* to adopt the colours of the principal football club of their *barrio*.<sup>25</sup> Not all the performers are *hinchas* of the club but the link was intentional.

24 The Gloriosa de Boedo weaved the sentimental happiness of the carnival with a political commentary: "Mauricio, pará la oreja, te queremos avisar, la ciudad está de fiesta, ha llegado el Carnaval, por más que te hagás el sota, ni un afiche pa` pegar, el pueblo ya se ha enterado, y las calles va a llenar, explotando la alegría, de la fiesta popular" (Mauricio [Macri], this is for the ear, we want to let you know, the city is a party, Carnival has arrived, even though you play the fool, or a poster to put up, the people have just entered, and the streets will fill up, exploding with happiness, in the party of the people).

25 *La Gloriosa de Boedo*, founded in 1998, also uses the colours of San Lorenzo. The name of the *murga* connects to the *hinchada* of San Lorenzo, *La Gloriosa Buteller*. Not all *murgas* relate their activities to football. The Cometas de Boedo were explicitly founded in 1959 with the principle of not connecting

Several of the musicians also play in the band of the *hinchada* during San Lorenzo matches and one of *murga*'s founders, Cristian Evangelista, later rose to a position of significant influence within the *Gloriosa Buteller*, San Lorenzo's *barra brava*. When the group is not practicing, the cultural centre of the *Chilfados*, located on Avenida San Juan near the corner of Avenida Boedo, opens its space to workshops on theatre, dance, and art. In general, *murgas* are seen as having a historical relationship with community-based organizing deeply connected to the local level.

As large *barrio*-based organizations, *murgas* often have a place in Argentina's political networks. A third *murga* in Boedo, *Los Dandys de Boedo* traces its history to 1956. *Los Dandys* are explicit in their political connections to the local branch of the Campora, an activist organization within the left-spectrum of the Peronist party. At both the City and national levels, political engagement has strengthened the presence of the *murgas* during carnival. More recently the Ministry of Culture of the City of Buenos Aires has provided financial support for official *corsos* around the city, promoting the month long celebration. On the national side, the Federal Government in 2011 re-instated a national holiday on the final Monday and Tuesday of carnival. Culturally, this has promoted the prominence of carnival as a *barrio*-based cultural activity.

In Boedo there are now three different sites in which neighbours come out to celebrate carnival. Besides the main *corso* on Boedo, another official *corso* has been setup in *Bajo Boedo* (lower Av. Boedo), to the south of the highway. As part of a cultural re-engagement with the *barrio*, *hinchas* in San Lorenzo's *Subcomisión del Hinchas* started football to the *murga* or to political parties.

to organized their own *corso* in front of the Carrefour on Avenida La Plata during the final weekend of carnival. The *murgas* of Boedo at this *corso* are given prominent positions. The *Subcomisión* also invites local tango artists and musicians to perform on the stage. The event is promoted as a reconnection to the legacy of the carnival celebrations that were once organized by the club at the *Viejo Gasómetro*.

### **3.8 The *Barrio* as Home**

Carnivalized, the *barrio* becomes an emotional space filled with the symbolic references to “*alegría*” or happiness. For the *murgas*, like the *hinchas* of San Lorenzo as I expand upon in the following chapters, their relationship to their *barrio* is a sentimental one, filled with references of *pertenencia*, or belonging. This relationship is similar to how the space of the “home” has been theorized (see: Moore 2000). Homes are simultaneously physical and non-physical, constructed from interwoven emotional and ideological components. Homes have qualities of imagined places. As emotional-ideological constructions of space, the home can have many simultaneous overlapping meanings. Understanding the *barrio* as a home in some of its theoretical facets helps to illuminate how *hinchas* discuss Boedo as the home of San Lorenzo.

Bachelard (1994) describes the emotional knowledge of a house as “intimate.” While Bachelard is focused on the physical/imagined house, a building with very particular physical characteristics, elements of his construction can be extended to a metaphoric home. What is often attributed to a physical house, transforming the physical space into a particularly meaningful place for those who have established a relationship

with it, are emotionally rich experiences shared with others; emotional sentiments that are related to shelter and belonging. The house, for Bachelard, remains a physical object despite the emergence of this sense of human intimacy, what Bachelard calls a “dream world” (1994:48). The dream world of a house, the investiture of the lived human life, does not ever fully encompass the physical house, which in its own way continues to stand apart from the ideas that constitute the emotional space. Thus a particular house becomes a place of deep emotional significance for some, while others look upon it as another visible object. Tuan similarly emphasizes the meaning of social phenomena in the making of a “home”:

Homes are "cold" without people, and come alive with them. But how? The precise way by which the human presence, human feelings, and human communication add to the warmth and aliveness of a place, or, to the contrary, drain it of warmth and meaning is little understood: indeed, social scientists and cultural geographers have taken little notice of the fact itself-the fact that the quality of human communication, including (preeminently) the kinds of words and the tone of voice used, seems to infect the material environment, as though a light-tender, bright, or sinister-has been cast over it. (Tuan 1991:690).

“Home”, as a conceptual category of place, emphasizes a particular phenomenological perspective (Moore 2000:209). As Tuan suggests, the ‘warmth’ of the home as a place (identifiable and relatively consistent) emerges out of the intimacy and security, the “dream world” described by Bachelard, implied by the house. Home becomes a generalizable concept to be applied to particular kinds of places where such sensations of belonging and security of self in relation to others are emergent. The significance of the dream world is that such emotional sensations emerge in relation but stand apart from the physical object or space to which they relate.

An idealized understanding of the ‘home’, often focusing on the positive emotional attachments to a particular place, can emerge when ignoring instances when the home is not a sanctuary or a place of safety. “The renewed focus on meaning,” Moore suggests, “will need to focus on the ways in which *home* disappoints, aggravates, neglects, confines and contradicts as much as it inspires and comforts us” (2000:213). In Buenos Aires, the stigmatization of the home of the other because of social-economic and racial discrimination reflects real social-economic inequalities which limit the possibilities for residents.<sup>26</sup> Moore (2000) argues that it is important to culturally contextualize the inhabited spaces identified as home and account for the nuances and ambiguity of experience, even while exploring the ways in which belonging and intimacy are generally understood as part of the home.

Here, I argue the importance of recognizing the various spaces inhabited by *hinchas* that they call “home”. The stadium, the club, and the *barrio* are all at different times described as home by the *hinchas*. Each type of “home” referred to by *hinchas* entails different people, social relations, and experiences. In the *barrio*, *hinchas* establish intimate relationships with people who do not necessarily care about football or their club. In the club, different types of activities are associated with their home: organized sports, using the swimming pool, having an *asado* with friends at the club, and becoming involved in the politics of the club. The stadium is filled with strangers, who potentially come from far away and is transgressed by the offensive but necessary presence of a

26 See Auyero and Swistun (2009) and Grimson (1999) who provide two different ethnographic accounts of living in *villas miseria* within Greater Buenos Aires. Auyero and Swistun focus on the environmental harms of the Villa Inflammable located near industrial port and chemical plants. Grimson describes the racial and ethnic discrimination experienced by residents an urban *villa*.

visiting team and its fans. The intimacy of social relationships, and sense of belonging in relation to each of these spaces, is described in several different ways in this dissertation. The variation within these notions of “home” for the *hincha* suggests the scalar flexibility of the concept of the home as it relates to spatial constructs.

The “nation”, as an imagined community (Anderson 1991) similarly is described as having a homeland, in Argentina the *patria*. When thinking about San Lorenzo’s disconnection to Boedo, the reference to a national homeland becomes relevant in situations when a population has been exiled and lost physical contact with its homeland. Diasporas often elicit a nostalgic attachment to a past place when they represent their disconnection to their homeland (as a political territory or imagined place). The home-lost as an imagined place contributes to a shared identity and history for the diasporic people (Manzo 2003). Gupta and Ferguson note that “remembered places have, of course, often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people” (2001:39). Diasporas connect to a lost homeland through stories of migration, implicating forces both internal and external that led to their movement. Narratives of displacement refract a nostalgia for a place-lost. The lost homeland, on the other hand, emerges as an imagined place where a sense of belonging in space can be re-established, to provide security to those who identify as members of the community. The evocation of memories and stories of the lost homeland come to transcend what was the actual home, transforming its significance to the diaspora, particularly in their contextual social relationships. The imagined homeland becomes an ideological influence in the present, changing what the diaspora community imagines as their spatial relationships to the world. Numerous

exoduses of football clubs from their *barrio*, including that of San Lorenzo, who nevertheless maintain symbolic and social ties to the *barrio* suggests an analogous dialectic between these clubs and the imaginary of the *barrio*.<sup>27</sup> *Hinchas* are capable of maintaining a strong emotional and ideological connections to a historical place in the face of displacement and distance.

San Lorenzo's *hinchas* have constructed their own narrative of exile from their home. Within their stories, explored with a greater focus in following chapters, there is the simultaneous reference to two homes: the *Viejo Gasómetro* and the *barrio* of Boedo. As a physical building, the *Viejo Gasómetro* and its surrounding facilities more easily translates as the lost house of San Lorenzo. Today, the *Ciudad Deportiva* in Bajo Flores and *Nuevo Gasómetro* stadium provide an alternative home to the club and its *hinchas*. The *Viejo Gasómetro*, an imagined home-past, and the reality of the *Nuevo Gasómetro* intersect in the lived actions of *cuervos* in the present. The contemporary experiences of *hinchas* in what many think of as the temporary home of San Lorenzo are in dialogue with the memories and stories of the *Viejo Gasómetro*. The separation in the real space-time between *hinchas* and the *Viejo Gasómetro* is overcome in part through the insertion of contemporary experiences into the stories and memories, which combined create the meaning of an imagined place. Conversely the sense of belonging to the imagined *Viejo*

27 River Plate is the largest club to have moved across the city, from La Boca in the south-east corner to the north-west *barrio* of Nuñez. Unlike River, which is now strongly identified with its place in Nuñez and has little presence in Boca, lower division clubs Almagro and San Telmo present interesting case studies of the lingering sentimental attachments. In the search for land, Almagro built their stadium beyond the western limits of the CABA. San Telmo built a stadium to the south on the Isla Maciel in the city of Avellaneda. While drawing *hinchas* from the immediate surrounds of the stadium, both clubs continue to maintain symbolic and physical ties to their historic *barrios*.

Gasómetro has profound influence on the form of intimacy that *cuervos* construct in their current Nuevo Gasómetro stadium. There is a sense of inadequacy and insecurity experienced by *hinchas* of San Lorenzo that is related to their sense of not being properly emplaced in the world.

Boedo as the socially constructed territory of San Lorenzo requires a more complex translation of home. The metaphor of *barrio* as the “home” of a club reveals the dynamic cultural construction of space. The social relationships of *hinchas* with and through their *club de barrio* dialectically draws upon the idea of the *barrio* and the specific construction of their *barrio* when they identify the *barrio* as the home of their club. In turn the socio-cultural activities that make a *barrio* identifiable and unique are elevated to the status of meaningful activities. When *hinchas* of San Lorenzo sing “we come from the *barrio* of Boedo, the *barrio* of *murga* and carnival” they point to how their sense of belonging to Boedo brings them into an intimate relationship with the activities, like *murga*, that also constitute their home. The *barrio* of Boedo comes “alive” with the recollections of experiences, the utterances within the lyrics of the tango artist and the *murgas*, and the embodied interactions that draw residents into a shared social life. As I argue later, these cultural activities are recalled in the memories of *hinchas* and contribute to a transformed reciprocal relationship between Boedo and San Lorenzo. The imagined *barrio* of Boedo constructed through the narratives of the *Vuelta a Boedo* informs how *hinchas* relate to the city. The territoriality of the *barrio* a defined space that belongs to San Lorenzo and becomes a place in which San Lorenzo inhabits. The product of the

dialectical relationship between the social-cultural activities of the *barrio* and the politicization of its frontiers helps to inform the sensation of the *barrio* as home.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

Boedo, the imagined and real *barrio*, is a central spatial protagonist in the social life and organization of *hinchas*, the *clubes de barrio*, as well as other culturally relevant practices such as tango and *murga*, that become related through the narrative of the *Vuelta a Boedo*. The history of how football clubs came to be part of the fabric and organization of Buenos Aires belies the continued relevancy of the *barrio* to the contemporary football clubs of the city and their community of *hinchas*. The football clubs, conversely, through their claims of belonging to a particular *barrio* also contribute to an ongoing socio-cultural making of the *barrio*. The complex layering of social-cultural activities that have contributed to the making of the *porteño barrio* are not only relevant to the spatial construction of the *barrio* but also part of the entanglement of particular practices like political organizing, cultural production, and football. Activities such as the *porteño murga* inform the musicality and creativity of Argentina's *hinchas* and football culture but also the ideological importance of being placed within the city. San Lorenzo's *hinchas* themselves recognize these linkages through their own referencing in murals and lyrics of the *murga* and carnival. While political parties in Argentina have historically sought to influence, control, and benefit from these local organizing networks, they have also become drawn into the practices created by the social-cultural organizing of the *barrio*. This particularity of the *barrio*'s spatiality, as I will argue, exposes and motivates

politicians to interact and participate with the *Vuelta a Boedo* in ways that cannot be easily restricted to a simplistic definition of corporatist politics.

The history of Buenos Aires' *barrios* is dynamic. Changes resulting from political-economic transformations intersect with the social-cultural practices of the *barrio*. The changes also create possibilities for reflection and experiences of loss. Nostalgia for the *barrio's* past and its imagined decay is a recurrent theme in literature and artistic representations, giving rise to a particularly *porteño* characteristic of nostalgia for places-lost. A similar form of nostalgic evocation of the *club de barrio*, I argue, can be seen from one perspective in how *hinchas* draw upon San Lorenzo's past to articulate the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Such reflections upon the past, however, like in the nostalgia of the tango lyrics inform a value-laden desire for the *barrio* to be a space of emotionally evocative cultural life.

Attachments to the *barrio* as a home within the city become more clear in later discussions of how *hinchas* articulate their desire for San Lorenzo to be placed in the world "where the club belongs." This imagined *barrio* of Boedo never escapes a relationship with the physical *barrio* as it exists part of the built city. This physical world has consequences, both as limitations and possibilities, for realizing a return. The following chapter explores the actual place of contemporary San Lorenzo in Buenos Aires and how *hinchas* emotionally interact within the current home the Nuevo Gasómetro during the most heightened and enlivened moment: the football match.

## **Chapter 4    Passion and Suffering in the Stadium**

This chapter explores the stadium through the perspective of a *hinch*a. I provide an ethnographic description of one particular match against Newell's Old Boys on 27 May 2012 at San Lorenzo's Estadio Pedro Bidegain, more popularly known as the Nuevo Gasómetro stadium. Going into the third last match of the Clausura 2012 tournament, San Lorenzo was positioned in direct relegation. Losing the match would have almost guaranteed the club's place in the second division Primera B, a result that *cuervos* had been dreading since the beginning of the year. In the lead up to the decisive match, tensions were high. In the previous months I had experienced the feeling of “suffering” that many *hinch*as describe in relation to their team’s losses. A form of collective depression formed around the club, as *cuervos* talked about their club's failures on the football field and what would be done, if anything, to save the team. Outside the stadium, through social media and in the cafes and bars the club's supporters blamed players and the club's political leadership equally. Some placed hope in the team's new manager Carusso Lombardi who arrived in the beginning of April; an experienced manager specializing in clubs facing relegation. On the field, Carusso's team played a pragmatic counter-attacking football but he is more well known for his bombastic media appearances. In the seven previous matches under Lombardi, San Lorenzo won two, tied four, and lost one, moving the club from 18<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> in the tournament. Argentina's unique relegation system however meant the club was still in a battle with Tigre, San Martin de San Juan, Banfield, Unión de Santa Fe, Rafaela, and Olimpo to escape the two direct

relegation and two play-off relegation spots. In the Bar San Lorenzo, the relegation table in the *Olé* sports paper received daily scrutiny as each club's point average was recalculated with the predicted results for the upcoming matches. During similar moments, the majority of Argentinian *hinchadas* will sing songs that reference their support “*en las malas mucho más*” – in the bad times a lot more.

I explore the football match as an emplaced event focusing on the Nuevo Gasómetro both as a stadium space and a place in the urban landscape. As well, I present the football match as an emotion-filled spectacle that, beyond just the play on the field, is produced by *hinchas*. Edward Soja writes, “space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience” (1989:80). This perspective turns our attention to the phenomenological production of space. Through the football match I describe what *hinchas* call the “folklore” of Argentinian football to develop the symbols and practices that emerge through the performance of the *hinchada*. Within the stadium a unique emotional experience is made possible, that in turn influences why *hinchas* understand a stadium to be an important place. Through my description of the match, I develop the relationship between passion and suffering for *hinchas*. This chapter begins by describing the general football stadium alongside a theoretical tool-kit that will be used to explore the performativity of *hinchas*. A description of the Nuevo Gasómetro is given before turning to a brief focus on the Nuevo Gasómetro's place within Buenos Aires. The Nuevo Gasómetro is located in an area known as Bajo Flores and is beside the Villa 1-11-14, an

informal community of over 26 000 residents.<sup>1</sup> For some *cuervos* the location of the Gasómetro contributes to a sense of being 'out of place'. I then turn towards the spectacle of the football match against Newell's Old Boys, highlighting the performance of the *hinchada* from a perspective located on terraces.

#### **4.1 The Stadium as Space and the Phenomenology of the Stadium Crowd**

Stadiums have ambiguous relationships with their neighbours. Placing a stadium is in part a dialogue with its surrounding spaces. As a result of football's particular development in Buenos Aires, many of the city's stadiums have been built within residential areas. The historical territoriality of football is intertwined with the placement of the stadium into the urban landscape (Chapter Three; Bale 1993; Gaffney 2009). Neighbours are particularly aware of the risks that come with living beside a stadium. One year before, *hinchas* of River Plate following the club's relegation dismantled part of their Estadio Monumental and tore through surrounding streets. Images of the smashed windows of local businesses accompanied the news coverage of the historic event. More mundane matches elicit fears of drinking and public urination in the doorways of homes. Fears of roving away fans and the violence they potentially bring to residential streets were periodically mentioned in newspaper articles covering the *Vuelta a Boedo*.

On the other hand, the stadium is a central space for the *club de barrio* as a social and cultural institution. *Hinchas* contribute to the production of their club principally on match days, which helps to make the stadium a meaningful space in the urban landscape.

<sup>1</sup> The population figure comes from the 2010 census. The population of *villas* is difficult to track and have been the only part of the City of Buenos Aires to see a significant population increase over the recent decades (INDEC 2010).

Bale and Gaffney, paraphrasing Tuan (1977), emphasize that, “The experience of a place will always be compounded of feeling and thought, the essence of being human” (2004:26). Stadiums are exceptional spaces in the modern world where emotional extremes are not only permitted but expected. Architectural design of stadiums intentionally engages with the emotions of spectators (Schäfer and Roose 2010:241). Experience of stadiums is historical; *hinchas* carry, share, and carry forward an embodied knowledge of the stadium that in turn shapes how they produce new experiences. For *hinchas* their intimate knowledge of a stadium is infused with multi-sensorial memories and emotional content, which they are creatively able to transpose into other stadiums and, importantly for the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign, other spaces. The bodily ideology of an *hincha*, however, also understands the significance of the “home” stadium.

Bale and Gaffney (2004), relying on the heuristic of the five senses, argue that a multi-sensorial perception of the stadium, including a sense of history and belonging, is needed to understand the space of the stadium. A phenomenological approach attempts to understand the structures of “experiential relationships to the world by turning to the most fundamental level on which these manifest, that is sensory perception” (Leistle 2006:41). Leistle writes,

In an empirical analysis of ritual, scientists should focus on the processes by which cultural meaning becomes embodied and is at the same time sensorily experience by participants... Participants take the ritual phenomena as a guideline of perception, the song or dance features as an experiential norm to scale up to; and as in non-ritual experience, they arrive at this level essentially by using the potentials of bodily intentionality. Singing, dancing, speaking in ritual do not mean that participants remain in a position opposite the scene, being able to stay detached. They are at the same time ways to *constitute and*

*inhabit the ritual situation*, which gains reality as an experiential atmosphere in the course of the process (author's emphasis 2006:50).

Accepting some of the parallels between the football match and the concept of ritual more generally opens a discussion about how the match emerges within a particular structuration of sensory perception. The specific performance of the crowd during a match, however, is always connected to the full social life of the *hinchas* (Chapter One; Leistle 2006:50; 52). For Leistle, there is a “dynamic structuration of sensory activity” within ritual modes of communication and that there are meaningful and particular relations “between the senses appealed” in a ritual process (2006:56). Paying attention to the various and specific ways in which the senses are engaged, appealed to, or subsumed over a match is part of a *hinchas* affective experience; their passion and suffering that occurs in relation to the match.

Visuality is often emphasized as the dominant sense through metaphors of experience the match. The spectator's primary activity is to watch the match. The emphasis on sight has become increasingly influential, notably in the rhetoric of contemporary stadium design which seeks to provide near universal unobstructed sight lines as a design rule. New technologies such as massive digital displays and the ubiquity of television screens in modern stadiums allow fans to have access to multiple perspectives. Access to these technologies transform the temporal experience of a match by providing visual replays captured in slow motion, drawing attention away from the present unfolding match.<sup>2</sup> Sight contributes to experience in other ways. Many of the

<sup>2</sup> The perception of “truth” is also affected by the use of technology. Video replay allows for fans to visually relive dramatic moments in the middle of a match, such as fouls and goals. Alternative perceptions of “what should have happened” can emerge through this visual virtuality.

symbolic elements within and around a stadium, particularly colours, are perceived through sight. A stadium's unique appearance often responds to architectural cues that symbolize the local culture and place.

Many contemporary stadium designs consciously engage sonic perception by considering acoustical dynamics and the placement of speaker systems to provide pre-planned music and announcements. Less consideration, however, is given to how the sonic qualities of a crowd contributes to people's awareness as mutual participants in a shared experience and how sonic perception contributes to a person's awareness of the flows of a match. In my ethnographic description of the match below I find myself continually drawn to referencing the stadium songs sung by San Lorenzo's *hinchada* to mark the emotional moments and to understand the play on the field. Being able to interpret the sound-world of a stadium, I argue, provides a more clear understanding of how *hinchas* are feeling. Here I draw inspiration from Erwin Straus' phenomenological approach to the spatiality of sound, which has different perceptive qualities than visual interpretations of space: "colours appear opposite to us, over there, confined to one position; they demarcate and differentiate space into partial spaces, appearing side by side and behind one another. Tones, on the contrary, approach us, come to us, and surrounding us, drift on; they fill space, shaping themselves in temporal sequences" (1966:7). The vibration of air in a stadium can be overwhelming; beyond its effects on ear drums the deep base tones reverberate against the skin and through your lungs. Catching the emotional tenor of the tones is an interpretive process. *Hinchas* possess experienced knowledge on how to register the sonic space of the stadium, which contributes to

understanding of the stadium as a unique form of space. The practiced body responds almost automatically to the combination of emotion and sound: “Not only are we able to hear a rhythm better than we can see one, but, as everyone knows, a rhythmic series of tones compels us to move in a way that is characteristically different from everyday walking, running, and jumping” (Straus 1966:11). *Hinchas* in an Argentinian stadium will spontaneously turn into a collective bouncing mass that is capable of moving stadiums. It is famously said of the Bombonera, Boca Junior’s stadium, that it “does not tremble; it beats.”

The skin is an important perceptive organ. Stadiums come alive in the presence of people. Contact with the crowd on the surface of the skin, in the context of the stadium, translates into the significance of a moment. In important matches, the numerous bodies will compress the crowd increasing the weight of others on the surface of the perceiving skin. Discomforts, such as feeling too hot or too cold, register the pathos that a person by willingly participating in a match must overcome. Overcoming is recognized by other *hinchas*, transformed into a virtue as they themselves are aware of the significant discomforts emergent in the experience. And the moment of a goal can result in an immediate and dramatic embrace, which particularly when experienced with strangers, transforms the perception of the crowd as one defined by anonymity into a viscerally personal relationship, transgressing boundaries that are otherwise maintained in public.

Like sound, aromas invade the body’s olfactory. Argentinian terraces are characterized by cigarette smoke, the skunk of marijuana, and someone’s unwashed lucky

jersey. Aromas combine and mix, only suggesting the faintest sense of direction, floating through in the air. Smells also have the ability to transform the perception of time:

In sensing a faint aroma, the smelling subject entertains a singular relation to distance. In smelling especially, something impending announces its coming; the sense features a strong dimension of futurity. The same holds true for the past. There exists probably no sensory experience with so powerful a potential to invoke the past, as smelling an aroma. The sense does not present the temporal dimensions in a structured order, however. In smell, past and future fuse more with the present than they appear in temporal sequence. (Leistle 2006:60).

Leistle (2006) identifies the recurrent presence of distinct aroma combinations in rituals where people enter trance states, suggesting the significance of smells to performative contexts. The particular and repetitive combination of aromas of the stadium elicit memories, transporting the *hincha* to past experiences, which can instantly orient the body to the expectant experience of the upcoming match. The carnivalesque crowd, organic and popular, is clearly indexed by its compositional aroma (Bakhtin 1984). The presence of the grotesque human body, its excretions (most powerfully the aromas of human sweat and urine) can overwhelm certain sensibilities and mark the stadium as a debased space. The grotesque aromas also infuse the space with a transgressive quality, breaking with some of the bourgeois norms of bodily cleanliness. There is, however, an indexical quality to aroma. Different spaces in the stadium are produced by unique combinations of aromas: near the boxes, cologne replaces more human smells; on the concourses, grilled meat; and the composition of aromas can also affect the perception of class and gender.

Bale (1994), developing a metaphor of the stadium as a container, has noted that the emotional extremes produced within the stadium have inspired several technologies

of control. In Britain, alongside a growing moral concern around the culture of hooliganism, stadium architecture increasingly focused on ways to control fans, starting with segregation. A shift began in the 1970s towards panoptic technologies of surveillance: cameras were used in tandem with identity cards to police behaviours and exclude individuals from the stadium. Perhaps the most successful form of segregation has been the movement to all-seater stadiums. Following in the wake of the Taylor Report on the 1989 Hillsborough Disaster, English football stadiums in the top divisions were forced to remove their general admission terraces and become all-seaters. Ideological influences on spatial configurations of the stadium have been globalized, if uneven. Transformations adopted in the United Kingdom have been adopted, to varying degrees, elsewhere. Seats prohibit the fluid movement of fans and give stadium operators the ability to organize and quantify fans. Numbered seats with an associated ticket also allows for individuals to be more easily identified and removed. Seated sections can be easily segregated in ticketing systems to provide a greater variety of ticket prices, and following a market ideology, more effectively correspond ticket prices to demand. Other amenities, associated with an ideology of comfort, have been added to stadiums to help distinguish segregated sections such as padded seats, luxury boxes, special access to restaurants, and stores; many improvements add new sources of revenue. As a result, while stadium capacities have trended downwards with the removal of large and densely populated terraces, profits have increased. Gaffney and Mascarenhas (2005) describe similar transformation of Brazilian football stadiums that were accelerated in the lead up to the 2014 World Cup. The reconceptualization of the stadium, particularly in the United

Kingdom, has been accompanied by the dissipation of hooligan elements and a subsequent reduction in the fear of violence for other fans (Robinson 2010). On the other hand, the transformation led to an increase in ticket prices and a dramatic transformation of the atmosphere. For Gaffney and Mascarenhas, “the new stadium is assimilated within other corporate and predictable spaces in society... domains of individualism and passivity that are of great interest to capital, and in which are inscribed the micro-physics of power” (2005:11).

In this light, many Argentinian football stadiums may seem to be architectural anachronisms that disrupt a globalized model of stadium construction.<sup>3</sup> Standing-only terraces are common in Argentina. Being on a terrace entails a level of risk and physical exertion; experience of these sensations have been lessened or prevented by the removal of standing sections in other parts of the world. The risks of a human avalanche and crowd crush are very real and require an aware and experienced *hinchada* to avoid. Nevertheless not all terraces are the same. For example, the terraces of the Estadio Mario Kempes, built to host the 1978 World Cup and operated by the government of Cordoba, are an expansive: each step is wide and has a shorter rise than other terraces. During a match against CA Belgrano one of the Malditos sought my opinion of the stadium: “Beautiful, very European, right? You can see everything.” Our group was spread out over several steps on the slowly sloping terrace. Despite selling 6000 tickets, the 14 000

<sup>3</sup> Only one major stadium, the Estadio Unico owned by the City of La Plata has been completed in the last two decades. San Lorenzo’s Nuevo Gasómetro is the newest completed stadium amongst major clubs in Argentina. Before then the most recent wave of stadium construction preceded the 1978 World Cup. Currently two clubs have stadiums under partial construction: Estadio Libertadores of CA Independiente and of Estudiantes of La Plata.

person terrace felt empty. I responded, “I guess but I don’t like it, it feels sterile and distant,” which also corresponded with our visual distance from the field. It led to a discussion about how some of our best experiences as *hinchas* were in some of Argentina’s oldest and, from a contemporary architectural perspective, most poorly designed stadiums.

Expectations for sight and comfort should be confronted by our other sensorial considerations when evaluating the quality of an experience. In the previous championship a similar number of *cuervos* travelled to Cordoba to support San Lorenzo against CA Belgrano. That match was played in the Belgrano’s *barrio* stadium: the *Gigante de Alberdi*. Built amongst residential houses, the stadium is compact. The short lateral visitor’s terrace was crowded beyond capacity, I had to turn my body sideways to share the step with three other *hinchas*. When they moved, I moved. The sanitary conditions were terrible, the few portable toilets that were available were in short order overflowing, and even from more than half-way up the terrace my view of the closest third of the field was obstructed by banners hanging on the fence. Yet, out of more than fifty San Lorenzo matches, it remains one of the most memorable. How my body interpreted the frustration and exhilaration of the flow of the match heightened the significance of the experience and was made more visceral and personal because of the shared physical contact forced by the stadium’s design. Predicting how a space will affect such emotional connections, however, is difficult. The contemporary fan through the ideology of the consumer expect amenities that enhance their comfort. Yet it seems in the

search for higher-value comfort and personal space, contemporary stadium architecture transform and limit how emotional extremes can be achieved.

Moments of suffering can be valuable experiences. The ideology of Argentinian *hinchas* suggests that passionate support depends upon experiences of discomfort being transformed into moments of celebration. Overcoming suffering is seen as a requirement of passionate support and the ability to overcome suffering needs to be demonstrated through action. *Hinchas* emphasize their participation with the match and their efforts to affect the match through the motivation they give the players and their influence on the referee. But the significance of their participation extends well beyond the relationship to a particular match. I argue that Argentinian *hinchas*, particularly those who occupy spaces on the terraces, engage in practices that are primarily concerned with the production of their mutual emotional states. Contrary to the prevailing emphasis on the visibility of spectatorship, I argue for a more holistic perceptive awareness of the sensorial experience to better understand the stadium space. By de-emphasizing visibility and comfort, the experience of a football match becomes a much more visceral and emotive event.

#### **4.2 Nuevo Gasómetro as a “Home”**

Few other cities in the world can rival Greater Buenos Aires’ density of stadiums. There are close to 70 stadiums for professional football in the AMBA, over twenty of which are capable of holding more than 20 000 people (Gaffney 2009). Ownership of a stadium is part of the political-economic structure of Argentinian football. Stadiums have symbolic

meaning as homes. Connected to the territoriality of the football in Argentina, owning a stadium is interwoven with the sentimental attachment and sense of belonging that *hinchas* form with their club. Understanding the significance of a stadium, therefore entails understanding the practices of *hinchas* that contribute to their meaning as distinct spaces in the urban landscape. Soja describes the dialectical process in the production of space:

The production of spatiality in conjunction with the making of history can thus be described as both the medium and the outcome, the presupposition and embodiment, of social action and relationship, of society itself. Social and spatial structures are dialectically intertwined in social life, not just mapped one onto the other as categorical projections (1989:127).

The *hincha*'s familiarity with their stadium is both a product and productive of their experience of a match. The physicality of a stadium, both as a placed building within a socially understood urban space and as a unique building with its own architectural features, does matter in this context. As buildings with diverse histories and configurations, individual stadiums combine with the collective practices of *hinchas* to produce experiences that become layered into the social life of *hinchas*. San Lorenzo's particular history with football stadiums helps to accentuate the relationship between *hinchas* and the stadium as a place of belonging.

San Lorenzo's current stadium the Estadio Pedro Bidegain is built on the triangular corner of the club's *Ciudad Deportiva*. The first match played at the Nuevo Gasómetro was against Universidad Católica of Chile on 16 December 1993, ending a period of fourteen years where the club's football team went without a home stadium. The north side of the stadium faces onto Avenida Perito Moreno overlooking the Villa 1-

11-14. Viewed from the South, the stadium's exposed concrete columns that support wide curving terraces behind each goal are reminiscent of the *Viejo Gasómetro*, lending the stadium its more recognized nickname: the *Nuevo Gasómetro* (New Gasómetro).

Architect Roberto Pando, a *cuervo*, designed the stadium with clear references to the stadium of his childhood. The new stadium is composed of four distinct structures. The terraces behind the each goal rise 85 steps above the surrounding urban landscape. The concrete faces are painted in a fading blue and red paint. *Paravalancha* (literally for avalanche) bars are interspersed on the terraces. At waist height, the thick metal bars are fixed to the concrete and intended to prevent a mass-domino collapse down the terrace steps. Rare collapses, nevertheless, do happen leading to severe injuries. The "Local" terrace, including a seated section in the corner is named after club legend Sergio Villar, and space for 18 000 people. The section is known as the Popular, which in Argentinian stadiums means general admission and open to *socios* of the club. Informal customs and habits, however, influence where people stand on the terraces. The centre of the terrace directly behind the goal is occupied by the core of the *hinchada* or *banda*, the Gloriosa Butteler. The western terrace has space for 15 000 people but when it is used as a visitors section the number is significantly reduced. Segregated gaps known as *pulmones* – lungs – are used to separate *hinchas* of rival clubs. The field is flanked on each side by two linear buildings known as the North and South *Plateas*, a reference to the theatre for the all-seated sections. While seat prices vary depending on the section of the *platea* specific seat numbers are rarely respected. The North, the only section with a roof, contains private boxes and two levels of seating separated by a concourse. Below the seats are the

teams' change rooms, club offices, a press room and the club's museum. With just over 5000 seats, the North is the smallest section of the Nuevo Gasómetro and is associated with the club's politicians and wealthiest *hinchas*. The South, like the terraces is supported by exposed concrete columns in a single bank of 9498 seats. A middle level behind the seats provides a concourse of washrooms and restaurants. Individual match tickets are sold for both the North and South, though many of the seats are purchased by *socios* for a complete season.

President Fernando Miele (1986-2001) is credited for developing the plan to finance and construct the stadium. *Hinchas* point to their own financial contributions during the construction, which increases their sense of ownership over the stadium. A large part of the stadium was paid for through loans which have been paid of overtime predominantly through the membership fees of *socios*. Also for several years *hinchas* attending matches were required to pay an *abono* (cash payment) which went directly to financing the stadium, a common practice of Argentinian clubs to finance capital projects that be can either voluntary or mandatory. Larger financial contributions are recognized on a tiled wall within the North building of the Nuevo Gasómetro.

For many *cuervos* the opening of the Nuevo Gasómetro is remembered as the end of a period of institutional instability that followed the loss of the original Gasómetro.

Adolfo Res describes the emotional day when San Lorenzo inaugurated the stadium:

It was fourteen years of touring around the different theatres of Argentinian football; fourteen years of pain, anger, and suffering the insults of our rivals (especially our neighbours). [After this day] it was as if this generation of *hinchas* was transformed by overcoming this barrier; everything that San Lorenzo has accomplished has always been a battle. ... On entering the

stadium, we *cuervos* celebrated with lots of tears in our eyes. The ninety minutes of [the inaugural match] was filled with all the emotion, nostalgia, revenge, and solace that comes from fourteen difficult years of pilgrimage for the stoic *hinchada* that was put up in so many places of Argentinian football (2008:433-444).

When San Lorenzo lost its first stadium, brothers and life long *cuervos* Julian and Rodrigo were young boys. They remember the atmosphere surrounding San Lorenzo when its football team was relegated to the second division Primera B. Rodrigo described: “I was a kid then, some things people lose with time, but San Lorenzo almost disappeared.” Not just, “Go to the B” he told me, but again with emphasis, “disappear.” Julian interrupted, “San Lorenzo was punished by the military dictatorship. We were left without a field, relegated, broken economically. We felt like at any moment San Lorenzo could just disappear. Then, the people appeared.” Stadiums are often metaphorically described as “homes,” a concept I discuss in Chapter Three in relation to the *barrio*. Argentinian football stadiums are tied up in sentimental constructions of belonging. Importantly homes gain meaning through the intimate and emotional relationships that are associated with them. Losing the Viejo Gasómetro destabilized the club’s ability to organize social relationships between *hinchas*. Many *cuervos* described a fear at the time that without a physical place to call home around which they could organize, San Lorenzo would disappear. Unexpectedly, San Lorenzo’s *hinchas* rallied and its second division matches became the most popular football events in Argentina (Chapter Six).

The transposition of their emotional relationships to the stadiums of their rivals was transformative for the ideology San Lorenzo’s *hinchas*. Rodrigo contrasted San Lorenzo’s contemporary situation to when the club was relegated:

And at this time there was no social media, there were only four channels on the television. We are talking thirty years ago. It was very much a word of mouth thing, very much by the *hinchada*... San Lorenzo went to the B and made a caravan from Avenida La Plata to the field of Ferro. It carried the team through its worst moment. From that point onwards, a mystique developed: San Lorenzo is support. You saw it this past year, we were headed to the B, and it was a party. The terrace was full, the people singing, San Lorenzo losing, and the people continued singing.

I come back to the club's 1982 relegation to the second division in Chapter Six. Here I want to focus on what Rodrigo describes as the "mystique" of San Lorenzo: the club's "people" and how they respond to the difficult moments in the club's history and what this means for the stadium.

An ideology of supporting a club through the bad times is shared by *hinchas* of different Argentinian football clubs. San Lorenzo's *hinchas*, however, describe their performances during the "bad times" as exceptional. Rodrigo tells me that no other club, in particular the other *grandes*, embraces their experience of relegation like San Lorenzo. Several of the club's most popular songs include lyrical references to the championship they played in the B. For many other clubs in the Primera Division, references to the B are used as an insult. One song states, "We went down, they sold our stadium, but one thing they couldn't do, is stop this *hinchada*." They talk about their willingness to "suffer" through such situations and their strategy of turning the stadiums into celebrations; creating the performative expectation that in the 'bad times' is when the crowd should appear and support the club. Various embodied practices of *hinchas* transform the stadium into a sentimental space filled with emotional content. That

emotional content gets fused into the history of the place and the social practices of the *hinchas*.

### **4.3 Locating the Nuevo Gasómetro in Buenos Aires**

Despite the significance of having a home stadium once again, the relationship that many *hinchas* of San Lorenzo have with the Nuevo Gasómetro is best seen as ambiguous. On the one hand the stadium is a ‘home’ for the club. This reflects the political-economic organization of Argentinian football, where owning and operating a stadium is an important economic condition for teams.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign expresses a desire to move their club's stadium. In large part this desire comes from a sense of “belonging” to Boedo but San Lorenzo's *hinchas* also express a sense of discomfort about where the Nuevo Gasómetro is located.

There are several routes to arrive at San Lorenzo's *Ciudad Deportiva* from Boedo. Most *hinchas* recommend avoiding the *Villa 1-11-14*, an informal community built along one length of the *Ciudad Deportiva* along Avenida Perito Moreno. Many of the buildings, which began as small individual dwellings decades ago, now rise three to four stories. Exposed rebar, blue plastic blowing in the wind and walls half built out of red bricks suggest that the *villa* is an ongoing and continuous construction project. The official name used for the informal communities, *villa de emergencia* (village of emergency) belies an official prejudice that these communities should not be considered permanent. A

<sup>4</sup> Only a handful of teams play at publicly owned stadiums: Estudiantes de La Plata in the Estadio Único, Godoy Cruz in the Estadio Malvinas Argentinas in Mendoza, and Aldovisi in the Estadio Jose María Manella, Mar del Plata. Estudiantes notably is currently finishing the reconstruction of their own stadium, which will leave the Province of Buenos Aires-owned Estadio Único built for the 2011 Copa America without a major tenant. Currently no stadium is shared by two or more clubs anywhere in Argentina.

handful of angled and twisting streets lead into the villa, interrupting the city's perpendicular planned grid. Many homes are accessed by small alleyways that penetrate in between the buildings. A tangled mess of wires and cables bringing electricity and television signals hang overhead. The *Villa 1-11-14* is the setting of César Aria's novel *Shantytown*. The seemingly chaotic lights are central to his plot: "it looked festive: a garland of ten little bulbs, a bunch of half a dozen, a circle of fifteen or twenty, or rows... Every kind of combination, all jumbled up, in a display of fanciful creativity. It was like a natural growth, as if at this level of society – the lowest – technology had been reabsorbed by nature" (Aira 2013:24). In Aria's novel the outsider's perception of disorder is a consequence of their misunderstanding of the internal organization of the *villa*. Frontiers of *villas* throughout the Greater Buenos Aires are often portrayed as some of the most difficult and dangerous to transgress for outsiders. In my own interactions few non-residents see the *Villa 1-11-14* as safe nor do they even cast an inquisitive gaze onto the *villa*. Crafted from media images of police raids and soup kitchens, the imaginary of the *villa* suggests it is the bottom of the spatial hierarchy within the city.

When I arrived in Argentina, I met several upper-middle class *porteños* who directly told me, perhaps feeling a connection to my outsider status, that San Lorenzo's stadium was located in an "ugly zone" of the city and that it would be too dangerous to conduct research with San Lorenzo. Their exceptional pre-occupation contrasted with their general concerns about the safety around Argentinian football stadiums. I also met *hinchas* of San Lorenzo who told me they would not go to matches because of where the stadium is located. And it was even more common for *hinchas* of other clubs to comment

on the aesthetic and dangerous surroundings of San Lorenzo and to use the zone to insult the club.

While the perception of crime and fear of violence does have a basis in the daily reality of living within a *villa*, most outsiders never have a direct personal experience with a *villa*. Most often Argentinian perceptions are formed by what they consume through news media and how they describe *villas* and the residents to each other. On my deflection of the concern about going to the stadium, I was advised, at the very minimum, to always take a taxi directly to the stadium.

*Hinchas* who go to the stadium regularly, however, have a different perspective and experience. Many *cuervos* walk to the stadium from the surrounding *barrios* and use public transit. Others come in cars, finding parking inside and around the *Ciudad Deportiva*. Depending on how *hinchas* arrive to the stadium they will have varying degrees of contact with the *villa*, these experiences for some are part of the ambiguous relationship they have with the *Nuevo Gasómetro*. It is common for *cuervos* to recount personal stories or stories from friends and acquaintances who, often after a match, had their cellular phone or pocket money stolen while walking beside the *villa*. Their assailant is described as coming from out of the alleyways of the *villa*, threatening violence or picking a pocket, before quickly disappearing back into the labyrinthine alleyways. Police, who are generally described as inept in these stories, are always unwilling to pursue the thief. As a result of these stories, many *cuervos* refuse to use the *villa's* convenience stores and family restaurants that line the edge of the *villa* along the principal streets.

Fear is part of the urban imaginary and used to construct metaphoric boundaries around places. In the case of the *villas*, the fear is racialized. Many *villas* are associated with the migration of Bolivians, Paraguayans, and Peruvians. The idea that the *villas* are not permanent and could be removed along with the notion that residents are “non-Argentinian” contribute to the rationale for some Argentinians that the residents of a *villa* are willing to damage and hurt the wider “Argentinian” community.

In 2012, San Lorenzo rebuilt the wall surrounding the *Ciudad Deportiva* and increased its height along the side facing the Villa. At a mid-week youth soccer game, a parent described to me how once a group from the villa had scaled the old wall and assaulted parents. Such stories reinforce a perception of the *Ciudad Deportiva* as being located in one of the most dangerous parts of the city. In 2010, the federal government proposed a “security belt” on either side of the Riachuelo, a polluted river along the southern edge of the City of Buenos Aires. The *Policía Federal* (Federal Police), who were seen to be unable to effectively police the region, were withdrawn and replaced by units from the three military police forces. Today the area is patrolled by the *Gendarmaria*, the national military police. Their olive green uniforms and patrol vehicles are ominous sights. At the time I asked *hinchas* of San Lorenzo if they felt if the *Gendarmaria* made the area more secure. One friend told me, “well, you don’t fuck with them.” On the one hand, the *Gendarmeria* are perceived to be more difficult to bribe because of their training. But they are also seen as prone to violence and less likely to attempt to de-escalate a situation. The deployment of the *Gendarmeria* increased the security presence around the *Ciudad Deportiva* as the green vehicles patrolled the area

more regularly and a trailer was placed on the corner to create a temporary station for the military police. What overall effect this long-term project was having on security was not clear and periodic police raids in the news suggested that over time the *Gendermaria* had simply established a similar relationship with the *villa* as the *Policia Federal*.

There have been some attempts to create and improve the relationship between the San Lorenzo and the *villa*. The *Subcomisión del Hincha* has provided money and clothing to a local soup-kitchen and day-care where members have volunteered. Several players in the youth teams have come from the *Villa 1-11-14* and some of the residents are *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. In recent years the club has also engaged in small outreach programs with kids from the *villa*, run small fundraisers to provide sport and education camps to youths. Some of these programs became a more prominent part of the club after I left in 2012 and have been more regularly advertised by the club's social media as part of San Lorenzo's social responsibility to its neighbours. On match days there are groups of hundreds of *hinchas* who regularly meet at the bars and restaurants on the edge of *villa*. Given the number of *hinchas* attending matches, however, these interactions are exceptional rather than the norm.

Locating the Nuevo Gasómetro beside the *villa* influences how *cuervos* and others view San Lorenzo's stadium. I continue to question to what extent the sense of belonging as part of the *Vuelta a Boedo* is affected by how *hinchas* think about the place of the Nuevo Gasómetro. When I asked members of the *Subcomisión del Hincha* if the presence of the *villa* motivated a desire to build a new stadium in Boedo they would deflect and minimize the concern by emphasizing the injustice that took San Lorenzo from Boedo in

the first place. They often reaffirmed that the project should not mean the club's disassociation with the *villa*. Passing by the *villa* is part of the match day experience for *hinchas*; this proximity, however, does not necessarily lead to an understanding of the living conditions or experiences of its residents. Their prime concern is their own expectations for safety. Once the whistle is blown to start a match, the presence of the *Villa 1-11-14* and the *hinchas*' perception of it almost all but disappears into the corner of the eye, revealed only through the side-ways glances onto to the tops of unfinished buildings. This sort of irrelevance of the *villa* to the immediacy of the match reveals a paradoxical place(lessness) experienced by *hinchas*. Where the stadium is located matters but for 90 minutes, at the height of the emotional intensity, it does not.

#### **4.4 San Lorenzo Plays Newell's Old Boys in the Nuevo Gasómetro**

*Hinchas* arrive to the stadium in different ways and engage in a diversity of pre-match activities, a sort of transitional space-time between the liminal match and their daily life. When I attended matches with the Malditos, I would regularly walk from Boedo to the Nuevo Gasómetro with Julian, Rodrigo, and Florencia, who also recently started to attend matches with the group. On 27 May 2012 San Lorenzo was playing their second last home match of the championship against Newell's Old Boys, a large club from Rosario, Argentina's second city. I met Julian at the edge of commercial Boedo at the corner of Avenida San Juan and Avenida La Plata. In this part of Boedo, there are several apartment towers ten to twenty stories tall along Av. San Juan. We crossed underneath the Autopista 25 de Mayo, which divides the *barrio* into two. In our walk to the stadium, we meet up

with Rodrigo and a few others in the group who live in Boedo. After the elevated highway the *barrio* transforms into low-rise residential homes built before the mid-twentieth century, small business, light factories, and the periodic corner cafe. We passed nearby the historic Plaza Butteler, a small park in the middle of a *manzana*, where the *hinchada* use to meet before matches when San Lorenzo played in the Viejo Gasómetro. Reaching Av. Chiclana, we turned right onto the main east-west avenue in southern Buenos Aires. A grocery store had stayed open but had lowered their metal security grill. A line up of *hinchas* were wearing San Lorenzo jerseys waited to buy beer through a small hole in the bars. Small groups shared bottles of beer, standing around in a circle. We continued walking towards the stadium and talking about the team. Rodrigo, the most opinionated in the group, talked about the potential line-up and the best tactics to beat Newell's. Large abandoned factories, their glass windows shattered, loom over the other side of the street between the road and a major train line out of the city; monuments to Argentina's industrial boom and collapse.

We passed a barbecue on the corner. More *hinchas* were seated at plastic tables drinking beer and eating beef sandwiches. Julian asked if I was hungry; he reminds me that up ahead there will only be the improvised barbecues selling hamburgers and *choripan*, the stereotypical street food of Argentina. He mentioned that the owners come from the *villa* and you couldn't really trust the meat. I'm not hungry. I was as nervous as my companions. At the corner of San Lorenzo's *Ciudad Deportiva*, thirty minutes into our walk, the Av. Chiclana splits into Avenida Perito Moreno. The triangular plaza was under construction, a new play set was replacing the concrete table in between which tall

grasses grew and garbage used to be strewn. The upgrade was paid for by the local parish which had also painted one of the outside walls of the *Ciudad Deportiva*. Garbage was also piled up on the corner, which the city's garbage company had refused to collect because it came from the *villa*. In front of the club's cinderblock wall an over-turned trash disposal unit moved and a man crawled out of his improvised shelter.

The stream of *hinchas* thickens as we got close even though we were arriving two hours before kick-off. We passed through the gates of the *Ciudad Deportiva* and purchase an *abono* to raising money for repairs to a section of the *Nuevo Gasómetro*. A month before, a storm with strong winds blew out a section of concrete on the visitor's terrace and damaged the stadium's lights. Twisted steel and crumpled corrugated metal, what used to be the roof over the club's roller-hockey pad, remained in a heap beside the club's gymnasium. The club did not have the money to clean up the debris. The small playground off to the side was reminiscent of a post-apocalyptic movie scene. Many *cuervos* had commented on the sorry state of the *Ciudad Deportiva*, emblematic of the political struggles to emphasize the social life of the club. A group of a hundred or more *hinchas* had congregated in one of the club's three picnic areas. The smoke was rising off their barbecue. They were drinking the typical Fernet and cola mix out of a shared improvised pitchers: the top cut off a cola plastic bottle. One of the tables began to sing a familiar San Lorenzo song and compelled the rest to join in. As we passed between two of the club's auxiliary football fields, we noted the large patches of mud in front of the goals. Julian remarked, "its a disaster. Disgusting." Later it was reported that the club's employees were not being regularly paid.

Leaning perimeter fences around the fields compressed the stream of people into a line as we came into view of the Nuevo Gasómetro. On a raised pathway, a large crowd had already formed a mass line ten persons wide and more than fifty metres long. Rodrigo turned to me, “this is San Lorenzo in the bad times.” The match was busier than any of the matches in the previous four months. The line-up was for one of two gates to the large local popular section. Only *socios* were allowed in. We continued to walk alongside the line-up, scanning for faces, to see if we knew anyone who would let us in, till we ran out of room. A line of police officer stood in full riot gear – helmets and plastic face masks, hardened black body armour, holding clear plastic shields in one hand and a metre long wooden sticks in the other – covered a gap of five metres in the temporary fencing that blocked us from the stadium. Behind the police line there was a makeshift gate made from pedestrian barriers.

An officer yelled out for the next group to be let past and the officers turned their plastic shields to create narrow openings in line. Behind them single-file lines were formed by white barriers. We merged into the crowded mass, going unnoticed in the confusion of the push forward. We were now close to the police line who had replaced their plastic barrier. An officer shouted, “Entrances in your hand!” The crowd yelled back to be let through, followed by angered shouts of “Dale!”. Others were directing loud whistles at the police. There was a slight pressure on my back.

Women were being told to go to the left. Florencia moved to the left side of the crowd. Men pushed to make space for her so that she could pass. Behind the shields I saw that the previous group was thinning. At the same time a group men were pushed their

way to the front. Dozens of younger men were carrying large white sacks and bass drums on their shoulders and above their heads. The rims of the drums were painted in blue and red stripes and *La Gloriosa Buttelet* was written on their skins. The group was escorted by a dozen-or-so older stocky men, their large broad shoulders stretching the fabric of their San Lorenzo jackets and sweaters; the largest men pushed open a hole in the crowd. Behind them the men carrying the sacks and drums moved through the gap towards the police line, which stepped aside to let the group pass.

We waited for several minutes. The wall of plastic shields opened once again to reveal the six paths. Each one was wide enough for one person. I slipped by the riot police with the help of people pushing me from behind. At the end of each paths there were two officers in the black street uniforms of the *Policia Federal*. One-by-one we approached an officer. The young officer waved me forward; his eyes glancing towards my membership card, keys and wallet in my raised right hand and then the camera and cell phone in my left. I avoided eye contact. He moved both his hands down first my left arm and then my right. He then put his hands across the front of my chest and took a step closer to reach his arms around my back. Starting at the top of my shoulders he pulled his hands down, reaching my lower back and then around my waist to my front. His motions were rapid and robotic with only a slight amount of pressure. He grabbed at the pockets of my pants, finding them empty he tapped my shoulder to tell me to pass while waving for the next person. Julian and Rodrigo made it through in a similar time. We look for Florencia, who was in the lineup in front of two female officers. An older officer with a

black tie covering the bulging buttons of his shirt, the brim of his hat pulled down over his eyes, told us to keep moving.

### *Hinchas and the Police*

The relationship between *hinchas* and the police is strained. There is a general mistrust of the police, in part connected to the legacy of the dictatorship. Many *hinchas* feel an opposition to the police, having been mistreated at one point or another by the police outside or around the stadium. The experience of passing through a security line is in some ways dehumanizing though it has become routine and mechanical for both the police and *hinchas* alike. For the members of the *barra brava*, the police are seen as rivals. Aragón (2010), in part from an ethnographic reflection on a personal experience of being detained and beaten by the police after a football-related incident, describes members how the police construct a “code of honour” similar to but in opposition to the one used by the *barras bravas*.

Once in the social space of the football stadium all the involved social actors: the *barras bravas* and police; assume their commonsense roles that they have assigned themselves. The *barra brava* will demonstrate their *aguante* (strength to withstand) against another *barra brava* and the police. The police who attempt to establish order for the spectators, who are outside of this structure, nevertheless demonstrate their own commonsense *aguante*, which they legitimate through an appeal to order. Between them they establish a relationship through force, that despite being oppositional, has the same operational logic (Aragón 2010:10).

In street battles between *barra bravas*, the intervention of the police is seen to favour the losing side. *Hinchadas* will regularly claim their rivals are informants of the police and

use nicknames for the police as insults to their rivals (in particular to call someone a *botón*, *vigilante*, or travel with the “*costodia policial*” or police protection).

Fifteen metres of grass separated us from the next metal gate and line of police. In an open space off to the right, the young guys that had passed earlier were stuffing blue and red fabric back into the white sacks; a group of police officers was standing in a ring around them. A few of the officers were turning over the drums and inspecting their insides. We joined another line in front of another police search. Once again I was waved forward and I lifted both arms into the air, part of a coordinated and familiar dance. The officer followed a similar pattern with his hands over my body. His pressure was more deliberate. Before checking my pockets, he put his hands on my left thigh and swept his hands towards my genitals, reaching my pelvis bone, then checked the pocket; a motion he repeated with my right leg. He asked me to lift the bottom of my pants, visually checking my ankles, and with a twitch of the head he turned. I slipped past the officer and was told to keep moving forward. In the next space of ten metres there were police officers taking random breathalyzer tests: one man was with his children, the other was middle aged and wearing a newer San Lorenzo jacket. Both unlikely ‘suspects’. Simultaneously I feel like everyone is going through the motions, while also imagining myself as cattle being prodded forward.

We reached the south gate to the Nuevo Gasómetro’s Popular: three metal doors have been opened to a concrete portal. Closed ticket windows, small holes protected by metal bars in the concrete wall, flank each side. Beyond the gate there were six turn-stiles

with a club attendant in a yellow pinny standing at each one. I pressed my card against the reader as the attendant took my *abono*. A green light flashed and I pushed through the turnstile. Finally through the security, I turned to look for Rodrigo, Julian, and Florencia.

We reunited in the gap between the local terraces and the south *platea*. We were surrounded by towering columns that rise out of dirt and braced half-way up; the concrete skeleton of the exposed structure. Much of the stadium was still a work in progress more than ten years after it was first opened. Rodrigo and Julian went off to the rudimentary bathroom built out of cinder blocs and a corrugated metal roof; men urinating into a concrete trough. Florencia and myself decided to go to the group's spot on the terrace. While there are no designated seats in the *Popular*, the Banda del Maldito Irlandés always stands behind the same *paravalancha*. We passed below a large banner that covered the gap between the *tribuna* and *platea*: a W adorned by a halo – the flag of the Peña de Wilde, a suburb of Buenos Aires. The Sergio “El Sapo” Villar sector, located in the corner, is surrounded by a low metal bar fence, with two gates at its base. Flat plastic seats have been fixed to the concrete terraces. Many families and older *socios* sit here to avoid standing on the terraces. The sector serves as a transition between the centre of the terrace and the all-seated south *platea*.

A two-story fence made up of square panels of chain-link fence prevented us from reaching the playing field. Metal poles hold the panels in place. Half way up the fence, a tangled mess of barbed wire and circular razor wire extended out over the concrete ground below. *Hinchas* were attaching banners to the lower fence. Each banner proclaimed a different *barrio*, *suburb*, or province. They had different designs but used

the same colours of blue, red, and white. By match time, the banners would completely blocked visibility of the field for anyone standing at the bottom of the terraces. On the other side of the fence there was an even taller pole onto which was fixed two security cameras pointed at the terrace. The younger men carrying the white bags had moved quickly past us and were pulling out the long streaming banners.

### *“Los Trapos” And Displays*

The *hinchada* refers to the various cloth flags and banners as *trapos* (rags), which are considered valuable trophies for rival *barras bravas* (Aragón 2007; Garriga Zucal 2010; Moreira 2008a). There are different kinds of *trapos*: *banderas* (the flags), the *tirante* (long metre wide fabric that are pulled tight from the bottom to the top of a section), and the massive *telón*, which can cover complete sections of a stadium. In Argentina, it is relatively uncommon for the supporters to make large one-off choreographed displays known as tifo that have become prominent in European and North American football stadiums. The massive *telón* is reused over multiple seasons, kept under guarded storage with the *tirantes* and other *trapos* of the *hinchada*. Made from a shimmering cloth, the Gloriosa’s *tirantes* are a vertical blue-red-blue like the traditional jersey of San Lorenzo. The Gloriosa has more than a dozen *tirantes* for the Nuevo Gasómetro. A second set is used for away matches. Bringing *trapos* to a match is a major operation for the *barras bravas*, often involving secrecy and trusted confidants. To “win” the *trapos* of another *barras bravas*, or even one of the *peñas*, is a powerful trophy for rival groups but

according to the codes of conduct, should be won in combat with the opposing *barra brava* (Aragón 2007).

The smallest guys were climbing up the fence, negotiating the barbed and razor wire coils, to attach one end of the *tirantes* to the fence. Other guys were lifting the *tirante* onto their shoulders and pulling the material up to the top of the terraces, passing it over the *paravalancha* bars. Near the base of each *tirante* the crest of CASLA ringed by the words “La Gloriosa Boedo-Argentina” had been painted onto the fabric. Together they covered a central area of the terrace. The whole process had become choreographed through repetitive practice. The *tirantes* were caught in the wind like long sails as the young guys struggled to pull them tight before securing each end them. Underneath the *trapos* I caught the strong smell of mouldy fabric as we began to ascend the terrace. Higher and higher the scale of the stadium transforms. We rose above the banners attached to the fence and could see the green playing field and the visiting *hinchada*. As I looked down, in a moment of vertigo, I imagined falling. By the time we reached our spot on the terraces, two-thirds the way up, the *tirantes* had been fixed in place to the fence below and to the top of the stadium above. A tented space directly behind the goal on the first ten terrace steps was made by banners laid across the vertical *tirantes*. These banners carried the name of the *hinchada*: “San Lorenzo – La Gloriosa Butteler.” The empty space below was going to be the pit for the *banda*. Having found our *paravalancha* we are met once again by Julian and Rodrigo. Rodrigo took up his habitual spot, leaning against the *paravalancha* bar, and opened one of free magazines he had picked up. Our

terrace spot had been occupied by this group of friends for several years. We were soon joined by more members of the group, including Maldito the titular figurehead. They were coming from the centre-west of the city, from the *barrios* of Caballito, Paternal, Lugano, and beyond. People were beginning to fill the terraces

On the other side of the field, the *hinchada* of Newell's Old Boys had arrived and was setting up their red and black banners and *tirantes*. Their banners proclaimed: "The Biggest from the Interior" and "The Most Popular *hinchada*." When visiting *hinchadas* are permitted, the Nuevo Gasómetro's visitor's section is one of the largest in Argentinian football. Only the largest of Buenos Aires' clubs are able to sell the 8000 tickets in the visitor's section. On the day, the section had been reduced to four or five thousand. The upper corner was closed around a large hole where the terrace had been blown out and was covered by a blue tarp. Many of Newell's several thousand *hinchas* travelled at least four hours by bus from Rosario.<sup>5</sup>

Loud booms started to emanate from a stairway entrance halfway up the terrace. Underneath the *hinchada* was beginning the pre-match festivities. A regular event, usually more than a thousand *hinchas* encircle the *banda* in the pre-match *previa*, warming up to the rhythmic drumming. They sing song after song dedicated to San Lorenzo, each one given a few minutes before it's changed. The *hinchada* will often use the *previa* to share new songs, practice lesser known or older songs, and promote what will become their set-list for the upcoming match.

<sup>5</sup> Travelling to away matches had become increasingly restricted and was subsequently banned in 2013 removing the back-and-forth sonic duel between the rival *hinchadas*. Part of the "folklore" of football, many *hinchas* are calling for the return the away-*hinchada*. Smaller clubs also financially depend on the sale of away tickets of larger teams and rivals.

On the terraces, we began to tear apart magazines and newspapers into confetti. Sexualized banter and ironic jokes about San Lorenzo's players belay the tension we were feeling. Bags of red and blue balloons were distributed, provided by the *peñas*. As the numbers increased, bodies of people on the terraces began to compress. The crowd was becoming a solid mass. Those now entering had to climb up the terrace by gipping the shoulders of people they passed to leverage themselves up the terrace and through the mass of people. From behind a group of *hinchas* began to sing: "let's see if they hear me, let's see if they understand me, the return to Boedo, is supported by the people." The lyrics caught on and spread through the rest of the terrace but without the support of the drums the song petered out after a few verses. A few minutes later, a different song was started from a different part of the terraces, which also died off after a few repetitions.

The stadium had grown noisy with random shouting and sporadic singing. A middle aged man near me suddenly yelled out: "You are a shitty coward, leper!" A common nickname for supporters of Newell's. Then: "Eat cats, Rosarino, son of a bitch!" repeating a myth about people from Rosario that started during Argentina's economic crisis. He apparently saw a *hincha* of Newell's, or at least imagined seeing one, making hand gestures from across the field. His animated arms and hands engaged in a semaphoric dialogue. Loud whistles erupted as a crowd of Newell's *hinchas*, without their band, began to sing "*vos sos de la B!*" (You are in the B). The insult had become increasingly frequent as San Lorenzo's efforts to avoid relegation had become more dire.

It was ten minutes before kick-off. The *previa* had moved up to the second level-entrance just to my right. The booms, straight on the beat, of the bass drums filled the

stadium bowl, higher pitched snare drums and clashing cymbals layered in on top, creating a more complex and interesting rhythm. Beginning at my right, then rolling over past our section over to my left, the melodic lyrics took hold over the whole terrace, till everyone was singing:

<i>Vengo del barrio de Boedo,</i>	I come from the <i>barrio</i> of Boedo,
<i>Barrio de murga y carnaval</i>	<i>Barrio</i> of <i>murga</i> and carnival.
<i>Te juro en los malos momentos,</i>	I swear to you that in the worst moments,
<i>Siempre te voy a acompañar.</i>	I will always be with you.
<i>Dale dale Matador</i>	Come on, come on Matador
<i>Dale dale Matador</i>	Come on, come on Matador
<i>Dale dale dale dale Matador</i>	Come on, come on, come on, come on Matador

The underlying melody is from Credence Clearwater Revival's Bad Moon Rising. I lost track of what was happening elsewhere in the stadium and was swept up into the emotion of the song. The lyrics had fit with the mood of the *hinchada* through out the campaign, proclaiming a carnivalesque atmosphere on the terraces despite the regularity of defeat. "Vengo del Barrio de Boedo" was the most sung song and the melody inspired several variations by rival *hinchadas* and even Argentina's national team.

#### **4.5 Singing and Songs from the Terrace**

While it is believed that the singing motivates the team to perform better, the prominence of singing has developed as part of the aesthetic competition between rival *hinchas*. One of the central responsibilities of the *hinchada* during a match is song selection. The *banda* is composed of a rhythm section made up a dozen or more percussionists playing the *bombo y platillo* – base drum and cymbal – combination popularized by carnival *murgas*, supported by a several others playing snare and tom drums. The *bombos* provide

the driving rhythm; the clashing *platillo* along with the snare drums fill the gaps between the loud base beats. Many *bandas* also use brass instruments to carry the melodies.

Singing is tied into the emotions being produced in the stadium and how *hinchas* know the match. Steven Feld (2003) uses the concept of acoustemology to describe how people can come to know a ‘sound world.’ For the Kaluli people, Feld argues, “social life is itself experience and made significant musically” (2003:237). Argentina’s football terraces reverberate in sound from simple whistles, shouted insults, the players, coaches and referees on the field, car horns, announcements and musical instruments supporting a choir of voices. Lyrics carry semiotic significance; though I hesitate to argue the extent to which they have ideological influence. Celebratory songs mention smoking marijuana and drinking, others make claims of beating up and even killing members of rival club, other lyrics affirm a masculinity encountered on the Argentinian terraces (see: Parrish and Nauright 2013). While referencing aspects of football culture in Argentina, the ability of lyrics to become persuasive speech acts needs closer attention. Songs, however, become powerful containers of past experiences and memories. Perceiving the sounds of a stadium produces a distinct way knowing the space. “Sound both emanates from and penetrates bodies; this reciprocity of reflection and absorption is a creative means of orientation – one that tunes bodies to places and times through their sounding potential” (Feld 2003:223). Songs reveal moods and moments of a match, celebration, anger and tragedy through a learned knowledge of the stadium and the culture of the club. As a result the songs help to orient the sentimental state of the crowd, who understand through embodied experience and knowledge the significance of the lyrics and tone.

Musical performances form part of the competition between *hinchadas*. Passion is measured in part by the *hinchada*'s ability to maintain intensity and volume during a match. *Hinchadas* that cannot sustain a consistent intensity through their singing are insulted and called *pechos frios* (cold hearted). *Hinchadas* are also concerned with their lyrical and melodic creativity (Aragón 2007:61). San Lorenzo's *hinchada* claims to be Argentina's most creative, with *cuervos* often referring to themselves as the *Escuela de Tablones* (The School of the Terraces). One *cuervo*, in an effort to document the *hinchada*'s creativity, has collected more than 1000 lyrical variations of songs and chants. In any given match the Butteler will use more than twenty songs and chants, with only a few songs being used more than once. Over a year I documented my own familiarity with over well over seventy songs and chants. The aesthetic of originality motivates San Lorenzo's *hinchada* to promote at least one new song every championship. The source material of the songs is diffuse. *Hinchas* are constantly borrowing new melodies and writing lyrics, sharing them through online forums, YouTube videos, and WhatsApp groups. It is rare, however, for a song to be picked up by the *hinchada*. When a song has been selected, YouTube videos are used to introduce the song to *hinchas* who share it on social media. The *hinchada* will practice the new song before bringing it to a larger audience at the pre-match. It will take several matches before a song appears on the terraces during a match.

Melodies are sourced from a wide range of music from international rock, pop ballads, and national cumbia and folk music. San Lorenzo's *hinchas* claim to have been the first to use many of Argentina's most popular melodies. Lyrics can emerge

spontaneously during a match, often as an insult against a rival or to praise one of the club's players, but the frequency of this has decreased over the years. The opportunities in the sonic space for such spontaneous creativity has decreased as the *bandas* increasingly dominate the soundscape and complete for dominance during the match. Across all *hinchadas* lyrics often reference a combination of unconditional love for the club, supporting the team regardless of results, winning matches or championships, drinking and drugs, auto-references to the *aguante* of the *hinchada*, and insults of the club's major rivals. Songs also draw upon and promote aspects of the masculine construction of the *hincha* (Scharagrodsky 2002). San Lorenzo's distinguished originality when compared to other *hinchadas* is often derived from its use of the club's history, referencing the club's relegation and efforts to privatize the club, as well as the club's historical relationship to Boedo in their lyrics (Aragón 2011).<sup>6</sup> Beyond the regular construction of the *hincha*, San Lorenzo's lyrics also transmit the ideological and idealized *cuervo* that embraces the club's history and place – Boedo – within the city.

Song selection during a match is very important. Songs become intertwined with emotional content as they become associated with specific moments. "Ritual performances are never timeless," Schieffelin describes. "They are ephemeral... while the form of a performance may recapitulate the forms of performances in the past... the performance itself is of the particular moment, articulating cultural symbols and ritual genre at that particular time and submitting them to particular circumstances" (1996:66).

<sup>6</sup> Classic rivals of San Lorenzo, Huracán also make significant references to their *barrio La Quema* and their *hinchada's* control over this territory (Garriga Zucal 2006:102-103). The spatial rivalry between San Lorenzo and Huracán contributes to the importance of each club's *barrio*.

Songs carry forward an emotional content through their performative aspects and in the memories of *hinchas*. On the long bus rides to away matches, *hinchas* will sing songs and tell stories of matches from the associated memories. Nevertheless this content and form must be performed anew in a particular moment, responding to the immediate context. Part of the *capos'* power within the *hinchada* and on the terraces is derived from their ability to recognize a song's affective associations, a form of performative authority (Schieffelin 1996:80). The team's current situation in the match, as well as a wider context influence how a song will be received and performed by the collective group on the terrace. There are songs that are more successful when the team is winning and others which are used to express anger or displeasure with the team. Both the lyrical and melodic qualities of a song, as well as the song's own history, are significant. A song is said to "hit" when it matches and elevates the emotional state of the crowd, which leads to an increase in volume and intensity, often in response to events on the field.

Failure to "hit" is a performative risk for the *hinchada*. Schieffelin (1996:66) describes that there is a strategy to ritual performances pertaining to how they accomplish their intended goals. To a certain extent these "performative strategies" can be scripted (which is more characteristic of rigid rituals). Schieffelin argues, however, that "most subtle performative strategies lie outside the script, in the activity of the participants, for it is through *their activity* in successfully *embodying* the script (if there is one) that the performance is kept intact and moving forward" (author's emphasis, 1996:66). When a song does not work, the crowd quickly loses interest and the momentum of the flow of emotion breaks down. Further, misidentifying the situation can lead to a conflict between

the *hinchada* and the rest of the stadium crowd and the collapse of a song. Though rare, it is possible for the stadium crowd to reject the song started by the *hinchada*. In one match against Vélez Sarsfield the *Gloriosa Butteler* began a song with lyrics that directly insulted Vélez. Many in the crowd, upset with what they perceived to be outside efforts in the media to create a major rivalry between Vélez and San Lorenzo, began to whistle. A small group began to sing a simple song in support of San Lorenzo that caught on amongst a large part of the crowd. For half a minute two different songs were sung, the sonic dissension increasingly winning over the stadium. Core members of the *hinchada* began to look confused and then slightly panicked in an uncommon moment as their song was drowned out. The drums suddenly began a new familiar rhythm as the *capo* decided to change the *hinchada's* song to a third song, which only contained lyrics in support of San Lorenzo. The rest of the stadium, having voiced their criticism joined in on the new song. Consistently facing challenges by the crowd would undermine the presence and authority of the *hinchada* on the terrace and ultimately the *capo*, who would as a result face internal challenges to his leadership.

Failure to create the expected sound world can lead to confusion, boredom, and disconnection for *hinchas* in the crowd and create a negative experience, which does not mean affectively negative (angry, sad, frustrated), but rather an apathetic situation. This point underlies the ideology of the Argentinian stadium: the central objective is for *hinchas* to feel and express emotions – become passionate – during a match. The risk inherent in the contingency of this passionate performance is crucial to the significance of

singing in the stadium, otherwise, to paraphrase Schieffelin the stadium “crowd could be effectively enacted simply by playing recordings of them” (1996:82).

#### **4.6 The Entrance of the Hinchada**

The entrance of the *hinchada* signalled their assumption of control over the terraces.

While at some clubs or for particular matches this is done after the arrival of the teams, it is common for the *Butteler* to enter before the players to be in position to receive San Lorenzo. Often their entrance is made from the bottom corner of the terraces but on this day, the *hinchada* entered from half-way up the terrace. Dozens of blue and red umbrellas burst through the stairwell opening, undulating up-and-down in a rhythmic fashion. The drumming section was ensconced within the mass. Large flags on poles poked through the umbrella covering, waving back and forth. The mass surged forward. Large men at the front pushed people up and down the terraces to make space for the drummers. The *Butteler's* largest *bombos* were held in the air. Lettering on the drum skins spelling “CASLA” was visible from the other side of the stadium. *Hinchas* scampered up and down the terraces to make way. People around me were pumping their open hands in the air, keeping the beat with each stroke of their arm. The hand gesture is associated with Perón and the political movement that followed in his wake but is most popular on the football terraces. The air of the stadium reverberated with the collective voice of the *hinchada*. As the lyrics restarted, the rest of the terrace began to produce the rhythm through clapping, arms raised above their head, in a mass choreography.

As the *banda* reached the centre of the terrace several of the members break off and took up positions behind a *paravalancha* bar. Three or four per bar pulled themselves up by grabbing the *tirante*. Pulling the fabric tight they balanced themselves above the crowd. Many turned to face the crowd, waving their arms, they urged on the people around them to sing louder: “Sing! Come-on, put in your balls! Sing!” No one came to stand on our bar, despite a *tirante* passing to my left and one to my right. Standing on a bar is a privilege for the members of the *barra brava* and is restricted to men (Conde and Rodríguez 2002). Sections of the terrace are often divided by the hierarchy of the *barra brava* and factions will claim their own territory on the terrace, moving closer to the centre if they want to challenge the leadership of the *capos*.

The masses on the terraces began to emulate the core of the *hinchada* by jumping up and down; reminiscent of a pogo at a rock concert but constrained to the steps of the terraces. Below my feet I felt the concrete flex as the stadium itself began to vibrate to the rhythm of the song. Mass collapses, known as *avalanchas*, occur from time to time creating a sense of risk. The exhilaration continued for several repetitions of the song, until the jumping slowed and the concrete terraces regained some rigidity. Slightly exhausted, the crowd went back to pumping their open hands into the air. And as the collective lungs tired, the song dropped in volume, though it did not disappear. The unrelenting beating of the drums kept driving the song.

Newell’s *hinchada* made a similar, though less densely populated, entrance across the field. High pitched whistling noises came from the *plateas*. Newell’s song was muffled as the sound-waves of the opposing *bandas* collided in the middle of the

stadium. Their arrival spurred the *Butteler* to change songs, the men on the *paravalancha* tried to make out a rhythmic signal of a new song by turning their heads towards the centre of the *hinchada*, looking and listening for cues. Their unoccupied hand waved in slow motion to calm the eager *hinchada*. The volume dropped till I began to hear the new rhythm and then accompanying lyrics. A confidence returned to the men on the *paravalancha*. Their arms exaggerated the movement as they bounced on the bar.

Anticipation was growing. The movements on the field and a change in the song signalled the impending entrance of the teams. A card display transformed the south *platea* into opaque stripes of blue and red of colour. Once again there was a surge in the intensity and the *hinchada* dived into a new song:

<i>Soy del barrio de Boedo, Yo soy de San Lorenzo</i>	I'm from the <i>barrio</i> of Boedo, I'm from San Lorenzo.
<i>Lo sigo de pendejo, Porque es un sentimiento</i>	I've followed since childhood, Because its a passion.
<i>Esta banda que está descontrolada, No te deja de alentar.</i>	This <i>banda</i> is uncontrollable [insane and high], It wont stop supporting you.
<i>Vamos ciclón, Vamos a ganar</i>	Let's go <i>ciclón</i> , Let's win.
<i>La Butteler, Te va a alentar</i>	The <i>Butteler</i> , Will support you.
<i>Vamos azulgrana</i>	Let's go <i>azulgrana</i> , I have to see you
<i>Te vengo a ver, Hoy no, Podés perder</i>	Today no, You may not lose.

Pocho, one of the Malditos, grabbed at my shoulder and yelled in to my ear, "Where is your camera? Take a video, this is incredible!" I fumbled to find the camera in my jacket pocket, right as the song began its second repetition; the words sent the crowd into a bouncing wave of heads. To my right, someone lifted up a wooden crutch into the air. I struggled to steady the camera as Pocho jumped up and down beside me. I was left alone standing on the undulating concrete. Straining to increase their volume many of the

voices around me turned to monotone yelling. In an instance the air was filled in an explosion of paper; the blue and red balloons were tossed into the air, carried by the wind before coming back down. Ripples of explosions followed as air violently escaped the destroyed balloons. When the cloud of paper dissipated I could see the white shirts of San Lorenzo on the field below.

Large sections of the stadium broke into the club's ritualized chant: "El ciclón, el ciclón, el ciclón, el ciclón..." their open hand chopping furiously at the air, till one by one people run out of breath and switched once again to an applause. Several smoke flares were lit. A sulphuric smell accompanied the red stained air. Underneath the applause, the *banda* kept the rhythm and a core of the *hinchada* followed the lyrics. A coin toss was held between the teams in the middle of the pitch and Newell's goalkeeper ran over to the net in front of the *Butteler*; high pitched whistles and unintelligible insults rained down on him as the rest of the players took their positions. Newell's stood over the ball and the referee was just outside the centre circle. He glanced at his watch his whistle waiting in his mouth to start the match.

#### **4.7 The Match**

San Lorenzo began the match with a lot of early pressure which lifted the crowd into a frenzy. A third minute header by the *azulgrana* striker Emmanuel Gigliotti was followed by an emphatic chant, "I am from Boedo, from Boedo, from Boedo I am." *Hinchas* of San Lorenzo generally expect their team to be protagonists at home. Defensive matches are met by whistles and vocal criticisms from the *platea*; insults directed towards players

and the manager. The *platea* is associated with a more critical and less supportive attitude towards the team. Further from the drums and separated by seats, *hinchas* in the *platea* are less likely to participate in the singing. As a result each vocal critic is more easily heard. The experience is more individualized. On the other hand, there is a performative expectation on the terraces that during a match the *hincha* supports the club through singing. On several occasions I heard others call-out someone on the terrace who was overly critical of the team, telling them they can go to the *platea* if they did not want to support the team. The men on the *paravalanchas* contribute to the orchestration of the crowd. Reflecting the mystique of San Lorenzo that Julian described to me, the *hinchada* is responsible for orienting emotions of anger, disappointment, and aggression that *hinchas* may be feeling and transforming them into practices that are believed to be motivating and supportive expressions. Songs thus have a performative role to organize and engage the collective emotional feelings of *hinchas*. The first ten minutes were a nervous battle through the midfield. San Lorenzo, however, had the only clear goal scoring opportunities. Gigliotti had already missed two clear chances in front of the goal. An ominous sentiment settled amongst the people around me, the songs became urgent, as a sense that the match was fated took over.

### *Superstition and Magic*

Many *hinchas* rely on superstitious practices and good luck charms to help their team. Pocho, who has never been baptized, makes the sign of the cross before each match. I asked him once why he does this; he responded with slight bewilderment, "I don't know."

I just do, I mean I started once and they won. Now I do it every match.” Pocho’s response suggested a bodily habitus. Near the end of the season a thousand *cuervos* made a two hour pilgrimage in the morning before a match to the icon of the Virgin of Luján, Patroness of Argentina, to pray for San Lorenzo’s victory to avoid relegation. Others believe that particular persons or themselves bring bad luck to the club. In the Bar San Lorenzo, we were told a story of how a *cuervo* contracted a “witch” to remove a curse that was over the club and told that a “black presence” remained in the club that needed to be exorcized before the club could truly leave its difficult situation. Many psychological studies of superstition in sport have focused on the practices of athletes; very few have looked at fans (Dömötör et al. 2016). Borrowing from Malinowski, many of the studies argue that superstitions have a functional role for athletes in resolving the anxieties that are generated by the uncertainty and, in particular team sports, uncontrollable elements by practicing a form of control (Dömötör 2016:271). *Hinchas* consistently encounter the limitations of their own influence on the outcome of the match, which in turn could suggest that *hinchas* seek other mechanisms such as bringing totems to matches in an effort to control outcomes. I found the reactions of others in the Bar as instructive: such beliefs are simultaneously taken seriously as they are rejected. No one in the Bar otherwise expressed a belief in “witchcraft,” nor did they say they would have contacted someone to spiritually cleanse the club. Yet they all expressed being affected by the story, feeling chills and getting “crow [instead of goose] bumps.” Such practices become incorporated into the story-making of *hinchas* and through that process gain importance.

To confirm our worries: an aerial ball was brought down by Newell's Pablo Perez in front of San Lorenzo's midfielder Nestor Ortigoza who was quickly left trailing the player in red and black to the top of the box. The goal happened quickly and I missed it with no screens to see a replay but from the terraces we could see Perez running towards the corner flag, arms spread wide, as San Lorenzo's goalkeeper Pablo Migliore picked the ball out of the net. Newell's *hinchada* was clearly heard celebrating the goal. The majority of the stadium went relatively quiet; stunned. It took a few seconds for the *hinchada* to respond: "Ohhh, lets go *ciclón*, lets go! Put in your balls so we can win!" Over and over. It was an angry demand for the home team to respond. The goal seemed to solidify Newell's defence and few chances for San Lorenzo emerged in the final third of the field.

The difficult situation then turned into devastation. Deep into the first half, the ball escaped San Lorenzo's defender Pablo Alvarado in a routine back pass. Newell's Fabian Muñoz leapt onto the ball and drove past the last defender, burying the ball into the corner netting on a diving Migliore's short side. Julian just yelled "No!" over and over again. Instantly I noticed tears rolling down the cheeks of Flaco, one of the Malditos. We were on the same terrace step in the crushed crowd; he had been alternating between singing and criticisms for the whole half. One *hincha* of San Lorenzo, a daughter of a family of *cuervos*, told me that the only time she has seen her father cry is at a San Lorenzo match. In contradiction to common masculinity, crying for your club is seen as a noble act.

### *Aguante and Suffering on the Terraces*

Withstanding physical pain, organized around the concept of *aguante* (to withstand), is a masculinized bodily virtue on the terraces. Many ethnographic studies, inspired by the practice theory of Bourdieu, have focused on *aguante* as connected to the corporeal practices of the *hinchada*. María Verónica Moreira, who conducted ethnographic research within the *hinchada* of CA Independiente, describes *aguante* as, “corporeal ability and resistance, as well as mental fortitude, to face without fear situations of risk and uncertainty. The tendency to fight and the voluntary participation of fighters marks a distinction between *hinchas* that are part of the *barra* and *hinchas* of the same team that distance themselves from this type of conflict” (2008a:85). Garriga Zucal (2005) notes that there are two conceptualizations of *aguante*, one is used by those engaged with violence and another understood by those who are not. This binary is useful for understanding those who incorporate violence as part of their participation within Argentinian football; on the terraces during a match some of these distinctions become blurred as supporting the club becomes a shared performance of a diversity of *hinchas*.

From a bodily perspective the practices of a *hincha* on the terraces entails physical exertion and risk. Standing for hours and the pogo on the terraces, with the risk of an avalanche, hands pumping in the air while sustaining a singing voice and being fully exposed to the elements creates several physical demands on the body. As a result many *hinchas* move to the *plateas* later in life to avoid “discomfort.” During the important matches when attendance increases, the terraces can become even more uncomfortable as a result of the crush of bodies. Endurance is embedded into how

*hinchas* understand their emotional connections. The physical endurance of the body is translated into the suffering that a *hincha* endures for their club. Here, the architecture of the stadium contributes to the sensation of danger and physical requirements on the body. Several of Argentina's stadiums, particularly of smaller clubs, have terraces that were too small to support the demand of San Lorenzo's *hinchas* during this particular championship. Away matches elevated the physical demands: sight-lines were often severely reduced, personal space was compressed, access to bathrooms limited, and the competition with the rival *hinchada* demanded a greater individual contribution by each *hincha*. Away matches can also include increased physical danger because of violence. Contradicting some of the architectural elements and principles of contemporary stadiums such physical demands and discomfort can unpredictably heighten the sense of importance of a match, making the experience more memorable and the emotional connection greater.

*Hinchas* do not express a desire to experience emotional suffering related to the performance of their club. Clubs with *hinchadas* that continue to show significant support through their numbers and their performances on the terraces during difficult moments, however, are respected by rivals. To not show support for your club in difficult moments is noted by rivals and used as an insult. To be called a *pecho frio* (cold chested or cold hearted) is someone who is emotionally unaffected by the results of their team, particularly when losing and is a significant insult. Despite being masculinized spaces, crying during the most difficult moments symbolizes the *hincha's* deep emotional connection to their club and a willingness to be exposed to suffering.

Months of frustration were culminating for San Lorenzo's *hinchas* in a single collective moment. The crowd became emotionally fraught with sadness and anger. Most of the people around me were crying. After what seemed like a minute Flaco yelled out "Alvarado, you son of a bitch, you are horrible" in the direction of the sky; the tears were still rolling down his cheeks. A few others around me were finding their own targets on the field for insults. Maldito was just shaking his head – his eyes rimmed in red.

Songs in support of San Lorenzo gained in intensity before quickly going quiet. The energy was frenetic, angry, and full of despair. In a rare moment this season, I felt the motivation of the *hinchada* waver. Just before half, the *hinchada* of Newell's started to acknowledge each pass with a clearly audible *olé*, something that usually only occurs towards the end of match. One of the guys yelled out "suck on my dick Newell's" and one of the women responds "they are big sons of bitches." The referee blew his whistle to signal half. Newell's were celebrating being a step closer to the championship. The masses on the terraces struggled to create a spot to sit down and I was left standing. Pocho sat on my foot and my legs were tired. My discomfort was compounded by the sentiments of the people around me. Flaco began to tell Rodrigo sarcastically, "We will at least get to go to Puerto Madryn," a coastal city in northern Patagonia 1300 km from Buenos Aires by car. "How many hours in the bus?" someone asked. "Not even wasted am I making that trip," they add. More cities in the interior provinces of Argentina are represented in the second division and many of the stadiums are unfamiliar to the Malditos. To learn their country and its football clubs next season in the second division

seemed like the only novelty of the moment. The pungent smell of tobacco hung in the air indexing the collective stress. Rodrigo seriously asked who would travel to all the away games next year as he began to calculate the number of long distance trips. His commitment was serious. I imagined many would follow suit.

The resignation had already set in as the teams took to the field for the start of the second half. Everyone stood up and I pushed people to make space so that I could stretch my legs. The anger had dissipated, replaced with a sort of malaise. The driving and pulsating *hinchada* that I had become accustomed to was itself unsure of how to orient its emotional response. In other losses they'd been urgent and festive despite the result. The *hinchada* started a song, one of the most basic in their repertoire: "come on, come on, San Lore, come one come on San Lorenzo." It was monotonous and mechanical. Over and over again for five full minutes into the half. Full-back Julio Buffarini received the ball from Leandro Romagnoli, the only urgent players on San Lorenzo, and raced down the line. Buffarini won an unlikely corner. The volume picked up every so slightly.

Romagnoli stood over the ball at the corner flag. The ball floated towards the near post and was flicked on. Gigliotti dived head first onto the dropping ball in front of the net. Roars of "gol" fused together. Flaco screamed into my ear and the weight of a body fell onto my back as I held up double my body-weight and I placed my hand on the shoulder of the person in front of me. In an instant we were hugging. Shouts of goal lasted a few seconds more. Already the drum rhythm was urging. Whispers of "come on San Lorenzo, come on come on come on come on San Lore..." crept back up the terrace like a contagion. Balanced on our toes on the edge of the step we were bouncing up and

down to the beat of the drums. Demanding, willing, the shared voice of the *hinchada* kept rolling. I did not even notice the player switch. I learn later Carlos Bueno, a second striker, had come on for San Lorenzo. The players seemed to come alive in the atmosphere of the stadium. Controlling the ball with confidence another pass found a high-pressed Buffarini once again on the edge of Newell's box.

This time "Buffa" had some space and he sent the ball straight into the box. A white shirt rose at the back post above its Newell's marker. It was Carlos Bueno. This time there were no clear words, the terrace exploded in a primal roar, we fell onto each other. As I regained my spatial awareness I found myself three terrace steps lower. The *paravalancha* bar and the mass of people below held our collapsed huddle from falling further. Those who managed to form words were yelling goal over and over again. Once again the song came back: "come on come on San Lore, come on come on San Lorenzo!" reaching a new pinnacle before it finally started to tire. We sang the song for more than ten minutes straight till the match was tied two-two. I felt the strain in my back, my muscles tired from repeatedly squeezing every molecule of air out to match the volume of the person next to me. I stood quietly for a minute. Just breathing and watching.

Several minutes later the *hinchada* regained its voice, my throat was sore, the vocal folds damaged, but our collective singing was now louder than before: "Today, you cannot lose. I come from the *barrio* of Boedo, I'm from San Lorenzo. I've followed you since childhood and this *banda* is out of control, wont stop supporting you. Let's go Ciclón, Let's win." I supported the weight of someone who slipped off the terrace behind me. A free kick on the edge of the box by Romagnoli flew over the bar. There was the

sense that Newell's Old Boys were unable to match our intensity, their *hinchada* had disappeared from our sonic perception. San Lorenzo's players kept up a frenetic pace. Each touch by "Pipi" Romagnoli and Buffarini was met with cheers and loud applause.

### *Romagnoli – The Last Ídolo*

Leandro Romagnoli is an "idol" of the club – a player who began in the club's academy and won a championship in 2001. The diminutive midfielder played three years in Portugal before returning in 2009. Playing "for the colours" is a common euphemism of the *hincha* and is regularly mentioned in a lament that unlike earlier generations, contemporary players are motivated by money and business rather than playing for "their" club. Romagnoli, *cuervos* believe, is unlike other players and is willing to "leave everything" on the field for the team. The crowd desires that its players share in their emotional world and have constructed an ideological distinction that is nostalgic of a past football. Contemporary football, they comment, is too influenced by decisions made for "business."

It was Romangoli who received the ball once again. Pocho who uses a stop watch to keep time recently mentioned there were five minutes remaining. Slipping by two defenders on the edge of the box, Pipi pulled the ball towards the touch-line and then chipped the it towards the centre. Gigliotti was diving once again, his head low to the ground, managing to clip the ball beyond the goalkeeper and it rolled into the corner of the net. Sound is critical to the spatial production of the stadium. Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano has

asked, “Have you ever entered an empty stadium?” His response is to note the silence: “Try it. Stand in the middle of the field and listen. There is nothing less empty than an empty stadium. There is nothing less mute than the stands bereft of people” (2009:19). Walter Lo Votrico is a small celebrity in the Nuevo Gasómetro; positioned at the bottom of the local terraces behind the goal and beside the drumming section of the band, he is always holding a small portable radio up to his ear. Walter’s other hand clutches a white cane. Blind since 1986, when glaucoma took his sight at age 23, Walter continues to attend almost every match. He was the focus of a fan-made YouTube video after the Newell’s match, where he is filmed standing alone in a crowd of devastated and crying *hinchas*. The lyrics “*todos juntos podemos*” – all together we can – are imposed across a jumping Walter who refuses to stop singing, “*está hinchada no te deja alentar*” – this *hinchada* wont stop supporting you. The video then cuts to moments after San Lorenzo scores the crucial third goal. Walter, emerging from an embrace of those around him, is in tears once again – this time tears of joy – and screaming the word “Gooool!” several times. Under his jacket, his teeshirt carries the words: “*No te veo, te siento*” – I don’t see you, I feel you.<sup>7</sup>

Spontaneously the crowd started to sing: “I come from the *barrio* of Boedo, *barrio* of *murga* and carnival...” the song that they have sung over the previous championship in the face of defeat and the difficult moments. It was a moment of full celebration on the terraces, which were flexing with a ferocity, as the crowd merged together into undulating waves. Arms wrapped around each other, hands pumped into the

<sup>7</sup> Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2OSzmmcfF0>

air, bodies bounced back and forth along the terrace, the performance of our bodies had unconsciously taken over. In the final minutes of extra time the song switched once again: “They say we’re all crazy, but San Lorenzo doesn’t care. We drink wine directly from the demijohn and we smoked all the marijuana, oh San Lorenzo...” to highlight the carnivalesque celebration. Loud whistles came from the *platea*, *hinchas* were becoming the referees. A player for Newell’s brought the ball forward, a final nervous counter-counter attack? Tensions rose alongside the cacophony of noise such that we did not hear the final whistle. The players ran onto the field to celebrate as if they had won a championship, forming a huddle in front of the local terraces, bouncing to the rhythm. Within a few minutes the crowd quiets; the physical and emotional exhaustion sets-in alongside a sense of relief. We collapsed into embraces. As we noticed Newell’s *hinchada* leaving people shout out “*pechos frios*” in between *olés*, the insults returned in favour.

We waited thirty minutes contained to the stadium while Newell’s supporters were given time to board their buses and leave. Reality hit as we talked about the upcoming matches. San Lorenzo remained in a precarious spot on the relegation table, only moving into one of two play-off spots. A surge in the crowd lets us know the gates were opened. As we climbed down the terraces, Rodrigo slowed up, and told me “watch your camera, put it away, you don’t want it stolen.” I’m instantly reminded about the fears about the *Villa 1-11-14*, the place of the Gasómetro, and wondered about the coincidental urban imaginaries. Elsewhere in the city – others have been preoccupied about my potential exposure to violence and theft by “*cabezas negras*” – blackheads, a term with a racial

history used to describe young poor men, often associated with the *villa* – on the terraces. I have just had one of the most visceral collective experiences in my life, connected to tens of thousands of other people. In the most dangerous moments, complete strangers acted to catch my body as it slipped off the terraces, any sense of violence by fellow *hinchas* of San Lorenzo seemed impossible (in the moment). Fear that the ‘other’ is more dangerous than your immediate experience, I am reminded, surrounds football.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

Later in the week I met up with Julian. Walking in Boedo, we stopped in front of a banner strung up between houses that read “All together we can do it” – a clear message in the *barrio* in support of San Lorenzo. I had noticed it before the match against Newell’s. I asked Julian about why everyone had cried when San Lorenzo scored:

Look, when everyone was crying after the third goal, it wasn't because a ball crossed a line. I cried because what San Lorenzo represents... A *pibe* told me once when San Lorenzo scored he began to remember his grandfather who loved San Lorenzo and began to cry. Its the same, when San Lorenzo scored its all your friends, you father that took you to see the games, your grandfather, your uncle... This is the *hincha* you don't see. We go to visit our friend in the hospital, we look for work for our friend whose unemployed. The common *hincha* goes to the matches to be with friends, to have a good time, works for the club, gives to the club, thinks of moments with people in the club.

Experiences in the stadium connect *hinchas*; they are intimately aware of the mutual emotional significance a result can have. Knowledge of past matches exists in memories. Such memory is embodied and infuses an awareness of particular places. This empathetic knowledge, I argue, is transposed by *hinchas* of San Lorenzo into their understanding of the significance of the *Vuelta a Boedo* for past and future generations.

San Lorenzo finished the 2012 Clausura championship with a dramatic win over San Martín de San Juan, placing them in a promotion play-off against Instituto from Cordoba. In back to back matches, San Lorenzo defeated Instituto 4-2 and remained in the first division. A YouTube of the *hinchada*'s entrance during the match against San Martín became one of the most popular videos of supporter culture around the world, being reproduced on several supporter culture websites in Europe.<sup>8</sup> Simultaneously exotic and familiar to football cultures around the world, others commented on San Lorenzo's *hinchada* and its creative and passionate expression. The stadium becomes meaningful through the embodied practices of *hinchas* that themselves are communicative acts, that others watch and attempt to understand. For some the stadium is interpreted as a dangerous place, the presence of the *hinchadas* and the emphatic crowds that they animate indexes the violence associated with the *barras bravas*. It is suggested by some outsiders that the more emotionally engaged the crowd the more likely and capable they are to engage in socially disruptive behaviours. From within the stadium, its possible to develop a different interpretation of the performance, which has the potential to produce emotional highs and lows. Stadiums as a "container", from this perspective, may have a dual significance. The physical boundaries of a stadium, its walls and fences, prevents the crowd from spilling out into other realms but it is also because of these architectural features that the emotional extremes can be produced.

Where a stadium is placed in the city can be both significant and meaningless. During a match, the considerations of where a stadium is located evaporate as the intense

<sup>8</sup> See the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhkRgJmmOhA>.

focus on the match overwhelms other considerations. On the approach and exit of the stadium, where a stadium is located is inherently significant and influences how *hinchas* think about their stadium. Located beside the *Villa 1-11-14* has affected how people think about the Nuevo Gasómetro. Personal experiences and social prejudices combine to create a negative perception of the stadium's location and the hope that San Lorenzo could be relocated, though this is not necessarily the most significant influence on the *cuervos* desire to return to Boedo. Beyond the consideration for safety, as I will continue to develop in subsequent chapters, a sensation of being "at home" contributes to an understanding of what it means to identify with and through San Lorenzo. This process of identification nevertheless informs the performance of the *hinchada*. San Lorenzo's visceral performance in the stadium and creativity, many *hinchas* claim, comes from the fact that they have been displaced from their true home in Boedo and contributes emotional content to being a *hinchas* of San Lorenzo that is beyond the relationship of the ninety minutes of football on the field.

## Chapter 5    Storytelling in the Bar San Lorenzo

“The return to Boedo is everything,” Pocho tells me. “San Lorenzo was born in Boedo and needs to be in its place in the world. The dictatorship robbed us of our home. And now we are going to return.” We are standing under a blue and red umbrella on the corner in front of the Legislature of Buenos Aires. Florida, the iconic pedestrian street in downtown Buenos Aires, is filled with business suits and informal street sellers. Three volunteers at information table organized by the *Subcomisión del Hincha* are promoting the 8 March for the *Vuelta a Boedo* on 8 March 2012. One of the other volunteers wears a deep blue shirt, the image of the *Viejo Gasómetro* printed across its front.

I ask Pocho, as someone who is in his twenties, why he supports the campaign. He tells me that, “the Viejo Gasómetro was the centre of social life of the *barrio*. There was a gymnasium underneath the terraces. An olympic-sized swimming pool. The movement [of social life] was impressive! And, the dictatorship stole it from us.” While Pocho talks with me a man at least twice his age approaches the table and takes an information sheet. I am disoriented by his suit and tie; most of my interactions with *hinchas* have been in the stadium up till this point. I ask the man if he is a supporter of San Lorenzo. “Of course,” he responds.

“Did you know the Viejo Gasómetro?”

“Yes! I grew up with the stadium.”

“What was it like?”

“Impressive. The number of people, you can't imagine. It was a different club, a different *barrio*. It wasn't just a stadium but the whole social life. Besides the football field there was a movie theatre, a gymnasium, olympic swimming pool, bowling. And the carnivals! Thousands of people.” I'd heard a similar description before from other *hinchas* at the Bar San Lorenzo but I'm struck by how Pocho had told me almost the same thing moments before. Ironically, Pocho's “memories” of the Viejo Gasómetro have become real for him despite his age. The Viejo Gasómetro was demolished in 1982, before his birth, preventing him to have had lived experience of San Lorenzo's social life while located on Avenida La Plata. This chapter begins to lay the foundations for understanding the influential power of the memories of the Viejo Gasómetro. In this chapter I focus on the practice of storytelling. Storytelling, as theoretically described by Benjamin is a practice dependent upon memory. It is also a social practice that links teller and listener into a dialogic relationship, where the teller becomes oriented towards the listener. I begin by exploring the concept of ‘nostalgia’ (first introduced in Chapter Three) before discussing particular stories of pertinent to San Lorenzo and examining the sites such as the cafe-bar as places where storytelling is performed. In later chapters I develop dialogic relationship with the past further by looking at memory as a particular framework of the past and the importance of narrative to the identity of *hinchas* and the place of the stadium. I argue in this chapter that storytelling also is connected to issues in the political-economy, which in the following chapter connect to the emergence of a politics of memory and justice in response to the political-economic consequences of the civic-military dictatorship, including the horrific human rights violations.

## 5.1 La Luna and Nostalgia for the Social-Athletic Club

Early on while conducting research, I had mistaken descriptions given by younger *hinchas* of the San Lorenzo's Viejo Gasómetro as nostalgic images of an elusive golden past. Historian Arthur Megill defines nostalgia as an “attraction to a real or imagined past” (1998:45). Megill suggests this attraction to an image of the past is separated from the self and is experienced as an insatiable longing for something lost. Longing for a past social life is a central theme in the Argentinian film *La Luna de Avellaneda* (The Moon of Avellaneda, 2004). The movie is set in the aftermath of the 2001 financial crisis in Argentina and tells the story of *La Luna*, a fictional sport and social club. *La Luna* is a fictional representation of the social-economic decay experienced by many in Argentina and of the social-athletic clubs in particular. The movie depicts the loss of employment in the factories in the southern *barrios* and conurbation and the wider disappearance of Argentina's industrial middle class. In the film, scenes of bleak abandoned factories and the crumbling club are contrasted to flash-backs of packed dance halls, successful amateur teams, and outdoor carnivals illuminated by colourful lights. Faced with a crippling fine for an accounting error, Román, the protagonist and club president, goes to Alejandro, a childhood acquaintance at the club and now local politician, for help. As their discussion devolves into a fight over who cares more for the club, Alejandro pulls out his membership card and says to Román, “Look at my card, I carry my card with me always... for me the club is a symbol, a symbol of another epoch, but a symbol nevertheless.” Román responds, “No, it is not a symbol of another epoch. It is a reality, it is right now.”

The audience is taken through Román's personal struggles as he tries to save the club from its economic crisis. In the process, Román is forced to confront *La Luna's* contemporary meaning as a social-athletic club to his personal life and the broader community. The *socios* of the club are forced into a debate over the future of the club when Alejandro returns with a proposal to bring hundreds of jobs to the *barrio*, which would require the club to be sold and redeveloped as a casino. Alongside *La Luna's socios*, the audience is asked to contemplate Román's romanticism for the past against the bleak realism of Alejandro. Are Román's efforts to save the club a nostalgic anachronism? Are material-economic concerns more important than the club itself? Is the imaginary past of the *La Luna*, shown through the memories of the older *socios*, even a possible reality amidst the political-economic shifts of Argentina? The club's *socios*, who stand in for the Argentinian public are asked to weigh the consequences of Alejandro's pragmatism against Román's romanticism and decide the future. The final commentary of the film is ambiguous. A small majority of *La Luna's socios* vote to support Alejandro's proposal, though one feels with great hesitation, and the hints at the possibility that Román will realize his vision of a reborn social-athletic club somewhere else.

Like Alejandro in *La Luna de Avellaneda*, I initially was skeptical of the memories of the Viejo Gasómetro. When I arrived in 2011, Argentina had seemingly emerged, albeit with great difficulty and ongoing uncertainty, from its economic crisis. The shared images of the Viejo Gasómetro, however, seemed to be reproducing an anachronistic model of the social-athletic club. The social-athletic club populated by the activity of its members no longer seemed relevant in the same way as it was in the middle

of the twentieth century Argentina (see Chapter 2). As I spent more time with *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, met organizers and activists of the *Vuelta a Boedo*, and participated in the social life of the club I noticed how my own understanding of the campaign began to shift. The question of whether or not memories, following on Megill, are “nostalgic” collapses against their active and influential use in the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign.

## **5.2 Collective Memory**

Pocho's emotional description of the Viejo Gasómetro, despite being born after the stadium and club facilities were demolished, suggests that there is a collective memory that produces a shared past. *Hinchas* draw upon memories of the *Viejo Gasómetro* when they talk about the *Vuelta a Boedo* that are shared and reproduced across generations. Remembering in this context has a social dynamic. To illustrate the social aspects of memory Halbwachs juxtaposes the act of remembering to dreaming. On the surface, personal memories and dreams suggest a similar internal self-reflection, in which ideas, images, and other sensual experiences of the past emerge within the mind. Dreaming for Halbwachs creates a contained interior world: “the frameworks of the dream are determined by the very images that are prepared within them” (1992:172). In the dreamworld, the self is an active but socially isolated protagonist producing the world in totality as the dream progresses. In contrast, memories emerge into a world both prefigured and being produced through social interactions. Memories, while a reflection of the past, occur in the present as part of pre-established and emerging social

relationships of a group. The social interactions provide a “framework of memory” that can be described through attention to collective memory (Halbwachs 1992).

Understanding memories in relation to a social group reveals aspects of how a social group is reproduced. Halbwachs provides the example of collective memory within the family and argues that, “if we were to consider only individual memory we would fail to understand in particular how family recollections reproduce nothing other than the circumstances in which we have established contact with this or that parent” (1992:55). Social customs within a family immediately influence how we relate to each other; memories of these people are unique and distinct but nevertheless are refracted alongside a socially constructed understanding of the relationships within the family, as well as the structure of roles within the family more broadly understood. Collective memory speaks both to the concepts and relationships that make particular memories meaningful.

Collective memory, as presented by Halbwachs, tends towards structuralist arguments. The danger is that personal memories dissolve into the overdetermination by collective memory. Making the framework of collective memory into a rigid structure, however, would not be conducive to exploring how memories contribute to a shared understanding. The solidifying of such frameworks, such that personal memories take on a coherent and apparently repetitive form, does not preclude their variability. I note below how daily routines and storytelling, like the retelling of past football matches, between friends creates a repetitive use of memories. These memories pattern each other, and while they often involve different matches, are used to the similar ends of reaffirming particular attitudes and social relationships. At the same time, a framework can over a

brief period of time become unstable and transform. Transformation itself is not a predictable process. Further, depending on the perspective, certain aspects of a social relation may appear to be unchanging despite other radical shifts that signify the transformation.

Personal memories cannot be reduced to a framework of memory. Rather, collective memory approaches can be used to recognize the mutually constituting relationship between people and their personal memories. Collective memory suggests a dialectic: memories emerge within frameworks but are also constitutive of the processes of (re)producing (as well as transforming, dismantling, and diminishing) frameworks. Collective memory from this perspective help to clarify how memories are produced by and in turn are productive of communities. Others have noted how memories are important to the reproduction of shared identities (Halbwachs 1992:47; Megill 1998). Studies of fans and supporters have noted the relationship between historical narratives and the community of supporters (Brazabon 2006; King 2001). Memories are one of the central ways in which supporters generally participate in the making of their club's historical narratives. Fans recall previous matches, historic goals, and defining moments in intense rivalries, most often shared verbally in conversation but also written down in fan magazines, books, and shared in various media online (Schwier 2007; for discussion of fanzines in English football see: Armstrong 1998; Long and Williams 2005; Robson 2000).

### **5.3 Storytelling, Memory, and San Lorenzo's mythology**

Walter Benjamin (2007) links memory to storytelling. Storytelling, as Benjamin describes, is a creative genre of reproducing the past. The act of retelling a story, particularly orally, relies upon memory (Benjamin 2007:91). Stories do not necessarily communicate a personal experience of the teller but they do depend upon the teller remembering details. A story can be remembered and shared over a long period of time (Benjamin 2007:90). Yet looking closely at a story's content also suggests its creative potential. There is a compulsive relationship between listener and storyteller: “the listener's naïve relationship to the storyteller is controlled by his interest in retaining what he is told” (Benjamin 2007:95). On the other side, the storyteller seeks to engage their audience. In part the intention of the storyteller is to make an impact upon the listener: to have the listener remember the story. The storyteller's intention and the listener's experience produces a relationship between the two. Audiences need to be engaged by the intelligibility of the story; reflecting Halbwachs' observation about memory, the retelling of a story has elements of structuring frameworks. While stories retold from memory perpetuate content, they also refract onto how people expect and desire to hear future stories. Multiple and varied stories can repeat themes, layering ideas and concepts drawing together the experiences of listeners and storytellers into a generalized framework.

Storytelling is important to the community of San Lorenzo's *hinchas*. Expanding upon Anderson's “imagined communities,” Megill argues that “the more a community is imagined, the more 'memory' (and 'forgetting') is necessary to it” (1998:44). As the size

and spatial distance of a community grows, Anderson (1991) argues, the possibility of personally knowing its constituent members becomes more and more unlikely. In the place of direct social interactions, media that reproduce stories to a large audience became more influential; shared written documents Anderson contends were crucial for the possibility of nation-states to produce a sense of the shared nation. For *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, newspapers like *Olé*, fan-written magazines and books, and online news sites, and online communities, provide a literary base for the community of supporters.

YouTube channels and various radio programs provide fan-produced content, in some cases generating small revenue from local and internet sponsors. Musicuervo and SanLorenzoTV by produce popular videos on YouTube. Musicuervo has uploaded more than one thousands videos since 2007, mostly of San Lorenzo's *hinchada* singing and the goal reactions from the crowd. Their most popular videos have had several hundred thousand views. SanLorenzoTV often produces a summary of the match, including cuts from the crowd, on-the-field play, and fans interviews. Less regular contributors, many of whom have recorded parts of their match-day experience on their cell phones, have also been influential on YouTube, with videos that capture goal celebrations in important matches being very popular. Online videos of the crowd allow San Lorenzo's *hinchas* outside of the stadium to interact with the match-day experience, contributing content to the imagined community. They have also increased San Lorenzo's presence within global football culture. Viewers from around the world have watched Musicuervo's videos, which have in turn inspired similar stadium songs internationally.

The founding of San Lorenzo, described in chapter two, has a myth-like influence on the imagination of *hinchas* of the club. The story of Father Lorenzo Massa providing a home for the young men of the Forzosos del Almagro to play was referenced by many *hinchas*, both to highlight the values of the club and to demonstrate their passion for the club's legacy. "I have this idea, tell me if it is crazy," a regular at the Bar San Lorenzo told me in an afternoon conversation, "you know those Disney films? The animated ones? My idea, if I ever have the money, is to make an animated movie about Father Massa and the founding of the club. You know the story is perfect for kids." As a Disney animated film, the *hinchas* tells me, they could use San Lorenzo's story like a modern fable and tell a central moral message.

At another time, when speaking to Pocho about what the *Vuelta a Boedo* means for the *barrio*, he referenced Father Massa and the foundation of the club. The original players of the Forzosos are recast in the stories told by *hinchas* as young men from humble families, good natured if misguided in their youth. By helping to create San Lorenzo in the way that he did, by providing moral and spiritual guidance to the boys and to care for them, Lorenzo Massa set a moral precedent that continues to be referenced when describing the club's social responsibility. Being able to retell the story is part of repetitive conversations between supporters. Knowing the details of how the club was founded informs what it means to be an *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. After a while in the Bar San Lorenzo, each time I met another man, Carlos, he would ask me if I had yet seen the 1950s film "Padre Lorenzo", a film about the priest as a central character in the growing *barrio*. Part of the film focuses on his relationship to the community through the young

boys who play football. Every time I would say “no, not yet”, his face would contort into a frown he would say “common Matt, don't be a cold heart, you have to see it!” Carlos, though he was jokingly making conversation, had made knowledge of the film into an expectation for my fandom. Having not seen the film, there was a limit to how we could talk about San Lorenzo. Retelling the foundation of San Lorenzo provides a starting point to the history of the club. At the same time that the details of the story are remembered, however, others are constrained or obscured, if not forgotten. For example, rarely do *hinchas* refer to the short period of time in 1910 to 1912 when San Lorenzo de Almagro did not field a team.

The story of the club's foundation fits within a larger narrative produced through commemorative acts (Connerton 1989). In recent years, *hinchas* of San Lorenzo have taken to commemorating the club's founding on 1 April. The now annual celebration organized by the *Subcomisión del Hinchas* began in 2006. The centennial anniversary of the club's foundation in 2008 was celebrated by 20 000 *San Lorencistas*. Similar to Christmas celebrations in the country, the anniversary celebrations begins on the eve. Starting at 10PM on 31 March *hinchas* congregate in front of the Oratorio San Antonio, where Lorenzo Massa was the parish priest. A procession then goes to 1700 Avenida La Plata where the Viejo Gasómetro once stood. They arrive at midnight 1 April at the gate of Carrefour's parking lot and are received by fireworks and musical performances that contribute to a carnival-like atmosphere. Acts of commemoration are ideologically entangled with the storytelling of San Lorenzo's foundation. Adolfo Res, club historian and a leader within the SCH, recalls the first celebration of the club's anniversary “was an

intimate party for people. It didn't discriminate against social conditions, following on the values set out by our founders. 1 April was a real celebration, tremendously emotional. So many people were crying in happiness” (Res 2011:140). The SCH sees their role as acting out San Lorenzo’s moral duty by facilitating an inclusive social interaction for the surrounding *barrio*. Making sure celebrations of the club are 'free to attend' has been important. Similarly, the SCH organizes a street *corso* along Avenida La Plata during the Buenos Aires carnival. Memories both legitimize the presence of San Lorenzo in these public spaces, taking over several streets for celebratory actions, as well as are intended to connect to the moral values emergent in the retelling of the club's history. Inclusion, as a moral idea from the club’s founding, is represented by the actions in symbolic places – the Oratorio San Antonio and Avenida La Plata – and recall Lorenzo Massa. The meaning of those places comes from the shared knowledge reproduced through stories.

#### **5.4 Storytelling in the Neighbourhood Cafe**

*Hinchas* of San Lorenzo tell each other about their foundation of their club but these acts of storytelling accompany more regular conversations about football. Away from the stadium, conversations between friends and *hinchas* depend upon the ability to reconstruct matches, most often the club's most recent match, in a narrative form. It seems obvious to note the social importance of conversations about football, yet these mundane moments often escape analysis. Anthony King, carrying out an investigation with “hooligans” of a Manchester United firm, noted how the men spent significantly more time recalling past fights than actually fighting (2001). Shared memories of football

related stories provide content to ongoing conversations. Memories are instructive of ideologies of hooliganism but they are also used in the service of maintaining a social relationship. Within the Argentinian context, stories of past fights are useful to demonstrate “*aguante*” – a corporeal willingness to withstand adversity, shame, intoxication, and importantly physical violence to support your team – that helps to define relationships between *barra bravas* (Alabarces 2006; Alabarces et al. 2008; Garriga Zucal 2001; 2005). This form of storytelling requires an attachment to 'real' acts. To simply retell stories of *aguante*, without being able to demonstrate it through real past actions, is considered *chamuya* – the persuasive use of language, often with an intention of deceiving others (Dodaro 2005). The general point here is that football supporters often rely on sharing memories to represent themselves. Their stories, in the particular case of the more sensationalized “hooligans” or “*barra bravas*” take on familiar forms that help to coalesce ideas about themselves. Storytelling, on a more basic level, is important because it gives content to the social relationships.

The structure of social interactions between *hinchas* where story telling is prevalent is repetitive, reflecting an emergent socially constructed framework that is relevant to how football figures into the lives of its *hinchas*. Conversation and arguments contain reconstructed recollections that describe past matches, relevant statistics, memorable plays, mistakes made by players, referees and managers. *Hinchas*, particularly in their most embellished moments, reveal the creative and imaginative aspects of storytelling. The passion these conversations elicit is striking given their ambivalent significance to how matches unfold. A tactical analysis by an *hincha* is

unlikely to affect how the manager will organize the team in the following next week. Yet, how *hinchas* recall and retell the match is fundamental to their relationship to the sport and to the spheres of community made alongside their fandom. Abstractly, the conversations that happen away from the matches are significant sites of social reproduction that make supporting the team a more relevant and emotional experience because it connects the sport to friendships.

The café-bar is stereotypical of the *porteño barrio* dispersed throughout Buenos Aires and is an important site where football stories are reproduced.<sup>1</sup> The café-bar is most often a masculine space, filled with an older generation of regulars. Many have a relationship with football. Eduardo Archetti describes how he used a café-bar to encounter some of his informants: “I decided to find a place where I could meet other kinds of supporters, and not only my middle-class informants. I selected bar located in the *barrio*, the Canadian Bar, where from 1988 onwards I met new informants” (1999:11).<sup>2</sup> Argentinian sports journalist and author Ariel Scher (2008) wrote *The Saturday Bar*, setting the book in an imaginary café filled with regulars. The characters are stereotypical archetypes found in the café-bar of the *barrio* and they debate and

1 Open early in the morning, the typical café-bar serves *café con leche*, milky coffee, and three *medialunas* (small croissants) or other sweet pastries. A daily lunch menu changes, but the kitchen menu is often standard offering pizza, pasta, milensas, and sandwiches. In the mid-afternoon, patrons drink espresso coffee and read the daily newspaper. Towards the early evening bottles of beer and glasses of house wine are more typical. While many close before dinner, several of Buenos Aires’ café-bars remain open 24 hours serving the nocturnal life of the city.

2 The Canadian Bar was located on the corner of San Juan and Boedo. Today it is the Café Homero Manzi. It is still a café during the day but at lunch and dinner it hosts a tango show. Besides the raised stage, the decor is classic. A long and large wooden bar with its espresso machine and bottles of aperitifs is framed by black and white photos from the tango era, featuring prominently singer Homero Manzi, and historic scenes of Boedo. Wait staff wear white collard shirts below black vests and black dress pants. While it has become a touristic site, the Homero Manzi is the favoured location for an afternoon *cortado* for many locals as well.

discuss the world through football. The Saturday Bar is familiar to the Argentinian reader through its representation of the masculine conversational space. The stories reflect back onto how football stories are told more generally. Scher writes, “No one in the Saturday Bar, the stage for weekly thought-provoking reunions, was interested in debating him,” as the character Roto launches into another argument supported by his recollection of names for the forward line in a long past match, “Like any other place where knowledge of football is recognized, it is a well known the prerequisite for anyone to reach the status of expert they must recite the formations of long lost teams” (Scher 2008:27). Scher’s description of Roto reveals the well-known power of memory in such conversations between the football-obsessed.

In the Bar San Lorenzo, located on Avenida La Plata across the street from the Carrefour, a small group of friends regularly meet during the week for lunch. Surrounded by the symbols and icons of the Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro, the space’s decor clearly indicates the place is for *hinchas* of the team. Memorabilia makes the bar a unique place. On the bar, beside the old cash register there is an even older copper espresso machine. Plants grow amongst dusty bottles of alcohol. Pizzas, ham and cheese pies, and empanadas sit on trays on the counter for those looking for a quick meal. On the wall there is an original uniform from the 1968 championship. Pennants from *peñas* have been donated to the bar, including one from the Peña Viggo Mortensen in Japan. A memorial plaque on another wall is dedicated to Osvaldo Soriano, a celebrated author and journalist. His portrait is above the table where he regularly sat towards the later years of his life. Newspaper clippings taped onto the Coca-Cola fridge depict the more recent

image of current club idol “Pipi” Romagnoli. Behind there are glass bottles of soda and Quilmes beer. The Bar is often busy with midday regulars and workers from the *barrio* who generally order the daily lunch special, a large plate of a typical *porteño* cuisine, a drink and a coffee. In the late afternoon, another wave of regulars arrives and ordering bottles of beer or espressos. On several occasions, I met *hinchas* of San Lorenzo who had travelled from outside the city inside the Bar, which has become a potential pilgrimage site for *cuervos* from outside Buenos Aires.

While not as ubiquitously located on a corner of every major intersection as they once were, the café-bar does endure as a cultural site in the *porteño barrio*. Many café-bars share common features. Every neighbourhood café receives a daily copy of *Olé*, the national sports newspaper owned by the media conglomerate Clarín. Its simplistic reviews of the previous day's matches along with a player-by-player ranking, rumours, and controversies fill out its few dozen pages each day. Football dominates all but the final pages, each club in the Primera División receiving column space every day, though stories covering Boca Juniors and River Plate often take up the most pages. The graphic-based cover page is used as an image of record. Editions published the day after important matches or events sell out in the associated *barrios*. On Thursday or Friday, the two page middle spread will focus on what the editors decide will be biggest match of the weekend. Many people I talked with condemn *Olé* as a biased and manipulative newspaper. For *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, the selection of stories is perceived to be weighted against the club. Though as a 'big club' San Lorenzo features more prominently than almost every other team except Boca and River. *Olé*, along with the daily football

programs on radio and cable sports channels, help to frame football discussions. Transfer rumours, squabbles between managers and players, and the analysis of previous matches in the pages of Olé are often brought up in conversation between the patrons of the Bar. The presence of hegemonic media while referential does not, however, constrain debate. Conversations between patrons include multiple perspectives that reflect distinct experiences. Conversations come together over similar issues, using the same points of reference, yet rarely does anyone agree on each other's perspective. In this diversity of opinions, however, social relationships begin to take on certain patterns of repeated experience of being in the café talking to the same regular guys.

In the Bar San Lorenzo, at the centre table in front of the bar is conventionally reserved for the regulars – friends and acquaintances – built around the pair of childhood friends Mario and Gallego. Now business partners, the two have their main office in Boedo and often have lunch at the Bar. Their predictable presence creates the opportunity for others to drop in. Not all the regulars are supporters of San Lorenzo, though it is well known which team they support. It can mean that their analysis is ridiculed – through familiar but amicable insults – and potentially discounted for this very reason. Football and San Lorenzo almost always is a topic for discussion, on the one hand, because it is a common reference. On the other hand, the content of these conversations provides greater opportunities for debate as each of the regulars brings their own perspective.

Gallego is notably soft spoken, rarely raising his voice above others; he is more likely to pursue side conversations than enter the fray of the main topic though he finds space to authoritatively make his point when necessary. Mario is often the amicable

protagonist of the main discussion. His vocal projection can take over the space, often heard laughing and reserves his aggressive tone for special moments. I would join them for midday lunch and coffee and they would be accompanied by a group of up to eight other men, pulling together tables to form a long table when needed. Eduardo, owner of the Bar, his son Diego often join the conversation from behind the bar. These interactions produce a unique cacophonous space where conversations and arguments occur simultaneously. “We’re from Italian and Spanish blood,” Mario told me once, pointing to his veins, explaining that its by “nature” that Argentinians and people from Boedo in particular are loud and passionate. Conversations can be difficult to follow and it takes time to become familiar enough the regulars to be a participant in arguments, and to know the difference between a comment made in aggression or jest. The most important condition for participating, however, is to possess knowledge of San Lorenzo footballing situation. Demonstrating an ability to describe how goals were scored, important plays and fouls occurred, and critically comment on players is necessary to participate in most conversations. A particular form of attuned football memory is elevated in this context. My novelty as a foreign researcher only allowed so much integration into such conversations. My position, I noted, began to transform, and dramatically so, when I could relate my own experiences of travelling with supporters to matches and comment on the failures of the players to secure wins.

Tensions in the Bar peaked as San Lorenzo fought through matches. My initial presence at the Bar began at the same time that the club had made the first of two manager changes that year, replacing Omar “El Turco” Asad with Leonardo Madelón, an

ex-player who came from the youth system of San Lorenzo. Diego hoped that at least Madelón, as an identified *hinch*a of San Lorenzo, would care about the club. It is a common refrain that modern football is not like it was, that players are mercenaries seeking money, and are unlike players from past generations who “felt for the jersey.” Compared to the *hinch*as who known to be suffering, players are seen often to not identify with the values of the club “like they used to.” In large part, because of the economic incentives to sell the contracts of talented players to European teams. Smaller clubs and clubs facing economic hardships experience this reality with greater frequency as the incentive to sell players becomes greater. Ironically, the construction of an idealized past is the central argument used by *hinch*as when their team is losing: the players simply do not care enough. In the absence of technical superiority over the opposing team, the masculine ideal to “*poner más huevos*” (play with balls), which indexes ideas of aggression and intensity, is often the final demand made by *hinch*as.

As the 2012 Clausura season pushed onwards and with each loss and tie, the threat of relegation become a very plausible reality. The centre table became a site of intense debate about the quality of Madelón's tactical formations and the *garra* (courage or guts) of the players. Expectations that players and manager demonstrate a resistance to their situation, similar to the *aguante* was expressed by the *hinch*ada. Diego from behind the coffee machine would regularly describe the performance of the *hinch*ada after a loss or tie to provide a contrast to the team. “Do you see how we supported the team?” he would ask me. “This is San Lorenzo in the bad times.” And he would start singing banging on the counter to the rhythm. In contrast to the *hinch*ada's response to the

situation, Madelón's formations and the players were described as scared. The lack of wins, it was argued, was a failure to be protagonists on the field and "*vaya al frente*" (to play forward, to set the tone of the match), which is believed to be unbecoming of a "*grande*" like San Lorenzo. Players were described as *burros* (donkeys) and *gordos* (fatties); their bodies becoming symbols for their lack of dedication. Conversations turned to removing players who were seen to be unable to respond.

How football stories are (re)produced is gendered in part because important sites of football storytelling, such as the cafe, are often dominated by men. Spaces in which football culture is produced are gendered. "Gendering of space and place both reflects *and has effects back* on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live" (author's emphasis, Massey 1994:186). Men's perspectives on football and thus the social relationships emergent in how stories are told reflects a gendered spatiality. Doreen Massey describes:

I remember very clearly a sight which often used to strike me when I was nine or ten years old. I lived then on the outskirts of Manchester... On the way into town we would cross the wide shallow valley of the River Mersey, and my memory is of dank, muddy fields spreading away into a cold, misty distance. And all of it... was divided up into football pitches and rugby pitches... I remember all this very sharply. And I remember, too, it striking me very clearly – even then as a puzzled, slightly thoughtful little girl – that all this huge stretch of the Mersey flood plain had been entirely given over to boys. (1994:185)

In Argentina, a similar appropriation of spaces of social interaction through football by the bodies of men has resulted in the gendering of space but also how gender is constituted. Playing football is seen as less appropriate for the bodies of women, which influences how women are seen to interact with the sport as *hinchas*. When a place like

the Bar San Lorenzo, iconic in its significance to the community of *San Lorencistas*, is dominated by men it represents the exclusion of women from the production of knowledge about football and San Lorenzo. My conversations with older women about football often occurred in less public spaces, often in passing, and with much less regularity because there are not as many sites where women are regular participants. Other sites in the *barrio* have a different gender composition, which would be valuable to explore to understand how the understanding of the gendered *barrio* emerge. The shifts of gendered spaces of the social-athletic club over time as they relate to the culture of football is also relevant. Sites like the meetings of the SCH and *peñas* represent openings where women have claimed a space to participate in the production of football culture.

There is an intersectionality of gender and generational identity in the Bar San Lorenzo. The café-bar in general is frequented by an older generation (some café-bars are less masculine spaces), who have greater leisure time and the space is more familiar to their cultural habits. Because of the importance of memory and story telling within football culture, places like the Bar San Lorenzo become respected as repositories of knowledge through the presence of older men. Their presence in the Bar adds to its symbolic importance for *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, who expect to enter a space composed of memory. The older masculine body in this space becomes a symbol of its temporal knowledge and the relative permanence of San Lorenzo in its place on Avenida La Plata. The value given to the practices of men within the Bar San Lorenzo is increased because of the symbolic importance of the place. Here the cadence and tonal qualities of the how the men talk, the cacophonous sound, and even their animated hand gesturing are

important symbols. Connerton, in discussing the differences between the stereotypes of East European Jews and Southern Italians as hand-talkers, notes:

The availability of particular gestural repertoires in the hand movements of individuals of either group depends largely on their history, their cultural belongingness; and the appropriate performance of the movements drawn from the repertory both depends upon the habit memory of their members and tacitly recalls their memory of that communal allegiance (1989:82).

The *habitus* of the men, seen as representatives of the *barrio*, commemorates the Italian and Spanish heritage of the wider Boedo. Through their acts of storytelling, their bodies perform a symbolic link between the important immigrant populations made nationally important as ‘authentic’ Argentinians, reflecting the compositional element of Argentinian football’s early history to the national imaginary. This historical authenticity plays off the nostalgic representations of both the café-bar and the *barrio porteño* more generally.

### **5.5 Football Memories in Argentina's Contemporary Political-Economy**

Memory emerges within its social, political, and economic context. By comparing the memories two members of the Malditos of Argentina’s recent political-economic conjuncture I explore how being a *hincha* of San Lorenzo relates to the surrounding context. As in *La Luna de Avellaneda*, the political-economy of the country is intertwined with being a *hincha* in many seemingly benign ways. How *hinchas* live their life and the socio-economic position in society necessarily influences elements of their football support. Memories of their experiences, therefore, are conditioned in part by their relationship more broadly to the political-economic context in which *hinchas* find

themselves. Memory more generally, in turn, is used to position oneself in society and to make political claims.

El Fletero (The Hauler) has a personal business as a for-hire small transport. I accompanied El Fletero on several occasions as he worked around Buenos Aires. Personal and easy to chat to, El Fletero has built a long list of clients by word of mouth. Mostly he works with musicians, transporting their equipment, and during the week with event planners and odd-jobs. Friday to Monday is his busiest time. El Fletero often works overnight and into the early morning on the weekend transporting several different bands in the same night. His van, which he calls “*Negruta*” – the little black one – was often used as transport by the Malditos for away matches in Greater Buenos Aires, sometimes between jobs. When working during a match, El Fletero listens to San Lorenzo’s matches on the radio.

One afternoon we were sitting outside of a restaurant in the trendy upper-class neighbourhood of Palermo beside his dented black cargo van. We’d brought the instruments for one of his regular bands to a wedding reception that we were waiting to finish. I asked El Fletero if he can remembered his first San Lorenzo match. He told me how his family used to live in the apartment buildings on the corner of the facilities of Ferro Carril Oeste, the *club de barrio* of Caballito. Caballito is the physical centre of the City of Buenos Aires and “Ferro”, as the club is colloquially known, is one of the city's historic clubs, formed by railway workers on the western line leaving the city at the turn of the last century. The stadium was once one of the largest in Buenos Aires; the club was a model with tens of thousands of members. During the 1980s the professional football

team reached its pinnacle winning the 1982 and 1984 National championships. It was also in this decade that San Lorenzo, displaced from Avenida La Plata, rented Ferro's stadium for several of its home games.

I remember watching matches from the apartment. Looking out the window onto the stadium, have you been to the stadium?... You've seen the apartments? Its a perfect view of the field. When San Lorenzo was playing at Ferro's stadium, it would be full and the *hinchada* was crazy. No one in my family is that fanatic about football; no one is from San Lorenzo. I'd just watch from my apartment. I was hooked by the people (of San Lorenzo). I started going to the games by myself. I would wait outside the gates till half-time, when they opened and you could get in for free; I'd go in then. That's how I started going to San Lorenzo.

Memories of the “first match” or the moment when a *hincha* realized their allegiance to a club are commonly shared between *hinchas*. Memories related to personal identity are dialectically constituted to value systems. Such memories reveal certain qualities that *hinchas* value about their personal fanaticism: important kinship relations, a dedication to the club, an authenticity to their passion, the sense of place, a personal relationship to football or something else.

We talked a bit more about going to matches and El Fletero emphasized how since childhood the visual experience of a match has been the most important thing for him:

I really just like going to matches, it doesn't matter where I am in the stadium. I don't get as crazy as others about being in the popular section. I like to go by myself, it doesn't matter, just to be in the stadium, I don't need to be with people [friends]. Watching the match is what is most important, good football, that is what I miss most when I don't go to the stadium.

I found his self-description to contrast to my experiences of standing beside him in the stadium. He would be a vocal participant of the songs and chants in the popular section, even louder during away matches. In part, El Fletero was reflecting on his current

situation. He had missed several matches over the previous months. His work often overlapped with weekend matches and he had been reluctant to not take jobs. Even when he drove the Malditos to the match he would leave to complete a job and come back after the match to take us home. The match would be on the radio.

El Fletero's van is adorned with punk-rock stickers; he used to transport musical equipment for some of Argentina's more famous bands and international artists.

What I do now is better. When I worked with Attaque [a well known Argentinian pop-punk group], they would want me to be there the whole time. I got to work with Calle 13 when they were in Argentina. But when I was with them I wouldn't be able to do other jobs. They played more for one job but not much more and then tell you that you can't leave, even though you aren't doing anything. Now I work with smaller bands and I can work with three or four a night, drop stuff off, go to the next one, no one complains. People are more relaxed.

El Fletero was not always transporting the equipment of bands; for a few years following the collapse in 2011 he had worked in an office. Being pragmatic and flexible are valuable characteristics to adapt to the cyclical economic turmoil of Argentina.

While travelling around the city, we would sometimes talk about politics. He was often critical of the current government of Cristina Kirchner but also of the general political climate in Argentina, which was partisan and divided. In one such conversation I talked with him about his experiences during the 1990s and the Menem government, asking him if the contemporary situation was that bad in comparison.

I understand why people are angry at Menem. But for me, and I'm just speaking for me, he was great! Look, I got to go to Miami, like every year, buy things and come back, and go to Brazil. The [convertible] Peso made everything really cheap; it was like travelling with US dollars. I went to the World Cup in 1994 and again in 1998. The World Cup in France! I did everything really cheap but I was in France for the World Cup.

El Fletero worked for a multinational company and with the convertible Peso, held at a one-to-one ratio with the US Dollar, was able to travel on his middle-class salary. Many in Argentina's middle and upper classes, particularly in Buenos Aires, had similar experiences; many took advantage of the Peso to travel to the US and purchase consumer goods at lower prices. Even during the height of the economic crisis, in the year following the 2001 collapse, El Fletero continued to make a regular paycheck in dollars, avoiding the massive devaluation of the Peso.

Reflecting on the long-term consequences to his country, El Fletero told me how his experience was not shared by the whole society. In other circumstances, El Fletero demonstrated generosity and an ease identifying with the daily struggles of other working-class people, while also effortlessly building relationships with people regardless of socio-economic status through friendly conversation. His comments about Argentina's political-economic situation suggests his pragmatic individualism, rather than an ignorance, that is a common strategy many Argentinians adopt to negotiate economic uncertainties. Today he has a modest but stable income, which allows him to support his family and still buy a few luxuries. Like many *hinchas*, the money he manages to save for his leisure is used to travel to important away matches. But his experiences of the Menem period are not dissimilar to many others in Buenos Aires' middle-class. The closure of factories and other industries, along with the sale of nationalized companies, led to the loss of employment that most prominently experienced by Argentinians in the provinces and the peripheries of Buenos Aires. Memories, as representations of the "true" reality of Argentina's economy, in this context are highly political; experiences become part of the

framing of contemporary political debates. But the process is dialectical; memories are also emergent because of how the political debates are framed in Argentina.

Julian, an other member of the group of Malditos, was more in favour of the Kirchner governments. While walking late at night back to Boedo after the match in May against Newell's Old Boys, the mood was uplifted but reflective, as San Lorenzo gained a reprieve from the fears of relegation. I talked with Julian about how some people in Argentina were particularly hostile to Cristina Fernandez's government and discussed what 'alternative' people might be seeking. Reflecting on what changed in Argentina over the past decade and a half, Julian raised the economic crisis: "It was terrible. People didn't have anything, everything was closed down, and for several years people were trading whatever they had to get by. People were being paid in food stamps. You can't imagine it. People easily forget." For those not benefiting from President Menem's economic transformation, the illusion of a successful economy quickly faded or never existed. The collapse produced traumatic memories of economic chaos (Grimson 1999; Guano 2004). A decade after the crisis, economic problems continue to be an issue for many Argentinians in their day-to-day lives but the experiences of economic uncertainty had shifted, making it possible to juxtapose the present to the past.

While it seems divergent to mention the political-economic crisis, it is part of the milieu of 'memory' within Argentinian society that *hinchas* supporting the *Vuelta a Boedo* participate within. During the 1990s, the broad privatization of the national economy and the underlying shift of political-economic ideology of the country had direct impact on the football league. The financial situation of the football clubs reflected the general

contradictions that led to the Argentinian economic collapse. Problems of overspending supported by overly optimistic predictions of revenue, as well as corruption amongst club officials, had resulted in large debts for the clubs. Declining membership created by the loss of wealth amongst many of the clubs' *socios* was also a major issue. The political leadership of several clubs began to pursue market solutions.

A year before the violent social upheaval against the general political-economic leadership of Argentina at the end of 2001, San Lorenzo's President Fernando Miele proposed a path towards the privatization of part of San Lorenzo's operation. Struggling with financial obligations and mismanagement of resources, San Lorenzo was on the edge of crisis. March 2000, Miele announced to the Board of Governors his intention to sign a contract with International Sport and Leisure (ISL), a private Swiss sports marketing company with ties Sepp Blatter (FIFA's President), to manage and promote the brand of the club, operate the stadium, control television rights, as well as receive a significant portion of the gate-receipts over 10 years, in return for \$13 000 000 US a year.

As the plan became more broadly known and understood, many sectors within San Lorenzo began to organize. Members of the *barra brava* were ambiguously placed; upset with Miele because of broken economic promises with the group, members of the *barra* nevertheless were crucial participants in the subsequent protests. Protests occurred at the club facilities in Bajo Flores, the centre of Buenos Aires, and the headquarters of the *Asociación del Fútbol Argentino*, which were met by riot police. The violence, particularly outside the Nuevo Gasómetro in Bajo Flores captured media attention. At the marches, protestors chanted, "Miele delinquent, San Lorenzo will not be sold" and "the

stadium is not yours, it was made by the people.” Another one of the songs, “San Lorenzo is not from Puerto Madero, San Lorenzo is from Boedo” illustrates how place was used to represent political-economic ideologies. Boedo, despite the club facilities being located in Bajo Flores, was used to symbolically represent the “people” of San Lorenzo versus the corporate interests (located in Puerto Madero) influencing the agreement with ISL.

Despite the economic difficulties faced by the club, *socios* in the protest also articulated their desire to maintain political-economic control over their club’s future. Influential politicians like Daniel Scioli of the President Menem's Partido Justicialista, demonstrating the left-right ideological fractures within the Peronist movement at the time, publicly denounced San Lorenzo’s agreement with ISL in the media and in congress.

On 30 November, 2000 Miele pushed the ratification of the agreement through a rare Assembly of Representatives held within the Nuevo Gasómetro in Bajo Flores. Outside, on the streets around their club several hundred *socios* and *hinchas* protested. Riot police fired tear gas canisters into the crowds. Some have since claimed that Miele requested the police repression. Inside, the Assembly voted in favour of the contract with ISL. Within a week the vote was annulled by the courts, backed by Scioli and other congressional politicians, reflecting the incident’s broader symbolic significance. Early in January 2001, ISL financially collapsed and the contract was terminated.<sup>3</sup> Miele lost the subsequent club election in December 2001.

<sup>3</sup> International Sports and Leisure was established by Horst Dassler, a former Adidas executive, with contacts in FIFA and the International Olympic Committee to buy and sell broadcast rights of sporting events. Illegal payments and bribes were uncovered by Swiss prosecutors, who accused six ISL executives. Court documents implicated former FIFA executives João Havelange and Ricardo Teixeira in the scandal. An internal investigation by the FIFA Ethics Committee in 2012 claimed to exonerate Sepp Blatter (Bond 2013; Gibson 2015).

Racing Club faced similar financial difficulties at the end of the 1990s. Unlike San Lorenzo, the control of Racing's professional team and stadium was turned over to a private company Blanquiceleste Sociedad Anónima in 2000. Racing Club was the only first division club to privatize the management of their football team. Blanquiceleste S.A. returned management of the football team to the club in 2008. By the end of its management, the private company had failed to generate a profit and left the football team operations in debt. As a result, Blanquiceleste was unable to pay the wages of players and other employees. *Socios* and *hinchas* of Racing Club organized to bring the football team and stadium back under the management of the club's civil association.

Racing's period of private ownership is remembered by *hinchas* of other clubs. Matches between any of the five *grandes* is considered a *clásico*. San Lorenzo and Racing, while not as intense as their primary rivalries, is considered a particularly intense rivalry. Generally, *hinchadas* look forward to facing a *grande* and unique lyrics are crafted to insult the opponent. Packed into the fenced off section of the upper bowl for visiting fans of Racing's Stadium in October 2012, San Lorenzo's *hinchada* sang several songs that targeted Racing.<sup>4</sup> Many of the songs, like the following, referenced the period when Racing was under the management of Blanquiceleste:

You are chickenshit; Racing never again champion  
You are chickenshit; Racing never again champion  
You are not a member; You are an employee  
You are a company; And not a neighbourhood club

<sup>4</sup> San Lorenzo lost the match 4-0, including a penalty converted by former San Lorenzo goalkeeper Diego Sebastián Saja. The *hinchada* was furious at the underwhelming performance of San Lorenzo. During the second half, the *hinchada* turned to competing against the Racing's *hinchada* through song. At times, San Lorenzo managed to out sing Racing despite being away and used the repertoire to insult Racing's history rather than reference the match on the field.

Blanquiceleste, won a championship  
And the Academy continues to wait

The above song carries an ideological message: to 'sell' the club is to lose dignity and respect. *Cagón* (piece of shit or chickenshit) is a common insult used to intonate the fear of an opponent, is tied to the memory of Racing's period of privatization. In contrast to the traditional *socio* who is active in their club as well as embody their club, the lyrics represents the *hincha* of Racing as a subservient employee of the club. *Hinchas* who are also *socios* have political ownership over their club; their performances as a collective *hinchada* does not represent a subservient relationship to the business, rather is representative of their central participation within their club. To lose the responsibility of being engaged through the club, the song suggests, is to be scared and thus weak. While being managed by Blanquiceleste, Racing Club won the 2001 Apertura championship, its first Argentinian championship since 1966. Through the lyrics of the song, San Lorenzo's *hinchada* denies the championship to *La Academia* (The Academy, a nickname of Racing Club), claiming that it actually belongs to the private company.

At another time, I talked with Julian about the similarities and differences between *hinchas* of San Lorenzo and Racing. He said that both San Lorenzo and Racing are recognized as being "suffering" *hinchas*. Both clubs despite their status as *grandes* have had significant periods in their history when they did not win a championship and both clubs were relegated to the second division before the other *grandes*. Racing and San Lorenzo, however, are both portrayed by the media to have supportive *hinchadas* that maintain a strong stadium presence despite loses on the field. Despite this similar media

portrayal, Julian questioned the limits Racing's *hinchas* to suffer for their club. He claimed that the inability of Racing's *hinchas* to prevent privatization of their club's football team betrayed a weakness in the character of the stereotypical *hinchas* of Racing.

San Lorenzo, he pointed out, now officially celebrates its resistance to privatization through the *Día del hincha* every 30 November. The club hosts an event within the Nuevo Gasómetro, including a significant presence of the *hinchada*, that takes on a festive atmosphere. In other commemorative acts, *hinchas* share posts on Facebook and Twitter, as well as on other websites, that contain messages that illustrate the 'defence' of the club against private interests. A mural on one of the walls of the Nuevo Gasómetro, painted in 2014 by the Grupo Artístico de Boedo, depicts a figurative legion of crows carrying blue and red banners with the words "*San Lorenzo NO SE VENDE, Siempre C.A.S.L.A. nunca S.A.*"<sup>5</sup> The commemorative acts reference the experience of neoliberal privatization more generally and have been used by *hinchas* to position themselves politically against the idea of privatized football. Such discussions interact with a broader turn against pure neoliberal ideology. The openings for critical discussions about Argentina's political-economic direction were created in the post-2001 situation, through which *hinchas* of football were provided with its own critical discourse about privatization.

5 "San Lorenzo NOT FOR SALE; Always CASLA (Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro) Never SA (Incorporated).

## 5.6 Conclusion

How and why memories of the crisis are used by *hinchas* is part of their experiences of social-political life in Argentina. Experiences of the 'past' emerge dialectically with the present. How memories emerge in the present also have an element that is orientated towards the future. In *La Luna de Avellaneda*, Román invokes the past against the contemporary economic reality of the club to validate his vision for an alternative social-economic value to La Luna. His vision challenges the economic rationality of “more jobs” (regardless of their quality and purpose) by promoting the recognition of the social solidarity that comes from the sport and social club. Memories from the club's past demonstrate the value, not simply economic, of social solidarity. Using the alternative economic rationality and thinking-otherwise that was basis of the sport and social club-past, Román proposes a more general alternative rationality in response to the economic crisis. In opposition, Alejandro is forced to respond to alternative represented by the shared memories of the club. The past once invoked requires a response that is necessarily about making the future. By claiming that a shared memory is “nostalgic” is to isolate the past from being significant to the imagined the future and is very much a political act.

Memory is an active social and political concept used in daily debates, discussions, and arguments. The presence of the past evoked by memory more generally is important to how and why 'memory' is used by the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes, “peoples are not always subjects constantly confronting history as some academics would wish, but the capacity upon which they act to become subjects is

always part of their condition... [This subjective capacity] engages them simultaneously in the sociohistorical process and in narrative constructions about that process” (1995:24). Memories of the Viejo Gasómetro suggests a dynamic understanding of how the past appears and is used in the present. As I continued in my participation with San Lorenzo, I became part of the action that makes the memories of Viejo Gasómetro relevant to *hinchas* of San Lorenzo and the daily life of Boedo. I also began to reflect on how memory is emergent within society. Memory in Argentina, as a political framework of the past, is emergent within a broad social, political, and economic milieu. Specifically, how *cuervos* produce memories of the Viejo Gasómetro and their club’s relationship to Boedo engages with the way in which Argentinians confront the historical consequences of civic-military dictatorship, the topic of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 6 Politics of Memory and the Civic-Military Dictatorship**

Memory, as a genre of how the past is invoked, has a particular significance within the contentious hegemonic processes of Argentina that have occurred since the end of the civic-military dictatorship in 1983. This chapter traces how a politics of memory emerged and has shifted as a way of engaging a question of justice for the victims of the civic-military dictatorship and relates to the production of memories by *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. Personal memories of the disappeared were used particularly by family members but also human rights activists to challenge the dictatorship. The political significance of the memories was to claim the social being of the disappeared and recognize their absence. In the transition to democracy, memory was included in the political project to incorporate human rights as part of a politically recognized civil society. The state also used memory to gain recognition and promote itself as an agent of justice. The political movement for justice, however, was significantly undermined by the government of Carlos Menem (1989-1999), who favoured a politics of reconciliation, particularly with the military. A more recent phase of political engagement with memory in Argentina has coincided with efforts to resolve the political-economic crisis that culminated in large protests at the end of 2001 and in the beginning of 2002. The Nestor Kirchner government elected in 2003 returned to a political engagement of justice for victims of the dictatorship, drawing upon the framework of memory produced by human rights organizations. The political interest in the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign emerged alongside this turn towards a discourse of memory and justice. How San Lorenzo lost the

Viejo Gasómetro was related to questions of social justice. The politicized production of memory appears in many facets of social life that *San Lorencistas* inhabit beyond football, which influences how they think about the club's past and its lost stadium. The demands of *hinchas* for a historic restitution of the club are tied into broader claims of justice held by human rights activists in Argentina. The first part of the chapter provides a brief description of how a politics of memory emerged and been used over the past thirty years. In the second part of this chapter, I reflect on how *hinchas* today talk about the events of dictatorship and reflect on the club's experience during the dictatorship.

This chapter also addresses how football and the civic-military dictatorship interacted. A focus on the 1978 World Cup, hosted by Argentina, presents the ways in which football was used by the dictatorship to portray Argentina as a modern country. Argentina's victory in 1978 is considered controversial, particularly in its use to quell civil dissent, as well as to represent the nation. As part of the civic-military dictatorship's hegemonic project, the World Cup can be argued to have acted as a distraction from the ongoing human rights violations. My aim, rather than to contradict these arguments, is to show the underrepresented ambiguity of football's relationship to the dictatorship by highlighting how San Lorenzo and other clubs came into conflict with the dictatorship. I argue that this ambiguity pulls on the duality of civilization and barbarity present in the narrative construction of Argentinian nationalism. While the civic-military dictatorship sought to use football to represent its political project, it nevertheless revealed a distrust of the popular masses and the football crowd.

## **6.1 Memory and Justice: Responses to the Civic-Military Dictatorship**

The re-establishment of Argentina's democratic government starting in 1983 drew upon a politics of human rights and justice (Crenzel 2011; Jelin 1994; Palermo 2004). Newly elected President Raúl Alfonsín immediately formed the National Commission on Disappeared Persons (CONADEP), an electoral promise to human rights organizations. Teams of investigators collected testimonies from families of the disappeared and survivors of the detention centres; forensic anthropologists located burial pits and the graves of unnamed bodies with the intention of identifying bodies. CONADEP's report *Nunca Más* (Never Again) was published in 1984 and made widely available to Argentinians. Public interest in the document was immediate. Appearing at newspaper stands, *Nunca Más* became a best-seller with more than 500 000 copies sold. Included in the report are detailed descriptions of the detention and torture facilities throughout the country, description of the various types of victims, testimony from torture victims and of witnesses to the sequestering of the disappeared, and a concluding description of the Military's "doctrine of repression" (CONADEP 1984).

The report came as a political response to the activism by human rights organizations who had worked during the dictatorship to illuminate the atrocities occurring. Nearly 10 000 documented victims of the dictatorship have been categorized as "disappeared" though human rights organizations claim up to 30 000 people were victims of the state. The repression, officially against "terrorists", was particularly intense in the urban areas around Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Rosario as well as in the interior province of Tucumán along the Andean mountains. People were lifted off of the street

and taken from their homes in raids by specialized teams known as *Grupos de Tarea* (Work Groups). They were taken to clandestine detention centres where they were interrogated, tortured, and killed. Their bodies were incinerated, disposed of in mass graves, in cemeteries in unmarked graves, or thrown out of planes flying over the estuary of the Rio Plate. Police and military officials systematically denied knowledge about the disappeared. Media sources rarely discussed the evidence of state-led violence against activists. When bodies did appear, they were declared as unidentifiable victims of violent crime and the *guerrilla*. Against this backdrop, families and human rights activists made uncovering and revealing the 'truth' of the disappearances a central component of their campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

Mothers of the disappeared created some of the first public protests around the practice of disappearing, challenging the silence generated by the civic-military dictatorship. First meeting each other in the waiting rooms of military and police offices, the mothers began to appear together on the iconic Plaza de Mayo, the location of many of Argentina's important political gatherings. Carrying pictures of their lost daughters and sons, the Mothers confronted government officials and military officers as they passed by the central plaza asking if they had seen their children. They wore headscarves to elicit a representation of conservative maternal femininity as a form of symbolic protection. As the number of mothers grew, their activism became more organized forming the *Madres*

<sup>1</sup> The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo are the most emblematic group that formed; in part a strategic decision was made by the Madres to focus on the 'truth' because other demands could have been interpreted as more overt political challenges to the Military government (Robben 2005:300-306).

*de la Plaza de Mayo*. Their meetings were infiltrated by members of the secret police and large demonstrations became targets for repression by the government.

A sub-group of the *Madres* formed in 1979 calling themselves the *Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo* (Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo). The *Abuelas* have been focused on discovering the whereabouts of the children of the disappeared, kidnapped during raids alongside their parents or born into captivity. In an act of “violence against identity” the children were taken by the government and given to military or police families and orphanages (Abuelas ¿Quién soy yo?, 2010). By 2016, the *Abuelas* have identified 120 people who were stolen as children and reconnected with the families of their disappeared parents.<sup>2</sup> The work of the *Abuelas* and other groups have popularized the political conceptualization of identity. In this context, memory becomes part of recognizing the 'true' identity of the children of the disappeared, reconnecting them with their biological families, and restoring a historical trajectory that they were violently displaced from when they were taken prevented from knowing their biological families.

Discovering the identity of the children of the disappeared has complex consequences for the social relationships of family members. Several of the children of the disappeared following their discovery have broken with the families that raised them and reconnected with their biological families. A few have refused to make a sustained connection to their biological families, while others have formed relationships with both families. In this context, the *Abuelas* and other organizations have advocated that the

<sup>2</sup> Activism to uncover the histories of these children and reconnect the now adults to the families of their disappeared parents continues to this day. In 2014, one of the founding *Abuelas*, Estela de Carlotto, met with her grandson Igancio Guido Montoya Carlotto, for the first time.

reconnection of families leads to the recuperation of identity and restores a personal trajectory that was violently disrupted. The state, human rights organizations argue, have a necessary role in rectifying the past injustice and healing the violence done to the person's identity. For the *Vuelta a Boedo*, similar arguments have been made about the loss of identity created by the disconnection to the *barrio*. In chapter seven I discuss how directly and indirectly claims of historical justice are related to understandings of identity.

Following the collapse of the dictatorship, CONDANEP was formed to document the experiences of victims and relatives of victims. This initial use of memory – emergent through narrative reconstructions of the torture and violence, as well as recording the name and stories of those disappeared – was the result of an effort to remake the historical narrative. By documenting and sharing publicly their experiences, those involved were part of an attempt to fill in the social gaps created by the damage of torture and absences of life. The public act of retelling the experiences of repression brought into light what had transpired in the clandestine torture centres, recognized the presence-lost of the disappeared, and was intended to end in the prosecution of the perpetrators of state-led violence and justice for the victims.

More generally, a framework of memory emerges within social processes embedded in relations of power. Vezzetti argues that a socially enacted “regime of memory” – the extension of a “general consensus condemning the violence and violation of human rights” – emerged through Argentina's democratization process that required the public to take action in re-contextualizing its relationship to the past (2007:5). Prior to the dictatorship, political ideologies rather than ‘memory’ oriented the political use of the

past (Vezzetti 2007:8-14). As the government worked to reconcile the historic ruptures in people's lives created by the violence, a politics of memory emerged as a dominant framework to negotiate the past. Emergent in the 1980s, the activist slogan "*Ni olvido ni perdón*" (Neither forget nor pardon) describes how activists attempt to frame how they want the state to respond to the social consequences of the dictatorship (Jelin 1994:39). The process of recasting the national narrative around the civic-military dictatorship was made into a public debate by focusing on the links between remembering and social justice. Democratic principles of social and public participation, human rights organizations argued, required a recognition of the suffering endured by Argentinians during the dictatorship and their right to justice.

Memory, articulated through the documentation of *Nunca Más*, was useful to defining a democratic Argentina. Crenzel (2011) argues *Nunca Más* establishes a contradictory "we" of Argentinian society. On the one hand, the collective society is represented as a bystander and victim of state terror, while on the other hand several institutions, such as the courts and church, which had played implicit or explicit roles in supporting the repression continued to have a significant role to resolving the issues of injustice in Argentinian society (Crenzel 2011:1066). Limits were placed on how far the government could represent Argentinian civil society's demands for justice because of this contradiction. Elizabeth Jelin argues that a clear shift in political policy occurred as the government moved away from "the need to resolve on an ethical level its relationship to civil society to a strategic need to maintain an amicable and harmonious relationship with the armed forces" (Jelin 1994:47). Antonious Robben (2005) details the unrest

within military barracks during the mid-1980s. Following the devastating results of the Falklands/Malvinas War with Great Britain in 1982, morale in the barracks was very low.

Recognition of the state-led violence as a result did not translate into a politically sustained effort to bring members of the military to justice. Social cohesion was emphasized by influential sectors of society and led to a hegemonic struggle on how to define social justice. Alfonsín's government attempted to navigate competing demands and his government operated through pragmatic political decisions (Jelin 1994:46). Human rights were important constituents in the voting block supporting Alfonsín's Partido Radical (Radical Party) and the formation of CONADEP was one of Alfonsín's campaign promises. On the other hand, members of the military were particularly wary of the shifting narrative. During the dictatorship, the military and allied sectors in the conservative Catholic Church, business elites, and other right-wing civil society organizations, maintained that Argentina was engaged in an internal civil war against left-wing "terrorists"; these elements of civil society were self-interested in maintaining this narrative post-dictatorship (Robben 2005).

Initially, Alfonsín's government had ordered the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to legally pursue the nine commanders of the military juntas that ruled from 1976 until 1982. Finding the military courts unwilling to try the junta leaders, the civilian court of Buenos Aires Federal Court of Criminal Appeals built their case from CONADEP's report. Hundreds of people attended the hearings and many more watched the broadcast on television; the courts produced a public narrative of justice against those who had ordered the violence. The verdict delivered on 9 December 1985 found the commanders

guilty of carrying out a secret plan that involved the systematic abduction, torture, disappearance and assassination of Argentinian civilians without the due process of the law. Both Videla and Massera received life sentences, Viola seventeen years, Lambruschini eight years and Agosti four and a half years. Graffigna, Faltiere, Anaya, and Lami Dozo were acquitted (Robben 2005:324-5). Before and after the trial, two thousand complaints against six hundred and fifty officers were launched, leading to the possibility of hundreds of trials against lower-ranked officers and soldiers.

Attempting to halt the increasing civic antagonism of the military and prevent unrest in the barracks, Alfonsín's government passed the *Ley de Punto Final* (Final Stop Law) on 23 December 1986.<sup>3</sup> A sixty day statute of limitations was put on the possibility of beginning legal action against members of the military (Robben 2005:331). Despite the limitations enacted by Alfonsín's government, the ongoing trials of one hundred officers was responded to by a military uprising in mid-April 1987 and again in January and December in 1988 (Robben 2005:332; van Drunen 2010:83). The Argentinian government continued to pull back on its initial efforts to seek justice through the courts. The *Ley de Obediencia Debida* (Due Obedience Law) exonerated officers under the rank of lieutenant colonel from facing criminal charges (van Drunen 2010:83).

A relevant critique of the Argentinian dictatorship emerged from the left during the 1990s. Most analyses of the dictatorship focused on the conflict between the conservative Catholic Church, corporate unions, and military on one side and the

<sup>3</sup> While legal processes, even in subsequent decades, may have been slowed by political decisions, as will be described later, it is unlikely that the military regained confidence with the large sector of Argentinian public. The term “*milico*” is often used as an insult to this day within Argentinian football stadiums.

grassroots unions, Peronist left, and revolutionary left on the other. This “two evils” thesis was supported politically by Alfonsín's government (Robben 2012). A critical-left analysis emerged that identified an instrumentalist relationship between the military and an internationally connected bourgeoisie (Izaguirre 1994 cited in Vezzetti 2007). According to this critique, while pursuing justice against members of the military could address the particular instruments of violence, the legal justice system would be unable to address the social-economic inequality related to the dictatorship.

The critical-left analysis is relevant because of the political-economic developments that occurred during the 1990s under President Carlos Menem, previously a Peronist governor of La Rioja. Hyper-inflation contributed to the decline in public confidence of Alfonsín's government and Menem won the 1988 election. Menem, in an effort to improve stability with hegemonic elites, moved away from a politics of historical justice towards “national reconciliation” and began a process of pardoning members of the military and guerrilla starting in 1989. While unpopular, Robben (2005:337) argues that the Argentinian public was mostly resigned to the solution for “national reconciliation” pursued by Menem. In the late 1980s, the Argentinian public became less sure about how to address the dictatorship. Lorenz (2002) notes that between 1989 and 1995 political mobilizations against the dictatorship on the anniversary of the coup d'état were characterized by their lower attendance.

Menem's plan culminated in full pardons for all members of the junta as well as Mario Firmenich, a central figure within the *Montoneros* who had also been convicted during Alfonsín's government. 60 000 people, called by the human rights movement,

protested the decision and former President Alfonsín critically claimed, “One cannot decree the amnesia of an entire society because every time anyone tried to sweep the past under the carpet, the past returned with a vengeance” (quoted in Robben 2005:337). Attempts to close off the historical past are related to the ensuing decade of consumerist expansion that was taking place in the Argentinian political-economy. Forgetting the past was constitutive of the political-economic transformation occurring.<sup>4</sup>

A politics of memory returned to the fore, however, in 1995, when the published testimony of Captain Adolfo Scilingo provided a first hand account of how the military systematically disposed of bodies from airplanes.<sup>5</sup> Scilingo's testimony, from interviews with Horacio Verbitsky vividly describes how living victims from torture centres were drugged and put onto planes. Flying over the estuary of the River Plate, the victims were thrown out of the plane in an attempt to hide the bodies. Some of the bodies ominously and by the force of the tides washed onto the Argentinian and Uruguayan coasts. During the dictatorship the appearance of these unidentified bodies gained some recognition but, with the collusion of the media companies, were rarely linked to the government. Less was popularly known about the specifics of the practice. Scilingo's testimony reopened the use of memory, producing a frightening image of the extreme practices of the dictatorship.<sup>6</sup> Other officers came forward with their own testimonies. Attempts to

4 This theoretical argument is made by Johannes Fabian in the context of the remembering/forgetting that has occurred alongside the colonization and coloniality of Africa (2007:65-91).

5 See van Drunen (2010:89-90) for a discussion on the reaction of the Menem government to Scilingo's testimony.

6 Popular Argentinian rock band Bersuit Vergarabat released the song *Vuelos* on the album *Libertinaje* in 1998. The lyrics, heavily influenced by Verbitsky's interview with Scilingo, depict an imagined interlocutor to Scilingo: the anonymous disappeared victim as they are being thrown out of the stadium. In a live recording of a Bersuit concert, the song ends with the crowd chanting, in the familiar intonation of an Argentinian football stadium, “*hay que saltar, hay que saltar, quien no salta es un militar*” (“You have to

produce a hegemonic version of a reconciled Argentina that had resolved its issues from the past was confronted by the reproduction of memories, which became re-embedded in new calls for justice.

The mid-1990s began a process of emergent counter-hegemonic civic organizing. The activism of human rights groups connected to and inspired by the activism of the 1980s were central actors. Researchers and community organizations turned to popular memory as a form of documenting experiences (DuBois 2006). On the margins of Argentinian society, other sectors of mobilization began to address the political-economic consequences of Menem's neoliberal regime (Auyero 1999; Grimson 2008). Gaining attention and recognition were similar goals for both the economically dislocated and human rights organizations.

New waves of activism influenced the evolution of popular narratives on state terror. A younger generation of Argentinians encountered the official narrative of what happened during the civic-military dictatorship, while experiencing the political-economic contradictions that followed in its wake. Anthropologist Alejandro Isla conducted fieldwork in the 1990s in the province of Tucumán, in the western agricultural region of the country.<sup>7</sup> Isla, looking at the way in which the violence and authoritarian norms were subsumed into the everyday practices in the forms of myth and memories, describes:

In Argentina, terror produced a culture divided and uncertain of how to locate its own agency. This effect continues to exact its toll from a second generation of

jump, you have to jump, whoever doesn't jump is military").

<sup>7</sup> The *Montoneros* were relatively well organized in Tucumán and in response the province's population faced severe military repression.

Argentines. The extent to which these divisions and uncertainties still threaten to tear apart the social body is glimpsed through the veil that covers its recent past, a veil that has not been lifted by a frenzied media attention to military and torturers whose confessions only add further bricks of inexplicable atrocities (Isla 1998:147)

As a national society, Argentinians struggled to define what form justice should take to resolve what Robben (2005) identifies as a social trauma. Isla argues that a resolution to such trauma would require an admission of guilt that could only come from a broader shared culture between victims and victimizers. Different understandings of social order and justice have prevented a recognition of guilt and contributed to the social fractures across generational experiences (1998:147).

## **6.2 Neoliberalism, Football, and the Return of a Politics of Memory**

Social fractures appeared viscerally in another way when many Argentinians were expelled from participating in the political-economy. On the one hand, Menem's government was momentarily able to create stability in Argentina's economy through the convertible-Peso artificially held by the government to a one-to-one exchange rate with the US Dollar. On the other hand, the anti-inflationary monetary policy required the mass privatization of state-owned assets, de-regulation, and the lowering of tariffs to generate an inflow of capital. As the Menemist neoliberal policies began to generate political-economic contradictions, the illusion of a stable and growing economy began to fall apart (Auyero 1999; Grimson 2008). Unemployment following the privatization and liquidation of productive public companies, such as the privatization of YPF, the national oil-producer, generated severe economic dislocation where state companies had been the

major employer. The removal of import protections hurt the manufacturing sector. Union membership declined, undermining traditional spaces where social solidarity had been formed. Factories in the manufacturing belt in the south and west of Buenos Aires were abandoned, dramatically reducing social interaction in these spaces (Cerrutti and Grimson 2004). While the government and many media outlets presented Argentina as a stabilized economy that provided wealth and opportunities for Argentinians, on the margins collective experiences contradicted the illusion and undermined the excluded population's ability to believe in the benefits of Menem's economic reforms.

Social protests, which had been growing throughout the 1990s particularly outside Buenos Aires' core of political-economic influence, took over the capital at the end of December 2001. The occupation of the plaza in front of the Congress and the Plaza de Mayo by protestors coincided with the collapse of Argentina's financial sector (Dinerstein 2002; Auyero and Moran 2007). Protestors demanded that "they should all go" expressing a clear anger against the collusion of politicians with banks, international institutions, and foreign ownership. Two years of political instability followed. No political party or leader was able to articulate a solution to the crisis and gain public support. As my discussion with Julian (Chapter Five) described, middle-class citizens in Buenos Aires experienced a radically different social reality. People were paid in food-vouchers and were trading personal objects in an informal market. Retired people who had believed their pensions were secure were suddenly left with diminished financial resources.

The social-political context extended into football (Gil 2003). Pablo Alabarces (2007) argues that while politics and football have been historically linked in Argentina, the national team's limited recognition of the crisis was the result of the de-politicization of football. In part, this argument is a reflection of Alabarces' focus on football and nationalism. Political commentaries on the 2002 World Cup suggested that the Argentinian Men's National team's failure symbolized the economic crisis back in Argentina; some feared that instead of providing joy to Argentinians suffering economic hardships the disappointment would lead to renewed protests. The absence of protests in the wake of Argentina's exit, Alabarces suggests, reveals how football had become disconnected from its symbolic significance to the nation. Alabarces presents the social relations at the club level as representative of a "tribalism" and thus as ineffective at responding to the national context (Alabarces 2007:108-109).

Previous chapters, however, show that Argentina's professional football clubs are deeply enmeshed in the historical formation of the country's political-economy. General transformations in the country's political-economy, including hegemonic processes that promoted a neoliberal ideology, through the 1990s influenced how clubs operated. Moreira and Hijos (2013) demonstrate how the operations of both Boca Juniors and Independiente were influenced by branding and marketing practices. At the time, these practices were seen as part of the modernization of Argentinian football and were expected to generate greater revenues for the larger clubs. Rather than interpret this juncture as depoliticizing, the adoption of neoliberal marketing strategies suggest that political-economic practices and ideologies are constantly being represented and

negotiated through the operations of the football clubs. Clubs become sites in which political-economic ideologies are rationalized. Football clubs, in the nexus between the social-political and political-economic relations, generate related but differentiated social relations because of how they have been historically composed in Argentina. The hegemonic processes effect the daily experiences of *hinchas*, as well as how *hinchas* interact with their clubs. Efforts to privatize the operations within San Lorenzo, as well as Racing Club's privatization of the management of its professional team, occurred during the later half of the 1990s. It is a relevant coincidence that *hinchas* of San Lorenzo protested the efforts to privatize their club a year before the collapse of Argentina's monetary regime, highlighting the ways in which club football was a contested site of political-economic issues in Argentina.

The election of Nestor Kirchner, the presidential candidate for the centre-left of the Peronist Partido Justicialista against fellow Peronist Carlos Menem in 2003, signalled a shift in the political-economic direction of Argentina. Kirchner's government linked economic justice to social justice. In part, the renegotiation of Argentina's international debt in 2005, including a massive default with private lenders, was justified to the Argentinian public as a refusal to repay loans given to the dictatorship. The Kirchner government distinguished itself from Menem-era politics by connecting the political-economic crisis to a politics of justice for the victims of the dictatorship. Members of the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo were included as symbolic and activist participants of the

Kirchner-wing of the Peronist party.<sup>8</sup> Following the election, the Full Stop and Due Obedience Laws were suspended, pardons granted to members of the military juntas were removed, and the courts were once again encouraged to convict the living members of the military juntas. The discourse of the courts transformed during the Kirchner government. Videla was once again put on trial. He was convicted on 22 December 2010 and received a life time sentence for human rights violations related to the deaths of 31 prisoners and sentenced to life in prison. On 5 July 2012, Videla was further convicted for fifty years for his complicity in the systematic plan to steal 35 babies from detained and disappeared parents.<sup>9</sup> The Argentinian court in their sentencing highlighted the “suppression of identity” as a crime against humanity.

In another importantly symbolic act, the Kirchner government transformed the former *Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada* (Navy School of Mechanics, ESMA), located in Buenos Aires, into the *Instituto Espacio para la Memoria* (Space for Memory Institute IEM). ESMA had been one of the largest secret detention and torture sites during the civic-military dictatorship. In 1998, President Menem authorized the demolition of ESMA to build a memory park. The decision was met with protests and legal action by the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo and other human rights organizations who wanted the building to be kept as a space of memory. Human rights organizations joined with

8 Saskia van Drunen (2010:180-181) describes how the protests in 2001 and 2002 provided opportunities for the political re-engagement of many of the surviving activists from the 1970s; in particular the rise of the Kirchners, who were members of the *Montoneros* in the 1970s, allowed for a re-vindication and de-stigmatization of the leftist Peronist movement.

9 Reynaldo Bignone, the President of the dictatorship, as well as Rubén Omar Franco, Santiago Omar Riveros, Jorge “El Tigre” Acosta, Antonio Vañek, Dr. Jorge Magnacco, Juan Antonio Azic, Eduardo Ruffo, Víctor Gallo and Susana Colombo also received sentences between 50 and 15 years in prison for their involvement in the theft of babies.

representatives from the city and national governments to create the IEM on the twenty-eighth anniversary of the military coup on 24 March 2004.<sup>10</sup> At the ceremony, President Kirchner met with children born in the ESMA, poetry from the detained and disappeared Ana María Ponce was read, and Kirchner criticized the failures of previous governments to acknowledge state culpability in the repression and impunity of the criminals (van Drunen 2010:218). The production of “place” out of and for memory is an important theme for activists in the *Vuelta a Boedo*. They reference their memories of the Viejo Gasómetro to demonstrate how the dictatorship disrupted important social relationships through its actions against San Lorenzo. Activists in the *Vuelta a Boedo* have made symbolic connections to the use of memory by using the IEM for presentations on the violations of the civic-military dictatorship and San Lorenzo.<sup>11</sup>

### **6.3 Politics of Memory in the Barrio**

Similar to the social activities of *hinchas*, activism in Buenos Aires is constitutive of networks of social solidarity on a *barrio* scale. Memory politics have contributed to local activism in the *barrio* (see DeBois 2006). In Boedo local memory projects have influenced the production and redefinition of shared spaces. The *Red de Cultura Boedo* (Boedo Cultural Network) was formed to promote the cultural identity of the

10 Hidalgo (2012) documents how different human rights organizations had different ideas for the ESMA buildings and how to organize the IEM to best reflect different directions for the politics of memory. Some organizations wanted the buildings preserved as material testimonials of the crimes; others believe the buildings should be maintained but their use transformed into spaces for human rights education.

11 The Sub-Comisión del *hinchas* and Adolfo Res have presented on the history of the Viejo Gasómetro in public discussions at the IEM to *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, members of CASLA's youth teams, as well as the professional Football team-members. On August 25 2011, 300 *hinchas* attended a presentation by Adolfo Res, Daniel Schulmman from *Liga por los Derechos del Hombre*, journalists Roman Perroni y Alberto Dean, Martin Dianda (SCH), author Enrique Escande, Victor Basterra an *hinchas* of San Lorenzo who was held captive at ESMA and Ana María Carriaga, the director of IEM.

neighbourhood, emphasizing the historical character of the *barrio*. Along with promoting the *barrio*'s history of tango, art, and alternative bohemian culture, the *Red de Cultura Boedo* has also recognized the legacy of the dictatorship's violence in Boedo. The group published four editions of the magazine *Barrio y Memoria* (Neighbourhood and Memory) between 2009 to 2013. The public journal included reflections and testimonials on the civic-military dictatorship with an emphasis on recognizing the disappeared. The first edition printed names, pictures, and addresses of thirty-five people from Boedo who were detained and disappeared. Longer testimonies on the lives of the disappeared and of the violence were written by family members and published alongside poetry, lyrics, and artwork that depicted an artistic response to the dictatorship. Each publication ended with a declaration by the group:

For our disappeared and murdered neighbours we continue to reclaim memory, truth and justice... the consequences persist in the present. This is why it is important that justice advances and that the courts condemn all genocides and the civil accomplices, for each and every one of our disappeared friends and neighbours. To exercise memory is to give value to our rights of identification and justice (Comisión por la Memoria 2011).

Justice is seen not only as a legal process but as a social process of reclaiming presence for the disappeared through memory. By retelling memories of the disappeared, their absence is recognized collectively, which is also to recognize the consequences created by their absence.

The Red de Cultura Boedo and similar groups use plaques and small monuments to embed memorials into the physical space of the city. These memorials to the disappeared are one way in which their presence can be re-incorporated into the social

world of the city. Walking down Avenida San Juan, one of Boedo's main arteries, towards the city centre there are dozens of small plaques at foot level embedded in concrete, each with the individual name of a disappeared resident of the *barrio*. Some of the memorials have been damaged but there are also signs of ongoing efforts to repair and replace damaged plaques. Elsewhere down the residential streets in Boedo, colourful mosaics in the side-walk and on the wall mark the place where someone was abducted by one of the dictatorship's Working Groups.

Small memorials dotting the urban landscape can go unnoticed or unrecognized by residents and visitors. When I mentioned the plaques on Avenida San Juan to *hinchas* of San Lorenzo who live in the *barrio* they responded in confusion, having not noticed the markers before. Small memorials do not necessarily force a recognition of their presence to everyone who uses the space. Conversely, however, the way in which the plaques participate in the production of the urban space creates possibilities for unregulated and unexpected encounters. Memorials to the disappeared contribute to such potential encounters with Argentina's past, creating moments of recognition and conversation. As a result the social landscape of the *barrio* becomes transformed through such memorials, which subtly ask interlocutors to pause and remember. The memorials are also symbols of a communal effort to remember, influencing what it means to be a member of *barrio*.

#### 6.4 Political Framework of Memory and Forgetting

The development of a political framework of memory ties together themes of loss, historical justice, and the social transformation of space. These themes are relevant to how activists have claimed that the *Vuelta a Boedo* is in part about for justice for San Lorenzo and its *hinchas*. Memories of experiences during the dictatorship permeate the storytelling of San Lorenzo's *hinchas*. Through their activism *hinchas* also transform the Viejo Gasómetro, I argue later, into a metaphoric victim of the dictatorship. The framework of memory used to structure the political use of memories of the victims of the dictatorship also influences how memories of the Viejo Gasómetro are made to claim the justice that *cuervos* seek for their club. Memory in Argentina has become part of transforming absences created by the disappearances into presence. Families of the victims were initially denied closure. Without proof many could not know for certain what had happened to their loved ones. Families have used the names and images of their disappeared loved ones to give them a form of social presence.

How and why a group of people remember parts of their past and not others, is also about how and why they forget parts of their past (Fabian 2005). Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995), using historical narratives of the Haitian revolution, demonstrates that power emerges out of efforts to make people forget. The practice of disappearance is related to forgetting in the sense that both can be about the production of absences. Part of the underlying logic of the disappearances for the civic-military dictatorship was to prevent the reproduction of particular ideologies. The absence of the disappeared

produced ruptures within the social networks of their lives. Their absence was also intended to produce fear and silence amongst the living.

Uncertainty about the fate of the victims was reflected through form of activism taken up by the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* and other human rights organizations. Unable to get information about their daughters and sons from the police and military, the mothers turned to a symbolically powerful act. Circling the small obelisk at the centre of the Plaza de Mayo, the mothers carried the photographs of their sons and daughters. Without evidence that the disappeared had died, the mothers hoped to find their loved ones alive. The absence of any truth became productive: memories of the disappeared and memories of their abduction became even more significant as an act of resistance. Simple recognition that the disappeared had existed and were missing stood against the dictatorship's violence.

As recognition of the civic-military dictatorship's violations of human rights became widely recognized, the significance of memories of loved ones disappeared and of the torture experienced by survivors transformed. A collective responsibility to memory emerged. Storytelling was oriented towards revealing the truth of torture and murder conducted by agents of the state. To share and learn about the lives of the disappeared became a social responsibility. And symbolic recognition of the disappeared, such a names on a plaque or a museum to memory, created opportunities to remember the victims. The memorialization in place allows for a sense of permanence, or temporal continuity, to the disappeared (Huyssen 2003).

The use of memory to give significance to a place is central to how *hinchas* of San Lorenzo produce narratives about the Viejo Gasómetro. How memory was made relevant by the *Vuelta a Boedo* is related to how memory was used to define, resist, and repair the ruptures created by the violence. In the early 2000s at the same time a politics of memory was being re-articulated at several political levels, *hinchas* of San Lorenzo began to reflect on their own memories of the Viejo Gasómetro. This argument is developed further in the following chapter.

### **6.5 The Civic-Military Dictatorship and Football**

Football has an ambiguous relationship to the civic-military dictatorship. San Lorenzo's historical narrative was profoundly shaped by the period between 1979 and 1983; some of the club's history was directly affected by the dictatorship, in particular the political influence of members of the dictatorship that led to the sale of the Gasómetro, while other events were more tangential, such as the relegation of San Lorenzo to the Primera B in 1982. But as part of the social milieu that surrounded the lives of *hinchas*, the dictatorship did affect the daily experiences of *hinchas*. The ways in which the civic-military dictatorship used the World Cup hosted by Argentina in 1978 to claim legitimacy has received the bulk of academic attention. It is argued that Argentina's victory on home soil was used to obscure the violence and human rights violations (Archetti 2004; Alabarces 2007). Less attention, however, has been given to how the civic-military dictatorship interacted with professional football teams and their supporters during this period. The football stadium was one of the few spaces where the dictatorship permitted

the crowd, a social phenomenon in Argentina tied as much to politics as it is to football (Robben 2005), to form. For this reason, greater attention to the specific relationship between the civic-military dictatorship and the football crowd beside the 1978 World Cup deserves more attention. The juxtaposition made by *hinchas* of San Lorenzo today between the loss of the Viejo Gasómetro in 1979 and the celebratory and carnivalesque crowds that followed San Lorenzo as they competed for the first time in the B Division in 1982 informs a nuanced and ambiguous perspective on how the dictatorship viewed football crowds more generally.

The 1978 World Cup is widely argued to have given the civic-military dictatorship an opportunity to transform a nationalistic sentiment into support for the National Reorganization Process. Alabarces argues that, “the dictatorship was paradoxically Gramscian,” identifying that the coercive element of state-terror was complemented by an effort to achieve consent through the manipulation of intellectuals, artists, grassroots organizers, and journalists (2007:112). The World Cup provided an opportunity to tap into populist nationalism. The dictatorship had inherited the World Cup, which was awarded to Argentina in 1966; preparations had started in 1974 under President Perón. Immediately upon assuming power, the civic-military dictatorship redoubled financial contributions to the planning organization, citing the World Cup as an opportunity to transmit the image of a modern and organized Argentina back onto the nation and around the world (Alabarces 2007).

The largest clandestine torture centre located inside the ESMA was several hundred metres from the Monumental Stadium of River Plate, where Argentina played its

opening phase matches as well as the final. Authors and other Argentinian artists have since attempted to understand the juxtaposition of the joyful celebrations of the World Cup victory in a stadium to the horrific violence happening in the clandestine torture centre (Archetti 2004). National media covering the World Cup avoided discussing the human rights violations, instead projecting a stable and modernized Argentina to the skeptical and critical international gaze. Efforts made by international organizations, such as Amnesty International, to use the World Cup to draw attention to the violence were ultimately constrained by suppressive actions in Argentina and a global sports media more interested in football than politics.

Chapter two discusses how football was historically incorporated into the national imaginary. The performance of the national football team is very important to how Argentinians see their national community and its relative success and failures at international competitions has been used repeatedly as a comparative-lens that reflects the nation back onto the people. In this contested context, football becomes part of the political process of making the nation. People are not necessarily, however, accepting of the complete nationalist project because of their passion for football. When Argentina won, massive crowds celebrated across the country including around the Obelisco on the Avenida 9 de Julio in central Buenos Aires. Alabarces notes from interviews with Argentinians that it is common for them to distinguish their happiness at Argentina's victory from the violence by saying "we didn't know what was going on" and that "they used us" (Alabarces 2007:123). A censored-auto-censuring double movement was produced. Others have argued that the people did not celebrate the dictatorship, but were

celebrating the World Cup victory.<sup>12</sup> Were the celebrations a symbolic recovery of public space or emblematic of public's abandonment of politics? Alabarces (2007) suggests the latter. Had football become depoliticizing or are people incapable of articulating a counter-politics through football? The answer to these questions is much more ambiguous. The 1978 World Cup celebrations did contrast to the absence of a similarly sized protest and reflects an unwillingness by large segments of Argentina's population to openly recognize and confront the human rights violations occurring at the time. As such it is possible to see football, particularly in its nationalist form, as submerged within hegemonic processes attempting to generate consent of the Argentinian public for the National Reorganization Process. Simultaneously a symptom and part of the problem, the national team failed to be a site capable of articulating an alternative to the civic-military dictatorship. Archetti writes, "the players were part of the public that preferred to adhere to the logic of innocence. In retrospect, it is possible to see that the military government provoked a situation of extreme social alienation in Argentina" (Archetti 2004).

Professional football is often left out of discussions about the dictatorship. In part, the clear links between nationalism, the patriarchal image of the state protecting the nation, and the World Cup victory make international football a more obvious site of

<sup>12</sup> Argentina's national team was managed by the iconic Carlos Menotti, who's membership in the Communist Party was well-known, is later quoted in the French press as disputing the political role football was expected to play: "If we wanted to talk about politics, first lets see who makes coups happen, who they represent: it wasn't just four crazy military guys taking up arms. A coup needs accomplices, those who first turned to right-wing neoliberalism. They got in there first with the militaries, and then infiltrated democracy... I don't need the World Cup to remember the dictatorship. I remember it because my friends were tortured for thinking differently; they incarcerated and fought against the left in a criminal way." Later in the interview, he adds "it was an excuse for the people to be happy" (Aro Geraldés 2003). In the lead up to the World Cup, the *Montoneros* also expressed on Radio Liberación their support for Argentina's national team and their hope that the World Cup could be used to draw attention to what was happening in Argentina.

analysis. The clubs' role in forming social and political relationships at different scales throughout Argentina's history suggests that they also need to be thought about in the context of the dictatorship. By operating through different socio-political scales of space, clubs and their crowds have at times developed an alternative political position that comes into conflict with the nation-state project; at other times, the clubs have been integral to processes of consolidating the nation-state. During the dictatorship, the clubs developed an ambiguous relationship to the government simultaneously contributing to hegemonic process to consolidate power, while also being a site of potential social disruption. Thus it is possible to see the dictatorship's variable relationship with club football, favouring particular clubs and segments of the football-supporting public while distrusting and targeting others. In this context, *hinchas* of San Lorenzo today argue that the club found itself out of favour with the dictatorship, who in turn intentionally made an example of the San Lorenzo.

In Chapter 2, I outlined how the San Lorenzo was forced into selling its club facilities and stadium by the municipal government of the City of Buenos Aires, under the military authority of Brigadier General Cacciatore. It is rumoured among *cuervos* that government officials personally benefitted from the resale of the property to Carrefour in 1983, though the direct links between members of the civic-military dictatorship and Banco Mariva remain unproven. The forced sale of San Lorenzo's property, however, suggests that the civic-military dictatorship formed a complicated political relationship with professional football and in particular with the institutions of the sport and social clubs that form the basis of Argentinian professional football. This argument does not

contradict the ideological uses of the 1978 World Cup by the civic-military dictatorship but does provide an opening to understand the ambiguity of mass events. Recognizing the contradictions in the relationship between the dictatorship and sport moves beyond the reduction of mass crowds to a politics of distraction (or display of resistance).

The lack of documentation of acts of protests in the media during the dictatorship, as well as the lack of significant research on football clubs during the dictatorship by academics and human rights organizations, means that it is difficult to trace how *hinchas* interacted with politics during the period leading up to and during the dictatorship. Silvio Aragón (2007), in his ethnography of San Lorenzo's *barra*, briefly mentions the experience of *hinchas* during the dictatorship. Milanesa, the nickname of the leader of San Lorenzo's *barra* during the dictatorship, was well-known to have links to the Peronist party and the *Montoneros* (Aragón 2007:105f6).<sup>13</sup> As a result, Aragón points out San Lorenzo's *barra* experienced repression and was more regularly targeted by the *Policia Federal* before and after matches leading to violent confrontations. Several *cuervos* told me that San Lorenzo's *hinchas* made the first public demonstration in a football stadium against the civic-military dictatorship in 1976 when they sang a Peronist song from the terraces during a match, as well as produced a banner in support of the *Montoneros*. Other such claims are made by *hinchas* of other clubs, often citing the recognized Peronist affiliations of Nueva Chicago and Racing Club.

<sup>13</sup> My shift from *barra brava* to simply *barra* is intentional. *Barra bravas* is a more contemporary term, whereas the *barra* or *barra de goma* was a more common term for the semi-organized groups of *hinchas* present before the 1990s. Many scholars in Argentina have noted the shift in culture, most noticeably the relationship between violence and economic practices, that emerged following the dictatorship in the mid-1980s (Aragón 2007).

The *barrio* of Matadores in the western corner of the City of Buenos Aires was once dominated by the slaughterhouses of Argentina's cattle industry. It is also synonymously the home of Nueva Chicago, a club historically identified with Peronist affiliations. During a match against Defensores de Belgrano on October 24, 1981, in one of the only documented cases of direct political resistance within a football stadium to the civic-military dictatorship, *hinchas* of Nueva Chicago sang the Peronist March in celebration of their team's victory.<sup>14</sup> Forty-nine members of the *hinchada* of Nueva Chicago were detained by the police and forced to jog with their hands on their heads, like military prisoners, to the nearest police station. Witnesses recount how people from the neighbourhood threw stones at the police on horseback who in turn beat the prisoners to keep them jogging. Nine members of the group were detained for over a month under the charge of promoting disorder in a sporting event. It was a well-known story amongst *hinchas* of Nueva Chicago that re-emerged nearly twenty years later when the commanding officer of the operation, Juan de Dios Velaztiqui who gained the nickname *El Trotador* (The Jogger) for the march he had ordered, killed three youths in Floresta on December 29, 2001.<sup>15</sup> *Pagina 12* published the article "The murderer was the famous

14 The newspaper *Clarín* covered the event the next day October 25 1981 with the front page headline, "Incidents and detentions in a Football Stadium: the police arrested 49 people in Nueva Chicago for singing the Peronist March", and a short article inside.

15 Velaztiqui, retired from the Federal Police force, was working as a security guard at a service station when he overheard four young men talking favourably about the lynching of police officers during the recent December 19-20, 2001 *cacerolazo* protests. Reportedly Velaztiqui only yelled, "enough!" and pulled out his gun, shot and killed the first man at point-blank range before killing two others; the fourth man escaped (Abiad 2001). Football reinserts itself into the story, as the three victims were all youths of the *barrio* and *hinchas* of the neighbourhood club All Boys. Cristian Gómez, Maximiliano Tasca, and Adrián Matassa are memorialized both by three statues in a plaza in Floresta and by murals painted in the black and white of All Boys. Tasca's mother told *La Nación*, "The work symbolizes all the dead youths of Argentina... art goes hand-in-hand with memory" (Caminos 2013).

'Jogger'" on 11 January, 2002 in which the author, Carlos Rodríguez, connected Velaztiqui's violent murder of the three youths to his conduct as the commanding officer in 1981 (Rodríguez 2002). A judge had absolved Velaztiqui of any criminal misconduct in his treatment of *hinchas* in 1985. Rodríguez (2002) wrote: "the judge justified his decision by stating that 'the particular climate of euphoria' that stadiums generate 'is translated, in the majority of cases, into disorder and aggression.'" Gabriel Dodero produced the documentary *Al Trote* in 2013 to retell the story. Both Mataderos and Nueva Chicago are represented in the documentary as having a historical identity of popular resistance.

The relative lack of stories in the popular memory of *hinchas* across Argentina suggests such direct in-stadium protests of a similar scale were rare. As the comments of the judge suggest, however, the political content of other incidents marked by a confrontation between the police and *hinchas* may have gone unrecognized. Rather, the violent actions of the police fit within a framework put forward in the national media and elitist-constructions of the crowd: its collective excitement easily devolves into anti-social chaos that requires the physical intervention to be controlled and brought back to order. Contributing to the police's reaction in Nueva Chicago to the Peronist March was not only repressive political violence but what is considered, in the context, as more mundane and common violence between the police, as agents of social stability in the eyes of the law, and the *barra*, the core of instability at the heart of an unpredictable, emotionally excitable crowd. Collective emotional exuberance in the form of a crowd,

while a powerful symbol when deployed as a symbol for the allegiance to the nation, was simultaneously mistrusted by institutions of authority such as the police.

The civic-military government's distrust of crowds led them to develop informants within the stadiums. The effort to recruit informants reflected a more general mistrust of large crowds, which were associated in their political form with Peronist organizing tactics (Robben 2005). Juan José Sebreli, an Argentinian philosopher and skeptic of crowd cultures, claimed that the *hinchada* of San Lorenzo was the only organized group in Argentinian football to reject efforts by undercover police to infiltrate its leadership and prevent the state-security from gathering information about *Montoneros*, union activists, and left wing activists on its terraces (2005:68). Others have noted that many *hinchadas* negotiated a truce with the leadership of the dictatorship, promising a cessation of violence during the 1978 World Cup (Duke and Crolley 2001). For Sebreli, this illustrates how populist organizations can be easily dominated by authoritarian politics and more directly how the *barras* in Argentina were tied to political-corruption during the dictatorship.

Sebreli's claims about the *hinchada* of San Lorenzo, however, may not represent the complete truth or experiences of *cuervos*. One day while having lunch in the Bar San Lorenzo, the conversation turned, as it often does, to contemporary politics, insecurity, and crime. One of the men provided their solution to crime in Argentina: “they should just kill all the *negros de mierda*.”<sup>16</sup> Sitting outside of the conversation at another table, I

16 “*Negros*” in Argentina does not necessarily refer to skin colour, though it always has racialized connotations, as in this context it is synonymous with criminals regardless of the identified criminal's skin colour. The word “*negro*” is also used as a nickname, often between friends, for people with darker hair and eye colour who may not have the phenotypical skin colour. Both as a nickname and when used to identify

mentioned how I was surprised how many Argentinians supported state-sanctioned violence to address crime and insecurity given the country's history. My company leaned in and whispered that I shouldn't be so surprised; after all, they suggested, someone at the other table collaborated with Argentina's dictatorship and "sold out" fellow *cuervos*. I quietly asked what they meant and who they were talking about. It was a dangerous rumour. They whispered back, "It doesn't really matter, that is in the past, but not everyone is the same." Several *hinchas* and *socios* of San Lorenzo are known to have been among the disappeared. Daniel Marcelo Schapira, who had been a tennis player and instructor and trained at San Lorenzo, was a student of law and member of the Peronist University Youth when he was detained and disappeared on April 7, 1977 by a Work Group of the dictatorship while travelling on a bus near the San Juan and Boedo intersection.<sup>17</sup> Others were tortured and later released. Victor Bastera, who was detained and tortured at ESMA in 1976, is an *hinchas* of San Lorenzo who has spoken at events organized by the SCH about his experiences, connecting memory to activism for the *Vuelta a Boedo*.<sup>18</sup>

"criminals", the word "*negro*" has a class-based meaning: it is most often applied to people coming from working-class neighbourhoods and suburbs of Buenos Aires. Black football players, often from other Latin American countries, are also called "*Negro*" by *hinchas*, both positively and negatively, suggesting the ambiguity and contextual meaning of the word.

17 Schapira, persecuted for his participation in the Peronist Youth and association with Peronist professors in Cordoba, had been pursued and shot three times by members of the state security in 1976. He went underground, staying in Argentina, until his detention. He was transferred to ESMA where he was tortured with electrical shocks and beaten, before being disappeared. The anniversary of Schapira's disappearance is commemorated in Argentina as the National Day of the Tennis Teacher (Pinco 2014).

18 Bastera had been a graphic worker and member of the Peronist Base. He was tortured over a period of 20 hours, suffering two cardiac-arrests, before the military began to use him to produce photographs for falsified documents for members of the military as well as the disappeared. Released under surveillance while continuing to be brought to ESMA for this work, Bastera took photographs of members of the military and of captives, hiding the pictures in his home until after the collapse of the dictatorship, providing an important visual record of the abuses and the complicit members of the security forces.

Actions of the police and military during the dictatorship continue to influence how crowds in Argentinian stadiums interact with the police. The term “*milico*” – a short form for military – is used to subvert the authority and use of violence by the police, recalling illegitimate use of violence by state security. *Hinchas* apply the label to challenge the legitimacy of the police. Rival *hinchas* at times are called *botónes* (buttons) after the brass buttons on old police jackets and *vigilantes* (a snitch). Associations with the police are used to insult rivals, a reflection of a historic conflict with the police that is not only explained by the dictatorship.

Violence committed by the dictatorship is not interpreted in the same way by everyone in San Lorenzo. One *cuervo* who has lived and worked in Boedo for his whole life described how he had witnessed the aftermath of a *guerrilla*-planted explosion at a local bank; a community police officer was killed in the explosion. For this *cuervo*, the civic-military dictatorship took extreme measures, which he did not completely support, but that he could rationalize. He contrasted the dictatorship to his contemporary experience of insecurity and fear of “delinquents” that cause petty street crime. For him, he described how streets felt safer during the dictatorship.

Such view points while common are today held in the minority in the *barrio*. Others described how repression and the militarization of society filtered into daily life, affecting the social climate. Military vehicles patrolled the streets and soldiers set up road blocks. Those who were aware of the disappearances struggled to construct an adequate response to the public silence on the violations of human rights. *Maldito Irlandés* (meaning bad little Irish), the symbolic leader of the group of friends with whom I

attended matches, was a teenager during Argentina's dictatorship. Contrary to his ironic nickname, Maldito is a calm and fairly quiet man. He grew up in urban Buenos Aires and was old enough to be drafted for military service in 1981. His mandatory service began in the lead up to the Malvinas/Falklands War but he was stationed away from the conflict. Maldito's youth was heavily marked by the dictatorship, though he was never politically involved:

The dictatorship took away my teenage years; as a teenager for them I was a danger. A suspect. At least every-other time I went out, someone would ask me for my documents, put me up against the wall and pat-down my legs, talk down to me. Maybe a forty year-old idiot could come along and say "we're living better"... from my perspective as a fifteen year-old or at the end a twenty year-old, they took away my youth.

More than any other reason, Maldito argued that an "unconscious fear" spread through the Argentinian public and had an effect on people's desire to be in public,

Some people didn't really notice it, but there was a lot fear on the streets. Fear is a weapon of social domination. More than a conscious fear, the real issue with the *milicos* was the people's unconscious fear... each time the fear limited you just a little bit more, taking away your desire to go to the stadium for example. Because you have to want to go to the stadium every Sunday, or to the carnival, or to a concert.

Maldito told me how he felt the dictatorship had a prejudice against events where people gathered in crowds. For Maldito going out into a crowd was an intentional act, which required motivation. I have argued previously that the stadium requires a willingness to be exposed to a particular form of suffering that is in turn valued by *hinchas*. The "unconscious fear" in the surrounding social milieu, particularly attuned towards youth and politically active segments of the population, negatively influenced people's desire to participate in crowds:

In the streets during the dictatorship, the general fear that served the government was a fear based on real actions but also a fear that worked on people's imaginations. Based on things that people couldn't perceive. I always say, there is nothing worse, real things can be very bad, but there is nothing worse than [the fear of] what is about to happen, of what could happen. On the streets it got to the point where there was always a fear of what could happen. Few people experienced a sequestering but we all knew it was happening, consciously or subconsciously, and this worked on the mind.

He described to me how this general fear affected him psychologically and how in retrospect he feels he stopped going to the stadium for a period after the dictatorship because of a social anxiety of being in the public created during the dictatorship.

Maldito received his conscription papers a week after San Lorenzo was relegated to the "B" (the second division). San Lorenzo was at its lowest point as a club through its own mismanagement. Maldito tells me that, "The worst of the military hoped that since we were in a moment of great hardship that we'd drop our arms [give up]." He contrasted San Lorenzo with River Plate, which he described as the club favoured by the dictatorship because it represented "order and respectability." Maldito had gained access to the inside of River's Monumental Stadium, which had been expanded for the 1978 World Cup, as a member of the military band. He described how the clean halls and dressing rooms left an impression on him of a well-ordered club. San Lorenzo, on the other hand he felt, had been the most targeted club, a sentiment generally shared by San Lorenzo's *hinchas*.<sup>19</sup> He wondered why: "it is not like the club was filled with Che Guevaras or that its people were really resisting like they should have been resisting." It could have been as simple as San Lorenzo was without obvious political representation

<sup>19</sup> A popular song for San Lorenzo to use against River contains the lyrics, "We are very different, you are *platea* and we are *popular*. You can see it in the people, they don't think in the same way, this *hinchada* built its stadium and will never forget, that yours was built by the military government."

and at the time institutionally weak, which made the club an easy target for a government looking to make an example out of San Lorenzo for the other clubs.

## **6.6 1982 and San Lorenzo's "Revolution"**

Cracks in the dictatorship's hegemonic fear began to appear as the demand for a democratic transition grew. The Malvinas/Falklands conflict was intended to raise nationalistic sentiment. Living in the barracks, Maldito told me how 1982 was a period of great deception for him:

To see how the people, from the perspective of a soldier, supported the war, the famous 'we are winning' 'we continue to win' all these things; in the barracks seeing this pissed me off because we knew it was all a farce. It's not that I knew exactly how the battles were going but it seemed like an act of ignorance to support a war. I developed deep anti-social feelings, a social-phobia, and I came out of military service with a lot of anger. It was right in the middle of San Lorenzo's championship in the B. But I was angry at society and I couldn't even think about participating in a socially massive event like a football match or a concert.

This personal experience for Maldito reflects a general sentiment in Argentina. Looking back, he believed a similar sentiment motivated a populist reaction to San Lorenzo's relegation: "When we were supposed to be defeated, our arms dropped, San Lorenzo rose up.... San Lorenzo's people pulled the team up."

The significance of San Lorenzo's support has become deeply embedded in the memory and historical narrative of *cuervos*. Stories recount the massive crowds that followed the team. Having no home stadium, journalist Pablo Calvo writes, "San Lorenzo had become a gypsy team that went from stadium to stadium followed by a multitude that broke Argentinian football records for gate-receipts. In a Saturday match against Atlanta,

[San Lorenzo], almost on its own, brought more people than the *superclásico* between Boca and River played the next day” (2013: “Asi se fue...”). Calvo, like Maldito, noted the concurrent moment of Argentinian history: “the other preoccupation at the time was the Malvinas War between Argentina and England that took place between 2 April and 14 June in 1982” (2013: “Asi se fue...”). What was expected to be a financial disaster for San Lorenzo, as the first major club relegated to the B, turned into what one newspaper called a “revolution” that needed to be studied by sociologists and psychologists.

Today San Lorenzo’s relegation is seen as a major turning point in the club’s history. I chatted with David, a young activist-member of the *Peña del Oeste*, and José, who supported San Lorenzo as a young man during the sale of the Viejo Gasómetro and the team’s relegation, who together retold the story to me. José described San Lorenzo’s final match in the Primera A:

We played the final game in the Primera against Argentinos [Juniors] in the stadium of [Ferrocarril Oeste]. I remember the game. We filled the stadium; people were outside still trying to get in when the match started. San Lorenzo just had to tie the game but ended up losing 1-0, the feeling was terrible. We played again in the stadium of Ferro against Ferro, we knew that San Lorenzo was already relegated. In the stadium we sang '*Ciclón, Ciclón*, it's only one year, we will follow you, wherever you want to go' till the end of the game. We were all crying, the players from Ferro even came over at the end of the match and applauded us. The Viejo Gasómetro must still have been standing, they hadn't taken it down yet, because I remember we marched down Avenida La Plata all the way to the stadium, some of us broke through the gates and got up on to the wooden terraces from where we used to watch San Lorenzo. They were dangerous; we were still singing, '*Ciclón, Ciclón*, it's only one year, we will follow you, wherever you want to go' and the tears were rolling down our cheeks.

The following year the club rented the stadium of Ferrocarril Oeste for the first three home matches. Against the expectations of the club’s office, *cuervos* appeared in the

multitude, so much so a crowd of thousands remained outside the stadium well into the second half. The demand forced San Lorenzo to rent the larger stadiums of other nearby rivals, Vélez Sarsfield, Huracán, Boca Juniors and River Plate. AFA then required clubs hosting San Lorenzo to find venues large enough to meet the demands of San Lorenzo's visiting *hinchada*. On television San Lorenzo's matches consistently had higher ratings than those in the Primera A. Famously, David told me, in a match against Tigre at River's Monumental, "San Lorenzo did something that River to that point had been unable to do, something that hadn't happened since the finals of the 1978 World Cup when Argentina won; we sold out the Monumental." David continued, "Before '81-'82 San Lorenzo was one thing. Before '81 there was a different history for San Lorenzo, completely different; you were from San Lorenzo because you didn't want to be from Boca or River. Since '81 you were proud to be from San Lorenzo because of the people that the club has." I described to David and José how my friend El Fletero became a *hincha* because he watched the crowds of San Lorenzo from his balcony over the stadium of Ferrocarril. David continued,

You have so many people like that. From '81 onwards people became *hinchas* of San Lorenzo [on their own]. Today people are from San Lorenzo, and are proud to be, because they see how its people are. Before [you were a *hincha*] because your grandfather or your dad made you. Today, you are proud to be a *hincha* of San Lorenzo because of its people; because what San Lorenzo generated in this moment and continues to generate to this day.

The notion that the club was transformed during this period is reiterated to *hinchas* in other ways as well. Adolfo Res (2008:391), in his club history, wrote, "The year of 1982

stands in history as a sincere example of activism for San Lorenzo and above all else it was a holy revolution that is synonymous with popular revolution in national football.”<sup>20</sup>

Relegation is a traumatic experience that challenges the self-identity of a *hinchas*. Pablo Calvo recounted in his history of San Lorenzo, “at the age of 13, I felt in my heart one of the most profound pains that I have ever since experienced... It was the saddest moment in the history of the *Ciclón*” (2013: “*Asi se fue...*”). “Losing the category” is an expression Argentinians use to describe relegation. As a category, the division to which a club belongs provides characteristics that are reflected back onto the *hinchas*. Clubs that belong to the lower divisions are described as small; being an *equipo chico* (little team) is often an insult.<sup>21</sup> More successful clubs when they face relegation are seen to be like smaller clubs and *hinchas* of rival clubs will begin to sing “you are a little team.”<sup>22</sup> The potential transformation of a big (relevant) club into a small (irrelevant) club because of the “loss” of category is a major source of emotional anxiety for *hinchas*. San Lorenzo, in 1982, already renting the stadiums of its opposition was in a dire situation and it was a questioned whether the club would be supported or disappear.

In June 2011, River Plate was relegated for the first time in that club's history after losing the home-and-away promotion match with Belgrano of Cordoba. The second match was played at River's Monumental stadium, River facing a deficit of two goals, the match ended in a 1-1 draw and River's relegation. Incidents during the match, leading to a

20 The word *santa* is translated as “holy” but in the context of San Lorenzo it has a double-meaning as one of the nicknames of the club is “Los Santos de Boedo”, referencing the club's name.

21 There is a simultaneous masculinized double-meaning of 'big' and 'little'. The symbolic referencing of penis-size, however, is not always overt or often the primary message.

22 Being a *hinchas* of a lower division clubs does have a set of recognized and valued characteristics, such as loyalty.

suspension of play for 19 minutes, foreshadowed subsequent riots by a section of the crowd that resulted in a street confrontation with the police, damage to their home stadium and surrounding neighbourhood. Video images were transmitted around the world by major international sports news companies, reflecting the sensational quality of the violence.<sup>23</sup> *Hinchas* of River Plate, which also goes by the nickname *Millionarios* (the Millionaires), had believed their club was too big to be relegated.

The subsequent violence and destruction that followed River's relegation is used by *hinchas* of San Lorenzo to mark a distinction between the two clubs and provides context to José's retelling of San Lorenzo's own relegation match. In our conversation, David contrasted the actions of the *hinchas* of the two clubs:

How about River's *hinchas*? River went to the B but they destroyed their stadium and made a huge mess. Even today, in San Lorenzo you don't see this in the people. San Lorenzo played a relegation match and people didn't swear at the manager, they didn't insult the players. We didn't go to destroy the cars of the players. San Lorenzo didn't burn-down their stadium. San Lorenzo went and sang "I swear in the bad times, I will always be with you", clapped, had a party, cried in the stadium.

In this context, memories and stories of the campaign in the Primera B, which are repeatedly shared amongst *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, much like a fable impart a morality and a code of conduct for how to behave as a *hincha*. The stadium becomes a distinct space of comportment with particular guidelines: to not attack the players, the manager or destroy your own home.<sup>24</sup> Inversely, the stadium also becomes a space in which severe

23 River's Monumental Stadium was used shortly after to host the final of the South American international tournament, the Copa de América. The final promotion match and following violent incidents were covered extensively and reached international attention in Europe (eg Schweilmer 2011; Estepa 2011).

24 The constitution of the stadium, how it becomes a space for particular behaviours and not others, is a topic in a later chapter. In other moments and spaces such as the cafe, the movement to and from the stadium, or even in private conversations in the stadium, *hinchas* are highly critical of managers and players. The distinctions *hinchas* make between when it is appropriate or not to be critical, and how those

emotional hurt can be inflicted onto *hinchas* by their own team. Pain is not only recognized as possible, enduring and transforming it into celebration is valued as a strength.<sup>25</sup>

San Lorenzo's public celebrations should be contrasted to the World Cup in 1978.

Beatriz Sarlo, much in the same vein as Sebrelli, critiques popular expressions of celebration during the dictatorship:

In the party of the World Cup the people suspended their hostility and their principles. They theorized that the right of the people to be happy would be privileged over the critical spirit. The Malvinas War, in the most terrible way because there were hundreds of deaths, also brought the people out into the streets and provoked, over several weeks a state of collective exaltation... There are enough examples that the popular character is impossible to debate. Sport and territory were unified by a common thread of nationalistic sentiment (Sarlo 2002:195).

The public celebration of San Lorenzo was not one of direct opposition nor included an overt political critique of the Argentina's dictatorship. But when reflecting on the existential state of the Argentinian public, described by Maldito above: the sense of political exhaustion and unconscious fear that different sectors experienced; it is hard to not interpret the significance of the reconstitution of the carnivalesque crowd.

Reaffirming the presence and capacity of the crowd to celebrate itself, San Lorenzo's outpouring of support advocated an alternative emotional state, which could arguably be said to have been denied to many during the dictatorship. Other such collective experiences were similarly undermined by a politics of control, suppression and fear.

critiques can be expressed helps to produce peculiarities in the different spaces that *hinchas* produce.

<sup>25</sup> This argument connects to the one made throughout the ethnographic description of the match against Newell's Old Boys in Chapter Four. There is a continuity to arguments made about *aguante* being valued trait of masculinity in Argentinian football.

What makes San Lorenzo relegation particularly interesting is that such a moment is supposed to be experienced as shameful, yet in contrast to the hostility, emotional exhaustion, fear, absences and silences, *hinchas* embraced the moment as an opportunity to reaffirm their loyalty to San Lorenzo.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

Argentina's most recent civic-military dictatorship came to a political end in 1983 but its social and cultural effects continued. A politics of memory has been significant to the articulation and demand for justice made by human rights groups. Disappeared victims of the dictatorship are reconstituted by the recognition of their identities, re-establishing a presence on the landscape and within the social relationships of Argentina. Memories of sequestering and torture were used in *Nunca Más* to expose the violence within the dictatorship. By recognizing the psychological and bodily damage committed in clandestine torture sites, parts of Argentina's society began a long process of attempting to address what Maldito described as the "unconscious fear" on Argentina's streets. The dictatorship had an ambiguous relationship with football. On the one hand, the 1978 World Cup victory was used by the civic-military dictatorship to demonstrate the progress of order and modernization. On the other hand, traditional Argentinian crowds both political and cultural, while alluring, were seen as dangerous and exuberant. Attempts to manipulate and control crowds extended onto the stadium's terraces. Informants and agreements with some *barras* were used to spy on citizens. Crowds in stadiums periodically would challenge the hegemony of the dictatorship by recalling

Peronist songs but rarely did they become overtly political. Nevertheless, San Lorenzo *hinchas* believe their club to have been targeted by the dictatorship and used as an example for other clubs. The weakened institution of San Lorenzo, unable to protect its place in Boedo, nevertheless was revived and transformed by the end of the dictatorship. The popular response to the club's relegation generated a new historical reference for *hinchas* of the club through which a different ideological morality was constructed to provide meaning to being a *cuervo*.

The *Vuelta a Boedo*, reframed as an issue of human rights in Argentina, developed its own narratives about the injustice experienced by the club, which contributes today to a motivation for *hinchas* of San Lorenzo to advocate for a return to Boedo. While many *hinchas* are aware that the club had been in financial problems at the end of the 1970s, many believe the pressure from the City of Buenos Aires to close and then sell the club's property in a nefarious business deal indicates foul play by the government. The forced transfer of the east corner of the Viejo Gasómetro property to the City of Buenos Aires, claimed at the time to be for the construction of an elementary school, but remained disused until 2007 when San Lorenzo recuperated the property, is further cited as demonstration of Brigadier General Osvaldo Cacciatore's influence over the loss of the Viejo Gasómetro.

In comparing themselves to other clubs, such as River Plate and Vélez Sarsfield, both of which had received public money to expand or build new stadiums, many *hinchas* of San Lorenzo feel that their club had been discriminately targeted. Framed as one of the victims of the dictatorship, the *Vuelta a Boedo* takes on a new meaning, one

which is about re-establishing social linkages which had been violently disrupted by the civic-military dictatorship's actions. The damage done to the "identity" of San Lorenzo is marked by a lingering sense of displacement, used by rival clubs as an insult and felt by *cuervos* when going to their new stadium.<sup>26</sup>

The period of the dictatorship, however also coincided with the club's relegation to the second-division Primera B. The resulting historical moment, coupled with the social context of the dictatorship, produced an unprecedented wave of popular support throughout stadiums in Argentina for San Lorenzo. A new generation of *cuervos* was inspired to see their club differently. *Cuervos* now take pride in "the people" of San Lorenzo, their creativity, fidelity, and displays of passion. The narrative construction of the 1982 "B" Championship plays out in the shared memories of *hinchas* who retell of the crowds that overfilled Argentina's stadiums in a moment of celebration amidst a period of political exhaustion and fear. To this day, *hinchas* of San Lorenzo seek to emulate the performances by maintaining passionate support during the club's most difficult moments.

26 Most rival *hinchadas* will at least once in a match sing the ubiquitous "*¿de que barrio sos? ¿Che San Lorenzo de que barrio sos?*" (What *barrio* are you from? Che San Lorenzo, what *barrio* are you from?). Major rivals have at least one song against San Lorenzo that references the Carrefour on Avenida La Plata, for example River Plate sings, "*Cuervos*, such an idiot, I want to your stadium, and I found a supermarket, with a red and blue flag, and a shopping cart that said Carrefour. Bread, wine and milanesas, and a fish I robbed. River has a stadium, San Lorenzo a supermarket."

## **Chapter 7    Memories of the Viejo Gasómetro and the *Vuelta a Boedo***

Stories of past experiences of the Viejo Gasómetro contribute to how *hinchas* of San Lorenzo construct their social relationships to the club. Initially I had labelled such stories as nostalgic (Chapter Five). While a narrative of the decaying Argentinian social club is prevalent, what I struggled to understand and found increasingly central is why Pocho, a young man in his mid-twenties, so adamantly reflected and advocated for the *Vuelta a Boedo*. He had never known the Viejo Gasómetro or personally experienced the social life of the club when it was located on Avenida La Plata. His direct experience of San Lorenzo has been of the team playing in their newer stadium, the Nuevo Gasómetro, built only 3km away in the athletics campus of the club. I began to interpret the stories as influential memories as how *hinchas* San Lorenzo produce their sense of self in relation to their club, which in turn has provided ideological content to the *Vuelta a Boedo*.

When I returned to Buenos Aires in August 2013, I visited the *Casa de la Cultura* of the *Subcomisión del Hinchas* with Poli, a proficient tango dancer in his early 60s and a regular at the Bar San Lorenzo, to see if Adolfo Res and others were around and to hear about the progress of the campaign. Adolfo had just arrived to open the *Casa* for the evening's workshop. The first to arrive, Adolfo turned on the computer, an older machine with a large box monitor that sits on a desk at the end of the entrance hallway of the renovated house originally built in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A man in his seventies had arrived to sign-up for the trust to support the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign. Adolfo struggled with the computer before picking up a phone to call Monica, one the younger

volunteers, for help. The leadership of the SCH is composed of men in their 40s to 60s but amongst the dozens of SCH volunteers many are below the age of 40. Women within the SCH began their own department in which thirty to forty women were members. One side of the main hallway in the *Casa* is covered with pictures of San Lorenzo's championship teams, reinforcing football's historic masculinity, a large portrait of Father Lorenzo Masa, and pictures of crowds in the stadiums and on the streets. A large black and white photo of a hundred young boys dressed in immaculate white training uniforms draws the visitor's attention. Behind the rows of San Lorenzo's youth squads, a massive mural of the Battle of San Lorenzo, part of Argentina's war for independence, covered the wall of the old gymnasium. San Martín, the famous Argentinian patriot, on horseback leads the charge against the collapsing Royalist lines. It was the mural that captured the man's attention. He remarked that he used to play basketball in the gymnasium and asked if anyone knew what happened to the mural. Adolfo responded that it might have been saved before the Gasómetro was demolished but no one really knows. Poli lamented at how fantastic it would be to recover this lost artifact of San Lorenzo's history and place it in a rebuilt Gasómetro on Avenida de La Plata. As Trouillot (1995) reminds us, history and the past is not a simple dichotomy between remembering and forgetting or the presences and absences. How we forget is part of the particular way we recognize the past. Simultaneously the absence of the mural helps to give rise to an imagined future with a new stadium on Avenida La Plata.

For older generations the *Vuelta a Boedo* suggests their physical reconnection with a place that only exists now in their memory and past experiences. It no longer

possible to physically inhabit the spaces of the Viejo Gasómetro and the surrounding athletics facilities following their demolition in the 1980s. Sharing past experiences of and in the Gasómetro is a way for older generations to reconnect with place. Emotional experiences and nostalgic sentiments infuse the conversation. In the process of sharing their memories, while maintaining particular and personal variations, older generations contribute to the structuring narrative of the *Vuelta a Boedo*.

Enrique Escande (2004) titled his history of San Lorenzo and the stadium: *Memorias del Viejo Gasómetro*. He begins the book by setting the scene at the Bar San Lorenzo, five cups of coffee on the table and “four veterans and one twenty-year year old man.” One of the older men says, “I still cannot believe that the Gasómetro is no longer there. Many times I avoid this part of Avenida La Plata to not make myself more bitter.” Another laments to the younger man, “You would've had to be born earlier, spent sometime there, to understand what it was like. Those that never were in the Gasómetro will never be able to understand but do you know how many have had that privilege? Millions, millions” (2004:9). Escande concludes the introduction with the quote from Diego Lucero, a well known Argentinian sport journalist of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “The worst is to forget”. Escande, while quiet-spoken in person, was a pivotal figure in the campaign. His book was published in 2004 right at the beginning of the rise of the *Vuelta a Boedo* and is credited by Adolfo Res as presenting a popular foundation for the campaign. The conversation in his introduction suggests one of the conundrums in the political use of memory: how do individualized experiences, contrary to the lament, become part of shared political project?

Divided into short articles on various moments in the club's history, Escande transforms the Viejo Gasómetro into the main protagonist linking his book's narrative together. He describes the carnivals and the dances, how the Viejo Gasómetro hosted major national and international artists. He documents the growth of the club through the construction of the gymnasium, tennis courts, and swimming pool, the first stadium lighting in Argentina in 1952, and the largest matches of more than 70 000. These descriptions reflect, influence, and become mobilized through the shared stories of *hinchas*. This chapter explores how the process of sharing personal experiences has transformed intergenerational connections between *hinchas*. The *Vuelta a Boedo*, in turn, takes on particular characteristics, such as the significance of the *club de barrio* in the imagination of younger *hinchas*. To develop this argument, this chapter explores the connections between memory, narrative, and identity.

### **7.1 Narrative, Memory, and Identity**

Nostalgia for a place-past lost to time is a repetitive theme within the urban narrative of Buenos Aires. Transformations of the *barrio* have been noted through cultural forms like tango and in literature commonly as a lament for an imagined and romanticized past that no longer exists (Chapter Three). The expression of longing suggests an unreconcilable separation. Arthur Megill (1998) argues nostalgia is a reflection onto the past. Memories, in contrast Megill argues, are part of a narrative construction of the past oriented towards self-identity in the present. Such a distinction is useful for thinking about the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Memories, in the form of personal stories told about the Viejo Gasómetro and of

when San Lorenzo had a dominant physical presence in Boedo contribute meaning to the *Vuelta a Boedo* for *cuervos*. Told by an older generation of *hinchas*, such stories could have been received as mirages of a past social world no longer useful to how *hinchas* want to define themselves in relation to San Lorenzo today. Initially I questioned the vision of the historic club presented through memories and perceived them to have a similar nostalgic quality (Chapter Four). What became evident, particularly through the participation of younger activists however, was that memories were mobilized to inform the *Vuelta a Boedo* and how *hinchas* defined themselves through their participation in the campaign.

One way to approach how *hinchas* identify with and through San Lorenzo is by narrative. Pablo Vila (2014), through his discussion of *rock nacional* in the post-dictatorship and contemporary *cumbia villera*, argues that narratives are relevant to how people come to identify with and through music. Both forms of music emerge in relation to, and can be seen as expressions of, their socio-political context in Argentina. Structuralist approaches to music communities, sometimes labelled sub-culture studies, produce what Vila describes as a “homological proposal.” Such perspectives present a music community as a reflection of a previously constituted identity, most often class. On the other hand, constructivist approaches tend to overprescribe a musical form's ability to generate its own community (Vila 2014:49). Vila turns to narrative to describe the co-constituting relationship between the listener and performer of music:

If I have to rapidly summarize how I currently understand the relationship between music and identity, I would say that I think the sketch of a narrative plot (situationally negotiated in a particular *symbolic exchange*) is what determines

the role that the various elements of a musical performance will play in the articulation of the identities in question... At the two poles of the encounter, we find actions that are interchanged in the framework of a discursive... and non-discursive (affective) encounter (Vila 2014:51).<sup>1</sup>

Narrative, as fluid and discursive, creates a coherency through the encounter between listeners and producers that together make the experience of music. Vila broadly defines discourse as composed as “practices,” though it may be better understood as the relational product of semiotic encounters, both linguistic and non-linguistic. In the making of music, an artist articulates elements of their own narrative-past. The narrative interpolates aspects of the listener through their encounter with the music (Vila 2014). The relationship is also inverted, as listeners articulate a part of their own narrative through their interactions with the musical form by making a claim onto the music. Thus while participants within a musical community have distinct experiences that are not wholly defined by their identification in the community, they also are drawn into participation in the production of narratives that define the community. The articulation and interpolation of narrative describes, for Vila, how people come to identify with and through a musical community. Vila uses narrative to expand the possibilities of understanding music's processes of identification beyond relationships of power that often focus on 'hegemonic discourses' as producing the homological communities. Vila's intent is to understand what makes a music community coherent without damaging or destroying its constitutive diversity.

<sup>1</sup> Vila (2014) describes discourse expansively including non-verbal forms of expression, including the symbolic actions of bodies.

Processes of how *hinchas* identify with a club can be similarly described. *Hinchas* are simultaneous producers and receivers of the narratives which they use to construct an idea of belonging to the community of a club. *Hinchas* interact with narratives that they use through their performativity to articulate their past experiences, as well as are interpolated by others as to what it means to be an *hincha*. Such narratives are both general to being a *hincha* in Argentina, and particular to *hinchas* of a specific club. By identifying as a *hincha* of a particular club, they expose their experiences to the framing of influential narratives produced around that particular team. Identification within a community of *hinchas* changes the position of person, shaping how they participate in and with the production of narratives. For *hinchas* matches are one site of significant encounter (Chapter Four) but their day-to-day interactions are also relevant to how *hinchas* engage in processes of identification.

Imbued with content and meaning from a person's past encounters, narrative is historically contingent. Narratives are not entirely defined by historic conditions but nevertheless are dependent upon them, which is similar to how Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes the process of historicity (Chapter Five). As an on-going process, narrative develops through a dialectical movement of articulation-interpolation. New experiences and ideas encounter an already existing narrative becoming part of the plot, or not (to be forgotten) (Ricoeur 2004). As a result, the “past” matters, but not in a rigid or defined manner, as the understandings of the past can be redescribed by (re)incorporating events and people forgotten, as well as forgetting parts of a previously recognized past. The shifting position of the past occurs in relation to current positions and experiences.

Ideologies are integral components of narratives. Paul Ricoeur (2004) argues that within the question of memory and identity the mediating factor of ideology. Through the *Vuelta a Boedo* it is relevant to reflect on memory has been incorporated into the ideological content that *hinchas* use to articulate their historic relationship with Boedo. Identity, claims and responses to questions of “Who am I” in terms of “What we are,” has a fragility, Ricoeur describes, because of its temporal content. Memory emerges through the “quest, the appeal, the demand for identity” (Ricoeur 2004:80-1). We turn to memories aid with our insecurities of our shifting self over time. Yet memories themselves are simultaneously seen as integral as they are insecure, open to manipulation and transformation. Ricoeur argues that ideology is a “disturbing and multiform factor” that intervenes “between the demand for identity and the public expressions of memory” (2004:82). Ideological phenomena are divided into three different levels by Ricoeur: “distortions of reality, the legitimation of systems of power, and the integration of the common world by means of symbolic systems immanent in action” (Ricoeur 2004:82). It is through the mediation of the symbolic systems by efforts to legitimate power that Ricoeur argues memories are exposed to manipulation.

On the deepest level, that of the symbolic mediation of action, it is through the narrative function that memory is incorporated into the formation of identity. Memory can be ideologized through the resources of the variants offered by the work of narrative configuration. And, as the characters of the narrative are emplotted at the same time the story is told, the narrative configuration contributes to modelling the identity of the protagonists of the action as it molds the contours of the action itself... It is, more precisely, the selective function of the narrative that opens to manipulation the opportunity and the means of a clever strategy, consisting from the outset in a strategy of forgetting as much as in a strategy of remembering... However, it is on the level where ideology

operates as a discourse justifying power, domination, that the resources of manipulation provided by narrative are mobilized (Ricoeur 2004:84-5).

Concerns about 'manipulation' reflects an unease and fragility within the processes of identification that Ricoeur describes. The translation through the transference of memories, however, does not necessarily result in the falsification of memory. Young activists, for example, adopt memories from older *hinchas* to circulate their ideological significance for *cuervos*. In the process of constructing a narrative history of San Lorenzo, aspects of the club's past are forgotten. Past events are replotted to provide a coherence to the overall significance of Boedo, the Viejo Gasómetro, and the relationship of San Lorenzo to these places for its *hinchas*, *socios*, and others. An alternate narrative to San Lorenzo's history, where the club has not lost its relationship to the *barrio*, emerges as an imagined reality for younger *hinchas* who did not themselves experience that past. In turn, this narrative calls for activists to articulate a future for San Lorenzo in Boedo. Emergent through the *Vuelta a Boedo* is the idea of "return" which reveals how the "manipulation" of memory is central to how the community reforms itself around the idea of being properly placed in the city: to be in Boedo where San Lorenzo belongs.

There is a normative ambiguity to the social process of manipulation because it is open to contestation. Ricoeur suggests that such a space for contestation emerges at the connection between ideology and systems of authority:

This relation between ideology and the legitimation of process of systems of authority seems to me to constitute the central axis in relation to which are organized, on the one hand, the more radical phenomenon of community integration on the basis of the symbolic – even rhetorical – mediations of action, and on the other hand, the more visible phenomenon, easier to deplore and to denounce (2004:84)

Following on a Gramscian perspective of hegemony, it is important to see legitimation of authority as always being in the process of being made and contested. It is sensible, however, to limit where we see contestation occurring and carefully describe the “symbolic mediations of action.” I have argued that Argentina’s *hinchas* are embedded within various scales of hegemonic processes related to football’s relationship to political-economic questions. Nationalism and football is one site where hegemonic processes are articulated through narrative. Neoliberal political ideas have also been shown to be incorporated into how football executives have attempted to direct clubs, creating sites of interaction and contestation with *hinchas*. On a very fundamental level, hegemonic processes interact with how *hinchas* understand and construct their relationship to their club, at times disrupting and forcing a re-imagining of what the fundamental ideas and actions of a *hincha* are. Yet there are simultaneously relatively autonomous hegemonic processes occurring within football, such as the practices involved in articulating the values of loyalty, passion and *aguante* which infuse meaning into what being a *hincha*. Identification with a club also involves hegemonic processes, power is exerted to generate a cohesive understanding of what it means to be a *hincha* of a particular club. In this way, hegemony and hegemonic practices are inherently ambiguous. Processes of consent-making are only normative for *hinchas*, that is open to contestation, because of the constructed context and narrative understanding of what it means to participate in and with the constitutive ideas.

Here it is relevant to think about the performativity of *hinchas* (Chapter Four). *Hinchas* in the stadium are productive of their collective community, embedded in emotional content about how they understand their embodied relationship to one another. How an ideology such as the right to return to a lost home, in this case to Boedo and Avenida La Plata, is incorporated into and related to this collective experience is of particular importance when trying to understand the power and influence of the *Vuelta a Boedo* to what it means to be an *hincha* of San Lorenzo. Over time *hinchas* have engaged in their own hegemonic processes attempting to establish a mutually understood commitment to the idea to the place of Boedo in the history of San Lorenzo and the importance of returning. While aspects of this project should be seen as diverging from dominant and hegemonic projects, in many ways, the *Vuelta a Boedo* is not counter-hegemonic but rather it emerges as a transformation of the bonds of solidarity from the stadium into new ways in which *hinchas* of San Lorenzo articulate their connection to their club.

The problem emerges, going back to Vila's discussion of narrative, in how to avoid being caught within a "homological proposal" or the universalizing of a social condition under a category of identification. Yet the inverse should be noted: the focus on an individual person's identification can obscure the broadly collective processes that generate ideology. It seems that a fundamental tension remains about how a personalized process of identification relates to shared expressions of collectivity. Particularly in cases where people put their participation in a collectivity before elements of their individuality, the task becomes to disentangle overarching ideological projects from

personalized narratives. A similar dialectic is described in the relationship between a framework of memory and personal memories (Chapter Five).

According to the levels of ideological formation described by Ricoeur there is an interactive relationship between the legitimacy of authority and the shared “symbolic systems” of identification. In the process of contestation, where narratives are both part of how people come to identify with a community as well as part of the articulation of ideas on authority, an ideological shift occurs within the symbolic systems. This point becomes apparent when looking at how activists within the *Subcomisión del Hincha*, with the significant influence of a historical perspective provided by Adolfo Res, began to shift the ideological basis of being an *hincha* of San Lorenzo towards an emphasis on social and cultural aspects of the social-athletic club.

## **7.2 Memories of the Viejo Gasómetro**

Brothers Julian and Rodrigo are just old enough to have attended the last years of matches in the Viejo Gasómetro. They describe the old stadium with a hint of mythical allure, a demonstration of how personal memories emerge as the product of shifting personal experiences intertwined with the context into which they are being told. For contemporary *hinchas*, to be able to remember the Viejo Gasómetro is a mark of pride. Those who never knew the stadium will ask “what was it like?” with an undertone of reverence. Memories of the Viejo Gasómetro, like music in a community, interpolate their audience. The narrative significance of these memories emerges through constituent components: an emotional awareness of being in a stadium crowd, knowledge of the

iconic presence of the Viejo Gasómetro, a familiarity with Boedo, and a commitment to being from San Lorenzo. The framework of memory that structures the remembrances are dialogic to the narrative of San Lorenzo and orients these components.

When I asked the brothers about going to matches in the old stadium they started with their 'poor' recollection of the football (represented by a reference to a player) and the iconic wooden terraces:

Rodrigo: "Yes, but I have a very poor memory."

Julián: "Yes... I remember Lavolpe, you know the former manager of Mexico, he was the goaltender for San Lorenzo when I started going to the stadium."

Rodrigo: "I have a really poor memory of going to the seated section just behind the goal."

Julián: "Of course! And, you know it seemed to me, San Lorenzo was all old wood, and to me, I was still really small and every step I thought I would fall through the gaps in the terraces. They were really separated; each step was fairly tall."

The brother began to talk over each other as their memories clarified:

Rodrigo: "Behind the goal they had a sector beside the *platea* and just above it there was the popular. I have a clear memory of being right behind the goal. I have an image, a very clear image, I was four my first time, you know, and I had only turned six years old in 1979, but I have an image very clear of being there..."

Julián: "I was eight. I tell you going up the wooden terraces and we were so small, I just have this image of falling through them!"

Rodrigo: "... Sitting there in the seat watching the match, the image burned into my memory."

The brothers use a visual metaphor to describe their memories. The accuracy of the image becomes distorted over temporal distance. To recollect in this context becomes about clarifying the image and focusing in on details. The terraces are a common detail, iconic of the Viejo Gasómetro and as they become the focus of memories they have become

powerful motif for *cuervos*. While the poor condition of the wooden terraces was an influential reason why the stadium was condemned, the wooden beams are now considered a relic of the old stadium. *Cuervos* purchase cut pieces of the old terraces to raise funds for the *Vuelta a Boedo*; José Sanfilippo, San Lorenzo's all-time leading goalscorer, famously rebuilt a small section of terraces in a field by his cottage; and a documentary was made about the search for remaining sections.<sup>2</sup>

As the brother's confidence about the image of the stadium grew, and prompted by my questions, they turned to describing the social relationships that brought them to the stadium:

Rodrigo: "It was a seated section. There was a fence and above it the whole *popular*. Below was a sector for women and children. That's where we were."

Matthew: "So you went with your father?"

Rodrigo: "I don't remember who took us, our father?"

Julián: "Our father? He was a *hincha* of Platense. It was our grandfather who was *hincha* of San Lorenzo."

Rodrigo: "On the side of my mother, the family was split between River and San Lorenzo; sympathizers of River and fanatics of San Lorenzo. Our grandfather was a fanatic of San Lorenzo"

Julián: "And we lived where I live now, you know? So only a few blocks from the stadium of San Lorenzo."

Rodrigo: "He, [our grandfather] was such a fanatic of San Lorenzo. To the point that he had problems with his heart and he had to go to the doctors. The doctor wouldn't allow him go to the stadium because they said he would die in the stadium. He died when I was one and Julián was three. Our mother is sympathetic to River and liked Racing. Others in the family, were not really fanatic. My mom and my dad, they were separated; he was a *hincha* of Platense. For her love for her father, our grandfather, [our mom] got us involved at a really young age with everything San Lorenzo. I don't think my mother ever

<sup>2</sup> A 40cm-long piece of the wooden terrace was purchased in an auction organized by the SCH for the equivalent of \$400 by one of the *peñas* and was added to their club-house's collection of memorabilia.

thought she'd have two monsters of San Lorenzo. She thought she'd get something more normal.”

Julián: “We loved football...”

Rodrigo: “There was my grandfather *hinch*a fanatic of San Lorenzo, our uncle who didn't really care [but took us anyways], and the seed of San Lorenzo that our grandfather planted in us.”

Matthew: “And your father took you to the stadium just because?”

Rodrigo: “He was a fanatic of football, *hinch*a of Platense, but he took us to [San Lorenzo's] stadium. The stadium was close to the house. But after a while we'd just go alone. I remember being twelve and telling my mother that I was going to the stadium. She'd let us go but she'd put some rules like we couldn't go to the stadium of Boca, but I'd lie through my teeth and we would go anyways.”

At another time, Julián described to me the role imagination played in the social connections between *hinch*as. He told me how in difficult moments, he would be overcome with the sensation of how those important to him might be feeling, which only intensified his own emotional reaction. Personal experiences of going to the stadium are dialogic with memories of significant others and they can be used to represent ideas about what those relationships mean to the self. For example, Rodrigo and Julián's connection to their grandfather extends out from their connection to San Lorenzo. For their mother, allowing her sons to go to the stadium was an important way in which she could maintain a connection to her father. While it is common for *hinch*as to describe a familiar connection in how they came to their club, it is not always the same story or the same family member. Place, in this case the Viejo Gasómetro, helps to coherently organize these diverse personal histories. While *hinch*as often attributed different people to introducing San Lorenzo into their lives, it was to a specific place: the stadium. And the

stadium, for the brothers the Viejo Gasómetro, becomes imbued with a shared emotional significance.

Elsewhere I met older generations of supporters of San Lorenzo who could describe longer histories in the Viejo Gasómetro. In the Bar San Lorenzo across from the site of the Viejo Gasómetro where the Carrefour has now been built, I met Gallego and Román, two childhood friends who grew up together in the neighbourhood and as they described it “underneath the terraces” of the Viejo Gasómetro. Many *cuervos* metaphorically referred to the roof provided by the terraces when describing how they met and played with friends. The image recalls the towering and exposed steel frames and the wooden terrace planks, distinctive architectural features that made the stadium recognizable in the urban landscape and led to its name. Gallego and Román told me how they met their future wives at the dances in the club, about how the olympic sized swimming pool was the focal point of their summer days, and about the movie theatre and the mechanical bowling alley, both symbols at the time of a modern club. Many older men in the bar will talk about playing football as boys between the supporting columns of the stadium during the week and before the Sunday matches. They will argue about who was best and nostalgically mention how one of their friends was a true *goleador* (goal-poacher) who, if not for one reason or another, could have made it to play on the grass pitch with the first team.

In the Bar, I sat by the window closest to the Carrefour across from Esteban and Dicapua. Esteban brought a picture of the Viejo Gasómetro that he had laminated. Both are older than Gallego and Román and themselves are separated by at least fifteen years.

Esteban is near ninety years old and has lived in a house by the visitor's entrance of the Viejo Gasómetro for his whole life. Dicapua recalls his first time in the Viejo Gasómetro was in 1950. Each personal story in the stadium reveals different periods of the club history, while overlapping memories create parallel ideas of what the Viejo Gasómetro represented that merge together. Dicapua recounts, "I grew up below the terraces. There, I became the leading goalscorer, cheered on by the whole *barrio*." Dicapua started working with the club as a paid employee when he was twenty-six; he continued to work at the club's gates on match days for most of his adult life. He is quick to emphasize he has also worked without pay for the club, volunteering to repaint walls that were damaged and clean up the facilities.

Over the picture, Dicapua and Esteban described the supporting steel columns and the wooden terraces and in the middle the oval football field. "The visiting *hinchada* would enter have to enter from here," pointing to the street that is now behind the Carrefour and near to Esteban's home. "Were there lots of fights?" I asked. "Yes, there were always a lot of fights." Dicapua tells me. "Football has never changed. Football and politics go hand-in-hand." I note the idea that football violence is fundamentally "political" for Dicapua, revealing early insights about the construction of *hinchadas* and how they are perceived. They began pointing out the different parts of the club. The pool, the tennis courts, the bowling alley, the basketball court, the offices, and the small concrete pad where the kids played football; on the other side of the stadium under the terraces they remember billiards and chess tables. And they described the pizza and *choripan* served at the stadium. "I was born with a stadium here," Esteban states, in

between naming friends with whom they played football and players they watched in the stadium. At another time, cameras from *Fútbol Para Todos* came to film a television spot with Dicapua. In the middle of the interview, as he described what the *Vuelta a Boedo* would mean for San Lorenzo, he stopped the camera as he had become emotional and a few tears fell down his cheeks. For *cuervos* like Dicapua and Esteban significant portions of their lives occurred within the club when it was located on Avenida La Plata. The memories are sentimental, vivid, and personal.

Such narrative constructions reflect and refract football's gendered history. There are many women who attended matches at the Viejo Gasómetro, though their relationship to club is often different: rarely were young girls able to play football with friends. A common memory for many older women describes their past relationship to football and the club as mediated through the men and boys in their lives. As Nicolas Hornby recalls in his popular autobiography *Fever Pitch* from his childhood experiences, while his mother never went to the stadium with him, he credits her influence as fundamental to his passion for Arsenal. For some other women who never attended matches, their social relationship to football is remembered as important because of their relationships to men and children. The gendered context influences the production of memories in the stadium.

While walking down a street in Boedo on the way to an event for the *Vuelta a Boedo* an elderly woman pulling her shopping cart stopped Julian and myself. Seeing our San Lorenzo teeshirts she asked, "Hey boys, who is San Lorenzo playing today?" We told her it was not a match but a barbecue for the *Vuelta a Boedo* that we were attending. She commented that it will be nice to have the stadium back in the neighbourhood. I asked if

she had ever been to the Viejo Gasómetro. “I never went to matches myself” she said. “But my children often did. It is important for the *chicos* to have somewhere to go that is close by. I hope it returns.” She asked us when San Lorenzo were playing next and how the team was doing. We explained that they were in a position of relegation, which seemed to cause her some emotional discomfort but that there was an important match coming up. She smiled at us and then with a genuine sincerity wished us the best of luck. At the time it struck me how she transposed her mediated relationship to San Lorenzo onto us and the *Vuelta a Boedo*.

In a café on the corner of San Juan and Boedo I sat down at a table beside an elderly woman sitting in a booth by herself. Her head covered with curly grey hair was bent over the Clarín newspaper, glasses on the tip of her nose. She must have overheard my conversation with the waiter, a friend of mine, and my strange accent. She lifted up her head to see my San Lorenzo shirt, perhaps an unexpected combination. She leaned out of her booth to tell me how she hoped that San Lorenzo avoids relegation and asked me where I am from and what I'm doing in Argentina. She tells me how she is a *hincha* of River Plate and how being in the second division is nothing she would wish for any other club. I ask if she is from Boedo. “My whole life” she tells me, having lived with her husband who has now passed away. She described memories of the stadium as an influential part of the social life of the *barrio*, how she used to attend the carnivals though she did not support San Lorenzo. She lamented that when the club moved out, the Boedo she knew had changed, and that were less people around on the streets, “especially in the south of the neighbourhood.” She told me about River Plate's attachment to Nuñez and

Belgrano was because of where the stadium is located. While remembering and transposing memories about football is gendered, it is not exclusively men that contribute to the narratives. Women's understandings of the stadium can be missed because they have often been afforded less public space around football. My own difficulty and relatively few encounters with older women that shared their views on football is a gap in my research, rather than the absence of many generations of women influencing the social meaning of football.

While there are many different sources and perspectives on the Viejo Gasómetro, many based on the retelling of personal histories, they all contribute to the history that contemporary *hinchas* interact with and through to define the significance of the *Vuelta a Boedo* for San Lorenzo. Storytelling, a practice that links *hinchas* together, is used to transmit the idea of the Viejo Gasómetro as a social space where generations of *cuervos* met at carnival dances, played football below the terraces as children, and supported the club (Chapter Five). The stories produce a mythic idea of Boedo with San Lorenzo as the focal point of social activity. The imaginary construction of place would be nostalgic, a reflection of the past without significant intentions on the present, if not mobilized towards defining what San Lorenzo's relationship to Boedo should be. Through the act of mobilizing the past, a younger generation of *hinchas* have come to form an intimate relationship with a "home" that they themselves never personally experienced. The next section explores the development of the *Subcomisión del Hinchas*. The formation of the group has mobilized the memories of older generations of *hinchas* and the history of the

club to present a renewed vision of San Lorenzo as a social and cultural organization in place in Boedo.

### **7.3 The *Subcomisión del Hinch*a and an Alternative San Lorenzo**

As my field research unfolded, I often mused about how there seemed to be two sides to the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign. On the one hand, there was the public mobilizations. On the other hand, the lobbying of politicians, discussed in the following chapter, moved the campaign forward within the Legislature of Buenos Aires. I wanted to understand the relationship between these two sides, how the activism of dedicated volunteers was connected to the mobilized displays of thousands of people. Young *hinch*as of San Lorenzo have embraced the idea of returning San Lorenzo to Boedo and made significant contribution through their participation in the mobilizations. Here I look at the emergence of the *Subcomisión del Hinch*a (SCH) within the internal club politics of San Lorenzo. I seek to show how the *Vuelta a Boedo* produced a narrative from the club's past, using and transforming the memories of older *cuervos*, that in turn influences how *hinch*as of San Lorenzo understand their relationship with their club.

Adolfo Resnik struck me as an unlikely leader. Res, a short form of his name that he regularly uses, is widely recognized as a central quixotic figure within the *Vuelta a Boedo*. A life long member of San Lorenzo and passionate historian of the club's history, Res has an encyclopedic knowledge of the club. With ease he can launch into descriptions of matches decades past, recounting the names of players who passed the ball before it was kicked into the back of the net. With his brother, Diego Resnik, Adolfo

started *San Lorenzo Ayer, Hoy y Siempre* (San Lorenzo Yesterday, Today and Always) a weekly radio program that predates the formation of the *Subcomisión del Hincha* (SCH) and was one of the first venues where a return to Boedo was regularly discussed. A core of friends and activists formed around Adolfo and Diego, drawn together by their interest in creating a greater presence for San Lorenzo in Boedo. Over time and with the formation of the SCH, Adolfo became one of the central voices of the *Vuelta a Boedo* and one of the campaign's most dedicated lobbyists. In front of thousands of *hinchas* at the various marches Adolfo was often the last to speak. In contrast to his genuinely reserved personality, with a microphone in hand, he would passionately describe San Lorenzo's historic relationship with the neighbourhood and how the dictatorship stole the Viejo Gasómetro from San Lorenzo's *socios*. Away from the microphones, Adolfo with Daniel Peso were instrumental in their interactions and negotiations with legislators of the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.

I had pursued a formal conversation with Adolfo Res for several months; my initial introduction was met with a cold and skeptical response: “ya sure, send me an email and maybe sometime later.” Being one of the public faces of the *Vuelta a Boedo*, Res often gave interviews to television and print journalists. I had felt at the time that it was strange that he seemed reluctant to talk about the campaign but I later perceived his reluctance to be continually placed at the centre of the campaign. Res' contributions to the framing of the *Vuelta a Boedo* through his radio program, books on the club's history, and his presence at meetings and mobilizations, however made him a central actor.

A mutual friend arranged for the three of us to meet, just a few weeks before my research time was ending, at the Bar Homero Manzi on the corner of Avenida Boedo and Avenida San Juan, the commercial heart of the neighbourhood. The Bar Homero Manzi has gone through many iterations and was well known for its touristic tango shows in homage to its namesake, one of Argentina's most famous tangeros. Black and white photographs recall a past depicting the daily life along Avenida Boedo alongside portraits of famous tango singers. The location was Res' choice and close to where Res cited the beginning of the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign:

“The first steps [for the *Vuelta a Boedo*] happened nearby. There was a café close to here that was emblematic in the history of San Lorenzo, Café Dante. Café Dante was here on [Avenida] Boedo at number 745. It was been there between 1919 and 2002. At the end of the 1990s, in 1998, we began to talk, alongside my brother Diego, about the history of San Lorenzo. This café was one of the first places where we began to talk a bit about the *Vuelta a Boedo*. We'd set up talks and people would stop by to listen, to chat.

“A group of friends, drinking coffee?”

“Exactly. We didn't have the radio program, that began in 2003. I wasn't that well known, so it was mostly friends, people we knew who came to the talks. We were just drinking coffee, just like we are now, presenting images. From there we began to put together presentations at cultural centres. Just twenty to thirty people. Older people mostly but it was fairly primitive; nothing like what you've seen with the *Vuelta*.”

In many ways, Café Dante represents the transitions of social life experienced by residents of the neighbourhood; perceived by some as a loss of the institutions that brought different parts of the community together. Café Dante closed amidst Argentina's economic turmoil in 2002. On the city's list of 54 “notable cafes” in Buenos Aires, Café Dante was well known as a historic space for both *hinchas* of San Lorenzo as well as the authors and poets in Boedo's literary movement of the 1920s and 30s. Nostalgia for

closed cafes suggests that such places and the forms of social interactions that occurred within them, have been threatened across the city (Mansilla 2013). Such nostalgia mirrors the position from which Adolfo and his friends began to muse about the absence of San Lorenzo in the *barrio*.

The formation of the *Subcomisión del Hincha* was precipitated by conversations among friends about San Lorenzo's history in Boedo. The conversations turned into presentations that drew upon the history of the club. Adolfo Res described how illusions of a new stadium in Boedo did not drive early efforts of San Lorenzo supporters. On his radio program Adolfo and his brother Diego focused on stories that highlighted the social-cultural history of San Lorenzo, providing both a broader image of the institutional role of San Lorenzo, while avoiding the internal politics that at the time were dividing the club:

We began covering different periods, doing homages to different athletes. I remember there was an elderly man, the goalie of the handball team of San Lorenzo in 1940, and we went to his seniors home to do the story; always programs like that. One day we began a series called “*Identidad y Pertenencia San Lorencista*” (Identity and Belonging Sanlorencista) in the café San Lorenzo. The first event we did, we covered the history of basketball team. It was a lot of work, getting the phone numbers of players, a lot we couldn't reach. We got twenty or thirty basketball players from different epochs. We gave them certificates and I talked about the history of basketball [in San Lorenzo], focusing on important figures in the history. For example, Francisco “Paco” Del Rios, who just recently died at 92 years old. With him, San Lorenzo won the championship in 1942. There was also a woman, the wife of one of the best basketball players in the country who played in San Lorenzo, José Villa... we did the same thing with bowling and the championships of second and third teams of football, the forgotten teams... and then we did an homage to the *hinchada*, its history... we covered a lot of different figures from the various epochs. Always people from different generations that you'd never encounter.

Much of the early discussions pushed attention towards to what Res considers “forgotten” moments and teams in the history of San Lorenzo.

An interest in club history is not unique to Adolfo Res or *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. Popular histories of football clubs have been a recurrent object of publication in Argentina, forming a small but recognizable genre. Football memorabilia is easily found at the various antique and book markets throughout Buenos Aires, suggesting an interest in historic artifacts of a club. In the book market of Rivadavia there is a stall dedicated to the resale of old *El Grafico* magazines where regular clients come to purchase decades old editions, often looking for a cover page that focuses on their team, building collections and reading old stories. Dicapua from the Bar San Lorenzo has turned his collection of memorabilia into a “museum” dedicated to the club. In a small room on the roof of his house he has covered the walls with historic posters and newspaper cutouts from the decades of the club's history. Almost every book ever published about San Lorenzo sits on a table and an old jersey from *Los Matadores* hangs on the wall gathering dust.

Such forms of nostalgic interactions with the club history are peculiar but common enough practices amongst *hinchas*. These historicizing practices are nostalgic (Megill 1998) and distinguished from how Adolfo and Diego’s radio programs and presentations engaged with a narrative about a different kind of San Lorenzo. On the surface, the practices do not seem significantly different. The difference is in how the ideology of the club's narrative is shifted by the historicizing by Adolfo. Nostalgic practices on the other hand add to the coherency of club’s narrative, collecting and re-

iterating in small acts the symbolic system of the community of *cuervos*. For Adolfo, retelling the club's history in contrast was one of the first acts building towards the *Vuelta a Boedo*. For historicity to have a transformative effect a shift in the use of the past has to occur. The project of eliciting San Lorenzo's past was ultimately oriented towards a different narrative meaning interpolated of *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. As a result, even collections like the one made by Dicapua take on new meaning as repositories of history.

At the same time as Adolfo and others began talking about returning to Boedo, San Lorenzo was going through a period of internal political upheaval. The authority of the club's leadership was increasingly questioned and acrimonious divisions between political factions emerged. The institutional disarray at the time stemmed from the attempt by President Fernando Miele to privatize the branding and stadium operation of the club. Internal divisions emerged in the fallout of the street protests. After Miele stepped down, Rafael Savino was elected as club president in 2004. While the football team won a championship in 2007, private interests continued to benefit at the expense of the club. Contrasting visions emerged, contesting how the club should operate. In this context, Adolfo's vision of a club based on San Lorenzo's institutional golden age with a focus on social and cultural activities, beyond just the professional football team, emerged as a political alternative.

On the one hand, San Lorenzo under Miele and Savino had prioritized its professional football team over other parts of the club. Winning championships was the public objective of club officials. Globalized models of football clubs, particularly in Europe, motivated a significant shift towards branding as a way of capturing a larger

audience (see Chapter One:f9). This model de-emphasized the importance of *socios*. Instead the club pursued a consumption-based audience. Growing the number of people watching on television and identifying as fans of San Lorenzo, it was believed, could be leveraged when negotiating advertising contracts and would drive the sale of branded merchandise. The short-term performance of the club was seen as a means to an end of growing San Lorenzo's audience. Behind the scenes in Savino's administration, third-parties invested private money to purchase expensive player contracts. Players that could be advertised were emphasized. The third-parties themselves had their own selfish motivations: they hoped to produce a profit when the contracts were sold internationally. This operating model provided some measure of success, though it was dependent upon the short-term success of the team.

On the other hand, it was argued by a minority within the club that the diversity of social and athletic activities provided by the club should not overshadowed by the operations of the football team.<sup>3</sup> Such activities motivate the inscription of *socios* it was argued who in turn pay a predictable monthly fee. Also within this model, the emphasis was to be placed on the club's youth academies as a source for players. Allusions to the club's past provided an alternative vision of how the club could be operated. At the peak of San Lorenzo's history in the 1930s to 1940s, which included some of the club's most

<sup>3</sup> In the wake of the 2000 institutional crisis of San Lorenzo, a group of *hinchas* formed an alternative political list to contest the elections under the banned of "De Boedo Vengo" (From Boedo I come). In 2004, the list presented "25 Years of Exile" and began to talk about the Plaza owned by the city located at Mármol and Salcedo as part of San Lorenzo's return to Boedo. The group presented in 2007 "Proyecto La Gloriosa Vuelta a Avenida La Plata" (The Glorious Return to Avenida La Plata Project) as part of their political campaign. De Boedo Vengo remained a very small political organization in San Lorenzo but is noted, along with the process taken by Adolfo Res and the *Subcomisión del Hincha*, as presenting a political alternative to club officials. Like the SCH, De Boedo Vengo argued a return to Boedo was central to re-imagining the club.

iconic football teams, Adolfo argued, the vision of the club was to make San Lorenzo the premier social, cultural, and sport institution in Argentina. Returning to this vision, he believed, would not only provide institutional stability to San Lorenzo as a club but also make San Lorenzo's football team a consistent challenger in championships.

The small group of *hinchas* that attended the presentations and listened to Adolfo and Diego's radio program used a symbolic evocation of Boedo to index their alternative club history. History and memory helped articulate how being placed in the city mattered to the operation of the club. Problems experienced by the club were framed, in part, as a result of the disconnect to the *barrio*. A desire for San Lorenzo be more engaged with Boedo, without wanting to be directly involved in the politics of the club, drove several different groups to come together to form the *Subcomisión del Hincha* on 10 April 2005. Adolfo describes how club President Rafael Savino (2004-2010) opposed the formation of the SCH and how in the early years of the group, they operated outside of official recognition from the club. Adolfo wrote, "in these [first] five years we suffered through attacks from a [club] leadership that consistently blocked our path so that the idea of a return to Avenida La Plata would not catch on. They would have liked the issue to be put on ice" (Res 2011:23).

During Savino's presidency San Lorenzo won a celebrated championship in 2007 and made it to the quarterfinals of the Copa Libertadores. Success on the football field can often vindicate a presidency and Savino was re-elected the following year but over that subsequent year, many important players were sold. Behind the scenes, club debts were dramatically increasing. San Lorenzo was responsible for the large salaries the

team's best players but rarely benefited when their contracts were sold; much of the profit going to the third parties. Institutionally, other areas of the club began to decay. Others had mentioned to me how during Savino's presidency, social aspects of the club were often ignored. Members of the *Peña del Oeste* described to me how they had approached Savino to organize volunteers to repaint the Nuevo Gasómetro and improve other esthetic aspects of the *Ciudad Deportiva*, only asking the club for permission, but were brushed aside.<sup>4</sup>

By the time the SCH was organizing demonstrations as part of the *Vuelta a Boedo*, a narrative about San Lorenzo's place in Boedo had taken on a mythic expression. Tuan (1991) notes the role of language in place-making. Language allows for a place to be named. Naming calls a place into "being" and a name becomes a discursive referent for the physical space, as well as the ideas generated about the place. Through language we are also able a different dimension to space, outside of the limitations of embodied sensorial experience of a physical space. A place becomes knowable through the stories told about it:

Myths have this power to an outstanding degree because they are not just any story but are foundational stories that provide support and glimmers of understanding for the basic institutions of society; at the same time, myths, by

<sup>4</sup> Sports journalist Pablo Lafourcade (2012) focuses on the internal politics of San Lorenzo beginning with the presidency of Rafael Savino (2004-10) and ending with the presidency of Carlos Abdo (2010-12). Lafourcade documents a series of player transfers that were funded by third-party investors, including the behind-the-scenes participation of Marcello Tinelli. The 2007 team was composed of stars such as Ezequiel Lavezzi, Gastón Fernández, Cristian Ledesma, and Osmar Ferreyra who were all sold internationally. The 2008 team saw the arrival of Andrés D'Alessandro from Zaragoza for US\$ 3.5 million and his contract was sold for US\$4.4 million to Internacional de Porto Alegre. San Lorenzo paid D'Alessandro salary of US\$ 900 000 but because the club itself only owned 50% of his contract, the club had not made any money from the sale of D'Alessandro. Such dealings have been common place in international football.

weaving in observable features in the landscape... strengthen a people's bond to place (Tuan 1991:686).<sup>5</sup>

Myths of places, in this context, are stories that organize space.

Mythical places, as linguistic expressions, make an ideological contribution that can be used to articulate political alternatives. Boedo represented the club's past as well as an alternative possibility for San Lorenzo as expressed through its past. The storied place of the Viejo Gasómetro helped to organize a conceptual challenge to San Lorenzo as only a football club. Adolfo Res and others created symbolic links to the club's past that emphasized the club's amateur sports and other activities. In part, by talking about what San Lorenzo had been institutionally in Boedo was an ideological challenge to the lack of attention that was given to the non-football operations of the club. For example, the Jacobo Urso Award was created to be given out annually, recognizing an exceptional athlete across all the club's disciplines. In another instance, the SCH organized the now annual Maratón Delfo Cabrera, a 5-km run through Boedo, named after the 1948 Olympic marathon gold medal winner runner who trained in San Lorenzo. The alternative vision of the club also emerged through the promotion of non-athletic social events. In 2010, a two-day event of *murgas* from Boedo was hosted on Avenida La Plata during Buenos Aires' carnival, recalling the large carnival concerts that used to be held in the Viejo Gasómetro. The *Subcomisión* publicity proclaimed, "We are returning to *Tierra*

5 Tuan is reflects the influence, much like Vila (2014) when he uses "discourse", of the linguistic turn. Following on relevant critiques, language seems to be a stand for broad semiotic processes through which a "place" is inscribed with meaning. Linguistic descriptions of place are more obvious and apparent, though other sensorial experiences are often incorporated into knowing a space and incorporated into even an imaginary of such a place. For example, the sensorial experiences within a stadium are held to be similar or common across different stadiums; familiarity with the sounds and smells of a stadium is constitutive of the imaginary stadium as a place, making such a place more vivid and real, even when articulated only through a mythological existence.

*Santa*, the carnivals are returning.” The *Casa de la Cultura* (House of Culture), opened in 2010 and now hosts regular classes in tango, history, art, history, and theatre as well as special events and is completely run by volunteers of the SCH.<sup>6</sup>

The *Casa de la Cultura* was built inside a rundown house that once backed onto the Viejo Gasómetro. It is one of several properties that the *Subcomisión* has purchased. Another important piece of land in the area is the Plaza Lorenzo Massa. Once under the wooden terraces of the visitors section in the Viejo Gasómetro, the 4501 m<sup>2</sup> property was for a long period owned by the City of Buenos Aires. During the campaign to recuperate the Plaza from the city, for the first time claims that the government of the civic-military dictatorship had acted unjustly to force San Lorenzo’s were politically made. Members of the SCH became focused on the possibility of lobbying politicians to transfer the Plaza back to San Lorenzo. Hidden from the street by houses on one side and the back of the Carrefour on the other, the plaza was poorly maintained and had developed an unsafe reputation amongst neighbours. Adolfo Res describes, “in 2005 from within the *Subcomisión del Hincha*, we began to organize free cultural festivals for the *barrio* in the abandoned plaza, which was completely destroyed and occupied at night by drugs and sexual activities” (2012:165). While football is generally associated with insecurity and disorganization, in the context of the Plaza, the *Subcomisión* proposed that the club could be a positive space and displace undesirable activities.

<sup>6</sup> The *Casa de la Cultura* was purchased in 2009 using funds raised by the SCH. A wall of plaques acknowledges people who made donations. Viggo Mortensen, a well-known international actor, made a significant contribution, US\$ 25 000, to complete the purchase. The *Casa de la Cultura* was originally purchased by the Civil Association “Volver a Tierra Santa” as a separate organization but in 2015 ownership was transferred officially to Club Atlético San Lorenzo de Almagro with the agreement that the property would continue to be used for recreational and cultural activities.

After hosting several cultural events in the Plaza, it was a surprise for members of the SCH that the Secretary of the club, Juan Carlos Temez and part of President Savino's bloc, announced that San Lorenzo was close to an agreement with Miguel Talento, a legislator in the CABA, to transfer the property. On July 17, 2006 the *Ley de Reparación Histórica* (Law of Historical Reparation), outlining the transfer of ownership and responsibility of the Plaza to San Lorenzo, was presented to the Legislature of Buenos Aires. In support of the law, arguments were presented about the irregularities that occurred when the property was to be transferred to the city from San Lorenzo and the political condition of the civic-military dictatorship was also mentioned. After facing legislative hurdles that put the project in doubt, the SCH began to mobilize people on the street, and on October 11, 2007 with 1000 *cuervos* outside the Legislature of Buenos Aires, the Law of Historic Reparation was passed.

Adolfo and other members of the *Subcomisión* had been inside the Legislature.

Delays in the passage of the law led to a nervous moment. Res recounts:

Inside the Legislative Palace Miguel Talento in front of Temez and members of the SCH said that it was likely they would delay the vote once again because they didn't have quorum. I told him to go out and tell that to the more than 1000 people who were outside, soaked by the intense rain; that once again they'd have to go home without the law. Obviously he didn't do it... Because of our pressure the 40 legislators appeared and provided quorum... From our sector of the waiting room we began to yell, "hey, hey what a smile it will give me if they don't vote the project, what a *quilombo* we will create" and from the other side another group began to yell, "hey, hey what a smile it gives me, the public servants appear to be the military government." The pressure was intense. The security came to tell me, "*Gordo*, relax because they asked me to remove you from the building." Finally they passed the Law 2464 (Res 2012:174).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The chants in Spanish: "*Hay, hay que risa que me da si no votan el proyecto que quilombo se va armar*" and "*Hay, hay que risa que me da parecen funcionarios del gobierno militar.*"

At the time, the *hinchas* exploited the public perception that they were a potential source of disruption willing to create a *quilombo*, a colloquial Argentinian phrase meaning a disturbance or social chaos. This image stands in contrast to the idea of the public plaza being made safe in the hands of the club. While seemingly contradictory, this simultaneous duality of *quilombo* and social stability is relevant to how the *Vuelta a Boedo* was being composed. It suggests that there was an important synthesis of contemporary stadium culture with the historic narrative of the social-cultural club.

#### **7.4 Memories and Activism within the *Subcomisión del Hincha***

Regaining the Plaza convinced several people about the possibilities of returning more of the club's social life to Boedo. Participation in the SCH grew as did the group's ambition. While many had previously dreamed about the possibility of rebuilding the club facilities on Avenida La Plata, from 2007 onwards activism became increasingly focused on practical steps towards the goal of a complete return. One of the major shifts was the increased participation of younger *hinchas* who themselves never experienced a club with a significant institutional presence in Boedo.

In December 2012, in one of the rooms of the *Casa de la Cultura*, I met with Monica, Daniel Peso, who was part of the *Subcomisión*'s leadership, and a few other volunteers. The conversation about the *Vuelta a Boedo*, as it often does, turned towards what the club was like when it was on Avenida La Plata. Daniel Peso focused on a part of the narrative that is often left out or minimized in the memories of the club. He talked

about the internal institutional problems preceding the club's loss of the property on Avenida La Plata:

I never knew the best time of the club in the 1940s. When I started to come to the club I was four in '62. There were people with bad intentions. There would be broken showers and no one would fix them. It was like an earthquake had hit the club. After that, 1970 onwards, it was a lot worse than people imagine. To drop a category, crazy. The club could have disappeared; people said this [at the time].

Personal memories leading up to the closure of the Viejo Gasómetro reveal the institutional state of the club. Many of the facilities on Avenida La Plata were dilapidated. The imaginary of San Lorenzo on Avenida La Plata reconstructed through the memories of older generations, however, often focuses on the club's history before this period. The narrative emphasizes the institutional pinnacle of the club during the 1940s and into the 1950s, with the lingering success of San Lorenzo as a sport and social club extending into the 1960s. Younger *cuervos* will reference the large carnivals and how friends played football under the terraces, they will talk about the bowling alley and the swimming pool as important parts of the club, and they will mention how the club operated with a large base of *socios*. The period of successful football teams from 1968 to 1974 is seen as the end of a period in the club's history when it was properly managed.

Many younger *hinchas* focus on these memories and juxtapose them to the immediate period after the loss of the Viejo Gasómetro. David a young *hinchista* in the *Peña del Oeste*, while acknowledging the institutional problems, focuses the importance on returning to Avenida La Plata on correcting what the dictatorship did to the club:

Yes, okay, we sold our home but how it happened was wrong. A club's home is something that you should never be able to sell. San Lorenzo went into debt and

did lots of things wrong, had a bad championship. Everything wrong... But when [the city] told the club, 'we need to take the stadium from you' there wasn't a discussion. The military said, 'this is mine and you cannot argue with us' and San Lorenzo gave them the stadium. I think that San Lorenzo today is returning to Boedo because that's what its people want; without anyone giving us anything.

A rupture created by the dictatorship is plotted onto the narrative. The dictatorship forced the weakened club from Boedo, which has created a disconnection in the legacy of the club. The displacement of San Lorenzo from Avenida La Plata also damaged the club's historic trajectory as a sport and social club. The social connections that are described through the memories of older *cuervos* lost the physical space that they had inhabited. In the place of a physical space, the experiences were transferred to an imagined place. While no longer referential of a real place younger *hinchas* are able to interact with the imagined place of San Lorenzo in Boedo through the memories of an older generation. The effort to bring San Lorenzo back to Boedo is interpreted as a collective effort to repair the damage done to the club and rebuild a place for the shared experiences of *hinchas*.

The participation of younger *hinchas* in the campaign was unexpected by many who began the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Sitting in a room with several volunteers in the SCH who are all younger than 40, Daniel Peso notes that the participation of *hinchas* who never knew the Viejo Gasómetro has been instrumental for the *Vuelta a Boedo*:

It's something magical. We work together but we are from different generations. The generation however that's really recovering the property on Avenida La Plata is the people who are now thirty or younger. If you look at the marches, [many] of the people are from this age group. They really are the people who got onboard. If you were to talk to a *pibe*, 'are we going to return to Boedo?' he'll tell you, "yeah, of course we'll return to Boedo." If you ask people my age, they

would have told you, 'that's stupid.' It's the capacity to dream. The young *pibes* have always supported [the *Vuelta a Boedo*].

I note the use of *pibes*, alluding to the young creative footballers of Argentinian football's transformation and the determined, hardworking, prone to rash but passionate young players of today. The capacity to construct an imagined place from the memories has been a significant source of motivation for young *hinchas*. The imagined presence of a stadium on Avenida La Plata, however, is also enacted in significant ways through the lived practices. Groups like the SCH provided practical sites where the social imaginary of the club could be performed in daily life; many of the activists talked about the friendships they formed through their participation. The ideology of a social and cultural club articulated by the club's past reflects and refracts through contemporary experiences of *hinchas*. Friendships formed through the repetitive actions of fandom: going to every match in the same spot in the stadium, making the away trips, and organizing events around the team; is a common global phenomena. Many *hinchas* in San Lorenzo travel matches in groups of friends, they meet people at the stadium, have barbecues together before matches, participate in the pre-game singing, they become involved in a *peña* and when not travelling to away games meet up with others to watch the game on television. Social networks like Facebook, Whatsapp, email and SMS facilitate their organizing. Football continues to be a site of intense socialization. Older *hinchas* often had more or less stabilized their groups of friends, had regular plans for getting to the stadium, and repetitive pregame rituals. Younger *hinchas*, while also having regularized pregame rituals, have more fluid, expanding, and fluctuating social networks through their

participation with football. The idea by the *Vuelta a Boedo* that the club should act as a space for social activity refracts through their immediate experience. The perceived and real insecurity around San Lorenzo's *Ciudad Deportiva* does limit how *hinchas* imagine the social space of the stadium. Young *hinchas* described to me how the *Vuelta a Boedo* will create a space for San Lorenzo where there will be a lot of movement around the stadium, similar to the descriptions of the Viejo Gasómetro. The romantic image of the carnival festivities also contributes to this imaginary. Older *hinchas* often describe the security that a stadium in Boedo will bring.

The common purpose of returning San Lorenzo to Boedo rejuvenated the *Peña del Oeste*. The young and active members of the *Peña del Oeste* are regular participants in the events and mobilizations of the SCH and have raised significant funds for the *Vuelta a Boedo*. On match days, the group provides buses from the western municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires. What is striking about the commitment of the *Peña del Oeste* and the other *peñas* is that they represent *hinchas* and *socios* who live outside of the CABA. Thus, not only do many of the younger members of the *peñas* not possess immediate personal memories of the Viejo Gasómetro, they also do not have a daily connection to living in Boedo. They have developed, however, a deep ideological conviction that San Lorenzo belongs in Boedo, an idea explored in the following chapter. At each mobilization of the SCH, I was taken aback by how the crowds would attentively listen to Adolfo Res' discourses, often quieting others so that they could hear his descriptions of the club's history. This interest in the history of the club suggests how younger *hinchas* identified with the narrative constructions that produced the club's past

in such a way that it was attractive to *hinchas* in the present. The memories of older generations provided content to the idea of an imagined future San Lorenzo on Avenida La Plata that many younger *hinchas* began to believe in. It should be noted how such arguments of sociability in the club reflected and refracted more broader ideas of public sociality – both contesting the neoliberal idea of public experiences being mediated through private consumer-based relations emergent in the 1990s, as well as the contrasted notion of football’s public and national function expressed by the Kirchner governments.

Motivated through a relationship to the club’s past, activists like Monica have provided a significant amount of voluntary work to the *Subcomisión del Hincha*. Monica was among a small group of volunteers that was regularly at the *Casa de la Cultura* to carry out administrative work for the *Vuelta a Boedo*. When it was decided to be politically expedient for money to be collected in a trust to pay for the potential expropriation of the Carrefour on Avenida La Plata, the SCH began a pre-inscription list for individual donations. Volunteers supplied hundreds of hours of work transcribing hand written forms into the database and updating an online list. Others set up tables outside the Nuevo Gasómetro before matches, in Boedo, and the downtown during the week to advertise the *Vuelta a Boedo* and the pre-inscription list. I met dozens of other regular volunteers who put up posters around the city, acted as waiters during the fundraising *asados*, were stewards during marches, and produced online content for the *Vuelta a Boedo*. When I asked those gathered around the table why they had contributed so much of their time to the *Vuelta a Boedo* and to the *Subcomisión*, Monica responded “for our love of San Lorenzo.” Her response drew nods from everyone at the table,

another one of the volunteers adds “it’s this, for the love of San Lorenzo, there is no other reason.” The simplistic response belies the complex ways in which *cuervos* had transformed their relationship to their club.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has traced how memories of the Viejo Gasómetro contributed to the narrative of San Lorenzo and ideological content to the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Younger *hinchas* were uniquely engaged by the reconstructed narrative. Adolfo Res’ description of the club’s past, amongst others who were making similar arguments, focused memories and memorials onto the significance of the club as a more broad social and cultural space, while continuing to celebrate the football history of San Lorenzo. For younger *hinchas* this narrative refracted through their particular experiences of going to the stadium and the social world in which they interact. While the memories articulate an experience of the past, ideological frames help to orient and plot the significance of these memories to the identity of being a *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. The sense that San Lorenzo’s historical trajectory was unjustly disrupted is connected to how *hinchas* of San Lorenzo understand the motivations and actions of the civic-military dictatorship that led to the sale of the Avenida La Plata property. The politics of memory (Chapter Six) contributes to the sense that the disrupted history of San Lorenzo should be reconciled and repaired. Young *hinchas* are particularly convinced that the loss of the Viejo Gasómetro was the result of a historic injustice against the club, which may also be related to their understanding the consequences of the civic-military dictatorship more generally.

Different past experiences contribute to the diversity of memories that could be emphasized by the idea of belonging to San Lorenzo. Yet there is something about being a *hinch*a of a club that draws diverse people and diverse experiences together. Maldito describes how his perspective on San Lorenzo has been shaped by his experience:

When I think about the difference between San Lorenzo and others clubs, I think about the history. It's not the same to be part of a club loved by the press, helped by AFA, that has won a lot of things – because sometimes AFA helps you win things. Everything that has to do with being a different kind of *hinch*a.... But listen, I was eight years old when the Matadores played... by the time I was twelve San Lorenzo had won four championships and was always near the top. As a *hinch*a this is something that is in your roots that you'll never lose. It was a team that leads, as they say, which is very different than a *hinch*a who is a few years younger than me who had the misfortune of only knowing the B, the misfortune of only knowing the new football. We are both *hinch*as of San Lorenzo, but we both have very different very distinct roots. Besides this though is the truth that the *pibe* that lived with the club who made their roots in '82, San Lorenzo without a stadium, and me who experienced championships, we have to live together in the present. All of it is part of the life of San Lorenzo.

The diversity of experiences that come together in the “life of San Lorenzo” reflects the dilemma that motives Vila: how best to understand the coherency of a shared “identity”, be it a community of music or *hinch*as, when faced with people with different experiences, backgrounds, and intersecting identities. In the case of the *Vuelta a Boedo*, the use of the past interpolates what it means to be a *hinch*a of San Lorenzo. *Cuervos* transform memories and descriptions of the 1982 season in the Primera B into an ideology of what it means to support the team through difficult moments. They draw upon the San Lorenzo's past relationship to Boedo to demonstrate that a club is more than its football team. The absence of the Viejo Gasómetro and displacement from Boedo produce an emotional narrative that motivates many *cuervos* to politically act. The

following chapter discusses how this narrative has been translated into the political activities of the Vuelta a Beodo.

## **Chapter 8    The *Vuelta a Boedo* and the Politics of Football**

Mid-spring November 2012 I joined with several of the Malditos outside Argentina's National Congress Building. The *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign had made significant strides over the previous two months. On 18 October, the Legislature of Buenos Aires voted in favour of opening a trust at the Banco Ciudad to begin collecting money to pay for a potential expropriation of Carrefour. The unanimous vote signalled the Legislature's willingness to move forward on the Law of Historic Restitution, which would create legal conditions that would force Carrefour into a negotiation with San Lorenzo over the sale of the property on Avenida La Plata. Activists had already targeted a voting period on 22 November for the final vote in the Legislature. On 14 November, the national Congress was holding a vote on a declaration to add its support to the campaign and increase the pressure on the Legislature of Buenos Aires to quickly pass the law.<sup>1</sup>

The small group, around a hundred, grew outside the public entrance. The Congress Buildings' neoclassical architecture loomed above; emblematic of the republican ideals that have influenced various national political projects across the Americas. The building and the plaza in front is a site of important protests. On the building's front steps, hundreds of thousands of Argentinians converged in December 2001 in protest following the collapse of the country's banking system demanding that,

<sup>1</sup> The declaration stated, “[Congress] would welcome a decision by the Legislature of the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, under the powers which authorize it to do so, to seek the Historic Restoration of the building located on Avenida La Plata 1624, between Las Casas and Inclan, with all its facilities... the Club San Lorenzo de Almagro.”

“they should all go!” precipitating a period of political instability that led to the election of President Nestor Kirchner in 2003.

At the time, President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's Front for Victory Party (FpV) controlled the majority of seats in the National Congress. In contrast, the City of Buenos Aires was controlled by Mayor Mauricio Macri and his Republican Proposal (PRO), who also had a majority in the city's Legislature. Macri's government often was represented in the media as the main opposition to the national FpV. Several budgetary conflicts between the City of Buenos Aires and the national government of Argentina in preceding years highlighted the ideological and political differences between the power-bases of these two parties. Conflicts have often resulted in the mobilization of supporting unions and civil society organizations, causing disruptions on the streets around the political buildings in Buenos Aires' central core. Activists in the *Vuelta a Boedo* had demonstrated skill and care to navigate the political landscape. Most controversially, the Law of Historic Restitution called for the “expropriation” of the Avenida La Plata property, a discourse that was considered provocative by the more right-wing and neoliberal members of the PRO.

Some of the supporters dressed in the uniforms and jackets of San Lorenzo. Others are wearing ties, dress shirts and pressed pants having come directly from their offices in the downtown. The hybridity of fashion alludes to the socio-economic diversity behind the campaign, as well as the encounter between politics and football. There is an ambiguity to the football crowd, displaced from the stadium to the halls of the congress. I argue that an intertextuality (Briggs and Bauman 1992) helps to understand this

convergence and transposition of people. While in many ways the *Vuelta a Boedo* is a unique moment in Argentinian football, politicians have a historical relationship to the sport; the collective and carnivalesque effervescence produced by the fanatic devotion to a club has influenced political organizing, particularly at the scale of the *barrio* (Daskal 2013; Frydenburg 2011; Frydenberg et al. 2013). On the other hand, large gatherings of *hinchas* can be and are often perceived as disruptive and violent.

We are let into the Congress Building and pass through security, which is less thorough than an average match at the Nuevo Gasómetro, and directed into a stairwell where we wait. Eventually we are brought to the corridor behind the balconies above the congressional chamber below. We awkwardly take over the plush seats, fit for the *platea* of the expensive operatic Teatro Colón. The balconies are framed by marble columns and red draped curtains. Democratic tradition has often allowed groups to spectate votes. It is the first time, however, that many of the Malditos have been inside the Congress Building. As our numbers overwhelm the available seats, others begin to stand, filling the balconies and leaning over the railings as if in a stadium.

Congress members are debating below, the tedious political issues quickly bore the crowd and we take up side-conversations. Malditos and I are joined on the balcony by the formally dressed club Vice-President Hernán Etman. Julian starts an easy-going conversation about the recent matches of the professional team. Other club officials converse with *hinchas* in the hallway behind. Security guards are attempting to hush the crowd, which only emboldens a few to pressure the politicians to move the debate forward; only to be silenced by their fellow *hinchas*. Members of the *Subcomisión del*

*Hincha* (SCH) have taken over the balconies towards the centre of the chamber and are unfurling the large stadium banner in support of the *Vuelta a Boedo*: “SAN LORENZO VUELVE A TIERRA SANTA”.<sup>2</sup> Formalities seem to bend as the *hinchas* seek to craft a space more familiar and comfortable, referencing their stadium.

Recently elected club President Matias Lammens is ushered away as the vote is moved up. Lammens and Vice-President Marcelo Tinelli enter into the chamber and stand beside the Congressional Speaker as the order of the vote is changed, citing the expectant crowd gathered above. Several politicians, more than on previous votes, take turns to comment. A few declare themselves as *cuervos*. Others pronounce that they are *hinchas* of other clubs or have no interest in football at all but they then echo positive sentiments and arguments promoted by the SCH throughout the campaign: the importance of the social, cultural and sports club to the identity of the *barrio* and the injustice faced by San Lorenzo at the hands of the dictatorship. The support crosses party lines. Each response is met with a round of applause from the balconies – a few shout out.

One congress member, however, came more prepared than the others. A small San Lorenzo banner hangs off his desk. Horacio Pietragalla Corti is one of the more than 130 babies and children of the disappeared who were stolen and have subsequently recovered their biological identity. Through exhaustive investigation human rights organizations have attempted to uncover the history of potentially more than 300 abducted children, raising difficult questions about identity, belonging, and justice. His father Horacio “Chacho” Pietragalla, a member of the *Montoneros*, was assassinated by the right-wing

<sup>2</sup> “San Lorenzo returns to holy land.”

paramilitary Triple A on 8 November 1975; his mother Liliana Corti gave birth to Horacio on 11 March 1976. At five-months old he was stolen after his mother Liliana was assassinated by one of the civic-military dictatorship's Working Groups in their home on 4 August 1976. He was eventually taken to Lt. General Hernán Tefzlaff who gave the child to his domestic employee to be raised under a different identity. Pietragalla Corti was an adult when in 2003 he discovered his family history and "recovered his identity" (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo 2013; Colombo 2003). He now uses the name given to him by his biological parents and has been an outspoken campaigner for the recovery of identity for the stolen children.

When Pietragalla Corti's begins to speak to the Congress he nervously plays with the banner. His voice wavers as he says, "Now you understand why I brought this, so please, please vote in favour." Pietragalla Corti continues,

As someone who knows what it's like to lose one's identity, paradoxically, the only thing that remains of my identity, I didn't keep my birthday, my astrological sign, my name, the only thing I kept of my identity is my football team... I want, like all *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, to be able to recuperate this identity that was appropriated and stolen during the dictatorship. It is our beloved Gasómetro, which at the point of the pistol of Brigadier Cacciatore, our [club] President... was forced to sell the club. The only thing we want the Argentine public to recognize, on behalf of the community *azulgrana*, like our human rights organizations, like the *madres*, is that the dictatorship committed a crime against the club... that everyone understands what the Viejo Gasómetro means to us. I don't only maintain this identification to San Lorenzo because it is something you do not renounce, but because my father "Cacho" Pietragalla was also a *hinchita* of San Lorenzo.

Pietragalla Corti draws upon the political implications of football support as being about identity, a sense of belonging, and emotional connection. The stadium, as the space in which feelings and identity become realized, takes on special meaning. The

personification of the stadium as if a disappeared person reveals the *Vuelta a Boedo*'s dialogic relationship of football to a politics of memory. This chapter explores the practical, strategic, and ideological consequences of this relationship as it relates to football and politics in Argentina. In this chapter I also explore the embodied politicization of the *Vuelta a Boedo* through its largest rally on 8 March 2012.

The *Vuelta a Boedo*'s blend of practices familiar to the football stadium, a politics of memory, and the construction of identity and belonging expands the horizon of how to approach the relationship between politics and mass-spectator events. I have shown how a politics of memory emerged in Argentina (Chapter Six) and how memories emerged to influence a contemporary imagining of the Viejo Gasómetro (Chapter Seven). I have argued that these social processes have become intertwined through the *Vuelta a Boedo* to infuse an emotional content to the political campaign. The first part of this chapter situates football in Argentina as historically connected to politics. In part it is possible to view clientelist practices as the reason why football and politics have come together. The second part challenges the assumption that the politicization of football is only about clientelist politics by looking at the intertextuality of crowd performances. Following on arguments made by Juris (2008) about the importance of emotional bonds between participants of protest actions, I present the transposition of the stadium culture onto the streets in the form of a political rally as central to how *hinchas* of San Lorenzo construct their ideological sense of belonging.

## 8.1 Football, Clientelism, and Politics in Argentina

Football matters politically in Argentina. From the early expansion of football clubs, there have been formal links between football clubs, their supporters, and political parties (Chapter Two; Frydenberg 2008). These links have continued into the present (Alabarces 2006; Fernández 2004; Godio 2011; Moreira 2008a; Paradiso 2014). Club officials often have links to political parties and in a few relevant recent cases, club politicians have made the transition to various levels of formal politics. Most famously Mauricio Macri, now President of Argentina (2015-) and former Mayor of Buenos Aires (2007-2015) was previously the President of Boca Juniors (1995-2007; 2008). Football clubs are not just used to generate recognition before launching into political aspirations, they can also be integrated into the organizing mechanisms of the parties. From an instrumentalist perspective, it could be argued that the *Vuelta a Boedo* gained momentum as it became strategically relevant for politicians to voice their support, hoping to seek favour within the organized support of San Lorenzo's *hinchas*. In particular, the influence of popular television personality Marcelo Tinelli, who became Vice President of San Lorenzo in September 2012, could be argued to be a crucial political opportunity pressuring politicians.

The political self-interest is popularly seen to manipulate the sport; *hinchas* often claim that “football is pure politics.”<sup>3</sup> In the immediate sense of politics, all the professional clubs are managed by officials elected by the *socios*. Regular elections mean

<sup>3</sup> “*Fútbol es pura política*” is also commonly said along with the derision that “football is a business.” In both cases the connotation is negative where, football is seen to be tainted by the manipulative interests of business and politics. The phrases also suggest, however, that football is not autonomous from these realms.

that factions often contest for power within the club. Clubs are represented within the Asociación de Fútbol Argentino (AFA) by their presidents, which until recently had meant navigating the longstanding patronage system of AFA President Julio Grondona. Further, each club engages in political interactions with the various levels of governments: the local municipal government, the provincial (in the case of the clubs in the CABA these two levels of government are combined), and the national government. Particularly in relation to issues of stadium security, the provincial and national governments take an active role, as they weekly mobilize thousands of police officers for matches. In recent years, the *Administración Federal de Ingresos* (Federal Administration of Revenues, AFIP) has actively pursued football transfers and other parts of the operating business of the football clubs for tax evasion.

Using *barra bravas* for protection and intimidation is known to be strategy used by local candidates to gain an advantage. Some of the large *barras* are believed to have strong political connections.<sup>4</sup> In 2014, the well-known leader of the *barra* of San Lorenzo, La Gloriosa Buteller, Cristian “Sandokán” Evangelista, and a leader of the neighbourhood *murga Los Chiflados de Boedo*, became president of the group organizing the carnival celebrations in Buenos Aires. Sandokán is often represented as having a strong relationship with the Campora, a local-based organizing wing of the FpV, and

<sup>4</sup> The most significant example in recent years is the often discussed relationship between the *barra brava* of *Independiente de Avellaneda* and the President of the CGT Hugo Moyano, who has led the *Sindicato de Camioneros* (Union of Truck-drivers) in several general strikes against the Kirchner government. Javier Cantero as President of *Independiente* (2012-14) entered into a protracted conflict with the club's *barra* that for a brief period saw the removal of the *barra* from the club's stadium. Conflicts within the political and economic leadership of the club, supported by the *barra*, led to Cantero's renunciation of the club presidency with two years left in the position, and subsequent elections where Hugo Moyano became club president (La Nación 2014; La Nueva 2015).

Kirchnerist *Unión Trabajadores de Entidades Deportivas y Civiles* that represents workers in the hospitality industry and in the sports clubs.

Argentinian sociologist Di Giano writes, “it is important to focus on the points of contact between political activity and football” (2010:12). The sport is fully enmeshed into the political-economic conjunctures of the country, as a social-cultural phenomena. The process however is not solely a reflection of the influence and interests of the powerful; the context refracts through the practices and meaning of football, which in turn develop their own political consequences. Rather than argue against an instrumentalist view of the relationship between politics and sport, I believe it is valuable to incorporate a perspective of strategic agency within a more expansive horizon of political processes that reframe political self-interest within ideological constructs and practices particular to the context.

Direct relationships between political parties and football clubs and their *hinchas* are well-documented and historic. How political parties interact with local populations to mobilize support has to a certain degree been integrated with the organizing capacity of the clubs and their *hinchas*. In Argentina, the use of clientelist strategies by political parties has received academic attention (Auyero 2000; Szwarcberg 2013; Stokes 2005). Such strategies often rely upon a network of operatives who are well connected to communities exchanging material benefits for political support. Clubs that developed the within *barrios* established political relationships with local politicians to gain access to resources (Chapter Three; Frydenberg 2013; Horowitz 2014). Matches became mass spectated events from 1900 to 1930 and the sport became professional in 1931. The

sport's transformation placed material and economic pressures on the clubs, who increasingly sought political favours. Politicians helped the clubs access property and financing for construction projects. In turn, politicians expected to increase their popularity within the *barrios*. Club elections also became sites for political activity and have long been used as launching pads for political careers (Horowitz 2014).<sup>5</sup> Part of the allure for politicians in interacting with the clubs is the media attention they gain.

The relationship between members of the *barras brava* and politicians perhaps receives more attention in Argentina's media than any other political relationship establish with and through football. Grupo Clarín has documented several connections between *barras* and local party organizers, often pointing to the influence of the FpV and the Kirchner governments (Grabia 2010). Often cited is the group *Hinchadas Unidas*, formed it was claimed to provide transportation logistics for supporters of the Argentinian national team before the 2010 World Cup in Africa. In reality, *Hinchadas Unidas* was created by the leadership of several *barras brava* who received subsidized travel and was seen as an attempt by the government to prevent infighting between groups supporting Argentina and gain the support from the stadium terraces (Lafourcade 2012:56). On the other side, Mauricio Macri, Mayor of Buenos Aires and leader of the opposition PRO, has a historic relationship with *La Doce* of Boca Juniors, going back to his presidency of that club. Complex webs of political relationships become particularly difficult to untangle in a period of polarized party politics. Such arguments, however, help to

<sup>5</sup> Horowitz describes that, "In 1914, eight years after its founding, Defensores de Belgrano reached the first division and a triumphal march took place. Among the participants was José P. Tamborini, who became an important Radical politician" (2014:567).

reproduce ideas about how populism, clientelism, and corrupt politicians are linked. For political commentators, the presence of *barras* in the political machines of Argentina is an example of the corrupt morality of Argentinian politics.

The relationship between politics and football reflects some of the clientelist practices more generally. Political parties in Argentina have been characterized as “machines” with many working parts (Stokes 2005). Their electoral success are often dependent upon an organizing capacity at the local level. Historic parties like the Partido Justicialista and the Partido Radical, have various sub-organizations dedicated to organizing, with small local offices spread out across the country. The extent to which political influence through local organizing can be used is not straight forward and often faces many obstacles, not in the least because multiple and competing interests are expressed and contested through the political connections.

Some possibilities for shifting the discussion emerge through ethnographic research of clientelist relationships in Buenos Aires' conurbation. Ethnographic research with political organizers by Mariela Szwarcberg questions the assumption that clientelist strategies in Argentina dominate all approaches to political organizing. Finding that an exchange of material benefits for voter support was an “insufficient condition to explain the use of clientelism,” Szwarcberg (2013) finds that access to clientelist mobilizing techniques does not necessarily led to their use by political organizers. Szwarcberg finds a large number of party candidates take what she describes as an “idealistic” approach to their politics, focusing resources on principled programs rather than clientelistic appeals to potential voters. Nevertheless, there is for many an underlying popular belief that

politics is about using all available resources effectively to win and, as one candidate explained, as part of the “rules of the game” (Szwarcberg 2013). Such an analysis may perpetuate a dichotomy between the normatively “good” ideological politician vs the pragmatic, and potentially corrupt, clientelist politician. In practice politics in Argentina plays out with a diversity of tactics and forms of relationships.

By engaging with people inside clientelist networks, Javier Auyero (2000) finds that very few clients develop strong and regular ties to a local broker. “Other kinds of politics are operating in conjunction with 'clientelist politics'” Auyero argues which challenge the idea that poor voters become “captive” to clientelist relationships that drive their votes (2000:75). Peronist voting tendencies, often presented as the stereotypical clientelist relationship, cannot be explained by simply looking at the distribution of resources. The regularity of practical engagements, Auyero argues, that occur because of clientelist relationships needs to be contextualized in the wider “embodying and enacting” of a persistent Peronist tradition (2000:73). Auyero identifies that for many participating in clientelist relationships is about “problem-solving” practices, which does not on its own generate a strong political allegiance. Personal relationships between clients and brokers are important. Local level brokers become interfaces between the sources of goods and services, controlling and channeling the available flow to clients. Unfavoured brokers are labelled as corrupt, while those who skillfully provide benefits and resolve problems for their clients are seen as “helpful” and “good people” (Auyero 200:70). Such a perspective developed from the experience of clients reveals the personalized interpretations of political engagement and the importance of mutually

negotiated rules to the game. In this perspective control and power within clientelist relationships is complicated and follows ideological guidance, implying that there are opportunities to shift politics when negotiating the values and practices of clientelist practices.

Mass mobilizations are the most sensational site in which Peronist political practices are embodied. Many outsiders regularly claim that participants are motivated by material benefit. The infamous *choripan*, the stereotypical cheap street food of sausage and bread, and a few pesos are dismissively mentioned as symbols of clientelist motivation. The motivations of participants in marches, while often requiring material support, however are not properly explained by the provision of such material benefits. Rather the sense of belonging within a political community and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships are connected to the ideological production that occur during mass political mobilizations.

Similarly, a more complex picture should be drawn as to why politicians engage with football. Through the lobbying efforts by members of the *Subcomisión del Hinchista*, the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign built regular relationships with several politicians across party lines, both at the national and CABA levels. Were these relationships instrumental to the electoral strategies of the politicians? In part research into clientelist relationships and the political history of Argentina's football clubs suggests that politicians seek to gain the support of concentrated voting blocs. But even in the context of clientelist relationships, as research conducted at an ethnographic level suggests, there is a more complex process to how political decisions are made, how material favours are

distributed and decided upon, and why both politicians and activists make the decisions to engage in the particular practices that they do.

The *Vuelta a Boedo*'s mobilizations and lobbying reflects and refracts football's political context in Argentina. Instrumentalist practices within party politics suggests that there are practical reasons, such as gaining voter support. There is also an ideological conceptualization of how politics should work that influences the possibilities and constraints of how activists are able to interact with politicians. By mobilizing crowds outside of a relationship with only one political party, the *Vuelta a Boedo* demonstrated its capacity to transpose political mobilization into different contexts. Politicians thus found themselves in a familiar but unexpectedly different relationship with *hinchas*. Politicians from across party lines came into dialogue with the ideological foundations of the Law of Historic Restoration and the framing of the *Vuelta a Boedo*.

## **8.2 “Soy de San Lorenzo” – Belonging to San Lorenzo**

The growing crowds of the *Subcomisión del Hincha*'s mobilizations reflected the increasing importance of the *Vuelta a Boedo* within the consciousness of San Lorenzo. On 12 April 2011, club President Carlos Abdo declared the *Vuelta a Boedo* a “question of state” for San Lorenzo in front of 20 000 *hinchas*, declaring the action “for all the grandparents not present.” On the stage at that march, Adolfo Res spoke:

It was the bloody and murderous dictatorship that captured people like us, everyday Argentinians. Brigadier General Osvaldo Cacciatore... someone who had the capacity to put his gun on his desk when he was visited by the President of San Lorenzo. And he told [the President], ‘take care of your family,’ who went to ask permission to repair thirty wooden terraces, nothing more, so we could continue to play at the beloved Viejo Gasómetro... [the law that took the

Gasómetro] was an act of revenge... because it was in the Gasómetro where a flag that mentioned [the disappearances] was first flown in 1976. San Lorenzo wasn't just hurt morally, San Lorenzo was hurt economically... and we remember in a song of resistance when we lost the stadium, not a song of anger, but a song of pride, the song remembers 'Here is the *Gloriosa, hinchada* of San Lorenzo...' that was the song of San Lorenzo's resistance.

Adolfo later described alongside a good friend in an interview with me the march as a major step forward for the *Vuelta a Boedo*. The political pressure of the crowd motivated the City of Buenos Aires to move legislation into the Committee on Sport and Culture, the first significant vote in favour of the Historic Restoration. During our interview the friend interrupted Adolfo, "remember how the act started? With a song..." and they started to sing together, "Here is the *gloriosa, hinchada* of the San Lorenzo, that didn't have a stadium, that supported during the relegation, over the years, in the moments that we've lived, always at your side, beloved San Lorenzo..." The friend stopped with tears in his eyes and says, "look at me, I've become emotional." The relevant connection of memory, political practice and emotion became embodied through the marches.

Narrative production by the *Subcomisión del Hincha*, and others like journalist-historian Enrique Escande shifted the symbolic importance of Boedo, the Viejo Gasómetro to how *hinchas* identified with San Lorenzo (Chapter Seven). The processes of identification based on the concept of *pertenencia* – which literally translates as belonging – is a visceral embodiment of a collective attachment to the idea of San Lorenzo in Boedo. Previous chapters argued that narrative suggests a dynamic continuity of a past-present-future that provides ideological content to processes of identification. When *hinchas* say "*soy de San Lorenzo*" (I am from/of San Lorenzo) they are expressing

their identification to the idea of “San Lorenzo” as well as a sense of belonging to the club. What is the “San Lorenzo” that *hinchas* belong to? And, how does this sentimental belonging also become reflected in how *hinchas* argue that San Lorenzo belongs to Boedo?

When I met David from the *Peña del Oeste*, he gave me a tour of the *barrios* in the western municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires where the *peña* organizes. He explained how the *peña* was brought back to life in 2001 by a group of youth who went door to door in the neighbourhood handing out flyers looking for any *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. They strung-up banners across streets to advertise car rides to the Nuevo Gasómetro on match days. From a handful of older members the *Peña del Oeste* grew and now organizes several buses for between a hundred and two hundred people on match days. Estación Ciudadela is first station in the Province of Buenos Aires on the commuter train heading west out of the city and only one station away from the stadium of Velez Sarsfield on located in Liniers in the west of CABA. The station has been claimed by the *peña* and decorated in blue and red. Giant letters, CASLA, the initials of the club adorn the station wall. I asked David why they had put so much work into decorating the station and he began to explain that they wanted to improve the *barrio*. They had decided to clean up and paint the station. David described how members of the *peña* contributed what they could: someone had donated the paint, David bought paint brushes, on match day someone else was responsible for organizing the buses. He told me that they “do this for San Lorenzo.”

It is common for *cuervos* to claim that they make sacrifices for San Lorenzo. Reflecting back on the Newell's match I remembered how everyone stayed on the terraces during the half-time, no one left the stadium, despite their emotional anxiety of the impending relegation of the club. They suffered through their emotions. On other occasions, *hinchas* stayed through torrential down pours and cold winds or sweltering summer heat, sweat pouring out, holding their place on the terrace till the final whistle. *Hinchas* are often engaged activities that they describe as 'giving to' the club or required by the relationship to their club. Such activities do not necessarily only relate to football or a match, and they can occur in the spaces and times outside the stadium.

After the meeting at the *Peña del Oeste*, I had a chance to talk with David more this time with José, an older *cuervo*. I mentioned to them that I was having difficulties understanding what *hinchas* meant by "San Lorenzo." Between the two they mentioned *pertenencia* (roughly belonging) as an idea that emerged in several different ways: the feeling of belonging within San Lorenzo, the idea that San Lorenzo belongs in Boedo, and that *hinchas* belong to their club. For both David and José, their description of "San Lorenzo" reflected a personal and emotional connection to the club. I asked them what is meant by "Soy de San Lorenzo." José was the first to respond, "It is something that is taught to you, transmitted to you by your family when you are really small. You buy into it, adopt it. You give a lot because you receive a lot."

Almost immediately, however, David complicated the idea of a reciprocating relationship by describing how being emotionally committed to the team often leads to a

negative experience. “The emotional connection is difficult to explain to someone else,” David began.

When they don't share it how can I explain it? I love my wife, I care for my daughter a lot, but they give their love back to me. You understand? There are times when San Lorenzo doesn't give anything back. Times when San Lorenzo gives through a win, a moment of happiness that is shared with you. But think of this: I work the whole week, every day twelve hours, so that on Saturday I can go to the stadium. I went to the stadium like an idiot just to watch them lose to Boca and begin the week with all the *hinchas* of Boca shitting on me. It isn't something I volunteered for, on the contrary, it ruined this week for me.

The previous week San Lorenzo had lost 3-1 away to Boca Juniors, a major rival for San Lorenzo. Being the only club in Argentinian football to carry a favourable record against Boca Juniors, San Lorenzo fans take a lot of pride from their historic dominance over Boca. Occupying the away terrace at the top of Boca's Bombonera stadium, San Lorenzo's *hinchada* ended the match singing above the local crowd “let's go San Lorenzo, I'll support you for my whole life, and I'll follow you from heaven when I die. I'm never going to separate from you because I love you, and I swear to you that I won't stop till the return to Boedo.” Anger and frustration from the match was translated into the tone of the melody but within the lyrics there was an honest affirmation of the emotional attachment to the club. Over the following week, however, *cuervos* would be reminded about the loss and their emotional investment exposed them to being insulted by their rivals.

As a result, looking for a utilitarian reciprocation of emotions does not properly articulate the motivations of a *hincha*. Negative emotions, as David expressed, are experienced beyond the immediate reaction to a loss and often continue throughout the

week. Vale, one of the Malditos, described how during San Lorenzo's battle against relegation one of the worst parts was going to work after a disappointing result. With anger in her voice she told the group how guys in her office teased her and made jokes about San Lorenzo's situation. Others in the group described similar situations. They agreed that the worst part was that those who made jokes were not "real *hinchas*." Real *hinchas* would know the situation was not a joke. Vale doubted others in her office even watched the matches, saying they couldn't even name the players on their team. But dealing with the insults is part of maintaining faithful commitment to the club. Receiving an emotional happiness from winning is rare for *hinchas* of most clubs. The rises and falls of emotional attachment to the club, however, give significance to belonging to the club.

Collective solidarity is formed in praxis. People apprehend and feel their connection to others through their body. From ethnographic accounts with organizers of counter-summit protests during the alter-globalization movement, Juris notes how the experiences "generate powerful feelings, including terror, fear, panic, solidarity, and joy" (Juris 2008:64). Discursive claims to unity can be embellished or unrepresentative, though performative towards such unity. For participants it is often in the practical experience that unity can become affirmed and realized. Emotions emerge performatively through the body in action. In the cases of the protests Juris finds that "as performative rituals, counter-summit mobilizations operate by transforming effect: amplifying an initiating emotion, such as anger or rage, and transferring it into a sense of collective solidarity" (Juris 2008:65). Juris found that many moments of a heightened sense of

solidarity were experienced when marchers were engaged in confrontational actions, either as they were attacked by police or performatively confronting social norms non-violently by engaging in symbolically transgressive actions. *Hinchas* who attend matches on the terraces regularly put their bodies into physically demanding contexts; for some in the *hinchada* this can mean preparations for violence. While personal experiences are varied, as they are in protest marches, the collective efforts are productive of a shared understanding. The rising and falling intensity of a match brings out a sense of belonging with other people in the stadium.

Solidarity emerges also in part through the dialogic opposition against a rival. Confrontation is often accompanied by strong emotional sensations. The potentiality of violent confrontation should be recognized as contributing to the form of solidarity emergent within Argentinian stadiums. Georges Sorel advocated for recognizing a relationship between collective solidarity and violence: “at such moments, we are dominated by an overwhelming emotion; but everybody now recognizes that movement is the essence of emotional life, and it is, then, in terms of movement that we must speak of creative consciousness” (Sorel 1961:48). Sorel felt that violence was necessary to create an oppositional rupture through which the formation of a social solidarity of the proletariat could fully realize itself. How physical violence emerges within Argentinian football rivalries is too complex of a question to be dealt with here. Rather the issue is raised to recognize how the oppositional structure of football rivalries contributes to the emotional experiences of solidarity.

The relationship between rival opponents, however, is dynamic and while antagonistic does not necessarily need to be violent. In the wake of violence between *hinchas* of Huracán and San Lorenzo, several *hinchas* took to social media to come out against violence between the two clubs. Instead they advocated recognizing the “folklore” of the rivalry. The Grupo Artístico de Boedo painted a mural that depicted a *hincha* of San Lorenzo and *hincha* of Huracán in an embrace stating: “We are *clásico*, not enemies! The biggest *clásico* between *barrios* in the world.” In stadiums around the world, there is a general ambiguity to the consequences of these emotional exchanges between rivals; in the vast majority of cases the discursive threats are not followed upon with action (Bromberger 1995). The performative rivalry does, however, allow for experiences of anger or rage to emerge and contribute to the emotional solidarity experienced in the stadium. A construction of rivalry between groups of *hinchas* and the police similarly is seen to give rise to bonds of solidarity amongst both sides (Aragón 2011). Football’s performative rivalries have been shown to be translated into other contexts. Dorsey (2013) notes in the case of Egyptian and Turkish ultras, that the embodied knowledge of facing police in regular confrontations in and around the stadium prepared ultras for their participation in the political protests, often taking front-line positions when facing the agents of the state.

*Hinchas* can move away from their club as their passionate relationship to their club dissipates. The crowd also experiences conjunctures of emotional highs and lows. Emotional production is not stable or consistent and often entails significant risks. In the case of counter-summit protests, a contradiction emerged. Actions more favourably

received by the media, because they did not result in confrontations with the police and property destruction, often did not reach the emotional highs amongst the participants as a result became less meaningful for the participants. Overtime this contradiction became difficult for organizers to manage, as increasingly repressive police tactics also discouraged participation and made confrontations during mobilizations more risky (Juris 2008:66-7). Similarly, some *hinchas* cite their own discomfort and fear of violence as reasons why they stay away from the stadium. On the other hand, attempting to manipulate emotions can lead to experiences that are perceived as inauthentic. *Hinchas* with whom I spent time with were particularly dismissive of efforts by outsiders to manipulate their emotional connection to their club. Most often they pejoratively identified such “marketing” attempts in the interest of “business” as having a limited or negative effect on their emotional connections. More coercive actions: the regulation of stadium spaces, the deployment of security, and a ban on away fans since 2013 can also be seen as affecting the emotional range of *hinchas*. Finally, maintaining an emotional connection to a club over time is exhausting and requires work. The ritualistic regularity of the matches is helpful to the reproduction of solidarity but it can also be emotionally and physically draining.

At an away match versus Lanús, a team in the Greater Buenos Aires, a man standing beside me on the terraces whom I'd met on the trip to the stadium, told me “it does not matter where you come from, you can be poor, you can be rich, there is only one condition for you to be here: you have to support San Lorenzo.” His idea of belonging produced a social acceptance. He travelled from Rosario for the match and like me had

joined one of the groups organizing transportation to the match without knowing anyone in particular, an activity he did whenever he could manage the time. Social levelling in the stadium is not universal and there are still many barriers, including gender, and contradictions that must be navigated beyond the ability to say “*soy de San Lorenzo.*” Yet his description is a powerful one that helps to articulate the expectations *hinchas* have of their community.

The social reproductive capacity of the football crowd is compelling. Around the world supporters of many football and sports teams demonstrate an ability to reproduce their community’s emotional relationships over time. Shared practices can be simultaneously about the maintenance (reproduction), as they are about a creative transformation of the community.<sup>6</sup> I have focused previously on how a community emerges out of the collective practices of the *hinchada* (Chapter Four). Outside the stadium, chance encounters with *hinchas* of the same team, often evolve into positive social interactions: more intimate conversations than would be otherwise be possible between strangers; suggesting that there is a particular form of social trust that emerges because of a sense of belonging. The constitutive practices of belonging are not necessarily conservative because of their emphasis on social reproduction and solidarity. Transformative and, in rare moments, radical shifts are possible. Through the narrative identification with a club, *hinchas* interact with shared ideologies of what it means to belong. New components of the narrative can be introduced through an alternative

<sup>6</sup> The carnivalesque, for Bakhtin (1984), is first and foremost defined by its active and symbolic emphasis on social reproduction.

interpretation of experience and a reconfiguration of the past, while leaving a core social commitment to belonging enacted. This process is ambiguous, that is it is not necessarily normative or directed towards any particular political project, unexpected, and dependent on context.<sup>7</sup> The politicization of fandom, while rare, is emergent within its formation of belonging. Later in this chapter, I look at how the culture of the stadium was deployed onto the streets in carnivalesque protest.

*Pertenencia* as a sense of belonging to a particular place, in this case of San Lorenzo to Boedo, is a recurrent theme in how Argentinian *hinchas* articulate the permanence of their community. The *barrio* and the football stadium are crucial places for the reproduction of community (Chapters Three and Four). *Cuervos* belong to San Lorenzo, but San Lorenzo belongs in and to Boedo. Belonging in and to Boedo resonates with Argentinian football's territoriality (Chapters Two and Three). But it is also an expression of the specific memory work of *hinchas* of San Lorenzo (Chapter Seven). In this way, *pertenencia* helps to articulate both an ideology about the club's place, as well personal narratives of San Lorenzo's history. The entangling of how individuals identify as *hinchas* of San Lorenzo with the productive qualities of the community of *hinchas* provides the basis of how the *Vuelta a Boedo* became a social movement within the club. I now turn to how an ideological and emotional connections of belonging to a particular place merge to create the political act of the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign.

<sup>7</sup> While in the case of organized football supporters in Turkey and Egypt, ultras groups joined anti-authoritarian protests, in the context of the break up of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, many football supporters groups became deeply nationalistic and in some cases became involved with ethnic-militias during the wars (Brentin 2016).

### 8.3 Genres of Crowds

In support of the *Vuelta a Boedo*, the SCH organized several mobilizations to the city centre and to the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires. On 24 November 2010, the presentation of the Project of the Law of Historic Restitution by legislator Laura García Tuñón was accompanied by the first march to the Legislature of 2000 *cuervos*. The following year, two marches, on 12 April and on 21 June, saw a significant growth in the numbers mobilized: from 20 000 to 40 000 people. The mobilizations received significant coverage from national newspapers and television news. A letter was presented to the French Ambassador on 15 December 2011 asking for the French government to help bring Carrefour to the negotiation table. The letter cited France's efforts to recognize the state's complicity in the disappearances and deaths of French citizens Alice Domon and Leonie Duquet.<sup>8</sup> The letter to the ambassador reaffirmed the *Vuelta a Boedo's* connection to Argentina's human rights campaign: "The same dictatorship attempted to disappear our beloved Club. Brigadier Osvaldo Cacciatore, Mayor during those years, through extortionist methods squeezed the leaders of the Institution and obligated San Lorenzo to sell its facilities for a vile price."

On the day the letter was presented to the ambassador, thousands of *hinchas* transformed the plaza in front of the embassy in the upper-class *barrio* of Recoleta into a stadium terrace. Curious neighbours appeared on their balconies above as flares and smoke waffled in the air. A large banner suspended between two polls stated: "Carrefour – Mariva = Dictadura;" citing a connection between the Uruguayan company, which had

<sup>8</sup> Domon and Duquet were nuns who worked in Buenos Aires' *villas*. During the dictatorship they became involved with the Madres de Plaza de Mayo when they were kidnapped, tortured, and killed in 1977.

paid for the San Lorenzo property in 1982, and the dictatorship. Another read “A.Astiz – L. Duquet – A. Domon – Gasómetro = Dictadura – Genocidio – Corrupción”<sup>9</sup> furthering the ideological link of the *Vuelta a Boedo* as a component of restorative justice. Adolfo Res stood on top of a van, using a megaphone to address the crowd, as representatives of the SCH met with the ambassador. “The march to the embassy was the most brilliant march that we did,” Res told me.

Even though it was the march with the least amount of people, seven thousand, why? Because, listen to this, a guy from Angola, the country Angola, emailed me to tell him he supports the *Vuelta a Boedo*. It crossed borders. It went around the world. They made a video that they sent to France, everything in French; we did a lot of things. It was a lot of work so that the world understood that Carrefour was with the military dictatorship. We did some dirty work against Carrefour that they would be connected to the dictatorship and it hurt them. This was the biggest play that we made. Posters and everything.

What Res admits as “dirty work” was a strategic transformation of the campaign;

Carrefour’s lack of response to overtures to negotiate was a significant political obstacle.

Previous connections made between the sale of the Gasómetro property and the violence of the dictatorship had already established the human rights case of the *Vuelta a Boedo*.

The narrative connection of human rights campaigns in Argentina was intended to shame

Carrefour into action. The move suggested the capacity of the campaign to effectively

construct and shift the framing of their actions. Amidst the crowd, the evocation of the

<sup>9</sup> Alfredo Astiz was a member of the GT 3.3.2 based in the Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) and involved in the sequestering, torture, and murder of many political prisoners at ESMA. Astiz had infiltrated the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo and was involved in the disappearance of twelve members of the organization, including the two French nuns. Astiz was convicted and sentenced in absentia by a French court on 16 March 1990 for his role in their torture and disappearance. France continued to pursue his extradition. An Argentinian court convicted Astiz of crimes against humanity on 27 October 2011 after the *Ley de Punto Final* was declared unconstitutional in 2005.

connection between the dictatorship and Carrefour was earnest. The risk was whether or not a wider audience would similarly accept such an interpretation.

Intertextuality, Sian Lazar (2015) argues, suggests the possibilities for reading the semiotic performativity of mobilizations and protests. Originating from the Bakhtin's analysis of language and literature, intertextuality describes the ongoing processes of producing and receiving meaning. In this perspective, a text is meaningful through its dynamic "interface" with at least one, but potentially more, other texts that both inform the meaning produced into the text and the texts that contribute to the interpretive reception (Briggs and Bauman 1992). Intertextuality argues that a text emerges within its historical and relational context and emphasizes on the dynamic reception (reading) of the text. Applying the concept of intertextuality implies recognizing a dialogic process:

We could imagine this circulation as a symbolic economy of political action. As practices cite each other, they become more than the sum of their parts, in this case injecting subversive potential into mainstream modes of action and conversely claiming that more subversive modes of action are, in fact, part of mainstream performances of national belonging. Thus, intertextuality becomes a form of political construction, and festivals, parades, and protests not only are performative practices in their own right but also come to have a different sense and effect as a result of their intertextual relation to each other (Lazar 2015:249).

The *Subcomisión*'s letter cited the use of political memory to articulate the *Vuelta a Boedo*'s claim as participant in Argentina's human rights movement, relating the campaign to arguments made by the French government in regards to its own citizens disappeared and murdered during the dictatorship. In doing so the performative meaning of being a *hinch*a of San Lorenzo became connected to the narrative construction of other victims of the dictatorship. The risk of such referencing is that the intended meanings are

misinterpreted or not made (Juris 2008; Lazar 2015). As Adolfo Res suggested, influencing the interpretation of the French government was not necessarily the main political objective, rather the success of the mobilization was to gain a wider global exposure for *Vuelta a Boedo*. While unexpectedly linking the loss of a football stadium to a call for justice, the international resonance of the act also connected to the idea of the football stadium as a site of social interaction.

The mobilization of a crowd is a politically significant practice in Argentinian politics. Political parties, unions, community associations, and civil society organizations all draw upon the mobilization of the crowd to articulate political demands and symbolically represent their power.<sup>10</sup> Contemporary Argentinian politics is marked by the protests that brought down the government in 2001, which informed a relevant repertoire of practices that intonate the potentiality of crowd (Auyero 2006; North and Huber 2004). Robben (2005) traces the emergence and conjunctures of the political crowd in Argentina. Starting in the early twentieth century, crowds have been regularly mobilized by political leaders as symbols of their popular bases. Arguably, this practice was fully incorporated into Argentinian practices of political parties during the Peronist period. A crowd has often been viewed with a duality: as symbols of power and influence but simultaneously distrusted for their potential disruptive quality. During the civic-military dictatorship, Robben argues that, “the military’s fear of the revolutionary potential of crowds was

<sup>10</sup> The *piquetero* movement, which emerged in the 1990s with blockades protesting the loss of employment and economic instability following the privatization of the state-owned oil company YPF and continued post-2001 in a more organized capacity, demonstrates the contested ground on which political organizing of the crowd occurs within Argentina. At times parties attempt to co-opt and integrate such organizing into their own political agendas leading to negotiated demands on the state, while reflecting the complexity of clientelist politics organizing more generally (Alcaniz and Scheier 2007; Epstein 2003).

complicated by a fascination with their spiritual cohesion and dogged resolution. Such force made Argentine dictators beam with an air of potency and invincibility in the sight of a crowd chanting their name; a crowd that was excited yet disciplined” (2005:85).

From an intertextual perspective, an interpretive readings of protests relies on this wider context of protest history in Argentina.

Genres is a concept applied through literary and linguistic analysis as an ordering or orienting framework. From a view onto the fringes of genre, the limitations of its categorization, and the messy and ambiguous boundaries of such categories, Briggs and Bauman argue that genres are intertextual “products of an ongoing process of producing and receiving” (1992:146). Within a linguistic setting, genre is noted to have performative aspects (Csordas 1987). The “intertextual relations” that lend to genre’s performative qualities as a process of ordering, unifying or bounding relates to power:

Genre thus pertains crucially to negotiations of identity and power – by invoking a particular genre, producers of discourse assert (tacitly or explicitly) that they possess the authority needed to decontextualize discourse that bears these historical and social connections and to recontextualize it in the current discursive setting (Briggs and Bauman 1992:148).

As a metaphor for semiotic practices of crowds, genre helps to think about how different collective practices are read as meaningful. Here I want to point to the distinction between the football stadium crowd and the street protest. The distinction of these types of crowds is the result of the interpretive frameworks applied, which also implies their distinct role within processes of political hegemony.

When looking at political protests and stadium crowds as different genres of mass mobilizations in Argentina, it becomes possible to think of the ways in which there is

crossover and mutual citation. The dialogic interaction between political mobilizations and football matches is historic and disentangling when the process began is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, recognizing the relationship helps to define the intertextuality used by the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign. From the blockades of the *piqueteros* (picketers) to the *cacerolazo* (pot-banging) of middle-class protests to the convergences from the peripheries to the city centre, Buenos Aires is a site for a wide variety of techniques utilized through the political mobilizations of the crowd. The downtown core of the city, the location of various sites of power from the Presidential Palace, Supreme Court, the Legislature of the CABA, the National Congress, and several other ministries, and symbolic locations like the Plaza de Mayo and Obelisko, is often disrupted by midweek protests. Organization of the demonstrations is often reminiscent of the preparations that *hinchas* make for away matches. For larger mobilizations, *barrio* and district-based organizers, embedded in civil society or a political party's clientelist network, provide transportation to the city-centre with pre-arranged meeting points similar to the *peñas* of a football club. Run-down retired school buses as well as flatbed trucks are used to carry people. Colourful banners and flags, which dominate the appearance of most mobilizations, index political and syndicalist affiliations. Unlike a football stadium, multiple factions across political parties and civil society organizations will compose the largest mobilizations; this diversity of organizations converges often around specific issues or political alliances. Many organizations that represent lower income *barrios* and *villas* are often accompanied by drummers and brass instruments, similar to the *murgas* and *bandas* in a football stadium. There is significant repetition in

the melodic repertoire of organized protesters, *murgas*, and the football crowd.<sup>11</sup> Practices like the *cacerolazo*, when marchers bang on pots and pans, are divergent from football crowds as they intend to symbolically communicate a spontaneous rather than organized quality.<sup>12</sup>

The *Vuelta a Boedo* suggests simultaneous “citation” and translation of practices from different sources into the mobilization of *hinchas* towards its political cause. This intertextual process contributes to the meaningful experience of *hinchas* through their participation but also to the creative possibilities of transforming crowd dynamics from one context into another. Briggs and Bauman write, “mixing genres foregrounds the possibility of using intertextual gaps as points of departure for working the power of generic intertextuality backwards, as it were, in exploring and reshaping the formal, interpretive, and ideological power of the constituent genres and their relationship” (Briggs and Bauman 1992:154). Gaps, emergent from efforts to conform to or create distance from a genre’s boundaries, are spaces of creativity. The *Vuelta a Boedo*’s mobilizations are performative encounters between the political and stadium crowds, creating new dynamics to be dealt with politically.

11 The Peronist Campora and Juventud Peronista are two political groups known for transforming melodies used by football crowds into political songs with lyrics that support Peronist politics. Similar to football songs, the lyrics often reference a life long support and historic moments. Activists also use lyrics to represent the ideological positions of their groups.

12 Protests against the government of Cristina Fernandez Kirchner produced significant crowds in 2012 including the #8N march organized in part by major media companies *La Nación* and *Grupo Clarín*. Many of the protests featured people banging pots with wooden spoons and “cited” historic Peronist actions and mass protests, intonation that a political crisis and loss of popular support was faced by Fernandez Kirchner’s Frente por la Victoria (also see: Lazar 2015).

#### **8.4 100 000 *Cuervos* to the Plaza de Mayo**

On 8 March 2012, the *Subcomisión del Hincha* organized their largest mobilization to the iconic Plaza de Mayo, a focal point of political power in Argentina, banked by the Presidential Casa Rosada, the original City Hall, and the Cathedral of Buenos Aires. It is also in Plaza de Mayo where mothers of the disappeared organized a weekly vigil carrying the pictures of their lost children as they circled the central obelisk. Preparations for the *8 de Marzo* rally began months in advance. Weekly stands at various locations in Boedo and in Buenos Aires' centre leading up to the march advertised the campaign and encouraged the participation of *hinchas* and a wider public. The SCH ambitiously set a target of 100 000 people, a number that was repeatedly promoted through graffiti and poster advertising. One bus company, owned by a *cuervo*, donated advertising space on the back of their buses. Others produced videos and made banners that they hung up across the street to promote the march. The advertising transposed practices of organizing a political rally. Alongside the growing attention to the *Vuelta a Boedo*, San Lorenzo's football team was in the middle of its slide down the relegation table. The sentimental context was conflicted. The SCH desired a celebratory atmosphere, while in relation to the football team *hinchas* were increasingly expressing frustration, anger, and depression as the result of the team's performance.

As the date moved closer, the leadership of the SCH focused their weekly meetings on the march. The meetings held at San Lorenzo's *Casa del Vitalicio* (House for Lifelong members) in Boedo. Meetings are normally attended by fifty to a hundred *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, though in the lead up to the march the room overflowed pushing

the number towards 200. In the sweltering main room of the *Casa del Vitalicio* people crowded around the prominently placed scale-model of the Viejo Gasómetro on a podium under a glass case faced towards the large wooden table at the far end of the room. Meetings regularly consisted of lengthy presentations by SCH President Claudio Simeone, Marcelo Culotta, and Adolfo Res followed by a shorter question and answer period. Photographs of San Lorenzo's championship teams adorn the walls behind the speakers. To the front, four small rows of chairs are occupied by the oldest in the crowd. There is a mix of older and younger *hinchas*. Women make up a higher percentage than is found on the terraces. Some of the men are wearing suits while others are in well-worn jerseys. The SCH represents a diversity of San Lorenzo's *hinchas*.

At the final meeting before the 8 March, Simeone spoke about the atmosphere the SCH hoped to create. A small fan near the front of the room circulated the air, the only respite from the late-summer heat in the humid room. Everyone was intently focused on listening. Simeone told the audience that the SCH must work to ensure that the march continued in the tradition of the previous peaceful mobilizations. Aware of the public perception of *hinchas* as disruptive, Simeone explained that the *Vuelta a Boedo* supporters should avoid bringing pyrotechnics to the march. Another preoccupation was the fear of property damage to the Carrefour. Everyone was reminded that San Lorenzo still needed to negotiate a settlement with the company and any property damage or violence would hurt the campaign.

It was later mentioned to me that the SCH had strategically played with the public perception of *hinchas* as violent and disruptive. While not wanting to lose public favour

because of a violent or destructive action, the SCH was also conscious that they achieved broader media support when their marches reflected a positive celebratory behaviour of *hinchas*. Behind the scenes, however, the SCH reminded politicians about the potential for violence. In the lead up to the final vote, Claudio Simeone later described how he pulled a politician close while in a hand shake, and with a serious tone said the SCH could not promise that future rallies would be as peaceful if the vote did not pass. Because the SCH had gained recognition for organizing the *Vuelta a Boedo* as a non-violent campaign, politicians risked the public interpreting their (in)actions as the cause of any potential disruption and violence. *Hinchas* of San Lorenzo were quick to contrast the *Vuelta a Boedo* rallies with Boca Junior's annual *Dia del Hinchas* celebrated every 12 December at the Obelisko in Buenos Aires' centre. On several occasions the anniversary has been marked by damage to nearby businesses and violent confrontations with police. More generally in Argentina mass demonstrations play with and reflect the duality of festive celebration and potential violence.

A large "caravan" was planned to leave from in front of the Carrefour on Avenida La Plata. Several of the *peñas* provided buses to first bring *cuervos* from the municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires to Boedo. *Hinchas*, mostly a younger crowd, started to gather around 3 PM in front of the Carrefour; which was still closed because of the construction of a new roof. Small groups of friends shared bottles of beer and boxed wine. Banners from the stadium were put up on the fence in front of the Carrefour as Avenida La Plata became congested with people. Buses and cars were rerouted several blocks away. People were wearing San Lorenzo jerseys demonstrating

the evolution of its design over the years. A banner across the parking lot entrance stated: “Carrefour will not open again.” Two or three entrepreneurs were selling flags with the image of the Viejo Gasómetro and the words “We will return to Boedo” along with t-shirts and hats. By four, a circle pit had formed around a group singing stadium songs, others roam up and down the street.

Then from the south, a long lineup of retired school buses, their orange paint chipped and windows cracked, came up the street pushing the crowd to one side. The very same buses bring fans to away matches, activists to political rallies, and transport the *murgas* around the city during carnival time. Volunteers in yellow pinnies corralled people towards the buses. Several of the buses were quickly claimed by a *peña* or larger group, while others were filled by random individuals and small groups of friends. Jumping on the closest bus, I found a spot in one of the few remaining empty seats. People quickly filled up the aisle. Outside, cars draped in blue and red flags and *cuervos* on motorcycles assembled alongside the buses. It took several minutes for the mass of people to load into a vehicle. Everyone was very at ease surrounded by friends and strangers. The plan is for the buses to take us to the Avenida 9 de Julio, most of the 7.5km to the Plaza de Mayo. The young woman beside me squeezed out the window as our bus begins to sing. Hands beat on the metal roof, vibrating the loose screws in the handrails. She waved outside to the motorcycles beside us. In the back a group of guys began to jump up and down as if they were on the terraces and the bus sways back-and-forth.

We lurched forward nearly knocking over three teenagers at the front. The one in the middle, without a shirt on, tried to steady himself as the cheap wine spilt from the box

in his, the top cut off. Eyes half closed, he weaved to the motion of the bus. On the floor there were two plastic bags, one with ice and in other a half dozen or more cartons of wine. He offered the wine to a stranger standing nearby who declined the offer before smirking to the rest of the bus. As the caravan turned down Avenida San Juan towards the city centre, taking over the street's five lanes, neighbours in Boedo stepped out on to the sidewalks to wave. After crossing the iconic intersection of Boedo and San Juan, we entered the *barrio* of San Cristobal, often associated with CA Huracán. Between songs I heard glimpses of the other buses, each was a self-contained choir. Once and a while, our bus caught the melody and rhythm from a nearby bus. Most of the songs included a reference Boedo and the campaign to return, but we also sung about winning championships and beating Huracán. People were still coming out onto the street as we passed by to wave at the festive atmosphere but our progress was slow. I decided to step off the bus and walk alongside. Many of the buses were bursting with people, bodies were pushed halfway out the windows, hands pumping in the air to their rhythm. Several buses passed by with *hinchas* riding on the roof. What normally takes twenty minutes in traffic had turned into a procession lasting forty minutes. The iconic image of Evita on the side of a building loomed over as the buses as the caravan finally reaches the massive north-south Avenida 9 de Julio that cuts through city centre. Rush-hour traffic was completely stopped as *hinchas* began to pour out of the vehicles forming a parade down the diagonal avenue towards the Plaza de Mayo.

Loud concussive fireworks sent sound-waves ricocheting off the surrounding office buildings. Blue and red smoke floated in the air. Disruptions of sight, sound, and

movement are common in Argentinian political marches and, to a certain extent, have become normalized in the city centre. No one in the crowd seemed to react to the almost deafening noise as we streamed forwards. From the front of the crowd a faint melody emerged that slowly became clarified as the voices around me picked it up: “let me see if you hear me, let me see if you understand, the *Vuelta a Boedo* is backed by the people.” The flow of people, from in the middle, seemed endless. Anonymity within the crowd was unexpectedly broken by familiar friends and acquaintances. I ran into men from the Bar San Lorenzo and we met with warm embraces and ecstatic happiness. I quickly lost them again as we kept moving. The physical contact with strangers increased as the crowd compressed around obstacles and moved forward leaving me with the sensation of interconnection, the festive atmosphere removing a sense of risk or danger.

The monument to Bolivar on his horse had been plastered with the posters linking Carrefour to the dictatorship, the same ones that appeared during the march to the French embassy. A San Lorenzo flag is draped out of the corner window of an office in Legislature of Buenos Aires building. Our caravan of people collided with the *cuervos* who arrived earlier at the Plaza de Mayo, many of whom came from offices in the centre or took the metro. The crowd was multi-generational and many came as families, small children, and young adults with their parents. On top of a flat bed trailer the *banda* of the Chiflados de Boedo *murga* played to the costumed dancers on the street below. A laser light projected the image of Father Lorenzo Massa onto the historic town hall and Cathedral of Buenos Aires, catching the smoke rising from the barbecues setup to sell sausages. Sellers carrying styrofoam coolers with beer and bottled water pushed against

the stream of the crowd. The informal economy that supports marches and rallies is well established and capable of appearing at a moment's notice. A semi-permanent riot-fence divided a quarter of the plaza in front of the Casa Rosada acting like the *pulmón* in the stadium. A stage flanked by portable screens was placed in front of the fence. Despite the amplifying speakers, it was hard to hear the speeches from the back of the crowd. People pushed towards the stage but it was hard to find space between the compressed bodies.

As I got half-way to the stage the crowd began to chant: "Adolfo, dear friend, Boedo is with you!" The chant lasted for a minute before the crowd quieted itself as the historian took the microphone. Many strained to hear his voice and Res was consistently interrupted by songs. To the melody of Fito Paez's *Y dale Alegría a mi Corazón*, they sing "And give happiness, happiness to my heart, the *Vuelta a Boedo* is my obsession. To have a stadium like the one in wood, on Avenida La Plata as champion. We will return, to the *barrio* that saw San Lorenzo born."<sup>13</sup> Adolfo at the front of the stage stated in between the chants, "We made a caravan this evening that will enter into history as the most important caravan in Argentinian sport. Made by the people of San Lorenzo." Playing with the narrative themes of belonging and justice Adolfo continued, his voice hoarse from yelling into the microphone, "they [the politicians] have to help us, San Lorenzo, because this is an act of justice." By nine the crowd began to disperse; some headed back to the buses provided by their *peñas* while others used the subway. The next day every newspaper including the front page of *Olé* carried an image of the 8 March

13 "Y dale alegría, alegría a mi corazón. La vuelta para Boedo es mi obsesión. A tener una cancha como la del tablón, en Avenida La Plata salir campeón. Vamos volver al barrio que San Lorenzo lo vio nacer." Commonly *hinchadas* use the familiar melody to sing about winning the Copa Libertadores and it has since been used at political rallies by the Peronist Campora.

rally, repeating an estimate of 100 000 on the Plaza de Mayo. Several of the news channels the night before had carried live coverage.

Remembering the 8 March mobilization, Aldana Flores, a member of the *Peña Oeste* and producer of San Lorenzo TV, described the connection she made to her father through the *Vuelta a Boedo*:

[The 8 March] I went with my dad. I had come back from each of the previous marches very emotional and crying. I said to him that he has to go and he kept saying he wanted to go. I told him on the 8 March he needed to be there with me, I wanted to share what I knew was going to be a personal moment with him. We planned everything: we came from the west of the city in the van that my dad owns, we had a huge flag, and we were honking the horn when arrived at the Avenida La Plata... We stopped and asked people if they were part of the march. We opened the doors of the van and told them get in. No lie, we were twenty people inside, everyone was singing. And if you can picture the scene: buses, vans, people walking, families, kids, babies, older people, lots of older people. When we arrived at the Plaza de Mayo I just hugged my friends and as we began to cry I said to them 'We've returned' because we felt at that moment there was no one could stop us, it was a reality. We knew that no one could deny the 100 000 people the return of what belonged to us.

Her voice broke as the memories come back to her. The overlapping personal relationships with the objective of returning San Lorenzo to Boedo make the narrative significance of the *Vuelta a Boedo* real. Aldana took a brief moment to refocus.

Of course, we knew they hadn't passed the law yet but in our hearts we felt no one could take from us this experience, this feeling of returning. There was so many people we couldn't hear anything from the speakers... The only thing that was important to us was the feeling and dream of returning.

The narrative construction of belonging, the social injustice faced by San Lorenzo, and an emotional embodiment solidified in Aldana's recollection of the 8 March rally. Listening to Aldana I felt a similar emotional resonance, which refracted through my own experiences of the rally and other events. The influence of the idea of returning to Boedo

was made real through the relationships articulated through the message of the *Vuelta a Boedo* campaign.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

Mass mobilizations produced an embodied experience of the *Vuelta a Boedo*. The sense of *pertenencia* that is lived out in the football stadium and daily interactions of *hinchas* was reflected and refracted through the mobilizations, marches, and rallies. By reading the such actions through an intertextual perspective, it is possible to contemplate the transposition of the football crowd into a politicized action. The mobilizations were interpreted from various different perspectives, from that of the participants to the politicians in opposition to the *Vuelta a Boedo*. The threat of the football crowd as violent, while never realized, contributed to the potential power of the mobilizations. Politicians, unconvinced about the moral significance of the *Vuelta a Boedo* and who were reluctant to support the campaign because of ideological opposition to the idea of expropriating property from a private company, were forced to consider an alternative reading of the situation. In part the *Vuelta a Boedo* contributed to and was itself a refraction of a broad history of crowd politics in Argentina, both being able to draw upon a repertoire of organizing practices that are familiar to many Argentinians while also communicating a particular symbolic power through action.

Adolfo Res described years of lobbying and the various personal motivations of several different politicians he encountered: from politicians interested in the possible social and cultural regeneration of the South of Buenos Aires, to *hinchas* of San Lorenzo,

to others more engaged by the inter-party politics and the consequences of not becoming involved in the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Deftly negotiating these different political motivations to move the legislation through the CABA should not be understated or ignored as they reveal the practical and historic relationship football clubs and politicians have formed. Politicians also ‘read’ crowds. Without the mobilization of a mass crowd it would have been difficult for lobbying efforts to influence politicians of the importance of the *Vuelta a Boedo*.

Further, the mass mobilizations provided *hinchas* of San Lorenzo the opportunity to experience and embody the social significance of the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Those at a distance who were not able to be present at the marches constructed imaginary experiences that were nevertheless influential. Following a San Lorenzo match in Salta, in the far northwest corner of Argentina, a young member of the local *peña* described to me his hope for San Lorenzo’s return to Boedo. He told me how he had never been to Buenos Aires but hoped one day to see San Lorenzo play at a new stadium on Avenida La Plata. I asked him why the return would mean so much to him if he had never even been to Buenos Aires, let alone Boedo or Bajo Flores. He began to describe to me that the return to Boedo was the “dream” of all *San Lorencistas*; he cited the 8 March mobilization as proof of how *cuervos* felt out of place in the world and wanted to return to Boedo. The paradoxical sense of *pertenencia*, a sense of belonging, emerges through the displacement in the past. The shared memories of the Viejo Gasómetro articulate an imagined place to which San Lorenzo “belongs” that motivates *cuervos* to act. The idea of belonging and being placed became politically salient through the powerful

mobilizations, which emerge from an intertextual relationship between genres of crowds and the historic relationship between football and politics. For congress-member Horacio Pietragalla Corti, the *Vuelta a Boedo*, parallels aspects of his own life and his struggle to recover what for him was his lost identity.

## Chapter 9 San Lorenzo Returns to Boedo

A friend from the Bar San Lorenzo anxiously called me early afternoon on 15 November telling me to get over to the Bar Homer Manzi, where several members of the *Subcomisión del Hinchista* were gathering. Adolfo Res had been scheduled to film an interview in the café-bar, a counter-piece to a small rally organized by Carrefour workers and neighbours in opposition to the *Vuelta*. Wanting the Legislature to pass the Law of Historic Restitution before the end of the session, the SCH had been promoting another rally for 22 November. San Lorenzo's Vice-President Marcelo Tinelli had also increased the political pressure by using his top-rated primetime variety program *Showmatch* to promote the *Vuelta a Boedo*. Many *hinchistas* considered it likely that the City of Buenos Aires would follow the SCH's preferred timetable. A massive street party was planned for 22 November. Rumours from within the Legislature coming from allied politicians, however, created unexpected confusion about whether the vote was being moved forward. The sudden change created a sense of panic amongst the SCH activists gathering at the Cafe Homero Manzi. Many worried that the vote was moved forward to prevent a crowd from forming outside; it was also speculated that Carrefour had politically manoeuvred to prevent a vote on the *Vuelta a Boedo* legislation. Others suggested it was political ego.

By four in the afternoon, the situation had remained unclear. Realizing it would be difficult to mobilize a presence on the street if many *cuervos* left the city-centre after work, the SCH decided to place a call out to all *hinchistas* to converge outside of the

Legislature of Buenos Aires. Earlier in the day *hinchas* from CA Huracán had held their own protest in an effort to block the expropriation of part of their club's property and there were worries that San Lorenzo supporters would also cross paths with the small gathering organized by Carrefour. In a little over an hour from the call out *cuervos* began to gather on the pedestrian mall outside the Legislature. A remnant of residents of the Villa 31 protesting other legislation were finishing their rally as we arrived; Carrefour's and Huracán's protests both had ended earlier in the afternoon. After a short strategy meeting in a small café nearby, Adolfo Res and others in the leadership group of the *Vuelta a Boedo* went inside the Legislature. They had meetings with allied politicians, hoping to clarify the situation. *Peñas* from the suburbs began to arrive outside, stringing up their stadium banners between the trees and from the balconies of buildings. An employee within the Legislature slipped out on to the window ledges above us to change the building's illumination filters to blue and red. A well known drummer of the Buteller *banda* and two boys arrived with their drums. One was less than twelve and played a small *bombo* painted in the colours of San Lorenzo and could competently beat out rhythms for the thousand or so people now gathered.

By 7PM more than a dozen of the Malditos had arrived to join Rodrigo and me, some came directly from their offices in the downtown. The whole city block was filled. The festive atmosphere belied our general confusion about what was happening inside. A few people in the crowd had a contact inside the Legislature and passed along information. Rumour spread that Matías Lammens and Marcelo Tinelli had arrived, increasing the likelihood that there would be a vote but no one really knew for certain. A

young woman climbed onto the Legislature building, gripping onto the column, she leaned out like someone on the *para-avalanche* bar and encouraged everyone to sing.

Adolfo Res later explained the tense lobbying occurring behind the scenes. Three weeks before Res and Daniel Peso met with Bruno Screnci, the “visible face” of the centre-right PRO, the largest party in the Legislature, to set-out a timeline for the vote. Screnci at the time indicated an internal debate was happening within his party. Mayor Mauricio Macri was allegedly “fired up” because he was not made aware of the earlier vote that allowed the Banco Ciudad to create the trust. Further Macri, it was suggested, was upset that San Lorenzo and Marcelo Tinelli publicly appeared to be setting the 22 November voting date for the Legislature. Res told Screnci that San Lorenzo would organize a rally regardless if there was a vote or not, which in the circumstances was perceived as a veiled threat. More directly, he outlined that if an all-party unanimous vote was not possible they would pursue a simple majority with the opposition parties. As both sides reaffirmed their commitment to a conciliatory solution, Adolfo Res claims to have suggested 15 November as a potential date for the vote. Res and Peso, however left the meeting without an agreement and the SCH continued to prepare for 22 November. When rumours began to circulate that the vote would occur on 15 November, no one in the SCH had expected it. Upon entering the Legislature, representatives of the SCH were told by Screnci that a vote was not on the order that day. The SCH, however, had already placed its call-out for *cuervos* to converge on the Legislature. As some members of the Legislature, including perceived allies began to waver, Adolfo Res described that he became passionately involved, “I was crazy. I wanted to fight with everyone.” Others

warned the legislators about the stability of the crowd gathering outside if there was not a vote. Allied legislators sought to reassure the representatives that the vote would happen, if not on that day then in a few days time. And then, unexpectedly, the “*Ley de Restitución Historica*” appeared on the order of the day.

Back on the street we received word that the legislators were about to meet and that the Law of Historic Restitution would be voted on. The anticipation and energy was picking up. More drummers from the *banda* had arrived, as well as several cameras from the television channels. A few people were receiving a live video feed from inside the Legislature on their cell-phones. Adolfo Res and Claudio Simeone were on the floor with Lammens and Tinelli and that the Legislature was voting to change the order of items. Anonymous shouts pleaded for everyone to be quiet. Pocho beside me yelled out “hey hey!” and as if by command everyone, including the drums, fell silent. One *cuervo* later described it as the biggest penalty ever taken by San Lorenzo. The nervous energy was static; people were holding their breath. And like in a stadium, where a goal is sometimes be registered first by the roar of the crowd, a wave of sound rolled out, emanating from those closest to the cellphones. Instantly people were hugging. Tears flowed from Maldito’s eyes as he pulled me in. I could see behind him others who attended matches together since they were young children in each other’s arms. Florencia, who became involved with San Lorenzo earlier that year was also crying. She later told me how she had never imagined a football team transmitting such emotions. No one was left without tears as strangers embraced.

The drum began to pound once again, rapidly, as the crowd chanted “El Ciclón! El Ciclón!” their hands pumping in the air. The song quickly switched: “*Señores*, I’m from a *barrio*, a *barrio* of heart, *Señores*, I’m from Boedo, and I’m an *hincha* of *ciclón!*” The crowd went through a full match repertoire in just a few minutes. Coming out of the Legislature doors awkwardly balanced on the shoulders of the members of the SCH, Adolfo was carried through the crowd. Everyone chanted “Adolfo, beloved, Boedo is with you!” As he moved out of sight, the crowd changed again, shifting to the past tense: “San Lorenzo has returned, has returned, has returned, San Lorenzo has returned.” Finally exhausted people mingled, taking pictures. I see several *cuervos* from the *Peña del Oeste*. Then as if the team had just won a championship, it is decided everyone should head to Boedo.

We packed almost twenty people into the back the van of the *Fletero* who took us toward Avenida La Plata. *Cuervos* yelled out at each other as their vehicles passed each other heading towards Boedo. We arrived outside the Carrefour, its gates closed, where thousands had already taken over the street. Many who could not make it to the Legislature for the vote decided to head to Boedo instead. Alongside songs about returning to Boedo, a special effort was made to recognize rivals Huracán. Hand-held fireworks exploded overhead as it passed midnight; part of the impromptu celebration of a San Lorenzo returning home.

## 9.1 Epilogue

Since the passing of the Law of Historic Restitution progress for the *Vuelta a Boedo* has slowed, the result of difficult negotiations with Carrefour and a shifting political landscape in Argentina. To support the trust, *hinchas* and supporters purchased a symbolic square metre of property valued at \$2880 pesos each. Various agreements with the Banco Ciudad allowed for *hinchas* to pay in monthly instalments; advertised as the equivalent of a large pizza per month. By September 2016 more than 19 000 people have paid for a square metre, some purchasing many more than one. By purchasing a square metre, a *hincha* becomes a Re-founding Member, which is carries with it benefits such as the ability to purchase tickets before others.

In the interim, San Lorenzo has grown institutionally. Over 70 000 people are now *socios* of the club, giving San Lorenzo the fourth largest membership base in Argentina. Several facilities at the club have been repaired and upgraded. The club built new synthetic and grass football fields, a dorm for the youth team players, and bathrooms and a basketball court in the Nuevo Gasómetro. In 2016 a small basketball stadium for 2000 people was inaugurated on the Plaza Lorenzo Massa in Boedo. The *Polideportivo Roberto Pando*, named after the life-long *cuervo* and architect of the Nuevo Gasómetro, is advertised as the first step of San Lorenzo's eventual return to the *barrio*. Several of the club's other federated sports have seen a return to success, including San Lorenzo's men's basketball team, which won the 2015-16 championship. On the football field, the professional men's team won a championship in 2013 and lifted the club's first Copa

Libertadores, the most important trophy in South America, in 2014, and has been one of the most successful teams in Argentina since the club's near relegation in 2012.

On 23 December 2015, a major step forward for the *Vuelta a Boedo* was secured when Carrefour SA signed an agreement-in-principle with San Lorenzo for sale of Avenida La Plata 1700. Of the 35 667m<sup>2</sup>, Carrefour will keep 8900 m<sup>2</sup> to build a two story retail location. In total, San Lorenzo will pay a total of \$110 million pesos and \$3 million US dollars to Carrefour (Casar González 2015). San Lorenzo immediately made a transfer of \$65 million pesos from the trust to Carrefour and the club continues to raise money. Ownership of the property will be transferred when Carrefour receives demolition and construction approval from the City of Buenos Aires. A new stadium named after Pope Francis for 40 000 spectators is planned to be built on the site, as well as possibly a new public school, originally promised by the City of Buenos Aires in 1979, and a police station.

Some *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, including Adolfo Res, have been critical of the process arguing San Lorenzo should have taken a more aggressive path and pursued legal action against Carrefour following the passing of the Law of Historic Restitution. The electoral victories in November 2015 of the *Propuesta Republicana* Party, with Mauricio Macri becoming President of Argentina and Horacio Rodriguez Larreta the Mayor of Buenos Aires, has resulted a shift in power in the political landscape. The collapse of resource prices has led to economic difficulties across the continent and Argentina's poverty levels have increased under Macri's government. The government's efforts to end *Fútbol Para Todos* valued at \$1.8 billion pesos in 2016, the sale of television rights for

the five *grandes* to private broadcasters, the death of long-time AFA president Julio Grondona in 2015, divisions between clubs to elect his successor, and significant changes to the Primera A in 2015 have left Argentinian football in turmoil. Discussions about the possibility of privatizing clubs has returned. All of these issues combined, along with the wider political-economic context has had a negative effect on San Lorenzo's ability to move the campaign forward. Political allies are more difficult to secure (current Mayor Larreta has previously spoken publicly against the *Vuelta a Boedo*) and a weakened economy has hurt fundraising efforts. Nevertheless, most *hinchas* of San Lorenzo believe their club's historic return to Boedo with a stadium on Avenida La Plata is only a question of time.

## **9.2 Conclusion**

This dissertation has retold the story of the campaign of the *Vuelta a Boedo* and its connections to football culture in Argentina. Several interrelated but distinct theoretical arguments were made to illuminate different aspects of how the *Vuelta a Boedo* emerged, why it captured the interest and motivated many *hinchas* of San Lorenzo, as well as the campaign's significance to understanding football fandom in the urban landscape. This exploration was founded on Gramsci's (1971:325) contention that moments when, "a mass of people are led to think coherently and in the same coherent about the present world" is a "'philosophical' event" through which a politics of praxis can be explored. Though rarely explicit, thinking through the complexity of events like the *Vuelta a Boedo* while simultaneously engaging from within the "conception of the world" from which

they emerge provides a model for interpreting and practicing grounded and creative political projects more generally. By maintaining contact with political-economic themes and trends in Argentina, I argue that the various historical threads woven through the *Vuelta a Boedo* reflect and refract hegemonic social conditions. Through its refractions, I argue the *Vuelta a Boedo* reveals the potential of a football crowd's productive creativity. The production of space, in particular the way in which places such as the stadium and the *barrio* are made out of the ideological and performative practices of *hinchas*, has been particularly relevant in this dissertation and shows how the urban landscape can be dramatically shaped by the spectacle of sport more generally. As a result the stadium is both constituted as an imagined place, as well as a site of social interactions.

I followed arguments made by football historian Frydenberg (2008) that football is influential on the spatial formation of Buenos Aires. In particular, the relationship between the football club and the *barrio* is dialectic. The territoriality of football clubs, which is a factor in Argentina's violent football rivalries, has also resulted in a mutually constituting relationship between clubs and their historic *barrios*. Many other socio-cultural practices and sites of activities have also influenced the spatial formation of the *barrio*. Activities like tango and carnival have also contributed to the idea of a traditional *barrio porteño*. As a result, football clubs are connected to other social-cultural practices of place making in Buenos Aires. The relationship between San Lorenzo and Boedo is inscribed into their mutual histories.

*Hinchas* often talk about "identity" in relation to their club. *Cuervos* will often contend, alongside the importance of Boedo, that San Lorenzo's identity is composed of

an unrelenting support for their club, which is expressed through the creative and passionate support of the *hinchada* during matches. In part, the *hinchada*'s performance is a historical product, pulling upon meaning from defining moments like the 1982 championship played in the Primera B and the protests against the club's privatization on 30 November 2001. History contributes ideological content to what it means to be "from San Lorenzo." *Hinchas* also refer to their emotional connection to the club as part of their personal identity. The processes through which *hinchas* come to identify with their clubs influences how they construct meaningful relationships around their fandom. A sense of belonging, *pertenencia*, is both produced by and productive of the relationships to a club and the club's spatial relationships. The displacement of San Lorenzo from Boedo is felt by *hinchas* as a significant personal disruption and displacement.

Others have identified the carnivalesque atmosphere produced in stadiums by football supporters around the world (Armstrong 1998; Gil 2004; Giulianotti 1995; Robson 2000). Following on Bakhtin's description the carnivalesque, these descriptions look at the expressive practices of football crowds, in particular the socially transgressive and inversive practices. While viewed as potentially disruptive of hegemonic processes, which should be understood as normatively ambiguous (Robson 2000:123), carnivalesque football crowds produce a sense of belonging. More generally, crowd dynamics suggests a need to continually think about the emotional bonds of solidarity (Gil 2002; Juris 2008). The description of San Lorenzo's match against Newell's Old Boys demonstrates how the *hinchada*'s performances are productive of emotional bonds within the crowd. Further without understanding the deeply emotional performances of

the crowd within the stadium, it is impossible to reflect on the significance of each stadium as unique place or why the Viejo Gasómetro could have such importance for *hinchas* of San Lorenzo. Contemporary *hinchas* of San Lorenzo transpose their personal experiences in stadiums to an imagined Viejo Gasómetro, as well as project an idea of what a return to Boedo with a stadium on Avenida La Plata will mean for San Lorenzo and the social relationships between *hinchas*.

While focusing on various performative elements of the stadium culture and political mobilizations, I have argued that significant points of contact between the genres of Argentinian crowds should be read as intertextual. Crowds have had an influential role in Argentinian politics during several historical conjunctures. More generally crowds have been used to articulate a political myth between civilization and barbarity; a binary construct which has been shaped through Argentinian national politics. Crowds, while attractive, powerful, and instructive of certain Argentinian democratic ideals, are simultaneously viewed with suspicion as easily manipulated, uncivilized, and potentially chaotic for those who seek power. Football crowds, read through this perspective, have a particular importance in Argentina as reflections of passionate allegiance, whether to the nation or to other imagined communities such as the football club or neighbours in the *barrio*. *Hinchas*, however, are also distrusted for their association to violence and other “uncivilized” behaviours. Nevertheless, the strong emotional bonds between *hinchas* have been read as politically instrumental, particularly within the practices of political organizing. Further the affective practices of football crowds have been translation into various political projects and efforts to mobilize crowds politically. The *Vuelta a Boedo*

demonstrates this process of translation when it transformed practices familiar to the stadium crowd into crucial components of its political actions. Read predominantly as a football crowd, however, the mobilizations for the *Vuelta a Boedo* reveal the general processes of intertextual organizing of crowds in Argentina.

The past plays an important role in the constitution of the *Vuelta a Boedo*, first by providing historical content to contemporary identification with San Lorenzo. Memories of the Viejo Gasómetro have brought into the present an idea of what a sports club means to the social and cultural life of the *barrio*. Stories told about matches at the Viejo Gasómetro, as well as the social-culture daily life, combine to not only recall past experiences but also articulate a future demand for what San Lorenzo could and should be if it were to re-encounter its place in the world. Such stories also tie generations of *hinchas* together.

Concurrent to the *Vuelta a Boedo*, a politics of memory has emerged in Argentina, which forms an ideological genre of the past through which claims to justice have been made following the end of the country's civic-military dictatorship in 1983. The storytelling of Adolfo Res and others have made relevant links between the dictatorship's processes of disappearing victims, the more general social disruptions created by the human rights violations, and how San Lorenzo lost its stadium. Politically recognizing the *Vuelta a Boedo* as a question of justice was a politically successful move on the part of the *Subcomisión del Hinchas* and has provided political allies. However to narrowly interpret the connection as politically convenient would misrepresent the complex and ambiguous relationship between football and the dictatorship. Further it would fail to

reflect on the ways in which absences and historical ruptures have broadly affected Argentinian society both politically and culturally. Such lasting consequences seep into how *hinchas* of San Lorenzo interpret their club's history and place in Buenos Aires. *Cuervos* will point to specific events that suggest San Lorenzo faced prejudiced punishment by the civic-military dictatorship, in particular from de-facto Mayor Brigadier-General Osvaldo Cacciatore. Perhaps more significantly, by reflecting on memories of the Viejo Gasómetro and what was lost, many *hinchas* today interpret their club's displacement from Boedo as an injustice through historical rupture. The loss of the Viejo Gasómetro created a violently imposed absence of an emotionally significant place. The sensation of displacement and loss has infused what *hinchas* talk about as the identity of the club. Their sense of the absence, while not directly comparable, refracts the absences violently created by the dictatorship through the practices of torture, disappearing, and kidnapping. The discovery of the biological identity of the children kidnapped by the dictatorship creates a parallel model for what it would mean for San Lorenzo's *hinchas* to return to Boedo. Returning, many *cuervos* believe, will repair San Lorenzo's connection to the Boedo that was severed when the club left the *barrio*.

The past has sentimental weight, it plays out in the dramatic performances of San Lorenzo's *hinchas* and is fused with emotional meaning to how *cuervos* understand their shared experiences and produce meaning about a place. The suffering and passion, valued by *hinchas* of football more generally in Argentina, are understood through stories told from the club's history, its place in Boedo, and the values which *cuervos* argue define belonging to San Lorenzo. This interpretive understanding of the past is itself a creative

consequence of the *Vuelta a Boedo*, which has infused the significance of being properly placed in the City of Buenos Aires into how *hinchas* meaningfully think their relationship to their club. Responding to my question about why many *hinchas* of San Lorenzo seem to think a lot about the club's past, Maldito said:

I don't know if fifteen years ago young kids knew about Don Pedro Bidegain, Jacobo Urso, or a bunch of the other old figures... but its true they know the history now. Well, it is because San Lorenzo is not in its place. We all paid to have [the Nuevo Gasómetro in Bajo Flores], to live almost 20 years in Bajo, we're always going to have good memories of playing in Bajo and we will think fondly of Bajo Flores. But that is not San Lorenzo's place; San Lorenzo is a club that has lived so many years away from its home. This always leaves you feeling like you've lost something, not exactly everything about your identity but that you have to go looking for your identity. More than [any other *hincha*] in the country we have to search for who we are. The internet has given us the chance to learn more about ourselves. We like to look up the birth of San Lorenzo, the history of San Lorenzo. It is like an opportunity to see the whole body of San Lorenzo. For me this search for identity has everything to do with not being in our home in Boedo. We have to return.

San Lorenzo's history and its particular relationship to Boedo are unique in world football. Few other stories in the world of football articulate the deep emotional connection between a club's supporters and their place in the world. It is worth noticing the affective creativity of people who act together to unexpectedly transform the world around them. All collective action, however, is contextual and productive. San Lorenzo's *hinchas* remind us of the ambiguity and power of the embodied bonds of solidarity that are commonly produced by the football crowd. When the Law for Historic Restitution passed, *cuervos* took to promoting message: "For us utopias do not exist," which is to say what they imagine, they make real.

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