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Abstract

The neighborhood of La Boca, located in the city of Buenos Aires, is an urban space burdened with a story and a unique aesthetic that differentiates it from other barrios in the city. In 2022, I visited this area to walk its streets, with the goal of understanding what elements marked this urban area as a distinctive place within the city. Situated within the rhetoric of space and place, this study relies on the concept of atmospheres to account for the way the experience of place is constituted by an interplay between bodies, materiality and spaces. My research attends to the sensual qualities of place, I inquire about the way certain places feel, and how we become sensually and mentally inclined by space. The study helps illustrate how the atmosphere of a place emerges out of a rhetorical process, and the potential the concept offers for rhetorical examinations of space and place.

*THE PASSING INTENSITIES OF A NEIGHBORHOOD. SENSING ATMOSPHERES IN
LA BOCA*

by

G. Tomás O'Rourke Murolo

B.S., Universidad del Salvador, 2013
B.A., Universidad Nacional de Luján, 2019

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Communication and Rhetorical Studies

Syracuse University

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Contents

Table of Figures	v
Introduction.....	1
1 • A Rhetoric of Atmospheres.....	9
EL BARRIO DE LA BOCA.....	11
Origins.....	14
Neighborhood Aesthetics.....	15
Spaces of Socialization	16
Tourism and Social composition in Contemporary La Boca	18
La Boca as a heterogeneous space	21
THEORY & CONCEPTS.....	25
A renewed interest in space	25
The Rhetoric of Space.....	32
A rhetoric of Atmospheres.....	34
Method	43
2 • Atmospheric Motions	47
Cities and Communication.....	50
Heterogeneity in La Boca	51
The Production of Place in La Boca	54
Atmospheres in La Boca.....	56
3 • Atmospheric Articulations.....	90
Atmospheric articulations	92
Stories about the city.....	97
The Physical landscape	112
Doing & Walking.....	122
Atmospheric articulations in La Boca.....	127
Final Thoughts	130
Works Cited.....	136

Table of Figures

FIGURE 1 “ <i>LA BOCA</i> ” A WATERFRONT DISTRICT, VIEWED FROM THE OLD BRIDGE (KIRCHHOF, 1949).....	6
FIGURE 2 <i>OLD HOUSES IN "LA BOCA"</i> (KIRCHHOFF, 1949).....	7
FIGURE 3 TOURISTS ON CAMINITO CIRCUIT	18
FIGURE 4 "IF WE RESIST, WE EXIST" A POSTER BY GRAPHIC COMMUNITY WORKSHOP – LA BOCA	19
FIGURE 5 THE ROAD TO LA BOCA	48
FIGURE 6 A SIGHT OF LA BOMBONERA FROM CASA AMARILLA.....	58
FIGURE 7 WALKING IN CASA AMARILLA	60
FIGURE 8 THE FENCES CLOSER TO THE STADIUM.....	61
FIGURE 9 THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO LA BOMBONERA, ON BRANDSEN STREET	62
FIGURE 10 SOUVENIR SHOPS ACROSS THE STADIUM, ON BRANDSEN STREET.....	63
FIGURE 11 BLUE AND YELLOW SHOP ON IBERLUCEA STREET	64
FIGURE 12 WOOD AND METAL HOUSES.....	66
FIGURE 13 LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW OF THE BAR	68
FIGURE 14 SEVERAL DOORBELLS AT THE GATE	69
FIGURE 15 A WOOD LIGHT POST PAINTED IN BLUE AND YELLOW, FENCES PILED ON THE SIDEWALK	70
FIGURE 16 OLAVARRIA STREET	71
FIGURE 17 MAN WASHING A CAR IN FRONT OF A WOOD AND METAL HOUSE, POSSIBLY A <i>CONVENTILLO</i>	74
FIGURE 18 COLORFUL WOOD AND METAL BUILDINGS, A SIGN THAT READS “POTATO SALE 2x300”.....	75
FIGURE 19 IBERLUCEA STREET, ONE BLOCK AWAY FROM VUELTA DE ROCHA AND MAGALLANES.....	78
FIGURE 20 MAGALLANES STREET	80
FIGURE 21 CAMINITO STREET-MUSEUM, A STALL SELLS PAINTINGS OF TANGO DANCERS.....	81
FIGURE 22 LA BOMBONERA SEEN FROM PASAJE GARIBALDI, BETWEEN MURALS AND TRAIN TRACKS.....	81
FIGURE 23 TOURISTS WALKING ON IBERLUCEA STREET.....	83
FIGURE 24 THE CORNER OF MAGALLANES AND PASAJE GARIBALDI.....	84
FIGURE 25 "DIEGO LIVES" MURAL ON A HOUSE	99
FIGURE 26 REGIONAL CRESTS ON FACADES.....	101
FIGURE 27 THE CREST OF LA BOCA.....	102
FIGURE 28 PUERTA 12 MEMORIAL	103
FIGURE 29 MURAL ON VUELTA DE ROCHA	104
FIGURE 30 MURAL ON IBERLUCEA STREET.....	106
FIGURE 31 WATER TOWER AND WINDOW ON MURAL	106
FIGURE 32 MURAL SHOWING WORKERS ON THE WALLS OF LA BOMBONERA	108
FIGURE 33 MURAL SHOWING FANS ON THE WALLS OF LA BOMBONERA.....	108
FIGURE 34 MURAL OF MARADONA ON PASAJE GARIBALDI, ON THE PILLAR IT READS "I MISS YOU GOD"	109
FIGURE 35 MURAL ABOVE SCHOOL ENTRANCE	110
FIGURE 36 POLITICAL BANNER CLOSE TO THE STADIUM.....	111
FIGURE 37 BUILDING ON VUELTA DE ROCHA WITH THE AVELLANEDA BRIDGE ON THE BACKGROUND.....	112
FIGURE 38 THE WALLS OF LA BOMBONERA, BRANDSEN STREET	115
FIGURE 39 THE TEXTURES OF FACADES IN EL BARRIO	116
FIGURE 40 REPLICA OF A TRADITIONAL FACADES INSIDE A COMMERCIAL GALLERY OF MAGALLANES STREET	117
FIGURE 41 CONTRASTS AND TEXTURES; ABOVE EL BARRIO, BELOW CAMINITO CIRCUIT	118
FIGURE 42 THE OPEN STREETS OF CASA AMARILLA.....	120
FIGURE 43 A CLUTTERED STALL INSIDE A ZINC WAREHOUSE	121
FIGURE 44 MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH A WOOD AND METAL HOUSE.....	124
FIGURE 45 AN URBAN BUS AT A STOP, A COMMON SIGHT IN BUENOS AIRES	125

Introduction

A few days ago, in the library, I was on my way to grab a couple of books when out of the corner of my eye a book stood out to me: on its broad leathered spine, gilded letters read: “Historia de la Villa imperial de Potosí”. This passing sight reminded me of Potosi, an imaginative pulse took over.

I remember being on a bus, looking out the window and writing down some of my thoughts as I traveled toward Potosi, on a road that followed a meandering path that climbed among the Andes’ mountaintops. You can’t really anticipate your arrival to the city as it suddenly appears after one of the many turns the road takes. Surrounded by mountain tops, I found Potosi booming and full of life; you get the feeling that it’s not just there waiting for you, but that it’s constantly active; an urban center isolated and hidden in the heart of the Andes. What first comes to my mind, as I reminisce, are the colonial buildings and a kind of maroon hue that extends over the city, with streets that follow strangled paths covered in cobblestone. Potosi feels imperial indeed. I remember seeing many markets, churches and squares; but most of all I remember the Cerro Rico, looking over the city. The mountain that once was a cultural hub for the colonial world, the financial pillar of the west and the heart of the Spanish empire.

I begin with this brief anecdote because this work touches upon many of these sentiments: the sensual capacities of places and the lasting impact those experiences bear on us. This study focuses on a neighborhood to examine the numinous qualities some places hold. I consider this to be a reflection about those spaces that become paired with certain histories and meanings, by means of which they stand as separated and distinct from general space, turned into spatial

centers. These places are burdened in such a way, that when one visits them a deep and special kind of connection unfolds. Just like it happened to me in Potosi.

Proof of the strength of this attachment is how years later, my unconscious mind is aroused by the presence of its name. My visit to Potosi left on me a lasting impact that explains why such an encounter triggers a set of memories and stirs feelings in me, why my eyes show an uncanny ability to detect that word even if camouflaged among thousands of other books, and how such encounter causes my walk to halt and my mind to wander. The chapters that follow are an attempt at unraveling the mysteries at work in such encounters.

My research focuses on atmospheres as an experience constituted by the interaction between bodies, materiality and spaces, relying on the rhetorical analysis of space carried out by communication scholars, this situates the current study on space and atmospheres within the ‘rhetoric of space and place’ as discussed by scholars like Dickinson (1997), Shome (2003), Aiello and Tosoni (2016). With this I hope to illustrate the rhetorical dynamics through which atmospheres are constituted and the potential the concept offers for rhetorical examinations of space and place.

For that purpose, I focus on the neighborhood of La Boca, located in the city of Buenos Aires. This place is similar to Potosi in the sense that it is burdened with a story that differentiates it from other barrios of Buenos Aires. But it’s not just the several intersecting and splintering narratives that run through La Boca, but also a unique aesthetic that nurtures its distinctiveness.

But I look beyond the stories that provide a place with its own genealogy. I’m interested in how these stories and their attachments to physical space and things, collaborate in the experiences that sensually make us. To do so, I rely on the concept of atmospheres. Defined by Böhme as *the*

poetic quality of a city, it references a sensually charged space that extends to incorporate and involve bodies and objects located within. Atmospheres help explain the dissemination of emotional stances across bodies, as they refer to a sort of spatialized feeling that denotes the sensual quality of a place, which is sometimes expressed in the warmth that fills a home or the eerie atmosphere of an old building.

On closer examination, this way of putting it is no less legitimate than calling a leaf green. Not even the leaf has the objective property of being green. A leaf, too, can only be called green insofar as it shares an actuality with a perceiver. Strictly speaking, expressions like serene or green refer to this shared actuality, and they are simply named in one case more from the perspective of the object, and in the other from the perspective of the perceiver. Thus a valley is not called serene because it resembles in some way a serene human being but because the atmosphere it emits is serene, and because this can produce a serene mood in the perceiver (Böhme, 2017:24)

The decision to center on La Boca is not solely grounded on the symbolic stature of the neighborhood, but also for the various atmospheres it holds within. This allowed me to experience such variations and offered a chance to assess how these slight changes in atmospheres take place. As a consequence, my study is organized into three sections or chapters, beginning with a delineation of the theoretical grounding and a historical description of the neighborhood. In the following chapter, I narrate my trips to La Boca, and describe the different atmospheres that I experienced within. Finally, my third chapter deals with their origin and articulation, here I attempt to understand how and why, different spaces within the neighborhood are charged with different atmospheric auras.

To conclude, I would like to briefly anticipate some of the theoretical implications inspiring this study. By working within the conceptual framework of atmospheres, which is informed by discussions of space/place and phenomenology, I'm relying on an approach that can be used to study more than urban spaces. Broadly speaking, it holds the potential to shed light on the impact places and the physical surrounding have on us. For example, by accounting for the experiential impact of brutalist buildings, the particular sensations one encounters inside churches, or the unique experiences certain landscapes invite. However, this should not be taken as an attempt to break down and disarm the enchanted qualities of places. On the contrary, I understand that reflecting on space by means of atmospheres is a way of formulating etiologies that consider how non-directional articulations between aesthetic qualities, meaning and human action shape to social life. Thus, signaling to the capacity of place to foster sensual experiences, I hope to evidence how life is not the result of transparent articulations, but always in a process of unfolding which occurs in oblique ways; how there is something else at work which -even if gestured towards in the notion of aesthetics, poetics, or in the concept of atmospheres- still remains impossible to stabilize under the mark of the sign. This is not a disclaimer; quite on the contrary, it is a firm assertion that beyond economic processes, historical documentation, psychological traits, representational structures, symbolic meaning and social interaction, a certain degree of mystery endures: a firm statement that life is enchanted.



Figure 1 "La Boca" a Waterfront district, viewed from the old bridge (Kirchhof, 1949)

It's known as La Boca but historical nomenclature refers to it as "La Boca del Riachuelo" (Riachuelo's mouth), and there was even a time when they called it "El pueblo de la Boca" (Town of La Boca). Long before the 18th century, it was the only port in Buenos Aires, which consequently brought the establishment, in that place, of a population of unique and unmistakable characteristics, it became the "small motherland" of the Genoese by the River Plate. However, it should be noted that the predominant sign in these settlements (salad houses and barracks), more than Italian, was Basque-French.

It's a curious case that of La Boca, for even being the closer barrio to Plaza de Mayo, it always stood as something foreign to the city (1963:48)

Buenos Aires, Mi Ciudad, Sameer Makarius



Figure 2 Old Houses in "La Boca" (Kirchhoff, 1949)

Every *Barriada Porteña* has its own street. There you find its shops, its extraordinary illumination and the crowds of neighbors and visitors. But each barrio also has another street, a lonely one that shows an incomplete façade, rubble and empty patios. The physiognomy changes according to the neighborhood, because each barrio is different, however in all of them the unmistakable porteño sign is inscribed, which has not yet been erased, and they all share like the final reminder of a romantic past (1963:62)

Buenos Aires, Mi Ciudad, Sameer Makarius

1

A Rhetoric of Atmospheres

...Because science reduces all it touches to immobility, it transforms it into still life. While around us the world resonates with a thousand melodies, exhales a thousand perfumes, is animated by a thousand movements that make our being vibrate and palpitate. And we take part in this life, so intense, impalpable and indefinite (1936:150)

Eugène Minkowski

The motivations driving this work share Minkowski's fascinations with the impalpable and indefinite intensities of life. The study deals with space and places, and how the inhabiting of certain locales can affect us deeply, how our actions and inclinations are -more often than not- tied to the places we dwell in. If capturing the evanescent might seem a paradox, the current work tries not so much to capture that which resists immobilization, instead it aims to consider the effects of that which can't be paused. I look into the inescapable force of such passing intensities in the space of a neighborhood. I have strolled through those streets attentive to how experience and landscape fluctuate in harmony, attending to how different places give off certain vibes and trying to ascertain why and how this happens.

In the following chapters, I engage in a practice of rhetorical criticism taking as subject matter La Boca, a neighborhood located at the southern end of the city of Buenos Aires. The analysis relies on scholarship by communication scholars and incorporates relevant studies on space from adjacent disciplines. Thus, dealing with the rhetoric of space, it pursues the goal of

understanding how space becomes involved in rhetorical processes that orient subjects, both sensually and mentally.

As a result, the study is organized around two main gravitational poles, el Barrio de la Boca –as the case study- and the *atmospheres* constituted within this space –as conceptual framing. La Boca is one of the oldest neighborhood of Buenos Aires, formed by the docks and already well established by the late 19th century, it is traditionally regarded as a working-class, migrant neighborhood -with a composition that includes basque, french, spanish and italian populations: a place of a rich social, political and cultural life. I have walked this space attending to its atmospheric qualities, a concept that refers to the “mood hanging in the air”, and is grounded on space\place theories and scholarship focused on the affective dimension of place. A look at the atmospheres that populate La Boca, entails thinking of the neighborhood as a *tuned space*, with special attention to the ways one is sensually inclined by the articulation of space, meaning, bodies and things.

Consequently, rhetoric appears theoretically proximate to *atmospheres*, making this concept useful for expanding our understanding of how suassory practices operate by organizing space\place and shape our experience of place. An analysis that relies on the concept of atmospheres, fully exposes the rhetorical capacities space holds, and the full extent by which subjectivity and place are the result of rhetorical processes grounded in space.

In this initial chapter I outline both theory and case study. In the first section of the chapter, I offer some notes on methodology and introduce the case study, first by attending to what I understand by neighborhood, and then discussing La Boca’s history and current shape. I continue by offering my theoretical frame of reference for the study, which entails a discussion on the

spatial turn, how phenomenological accounts of space informed the concept of *atmospheres*, and the rhetorical qualities of space.

EL BARRIO DE LA BOCA

Scholars in communication studies have considered cities and the urban built environment as key forms of mediation. They have analyzed urban environments looking at materiality and textures, visual and symbolic elements, the rhythms and flows of people, and the sounds and smells that are involved in processes of communication occurring in space (Aiello & Tosoni, 2016; Dickinson, Blair, & Ott, 2010).

Consequently, the decision to explore an urban area such as La Boca was motivated by the rhetorical depth urban spaces offer (Dickinson, 2020). Neighborhoods have been defined attending to a number of conditions, constitutive areas of a city yet separated from surrounding spaces by means of a symbolic and material articulation: there's an intrinsic cohesion that extends across physical extension, giving the area a particular *essence* that sets it apart from other neighborhoods and urban spaces (Chavez & Hill, 2021).

A fundamental trait of any neighborhood is intersubjectivity and the sense of community fostered within. It normally occurs that the convergence of a history, specific practices, a way of navigating the streets and the aesthetic disposition of the built environment, allows for collective experiences and a sense of community to emerge (Horowitz, 2014). And so, neighborhoods are also islands within cities, a “place in which people know each other, socialize, and look out for one another” (Chavez & Hill, 2021:71). This also explains why neighborhoods find a limit in their extension, as these communities are anchored by the sensuous experience of collective practice.

As a result, neighborhoods are not pervasive, but instead emerge in residential areas when people living there experience the place in a particular way, assigning certain meanings to it. However, as Chavez and Hill explain, “the power to construct the neighborhood is a privilege not afforded to everyone sharing a geographical space” (2021:70), and so such processes remain tied to the distribution of power, either across social strata or racial and ethnic groups. As a consequence, a neighborhood is defined as a *claimed space* within a broader urban area. I might add there a sensual dimension to it as well, and when a *claimed space* is paired with a characteristic atmosphere, a sense of *neighborhood* can be felt there.

Consequently, a neighborhood’s constitution is always complex and its internal cohesion arises out of the articulation of a variety of distinct elements; aesthetics, location or physical boundaries, history and associated meanings, demographic composition and social practices.

For instance, history plays a fundamental role in determining the particularity of a bounded area. De Certeau has highlighted the capacity of stories to found places (1984), but in a neighborhood the actualization of the past may take material form and extend aesthetically. Thus, a particular architecture, the utilization of a limited set of colors, a distinctive visual trait throughout the built environment might serve to signal and distinguish a neighborhood from adjacent areas. Social practices and meaning may also define the character of a neighborhood. These may become associated by means of a history, but also due to location, physical boundaries or barriers (element which can also play a role in their delimitations), such as railroads, freeways or lands of water; the presence of these might organize practices and attract population with specific traits, define a particular aesthetic or spatial disposition. Additionally, physical elements may also define modalities of navigation within a bounded area, providing physical pathways and boundaries, and articulating the flows and rhythms of circulation within.

Finally, my case study looks at a barrio, which is similar to neighborhood are similar notions, though not entirely equivalent. While a neighborhood is a broad concept that defines a claimed urban space, a barrio is geographically bounded and refers to this modality of spatial organization as it developed in Argentina since the late 19th century. As a consequence, it is a burdened term of vernacular origin, similar to a neighborhood in the sense that their constitution relies on the conditions listed above to craft a particular identity.

Just like neighborhoods, barrios find unity in symbolic and material cohesion, and in the case of La Boca these can be found in a set of unique traits: namely, a recognizable architecture in an aesthetic of low colorful wood and metal houses, the presence of conventillos, it is socially and ethnically characterized as a working-class and migrant neighborhood, which provides it with a defined political character (a historical hub for mutualism, unions, anarchism and socialism), it has been historically connected to cultural practices in the form of art, tango and soccer, and its history has been closely knitted with that of Argentina and the city of Buenos Aires, finding an origin in the late 19th century.

La boca was one of the barrios that mobilized progress in the city, in a time of industry, shipyards, warehouses, factories and port... the refuge for anarchism, socialism, workers and social defiance... where celebrations were held on the streets, in cantinas, the place for carnivals and family gatherings. It was the cradle of Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos, theaters, libraries, where solidarity stood as the rule. It saw the birth of River, Boca, and a dozen of other barrial clubs (Rey, 2014:5)¹

¹ Except for Emiliana Guano's (2003), all articles on La Boca cited in this work have been originally published in spanish; the excerpts included have been translated by the author

Origins

La Boca is located at the southernmost end of Buenos Aires, where the Riachuelo Matanza river meets the much larger Rio de La Plata and the port of Buenos Aires was originally located. La Boca means *the mouth*, in reference to the geographic fluvial encounter upon which it is situated: the mouth of the riachuelo river, which was Buenos Aires main and only natural port since its - second and definitive- foundation in the first half of the 17th century. The river bears a composed name that loosely translates as *small river of slaughter* (matanza translates as slaughter, while riachuelo is vernacular for small river). Slaughterhouses and salting houses established by the margins of this river during colonial times, which explains why the location has been traditionally known for stench, polluted water, and why -paired with constant floodings- land value has always been among the lowest in the city (Herzer et al, 2008, Fabaron, 2016).

Moving forward in time, already in the 19th century some storage warehouses could be seen in the area where La Boca currently sits, but it was only after 1885 that it began to develop as a residential location. A neighborhood started to take shape between the decades of 1860 and 1890; a growth that reflected the development of commercial activities related to international commerce and the growing influx of migrants. Low rent and closeness to job spaces made it an attractive location, and most of its residents were recently arrived migrants that worked at the docks, or low-income nationals, so the neighborhood acquired a well-defined social and financial character, its residents were marginalized groups for their ethnic, social and financial stature. Living in La Boca meant residing far away from downtown Buenos Aires, at the outskirts of the city in a region of limited infrastructure and amidst the stench of the polluted Riachuelo river (Fabaron, 2016; Rey, 2014).

By the turn of the century La Boca already had a school, church, train station and tram (Devoto, 1989; Herzer et al, 2008), and during this period La Boca became a vibrant cultural hub due to the rich diversity fostered within (Rey, 2014; Devoto, 2002). As a working-class barrio sitting by the river, ships from all over the world docked here, thousands of workers lived and socialized in the harbor and the streets of the barrio. Thus, its history is informed by the 1900's migratory wave and the resulting cultural artifacts of this process. Mainly composed by Ligurian and Spanish migrants, the influx of new residents produced a cultural complex composed by fileteado porteño (a typical design), tango, pizza and vermouth, and fostered the popularization of certain political and social practices such as collective associations, anarchism and fútbol clubs.

Neighborhood Aesthetics

The confluence of precarious living conditions, meager material means and the recurrence of floods saw the birth of a distinctive kind of architecture in La Boca. According to the national census of 1895, 71% of the residential buildings in La Boca were made out of "light material", either metal or wood (Herzer et al, 2008: 42); working-class families would build their houses utilizing scrap metal and lumber, painted them using the leftovers of ship paint, and the result was a polychromous landscape of low houses sitting atop wood stumps; a sight that marked a characteristic aesthetics in the neighborhood.

Another characteristic feature related to its working-class, migrant character is the presence of *conventillos*. Similar to tenement houses, these were residencies occupied by several families, which resulted from the increasing demand for housing and low income of the residents. This type of residential house became a staple sight of La Boca, as Herzer investigation shows,

between 1869 and 1887, 22% of all *conventillos* in Buenos Aires were located in La Boca, with about 297 *conventillos* in La Boca that housed 40% of the neighborhood's total population (Herzer et al, 2008:44). More than twenty years later, by 1904, the number had increased to 331 *conventillos* housing over 16,000 people (Keuchkarian et al, 2019:37).

Spaces of Socialization

Emotions imply relations between men, collective relationships... their expression is the result of a series of experiences of common life, of similar and contemporaneous reactions to the shock of identical situations and encounters of the same nature (Febvre, 1941: 8)

Lucien Febvre, *Sensibility and History*

As thousands of families from different cultures converged, La Boca offered several spaces for socialization in the patios of *conventillos*, barrial clubs, and work spaces. These interactions created a thriving cultural life, which birthed a plethora of cultural elements developed by the docks and in the streets of La Boca

An example is the emergence of Cocoliche, a language born from the mixture of Spanish, Yiddish and several Italian, French and Spanish regional dialects. Similar to it, Lunfardo emerged as a form of slang that developed by the docks and was associated with criminals, working-class folks, migrants and other socially marginalized groups (see Andre, 2017; Castaneda Naranjo, 2018; Guillen 2019). Both, Cocoliche and Lunfardo, were normally included in the lyrics of Tango. With a common origin in the streets of La Boca, among cantinas and the docks, they all shared the same negative connotations. Another form of art that flourished in La Boca was painting, with Benito Quinquela Martin being the neighborhood's most renowned painter. An orphan raised in the streets of La Boca, whose house has been turned into an art museum bearing his name, that sits across the Riachuelo river on Vuelta de Rocha.

For the purpose of this study, the relevance of soccer should also be highlighted, since early in the 20th century, migrants brought with them a passion for soccer expressed in the creation of soccer clubs (Horowitz, 2014). In the barrios of Buenos Aires young men would get together to form local teams, the most successful of them developed into social clubs modeled after socialist and anarchist associations (not for profit with an egalitarian spirit, collectively own by member who get to vote the authorities every several years), and a few of them continued to exist well into the professionalization of the sport in 1930. Initially, it was an amateur sport, so teams were composed by people who lived in the neighborhood and shared an occupation -or at least, a similar social standing-, this gave these athletic clubs a strong social character, deeply grounded in the barrio they were created. La Boca saw the birth of many of these clubs, among them Boca Juniors and River Plate, the two most successful clubs in Argentina for the last century.

However, River Plate moved out of the neighborhood in the decade of 1910, after purchasing some land at the north part of the city, in the more expensive, middle-class neighborhood of Nuñez. This marked a cleavage between both clubs and gave birth to a century old rivalry; as a result Boca Juniors' identity developed a deep connection to the neighborhood, gaining a working-class, popular character, and their fans came to be known as *xeneizes* (of genoa) or *bosteros* (bosta is lunfardo for horse manure, a reference to the stench of the riachuelo).

More can be said about La Boca's rich cultural, social and political life, however what I wish to highlight as a closing note to this brief discussion, is how some these local cultural traits became elevated and associated with a regional -and sometimes national- ethos. For example, Tango is considered a national staple of Argentina, and similar to it, pizza, vermouth, carnival dances, soccer, and Mutualism (in the form of anarchism, socialism, unions and social associations) are all identity signs of the rioplatense region (the cultural region of Río de la Plata, which main

hubs are the cities of Montevideo in Uruguay and Buenos Aires in Argentina, situated on opposite margins of the River Plate).

Tourism and Social composition in Contemporary La Boca

This transference between the cultural traits of La Boca, and a regional, national identity has served to make the neighborhood an attractive destination for tourists. Additionally, its history is consistent with an hegemonic narrative that considers argentinian culture as a direct extension of the migratory wave that extended between 1880 and 1920. A myth of origin that also situates Argentina's culture in proximity to a western, white european tradition and fractures its connections to indigenous cultures and the region's colonial past.

However, and beyond historiographical debates, what is relevant about this symbolic transference, and how today, the barrio's particular architecture with its colorful landscape, the mythical stadium of La Bombonera (dating from 1940) and the nostalgic retelling of the city's origins make it one of the most attractive and visited tourist spots of Buenos Aires.



Figure 3 Tourists on Caminito Circuit

Some areas in the neighborhood have been entirely renovated and transformed for tourism purposes (Sequera & Rodriguez, 2017; Hopftgarner & Vidosa, 2014). This happened as the result of a renovation program set up during the 1990's as a joint venture between the city government and private investors, whose goal was to profit off the tourist attraction the neighborhood offers. This entailed the construction of infrastructure to control the floods that plagued La Boca for more than a century and the relocation of *conventillos* to turn residential spaces into commercial zones. The pinnacle of such endeavors is the area known as Caminito, an open street museum which showcases La Boca as the beacon of a national identity that is grounded on a bygone era of migrant, European origins.

Residents of La Boca have pushed back against such efforts (Herzer et al, 2005; Mera 2014). Even if its demography has changed, a look at La Boca's current social composition shows some similarities to that of the early 20th century: it still has a working-class, migrant character and the value of the land remains one of the lowest in the city (Guano, 2003).



Figure 4 "If we resist, we exist" a poster by Graphic Community Workshop - La Boca

The neighborhood is mainly inhabited by low-income families with a minority of middle-income households, and no areas showing middle-high income residents (Fabaron, 2016:72). And while the size of the migrant population has decreased, La Boca still houses a large migrant population who, unlike the early 20th century when most arrived from western Europe, travels from other provinces and neighboring countries (Fabaron, 2016:71).

One can anticipate that they settle here because La Boca is still one of the less expensive neighborhoods to live in. The square feet value halves the average for the city; \$500 against an overall city average of \$1000 (Herzer et al, 2008: 45). But this value expresses its marginalization in terms of infrastructure too, La Boca has endured a long period of material and financial degradation since the nationwide deindustrialization process that started in the 70's. Herzer lists a few examples of this: there is some significant environmental degradation caused by the pollution of the Riachuelo river and the recurrence of floods, the original sewage system has not been replaced (dating from the late 19th century), and the high volume of heavy traffic produces vibrations that damage the already precarious, aged and deteriorated residential buildings of the neighborhood. Consequently, the neighborhood continues to have the greatest amount of conventillos in Buenos Aires (about 70% of all tenement houses in the city), with as residency for 36% of La Boca's total population (Herzer et al, 2008: 44).

As a result of its current social composition, and a history that burdens it with a high symbolic value, La Boca is a heterogeneous urban space. One may recognize it, as Herzer does, in the confluence of a multitude of elements that result in the "different constructive typologies that seal distinct 'microclimates' within" (Herzer et al, 2008, 42).

La Boca as a heterogeneous space

La Boca is singled out for its particular traits, and has attracted the attention of many scholars concerned with the study of urban spaces. La Boca remains a characteristic barrio of Buenos Aires mainly due to its isolated and marginal location within the city, which helped protect the essence of the neighborhood. This is also expressed in a lack of gentrification, probably hindered by its proximity to the very polluted Riachuelo river and the lack of basic infrastructure. At the same time, the neighborhood offers a distinctive aesthetic and is burdened with a set of meanings connected to the identity of the city as a whole, and sometimes paired with a national identity, which has made it one of the main tourist spots in Buenos Aires and motivated private investment (Hopftgarner & Vidosa, 2014; Guano, 2003; Blasco, 2015).

Tied to its identity and host for its stadium and the club's main offices, La Boca is also home of the nation's most popular fútbol club, Boca Juniors. A recent study shows Boca has a share of 42,3% of fans across the country (Equis, 2022), with over 300,000 members who collectively own the club (the second largest globally, after Bayern Munich). In a country where soccer's popularity is unmatched, the cultural relevance of this connection can hardly be overstated.

Athletic clubs hold a strong connection to both, barrios and politics. In Argentina private ownership of futbol teams is legally banned under the law 25.284, against a global trend where investment funds see in soccer a profitable enterprise. This is also rejected by the fans who see these clubs as part of their local cultural asset, as different clubs are associated with the barrios they are located in: River in Nuñez, Huracan in Parque Patricios, Argentinos Juniors in La Paternal, just to name a few. Most of these not-for-profit athletic clubs were founded at the turn of the century and offer members and neighbors the opportunity to practice several sports (they

normally have youth academies leading up to the professional squad), and spaces of socialization such as cantinas, pools, gyms, and sometimes even schools.

A final example of their relevance can be evidenced in the political trajectory of Mauricio Macri, who held the position of Boca Junior's president during the years 1995-2007 and became the club's most successful president in terms of championships won. The popularity he garnered during this period boosted his future political career, in 2007 he became Mayor of Buenos Aires, and in 2015 Argentina's president.

As a result of these set of circumstances, La Boca has been defines as a

neighborhood of a strong character, that crowns a city within a city, and undoubtedly is unlike any other barrio in Buenos Aires, both for its heterogeneous organization and urban textures –where many different heights, materials and colors meet-, as for its dissimilar ethnic, social and cultural composition, that originates from its diverse migratory origin (Herzer et al, 2008 42)

History and diversity are emphasized as distinctive traits as well. For example, Fabaron notes the barrios picturesque quality by speaking of the diversity it offers:

Unlike other barrios located in the south, that lack exoticized particularities or touristic attractive to offer, La Boca was built by different social actors as a distinctive barrio, and is today one of the most visited touristic destination in the city (Fabaron, 2016:71).

So, it's not only diversity that marks La Boca as a good location to seek and explore atmospheres, but also its symbolic value within the national cultural landscape. A Herzer notes, the symbolic value is reflected in the barrio's aesthetics:

The historical character of the neighborhood is linked to cultural traits –like the associative and political life of its working-class constitution at the turn of the century- and the presence of a distinctive architectural patrimony, even if quite degraded. The polychromed houses made of metal and wood contribute to the neighborhoods peculiar character, giving it a unique kind of aesthetic that created bond of identification that runs deep among its inhabitants (Herzer et al, 2008:44)

So again, we notice how La Boca bears a well-contoured historical past, a strong sense of community fostered within, and a particular kind of aesthetic imbued with symbolic value that is tied to the neighborhood’s mythical origins. There is also a diversity of inhabitants, either resident or visitors, that move in this part of the city (Hopftgarner and Vidoso; 2014).

Finally, there are two main conditions that fit within the interest of this study, one is the symbolic meanings the barrio is burdened with, and the second is heterogeneity, the internal multiplicity of subjects, meanings and places the neighborhood harvests a single. La Boca shows a distinctive identity, which can be enunciated in the use of terms such as *xeneizes* and *bosteros*, which gesture towards both, the historical as much as the sensual: the stench of the river and the neighborhood’s *ligurian* roots. As a consequence, I believe there is space to think about neighborhoods as more than *claimed spaces*, that one could expand such understanding to account for the sensual extensions that provide unity to the urban spaces. Thus, more than talking and defining them in terms of the meanings attached to a portion of space, one should also consider the full extent of such attachments and how these can give way to the atmosphere a neighborhood radiates.

Unsurprisingly, and for all these reasons, La Boca has drawn the attention of scholars for many years. La Boca’s spatial organization has been a key point of interest due to the way in which

conflicting social, symbolic and economic factors find expression in it, and how different “microclimates” seem to emerge within. These studies have noted how in this neighborhood urban spaces are contested (Guano, 2003; Mera, 2014; Blasco, 2015), describing how “social spaces” within show either, overlapping or contended uses/ownership, and highlighting a symbolic notoriety that make it a quintessential barrio.

The purpose of this study is to draw and expand these explorations by directing attention to space and affectivity, and mapping how places, bodies and things show up to give this barrio a distinctive atmospheric quality. While previous accounts of La Boca have mapped the neighborhood tracking visual markers and situating social practices, I consider generative to think about spaces in La Boca in terms of atmospheres, as it has been defined above. Which entails not just enumerating, measuring, counting and categorizing the elements that constitute a neighborhood’s *social space*, but being attentive to the relationality between these, and the sensual dimension of place. Which calls for an inquiry that moves beyond the notion of space as *social*, toward one that questions how such sociality relates to materiality, and what are the sensual effects of these relations.

This means accounting for the way different elements interact in the constitution of place. In the next couple of chapters, I will explore these processes by centering on La Boca’s and tracing its atmospheric qualities, to understand how materiality, symbolic meaning and intersubjectivity give shape to the particular experience of place in this neighborhood. First, in chapter 2, I begin by locating and characterizing the different atmospheres that emerge as one walks through the barrio of La Boca, and then in chapter 3 I explore how these atmospheric areas result from the articulation of materiality, meanings and bodies. Before doing so, I will situate my work by referencing the theories and ideas undergirding it.

THEORY & CONCEPTS

A renewed interest in space

The term atmosphere finds its origin in the realm of the natural sciences, specifically within the study of meteorology, and describes the air above the earth or, in more technical terms, the heterogeneous gaseous layer surrounding any planet. However, it soon made its way into more menial conversations, and at least since the 19th century served to describe how certain weather conditions make us feel or the general vibe of a given situation: a metaphor that describes “a certain mood hanging in the air,” *tuned space* as Gernot Bohme and Jean Paul Thibaut have described it (2016: 2). In recent years, the term has been used within a spatial theory of atmospheres to account for the affective capacities of place, atmospheres have been defined as quasi-objective, emerging out of an interplay between the physical and the cultural and radiating out of space; they become operative by illuminating the way people are oriented by place, and to assess the impact that being in-place has on us, both at a sensual and mental level.

Conceptually, then, atmospheres can be traced back to the renewed interest in space that emerged during the second half of the 20th century, and later informed and paired with more recent phenomenological inquiries of space. The initial shift in the study of space originated in the 70's, moving from analyses of *void receptacles* to more encompassing explorations of *relational social spaces*, conceived as integral components of social life. Two main traits articulated in the critical engagement of the 70's can be recognized in -and sustain- the concept of atmospheres: an emphasis on relationality or the intersubjective aspects of space, and a critique of space as static, material and objective. In addition to this, within phenomenology space was explored in relation to experience and affectivity, opening up discussions that were lacking in the initial assessments.

The Spatial Turn

In the context of postmodernist thought, the works by Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault were among the earliest –and most influential- explorations of space in relation to social life.

Lefebvre's concern with this issue is made explicit in the title of his 1974's publication, "The production of space"; around the same time, Foucault engages with the built environment and the organization of space in his studies on madness and the prison system (Foucault, 1961; 1975), but a more systematic account of spatiality is provided in a set of conferences, posthumously published, where he reflects on the relations between space, power and knowledge (Foucault, 1986; 2007).

In this way, postmodernist thought helped inaugurate a new way to conceptualize space. An approach critical of that sometimes is termed "euclidean space", which entailed a "dominant tendency" to fragment space into isolated particles and enumerate "the things, the various objects, that space contains", instead, what Foucault and Lefebvre wished to uncover was the "hypercomplexity of social space" by considering its "individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements, and flows and waves" (Lefebvre, 1974: 88). In short, this new representation of space reorients analyses away from a merely material understanding, to a more encompassing conceptualization that accounts for its *hypercomplexity*. Hence, under the rubric of Lefebvre and Foucault, space ceases to be represented as passive and inert, and is integrated into a set of complex relations that need to be accounted for in more nuanced manners. Foucault summarizes this conception in the following way, "we do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely nor superimposable on one another" (1986: 23)

One of the decisive innovations was the understanding of space as relational. For example, Foucault claims that space takes “the form of relation among sites” (Foucault, 1986: 23), and these sites that organize spatiality can be “defined by relations of proximity between points or elements”. At the same time, materiality is relativized as these locations can be real or unreal (materially locatable or entirely immaterial), but most importantly, sites are defined not by a discrete location but by “the cluster of relations that allows them to be defined” (Foucault, 1986: 24).

Similarly, Lefebvre foregrounds the role of mediation, interaction and networks when thinking about space, to emphasize “the polyvalence of social space” as something that is “at once formal and material” but also composed by “networks of exchange and flow of raw materials and energy” that simultaneously “fashion and are determined by it.” (Lefebvre, 1974: 85). Lefebvre’s work signaled the relational and immaterial aspects of social spaces which can “interpenetrate one another or superimpose themselves upon one another”; thus, the more-than-material aspect of space is addressed by reflecting on its visible boundaries: spaces “are not things, which have mutually limiting boundaries” he explains, instead “visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces, where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity” (Lefebvre, 1974: 87).

These claims challenged previous approaches to space by exposing its reversibility and the multitude of components organizing it. They turned space into something that is flexible and deeply woven into social fabric. By reversible, space came to be understood as simultaneously constituted by and constitutive of social interaction, which opened the door for explorations that were concerned with its influence and involvement in social life. At the same time, under this scope, representations of space as fixed, material backdrop were undermined.

Ultimately, these set of reflections allowed for a renewed interests in space; a new mode of thinking of spatiality which gave birth to an influx of explorations, leading to a *spatial turn* in the humanities (Soja, 2009) –first championed within geography, and then widely dispersed among several disciplines. Consequently, an approach to spatiality by attending to its atmospheric qualities certainly acknowledges the relational, reversible and fluid condition of space. However, it pushes further and beyond the concerns inaugurated in the 70’s by postmodernism, which also inspired a spatial turn in the humanities (Masey, 1994, 1997; Soja, 2009; Warf & Arias, 2009), because it also integrates a sensual and experiential component; as a concept somewhat grounded in phenomenology, atmospheres helps offsets the initial lack of sensitivity toward the ways places are experienced.

Phenomenology

The discussions introduced by Foucault, Lefebvre and Soja were taken up and expanded by phenomenology scholars, whose preoccupation with space offered an emphasis on materiality and experience. Inquiries within phenomenology, seek to problematize simple accounts of place by exploring the relations between place and self.

To draw a quick genealogy, one could posit Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space* published in 1957 serving as a steppingstone, and also the work Eugene Minkowski’s referenced at the beginning of this chapter. But it was later attempts, mostly championed by Ed Cassey (*Getting back to Place*, 1993; *The Fate of Place*, 1997), what paved the way and made the topic of space a usual reference among scholars such as Nicolas J. Entrikin (1991, 2001), Tim Creswell (1996, 2004), Dylan Trigg (2012, 2020) and Jeff Malpas (1999). Mainly informed by the contributions of Heidegger and Merleau Ponty, these contributions attempt to sketch an understanding about our

“orientation and experience of place” conceived as a “fundamentally affective” one (Trigg, 2012:4).

Two notions ground these works, an understanding of space as relational and an emphasis on the affective dimension of space. So, while these contributions accept the fluidity of space and the produced/productive thesis introduced by the spatial turn, they posit a middle ground between material and constructivist accounts by trying to integrate affect into that equation.

Consequently, the concept of atmosphere has gained traction within phenomenology given that it can stabilize the various accounts of space within the discipline. While some authors have spoken of an atmospheric turn in the humanities (Bohme, 2019), I wish to evade such debates and instead emphasize how both phenomenological studies of space and explorations of space centered on atmospheric qualities, help expand our understanding of space. These approaches take the notion that space is relational and push it forward to claim that this relationality is not one-directional but horizontal, that the making of places entails simultaneously a making of subjects, meanings and things.

For instance, thinking a neighborhood through atmospheres implies understanding it as more than a symbolic construction, as something that unfolds in experience, and is both constituted and constitutive of it: La Boca is active and has an effect on social life. To unpack this further, I will refer to a set of discussions that ground the concept of atmospheres; namely, space/place theories; an understanding of place as a structure; and the affective dimension of place.

Structure and the Experience of Place

To begin with, the notion of Place has been defined in contrast to space -considered as undifferentiated physical extension-, with the former -Place- defined as a relational, open yet bounded, unitary realm interdependent with the structure of self (Malpas, 1999; Trigg, 2012). This distinction between Space/Place exposes a fundamentally relational understanding of place, which is the result an interplay between self and materiality. For example, La Boca is a place given that it is a bounded locale, distinguishable from adjacent barrios and other places in the city, and so bears a material\symbolic unity that holds it from within: there is something in this place that provides the neighborhood with a particular essence that is pervasive throughout and dissolves beyond its boundaries. Such spatial distinction is neither exclusively material, nor subjective, but arises from the integration of both and is accessible only in the experience of place.

In addition to this, phenomenology scholars consider that the relationality between Place and Space is also altered by the affective inclination of subjects. Simply put, different places orient humans toward certain affective stances; and in turn, these spatial affective stances operate by enacting a sense of unity across space (Malpas, 1999). For example, a street that makes me feel uneasy will allow me to differentiate this space from others, and so I will mark certain streets where I feel safe and comfortable as constituting a separate urban area. In this way, affective stances help organize space as particular moods help organize space in unities, regarded as Places.

The articulation of space is also reliant on material features. Generally speaking, the sensual orientation of subjects, allows for spatial boundaries to surface and leads to a loose juxtaposition

between affective and material boundaries, since these contours find support in material recognizable features of space. A wall, a gate, a bridge.

Most importantly, is that the dynamics of these articulations are taken as non-directional, being both material and affective, and bearing the capacity to form unities while also marking difference. For instance, Jeff Malpas considers space as a structure. Given that Place is neither an objective material reality, nor entirely defined by the experiencing subject in isolated fashion, but borne out of the interplay between subject and space:

Place is that within and with respect to which subjectivity is itself established -place is not founded on subjectivity, but is rather that on which subjectivity is founded (Malpas, 1999:25).

As a result, the structure of place involves the transformation of physical extension (space) into a network of places, by means of a horizontal dialogue between subjects, meaning and materiality, unfolded in experience. But in this structure, it's not just space that gets to be transformed but also the elements that lay within. Thus, echoing Foucault and Lefebvre, the interaction between place and subjectivity is reversible and non-directional. This understanding informs the notion of atmospheres as theorized by Gernot Bohme (2016, 2017), Tonino Griffero (2019, 2020), Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2016) and Dylan Trigg (2022), among others, in the sense that atmospheres occupy a liminal location, in-between subject and object-world. This opens up several implications, as atmospheres can facilitate the dissolution of boundaries between both, they also modulate how subject and place extend toward each other, and so they play a role in that horizontal dialogue that involves space, bodies, meanings and things; marking a reversible and non-directional kind of relationality.

The implication that lies just under the surface of these reflections is that the articulation of space is a rhetorical process out of which subject and object-world emerge simultaneously. The organization of space into the “binary” Place/Space is relevant within rhetorical criticism, being—in the words of Dickinson— the result of a suatory effort, an ongoing negotiation of how physical extension is interpreted in experience, which positions rhetoricians as especially well-equipped for its exploration.

The Rhetoric of Space

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, this study is situated within rhetorical criticism and looks at the way space inflects social life, by thinking space through atmospheres to uncover the rhetorical capacities of space. Doing so entails attending to the material/affective dimensions of place, the sensual and symbolic extensions of La Boca and how history, visual markers, textures, the sonic landscape and human involvement unfold in this urban space. I believe this approach will help expand an already robust scholarship on the rhetoric of space, that I will briefly outline in this section.

Space\Place theories began permeating communication studies following the trend across the humanities (Ackerman, 2003; Shome, 2003; Dickinson, 1997, 2003, 2006, 2019; Wright, 2005; Butterworth, 2005; Bowman, 2010; Clark, 2010; Aiello, 2011; Aiello & Tosoni, 2016). The spatial turn impacted the field by reorienting scholarship into thinking about “the ways people, cultures and politics are organized spatially” and how this spatial dimension can help inform and reorient rhetorical criticism. Space was incorporated under the rubric of medium, and understood as a technology of power that allows the circulation and distribution of meaning (Dickinson,

2019; Shome, 2003). Thus, thinking critically about space helped reformulate rhetorical criticism, leading to a reworking of how we make sense of texts, context, author and effects.

This integration of space in the practice of rhetorical criticism is often referred to as “rhetoric of space,” which entails a reformulation of how scholars understand and approach suatory practices of communication, with Gregg Dickinson assessing this shift as foundational: “it remakes rhetorical criticism” he claimed (2019: 300). Consequently, the expansion of rhetorical criticism that space habitates offered scholars new ways of dealing with questions about community, identity and “the discursive and material structures of power” (Dickinson, 2019:300).

Writing about material places whether sublime, quotidian or somewhere inbetween, localizes our attention, demands that we critically evaluate power, and requires that we think carefully about bodies, selves, others, and identity. At that same time, we recognize in the writing of criticism about the built environment and other material places a chance to refigure rhetorical criticism and to question a series of limiting and enabling assumptions (Dickinson, 2019: 300).

All in all, a rhetorical analysis of space does not simply entail the addition of a new item for the critic to attend to. On the contrary, space should be considered as closely interwoven with rhetoric and with the way meaning is encoded, decoded and circulates. As noted by phenomenologist accounts (Malpas, 1999; Trigg, 2012), space remains a permanent affair for attention as there can be no self, experience or social life existing outside of place. As much as this complicates the practice of rhetorical criticism, it also allows for a more deep and nuanced understanding of it.

However, whatever valuations could be made of it, I consider that rhetorical approaches to space would benefit by foregrounding not only space/place dynamics, but also by assessing the role bodies, meaning and materiality have in these processes. Dickinson's rhetorical explorations of space highlight these concerns (1997, 2003, 2006, 2019), and more than a static assessment of the built environment, his work encourages to think through the entanglements of space, meaning and bodies, both human and nonhuman.

The body and the surrounding spatial bodies -human and nonhuman alike- are knit together with space governing the body even as the body produces space and produces its own spatiality. Space and the body are co-implicated (Dickinson, 2019:303)

In short, meaning, materiality and bodies come together in the organization of space into an organized schema made up of places and spaces. This describes a rhetorical formulation that requires attention not only toward the articulation of space, but to the ways these processes also have effect on people. This can be uncovered by assessing our emotional responses to space, and it is exactly what the theory of atmospheres is signaling to: how rhetorical processes involved in the articulation of space\place bear effects that extend beyond toward the bodies involved in their constitution. This entails thinking of space as more than the scenography for social life; simply put, as we make places, places make us.

A rhetoric of Atmospheres

Atmospheres has been developed within philosophy, aesthetics, and phenomenology, gaining steam over the last couple of decades. Utilized in a variety of contexts, it has been theorized by Tonino Griffero (2019, 2020), Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2016), Dylan Trigg (2020), Mikkel Bille (2015) and Tim Flohr Sorensen (2015), whose work has been initially

inspired by the work of Gernot Bohme, *Atmosphäre: Essays zur neuen Ästhetik* (1995) and *Architektur und Atmosphäre* (2006), originally published in German.

As the term signals, atmospheres are in-the-air and somewhat ethereal, not fixed in materiality but not entirely subjective either, the concept allows to read space rhetorically accounting for the way the experience of place orients subjects affectively. Referring to an emotional state, they are different from moods, given that while these are rooted in personal situations, “atmospheres often affect the individual from a spatial and social environment” (Griffero & Tedeschini, 2019:3). Thus, it signals to that *something-more* involved in the experience of space that resist symbolic representation (Griffero, 2010), through Atmospheres scholars have been able to illuminate the affective stances evoked by space and these may be distributed and shared collectively: “it proposes a solution to understand why our emotions and feeling can be intersubjectively shared” (Griffero & Tedeschini, 2019:2).

A notable example is the work by Tonino Griffero (2010), who finds atmospheres to be pervasive, spatially poured out and arising out of the sensual encounter with the world (Griffero, 2010:5). They allow us to speak of the *affective quality of space* and taken to be constitutive of experience operating at a prereflective level. Griffero has defined them as spatialized feelings, felt and sensually accessible in-place –meaning they are tangible- but hard to convey by any other means. Dylan Trigg has also acknowledged the potential of this way of conceptualizing space and describes atmospheres as a “focal point for studies on the intersection between materiality and affectivity, embodiment and culture, perception and sense” (2016:763). A slightly different approach is offered by Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos’ work, centered on legality and space (2015), in which he addresses the political implications and oppressive quality of space. In his explorations he takes atmospheres to be ethereal and liminal too, but links

them to the spatial deployment of legality. In this sense, he conceives atmospheres as a perfected modality of *lawscapes*, a term referring to the integration of law and landscapes.

It must be noted, that across these bodies of work, there is no single and unified definition of the term, so -for the purpose of this study- I will provide my own definition keeping in mind how it can help account for the rhetorical experiences in the barrio of La Boca.

By way of atmospheres, one can account for the interaction between materiality, affectivity and meaning experienced in space. Thus, atmospheres reference affective stances evoked by being-in-place, the way certain spaces make us feel or how some places incline us sensually; atmospheres affect our bodies as we navigate and inhabit different places. They are neither fully in the object nor the subject, atmospheres are not encoded into the built environment but rather refer to the ways landscapes (which are material and meaning-laden) make us feel: “perceiving an atmosphere means grasping a feeling in the surrounding space” (Griffero, 2010:5).

Three main traits are constitutive of atmospheres: they are liminal, shareable and dynamic (or excessive, in the words of Tonino Griffero). *Liminality* signals towards their location, they are situated at the point where subject and the object-world encounters. Atmospheres are also *shareable* in the sense that they allow for shared emotional responses as evoked in-place, they do not remain attached to single psychic responses but are instead *spread over the world*, affecting several bodies simultaneously. Finally, their *dynamism* refers to the fluidity of their contours and reversibility, the fact that they are not firmly tied to material space, but in a state of flux and indeterminacy, given that they are co-dependant on the sensuality of bodies: Bohme speaks of them as quasi-objective. In the following pages, I will expand on each one of these characteristics.

Liminality

Atmospheres emerge as a concept borne out of a relational understanding of space which encompasses both, the material and symbolic elements composing a locale, and the emotional inclinations of bodies situated within the spatial structure (Malpas, 1999). The original trait of atmospheres is that it serves to account for that elusiveness of experience, it is a concept that speaks not only of the formal elements that constitute a space (visual cues, textured surfaces, material structures, spatial organization) but also the very subjective responses that emerge when involved in the experience of space; the sensual inclinations evoked by a place.

Griffero's utilization of atmospheres seeks to gap the bridge between expression and ontology, taking them as constituted by both simultaneously. He explains how, in atmospheres, "there is no separation between objective things and their correlated meaning. Rather things present themselves to us as being meaning-laden on a corporeal and cognitive level prior to any such abstract reflection on these things." (2010: 765). As a consequence, it sifts in-between not firmly attached neither to object nor subject. Griffero's take focus neither on things nor subjects, but on the way spatiality looms over and penetrates us: it oscillates between both polarities untethered.

Atmospheres are neither something objective, that is, qualities possessed by things, and yet they are something thinglike, belonging to the thing in that things articulate their presence through qualities... Nor are atmospheres something subjective, for example, determinations of a psychic state. And yet they are subject like, belong to subjects in that they are sensed in bodily presence by human beings and this sensing is at the same time a bodily state of being of subjects in space (Bohme, 1993: 122)

Trigg agrees with Griffero in this respect, emphasizing their liminal quality in the sense that they are not located in things nor in the subject, they oscillate, moving freely across such boundaries:

neither to the subject nor the object, it is neither fully present nor entirely absent, rather it sifts between these division, undercutting any attempt at fixing polarities in place... It can relate to the mood of a film or the affective resonance of a monumental event. (Trigg, 2016, 763)

In short, as much as atmospheres are felt and experienced by an individual, they do not dwell within the self, they are as much intersubjective as anchored in the materiality of space. As a consequence, the concept exists independently of both, subjective experience and material landscape. Additionally, by being not so much centered on personal experience, but sensual inclinations, it is able to account for the sharing of emotions across bodies, or how certain locales orient people sensually, how certain experiences evoked by space can spread simultaneously across several bodies.

Dynamic

If liminality is one of atmosphere's core qualities, by being located between self and place, this also entails that they bear no fixed boundaries and that their limits can be hard to grasp given that they fluctuate over time. This uncertain locality bears a numbers of implications: first, the presence of an excessive quality that signals the fluidity of its contours; secondly, this also entails a ubiquitous presence of atmospheres.

Griffero takes atmospheres to be spread out in the world or poured over into space, and given that they are not reducible to qualities of things, nor personal perception, they stand largely as

anonymous (2010:765). Furthermore, he describes them as quasi-objective and discusses their essence in the following manner:

Atmospheric perception is therefore a holistic and emotional being-in-the-world... An atmosphere provides a pre-reflective and all-encompassing field of meaning, such that we are never not in some kind of atmosphere (2010:765)

Hard to pin down, measure and stabilize, their contours are pliable granting potential for expansion or retraction as the relation between its components shifts across time. As a result, they are hard to constrain and rigidly mark their limits or finding definite anchoring points.

However, such fluidity does not entail that there are no definite limits to track. In many instances, there are definite boundaries that mark the “inside and outside” of a given atmosphere (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2015). For example, Dylan Trigg speaks of the atmosphere one could experience in a room, whence a sense of place emerges out of a “dialogue that takes place between the inhabitant of the room and the spatiality itself, while at the same time registering how an atmosphere exceeds that liaison between the subject and object” (Trigg, 2016: 763). In this case, the material boundaries of the room mark the contours of that atmosphere.

This takes us to the second implication mentioned, its pervasiveness. The door of a room can certainly be a boundary, however it also marks the entrance into a space with different atmospheric conditions. So, given that space appeals to us at an emotional and sensual level, atmospheres remain unavoidable, there is nothing outside of the *fractalised organization of space*, a move outside of a given atmosphere only provides access to a different kind of atmosphere (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2016).

Then, at the core of atmospheres' elusiveness lies a lack of certainty: it is hard to situate them and mark their definite limits: they can never be accurately measured. However, the concept appears useful to account for the way materiality, affect and intersubjectivity conflate in relation to space. If explorations on Place are concerned with charting the way space is organized, an exploration of atmospheres entails a nuanced assessment of how these places -once differentiated from undetermined space- affect people, allow for the sharing of affective stances and inclining social interaction.

Shareable

The third trait is the public quality of atmospheres. This hints at the way bodies become sensually oriented in-place and signals towards the emotional modalities a space is able to evoke. Thus, atmospheres operate at a collective level and offer a way to account for the sharing of affective stances operating at a prereflective level. This also implies that atmospheres are transsubjective, they breach the boundaries of subjectivity by simultaneously impacting several bodies (Ettinger, 2007; Pollock, 2009).

Following Griffero, we can situate atmospheres as primary to perception, meaning they are grasped by the subject before any rational abstraction to organize raw phenomena at a reflective level can occur. This approach brings atmospheres in proximity to other concepts that rely on the idea of entanglement as constitutive and primal and which, similarly, attempt to disarm the cartesian division of self and thing (entanglements as conceptualized by Karen Barad, assemblages in Gilles Deleuze and Karen Bennett or sensational forms as theorized by Birgit Meyer).

Given that atmospheres modify our subjective experience of the world -they operate upon the fabric of the world itself- being at the same time vulnerable to human agency. In atmospheres, then, one can find a sense of reversibility that allows them to operate as both, active and passive force. Thus, an atmosphere “shapes and defines a situation, providing the context and frame for how we respond to that situation, without at any point determining in a mechanical sense our response” (Griffero, 2010:765).

For instance, walking into a library might foster our inclination to focus and facilitate the act of reading, given that a certain atmosphere present in that space operates by “providing the context and frame”. At the same time, this does not entail that if we are overly anxious or struggling with personal concerns, the spatial inclination might not be enough to foster such response. At the same time, these atmospheric conditions might be disrupted by means of human agency if a group of people enters the building and plays loud music.

Another example of an atmosphere’s ability to incline people sensually is provided by George Orwell in his description of the *two minute hate* practice:

The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but, on the contrary, that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds any pretence was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic. And yet the rage that one felt was an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp. (Orwell, 1980)

Put otherwise, atmospheres' generative capacities are neither predefined entirely, nor defined by a subject in a non-relational manner either, but via an intersubjective integration of the material components of materiality, meaning and human involvement.

Atmospheres can be defined as both, public and shareable, because the way we react to a particular atmosphere and the type of action or attitudes it orients us toward “do not belong solely to the interior world of an individual, but are instead dispersed through the world more broadly” (Trigg, 2016). In short, atmospheres' intersubjective qualities can help explain how affective states can be shared across bodies.

But more than just intersubjective, they operate at a transubjective level. The extension from *inter-* to *trans-* occurs when the boundaries of the self are breach as emotional states move across bodies, which -by inhabiting the same place- become exposed to the same atmospheric conditions and inclined in similar fashion. Again, the subject is not forced toward a certain disposition here –as in a mechanic response- but inclined towards it. An example where this surfaces is in the analysis of public spaces (how they are designed to orient action and create specific affective stances). Therefore, a rhetorical study of such spaces can unveil the instrumentalization of atmospheres. For instance, Gregg Dickinson's (1997) work on coffee houses and old town Pasadena are prime examples of this, even though he doesn't utilize the concept to describe the effects of space, the concept of atmospheres can provide access to the modes in which retail spaces intend to “appeal to us on an affective rather than logical level” (Griffero, 2010:766), orienting our experience of space by fabricating a specific atmosphere within a locale.

As a theoretical concept, then, atmospheres bridge the gap between reflective meaning and pre-reflective experiences of space to help expand our understanding of the rhetorical processes involved in the experience of place. In the case of La Boca, it proves useful to account for the way subjects become affectively oriented by both aesthetics and symbolic meaning.

Additionally, it can help better understand how collective identity and community are held together through space, and how space operates transsubjectively (across subjective boundaries).

In the last few pages of this chapter, I will discuss my methodology and briefly outline the way the study is organized.

Method

My study can be defined as a rhetorical analysis of space that incorporates the notion of atmospheres, centered on El Barrio de La Boca. Formally speaking, the case study is defined by the boundaries of La Boca. Within this locale, I aim to explore the atmospheric conditions organized through the symbolic and material references present in space. I'm interested in attending to the way these atmospheres can be identified, but also in tracing their boundaries to understand how they emerge and fluctuate, how their associated meanings converge or differ, how they inform each other either via contrast or confluence. Community, history and identity are all concerns that inform my engagement with space, but more than standing as main preoccupations they will be touched upon to show how different atmospheres are experienced, and how as people move in and out of them they either recreate, resist or become affected by the atmospheric conditions of space.

By framing these interactions under the lens crafted by the theoretical contributions described above, I will approach places neither as material nor socially constructed, but as relational. Not as things, which have mutually limiting boundaries but locales with fluid contours, and as taking place as a structure that involves materiality, meaning and intersubjectivity.

This approach is consistent with the space/place framework and the understanding of space as relational, both of which rely on the rhetorical qualities of space. Within these inquiries, I wish to emphasize how places orient the motions within a neighborhood, or how certain atmospheres organize the flow of people within. Here, I draw primarily from Dickinson's work on Old Pasadena (1997), as well as Giorgia Aiello study on Bologna (2011) and Emanuella Guano exploration of La Boca (2003), all of which entail the navigation of a neighborhood to uncover the meanings and suassory efforts tied in space. These studies rely on the embodied aspects of experience, as well as gaze and movement, to focus on the horizontal dialogues between space and bodies.

If these are the initial questions and assumptions that motivate my study, I will rely on a number of different sources to address them.

One of my main resources is an embodied and physical exploration of La Boca. I walked the neighborhood to engage in what Middleton, Hess, Endress, and Senda-Cook have termed "participatory critical rhetoric" (2015). I visited La Boca in three different occasions in the span of two weeks, all of which took place at different times and days of the week. In each of these trips, I followed different routes to reach the neighborhood –having started from different locations- while having no strict itinerary or pre-established plan to guide me through the neighborhood; I was also accompanied by either close friends or relatives, in groups no larger

than three. I was familiar with the neighborhood having visited it a number of times over the span of several years, so I had a basic background –and knowledge- of the associated meanings attached to the different location within the neighborhood. However, this was the first time I would consistently visit La Boca. I gather over 6,000 words of field notes and took a total of 204 pictures.

Participatory critical rhetoric has been devised as a way of engaging with “vernacular, everyday and lived” forms of rhetoric, this is why I find it appropriate for the purposes of my study. More than that, the authors explain how the critic’s “presence in the moment of rhetorical invention” can help recognize and deal with non-traditional modalities of rhetorical practice which is precisely the purpose of this thesis. By visiting La Boca, one gets access to the “significance of the embodied, emplaces, material, visual affective, processual and vernacular dimensions of rhetorical practice that intersect” (Middleton et al, 2015: xiv) in place, and gets to witness the shared encounters and experiences that rhetorically give shape to the barrio.

Additionally, there are further resources I am drawing from as well. Visual and audiovisual documentation of the neighborhood, previous articles exploring of La Boca, and additional studies that share a similar theoretical outlook. However, these sources will become secondary, given that an exploration of atmospheres –which denotes how the physicality of space resonates upon human bodies- could only be performed by sensually experiencing these locales first-hand.

Consequently, the emplacement of my body amidst the rhetorical processes will result in a twofold presence; the analysis will be inflected by my experiential engagement with space and by my personal life trajectory as well. La Boca has had a special significance for me given that I am a fan of the athletic club Boca Juniors, founded there in 1904. This situates me in an affective

proximity to the neighborhood as it speaks of my particular emotional attachment to both, club and space, as an unavoidable part of my identity. In a way, this project is also a practice of self-reflection and a way to tension the boundaries of what symbolic communication is able to convey.

2

Atmospheric Motions

On my first trip to La Boca, we started off by car from La Paternal, a neighborhood located pretty much at the center of Buenos Aires, and it took us about 50 minutes to get to La Boca. It was a very noisy and stressful trip, lots of cars and buses, traffic lights, jams and loud sounds as well: rush hour situation in a city of about 5 million inhabitants. The road took us south given that La Boca is located at the southernmost region of Buenos Aires; this barrio borders with the province of the same name: towards the south the Riachuelo marks this boundary with Isla Maciel, an informal settlement in the town of Dock Sud, to the west and north the city extends in the neighborhoods of Barracas, San Telmo and Puerto Madero, and to the east sits the great Atlantic ocean.

So, it felt as if we were “leaving the city”. To reach La Boca, no matter where you are, one has to move towards the “periphery”, this is the sense that I got on all my trips I took there. Which entails a relative spatial designation marked by a number of factors, namely, the deviation from main roads, the decreasing density and urgency that animates traffic as you get closer to the south, and also a change in the built environment and general ambience: commercial and residential packed spaces are replaced by highways and warehouses, it becomes less noisy and the streets less crowded, there are fewer pedestrians and upon reaching La Boca, traffic jams and the corresponding loud noises of rush hour dispersed almost entirely.

What I’ve described so far it’s not a specific delineation of the route one has to take to reach La Boca, but a general assessment of the feeling I got when travelling toward this place, of atmospheric fluctuations. A charting of how atmospheric conditions fluctuate as one closes in on

La Boca. In this chapter, I will refer to these fluctuations within La Boca, and the atmospheric motions that animate the neighborhood.



Figure 5 The road to La Boca

By atmospheric motions I refer to the ways atmospheric conditions organize the flows of people, practices and emotions in urban contexts. Thus, the term motion is not constrained to the ways that people walk or stroll through a neighborhood exclusively, but also signals to how we feel when we do it. Put otherwise, it's meant to discuss how a kind of atmosphere inclines our movements through the streets, how we are oriented toward certain actions and attitudes and how the urban landscape is able to mobilize collectivities toward specific practices.

A simple example of what motions are and how they emerge out of specific atmospheric conditions: Imagine you're wandering in a city, walking down a street, and upon reaching a corner you notice how the next block looks uninviting, darker and emptier, simultaneously the people around you, they all take a right turn at this conjunction, and so you turn right too. This is an atmospheric motion, an expression of how atmospheric conditions –a confluence of the

material landscape and the integration of human activity- operate by orienting how one moves through the streets.

At the heart of what the notion of atmospheres is signaling at, is how linguistic limits, how spoken or written language is unable to fully capture and convey the experience of being in a place. This is what Griffero terms the *something-more* felt in space that resist representation, and so he describes that “perceiving an atmosphere, means grasping a feeling in the surrounding space” (Griffero, 2010:5).

Thus, this chapter entails an exploration of La Boca to trace the neighborhood’s atmospheres and characterize them highlighting their qualities as liminal, diffused and public. I plan to do so, by signaling to the heterogeneity of atmospheric conditions constituted within, which can be recognized by attending to the different motions that atmospheres animate in different places of La Boca. As a result, in the following pages there’s less of an emphasis on the visual and material traits of the landscape and how these atmospheres are constituted -an analysis provided in the following chapter-, and instead greater attention towards atmospheres, how they co-exist in La Boca, and how their liminal, dynamic and public qualities show up.

I begin by briefly outlining the relation between cities and communication, followed up by highlighting the heterogeneous characteristic of La Boca –as recognized by other scholars- and then continue to expose the experiential dimension of these different places. More specifically, signaling how in different areas of the neighborhood distinctive atmospheric conditions and atmospheric motions overlap. Throughout, I highlight the liminal, diffused and public traits of atmospheres.

Cities and Communication

Since the turn of the century, already more than two decades ago, cities have become privileged sites of inquiry within communication studies, and well beyond it too as scholars from numerous disciplines have taken an interest in the study of urban spaces. These spaces offer relevant insights into the complex dynamics and modalities on which communication relies. Both communication and cities have been described as inherently heterogeneous, continuously shifting, as well as contested (Aiello & Tosoni, 2016:1254).

At the same time, such inquiries entail “a recognition that cities are not simple backdrops for the communication processes through which people may connect or disconnect in meaningful ways” (Aiello & Tosoni, 2016:1258), but that these urban conglomerations are fundamentally involved in the expression and constitution of communities, political struggles, identities and cultural production. Thus, the current study sits within such analyses, sharing the intention to understand how urban spaces communicate through their material and symbolic layers, how it is both made and unmade by human activity, and how traces of the urban past take presence on the streets (Pauwells, 2016).

A look into atmospheres in La Boca serves to account for the modalities in which such communications take place, while specifically focusing on the sensual and emotional inclinations evoked by space. It speaks of the ways in which people in urban spaces connect with others and with the urban landscape, and the wider set of relations that cannot be contained by a symbolic reading of the built environment (Aiello & Tosoni, 2016). Consequently, in the case of atmospheres, and of their tracing, our attention is directed to a tangible –even if not solely

material- quasi-objective element which is liminal, shareable, and of diffused boundaries (Griffero, 2010).

Heterogeneity in La Boca

The case study for this, La Boca, can be considered a beacon within the national cultural landscape of Argentina due to the many intersecting narratives that find expression here. Several scholars have noted how a variety of places co-exist within (Herzer et al, 2008; Guano, 2003; Fabaron, 2016); as much as the neighborhood has been described as bearing a working-class character, La Boca is considered a contested space where several political, cultural and symbolic struggles over space take place. It remains a cultural hub, globally, nationally and locally relevant, a touristic attraction, a residential space, and the site of one of Argentina's most significant sports venues.

We have noted how its history has been paired with Buenos Aires' mythical origin, considered in the early 20th a booming city century nurtured by the arrival of peoples of different cultural backgrounds. Nicknames such as *La Babel del Plata* and *Paris del Plata*, served to privilege the influence of a white, west European cultural influx. In retrospect, La Boca is considered a prime example of the period due to the majority of Ligurian migrants who settled there and their influence still expressed in the particular aesthetic of the neighborhood (Devoto, 1989). As a result, La Boca's symbolic capital has been exploited for profit and some area turned into a tourist hub, namely around the area called *Vuelta de Rocha* and *Caminito street-museum*.

Table 2
REGIONAL ORIGIN AND SELECTED COMMUNES
OF ITALIANS IN LA BOCA (1855)

Commune/Region	N	%
Genoa	143	25.6
Varazze	129	23.1
Recco	76	13.6
Sestri L.	25	4.5
Others	154	27.5
Total Liguria	527	94.3
Sicily	12	2.1
Piedmont	12	2.1
Lombardy	8	1.5
Total Italy	559	100
No data/unidentified	93	—

Source: Census forms, Census of 1855 (Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires).

Table 1 As cited by Herzer et al, 2008

Another narrative that finds spatial expression –connected to this ethnic past as well- is the presence of the soccer club Boca Juniors. Founded by Italian teenagers in 1904, the club has been for over a century one of the main animators of the national soccer league, arguably the team with most fans and trophies nationwide, and so a cultural and financial powerhouse. Thus, a small working-class neighborhood is the host to the biggest club in the country and, most notably, to its stadium “La Bombonera”. A world-renowned venue due to its location within a residential neighborhood, its distinctive shape and its frantic atmosphere during game days, which draws tourists and fans alike.

A third sign found in La Boca is its residential character. Gentrification has had less penetration here, and the land value has remained consistent over the years (Herzer et al, 2008). As a result, one finds a lower residential density which fosters a sociality that is further pressured by its peripheral location, La Boca is still somewhat isolated and distanced from the city, and so it

holds within an active community with has a strong sense of identity grounded on a symbolically burdened urban space.

The trajectories described above coalesce to impose a particular aura to La Boca. There is a sense of melancholy, a stillness of time spatially expressed, as if things here remain untouched by time: the nostalgic feeling evoked by a centenary *barrial* fútbol club holding on to its roots, the mark of Italian heritage upon urban aesthetics, and a working-class community with a strong sense of belonging. These intersections inflect La Boca's spatial disposition, as Keuchkarian et al note, La Boca bears a "tradition of symbolizations with an emphasis on the visual dimension that acquires materiality in its urban landscapes" (2019:42); all of these narratives are contained within the neighborhood and work in tandem by reinforcing each other but they simultaneously struggle for expression on a limited space. As a result, they mark it by creating different places that either overlap, converge or adjoin.

Thus, La Boca expresses the traits of cities already noted by communication scholars, being inherently heterogeneous, continuously shifting, and contested. Herzer explains that "different constructive typologies seal different microclimates within" (2008:42). In similar fashion, Hopftgarner and Vidosa highlight the heterogeneous characteristics of the people that navigate the barrio on a daily basis, and stresses how the use of public space made by tourists and residents is "directly opposed" (2013:33). While Fabaron considers such heterogeneity to be La Boca's characteristic trait, expressed in its various landscapes and urban practices: places that bear a "high symbolic value, both in local memory and in the city's imaginary, coexist with areas less known, deteriorated houses and public spaces" (2016:69).

During my visits, I came across the heterogeneity of places and noticed three atmospheric areas that coincide with these intersecting narratives. First, *El Barrio* is a residential region, where

houses, tenement houses, apartment buildings, shops and other residential buildings –schools, churches, social and political association offices- can be found; then, *Casa Amarilla* is where the stadium, training grounds and other buildings owned by the club Boca Juniors are located; and finally *Caminito Circuit* is the tourist region condensed around Vuelta de Rocha and Caminito street-museum which is also where most souvenirs shops, restaurants, and museums are located. It must be noted, that even if the neighborhood's heterogeneity is expressed in the presence of these three atmospheric areas and in the way they interact, they do not exhaust the totality of the neighborhood spaces of La Boca, there were some spaces I did not visit –mainly, due to the constraints imposed by time and distance.

The Production of Place in La Boca

The studies I have cited so far, explain the spatial organization of La Boca relying on two grand cleavages. One is an economic organization of space, and the second theme is the socio-ethnic claim over neighborhood spaces. The first one contrasts spaces in terms of the residential/tourism opposition with a focus on gentrification and the for-profit exploitation of the neighborhood's identity. Then, the socio-ethnic divide hints at the politics within La Boca, by exploring space in terms of an opposition between middle-class and low-class residents –other times characterized as local vs. migrant population. However, what these analyses tend to overlook –even when they mention it- is the experiential dimension of these places, centering instead on the associated meanings and authorized practices anchored by place.

For instance, Fabaron speaks of La Boca's heterogeneity in terms of codes, practices and signs. She identifies a distinction that residents make between *barrio* and *tourism*, notions that spatially

speaking coincide with daily urban landscapes –residential areas- and cultural landscapes – tourism-oriented spaces-, organized by symbolic frontiers which are not clearly delineated upon space. These codes or signs are expressed in authorized, desirable and impossible practices and morals attached to different places across the neighborhood (Fabaron, 2016:71).

As a matter of fact, the same neighborhood signs are constantly deployed in the production of landscapes and diverse scenes with different –and even opposite- meanings (Fabaron, 2016:71).

Hopftganer and Vidosa make a similar distinction between tourists and residents, and rely on practices as the fundamental factor for the production of space. They identify spaces of heterogeneous populations who cohabit without interacting:

On one side, we find tourists who, for security reasons, only consume the public spaces in recuperated areas... on the other hand, surrounding this sort of enclave, the reality of the neighbors is radically opposed (Hopftganer & Vidosa, 2014:33)

Emiliana Guano has analyzed La Boca as a contested space, focusing primarily on how “dominant representations of class, race, and gender” organize and mark places within. She states that

the boquense middle-class resident, has spatialized its narrative of a cultured, respectable self in opposition to a dangerous other, through a discourse and a variety of practices that ranged from a class-conscious passion for the arts to performative stagings of heritage, and from a racialized representation of “work ethics” to a crime talk that reproduced social boundaries (Guano, 2003:358).

Similarly to the work by Fabaron and Hopftganer & Vidosa, Guano underscores the role of discourse and practices in the articulation of spaces. Additionally, these studies focused on

power-dynamics within the neighborhood, either opposing residents to tourists, local neighbors' associations to real-state contractors and private investors, or by illuminating social-ethnic cleavages.

As noted above, the symbolic relevance of La Boca and its heterogeneous spaces have been explored by reading the meanings and practices anchored in place. My intention in the following sections is to build and add to these reflections by addressing both, the rhetorical qualities of space and La Boca's heterogeneity, from an atmospheric perspective. Doing so entails incorporating the affective dimensions of space within La Boca, and accounting for the way variations in the qualities of places affect people differently. Put otherwise, how the fluctuation of atmospheric conditions in La Boca, results in different motions within these areas. Emiliana Guano has acknowledged such atmospheric qualities at play during her *Stroll through La Boca*, by noting how meaningful actions organize space into a mosaic of places, which then provide "more or less explicit prescriptions for walking and looking, for sensing and thinking" (2003: 360). Thus, I will first characterize the three atmospheres I recognized –Casa amarilla, El Barrio and Caminito Circuit- and then offer specific examples of how these areas orient practices, movement and affective stances of subjects within –the atmospheric motions.

Atmospheres in La Boca

I visited La Boca between the months of December and January of 2022 and 2023, in three occasions at different times and days of the week. During my visits I walked the streets, talked to my companions and engaged in conversation with people, looked around, took pictures, and stopped at cafés, bars or restaurants to rest and take additional notes. I had no planned itinerary

for these trips, and so the only constraints conditioning my visit was the availability of time and the factors that emerged during my experience, the atmospheric motions -as mentioned above- either provoked by atmospheric conditions –the conversation I had with my companions, what people on the streets told me or suggested, what I felt like doing at any given time. This entailed that sometimes I ended up involved in practices –or in places- I couldn't have anticipated, but being that my purpose was to *feel* the neighborhood spaces or to “grasp the feeling in the air”, such situations were unplanned but within the parameters of what I expected.

As noted above I circulated between three different atmospheric areas that were quite distinct: the club's premises, the residential area and the tourist part. In the following section, I describe each one of these atmospheric regions by referencing my experience there. As I do so, I will also reference the liminal, diffused and public qualities of these atmospheres as they become more or less noticeable.

Casa Amarilla: Diffused & Dynamic

Casa Amarilla has a tranquil and serene vibe to it on non-match days. The premises of the Boca Juniors club, where the stadium, offices and training grounds are located are physically distinguishable by an open space and the pervasive presence of a blue and yellow. For the purpose of this study I refer to this atmospheric area as *Casa Amarilla* –which translates as yellow house, the name of the club's main offices- with the purpose of highlighting how in this area the diffused and dynamic qualities of atmospheres show up.



Figure 6 A sight of La Bombonera from Casa Amarilla

Visually speaking, as you walk on this area the sight of La Bombonera is permanently visible on the horizon –toward Caminito and the Riachuelo river-, rising on the southeast towering above La Boca. The stadium seems to be a central node within La Boca, both symbolically and spatially, but it is certainly most noticeable within Casa Amarilla, the only area in the neighborhood where you get such a clear sight of La Bombonera.

La Bombonera is cordoned by two streets, Brandsen to the south -where the main entrance is- and Dr. Del Valle Iberlucea to the west. Toward the east it borders with the train tracks (Pasaje Garibaldi) and to the north Casa Amarilla extends. Iberlucea is quieter than Brandsen, almost empty in terms of traffic and passersby since it starts by the stadium and runs south for 7 blocks ending at Vuelta de Rocha on the margins of the Riachuelo river. Brandsen, on the other hand, is a main road within the neighborhood running from east to west, starting by the docks –in the east- and reaching out to the neighboring barrio of Barracas in the west.

The atmospheric area I recognized extends toward the northwest of the stadium, where the club premises are located and so it is an open urban space, with very few buildings to be found. A little bit further toward the west, opposite to the stadium, the sidewalls of tall apartment

buildings by the Avenida Brown show enormous murals of Boca's fans and notable club players on the horizon.

Diffused because its boundaries are hard to detect and are not discretely defined, instead the articulations that create a particular atmosphere disentangle as you move closer to the stadium, and toward adjacent atmospheric areas. Dynamic given the atmosphere changes drastically on gamedays, these are the streets people use to move in and out of the stadium, and where *choripan* stalls are set up during game days. My visit took place during days where no match was taking place –off season- but some material markings, such as fences, made evident the temporal shifts in atmospheres that occur here.

As you walk on these streets very few cars and people circulate –it appears there are no shops, restaurants, nor houses here-, and so the site remains marked by silence, slightly broken by sound traces off Avenida Brown's constant traffic. To add to this tranquil soundscape, both in the morning and the early afternoon, you can hear birds chirping, and the lack of buildings results in a stronger breeze; you can sense the proximity to a body of water, both by the way the breeze flows and the scent it carries. It is not a stench however, but a slight aroma that signals to the presence of a river.



Figure 7 Walking in Casa Amarilla

As we walked here, we tilted naturally toward the stadium. On a trip that takes no more than twenty minutes, the landscape extends in a stable manner: close to me walls, facades, buildings, lightposts, fences, the sidewalk's curb, they all show the blue-yellow color pattern that identifies Boca Jr. Specifically, as I navigated these streets, the sight of the stadium not only served as a visual reference to mark the location of the tourist and residential regions of the neighborhood, but its visual presence guides you on the path towards it, so even if one must follow a strangled path and take several turns, the sight of the stadium serves as a constant reference. From these buildingless blocks it appears in the distance as a massive blue and yellow structure.

Closing in on La Bombonera it's still very silent, as we turn on a couple of corners we reach an area with more buildings –some are houses, some offices, other shops, most of these are painted in blue and yellow. In the distance, a traffic sign stands out due to the contrast the red and white creates upon this chromatic landscape. Already a few blocks away we start to see fences by the sidewalk, used to organize the flow of crowds during gamedays. Thus, if *Casa Amarilla* offers a tranquil and serene space draped in yellow and blue, the stadium seems to stand as its chromatic

center naturally drawing you to it, as we moved closer the colorful cues become more prevalent and consistent. The closer we got more things showed up in these colors, as if they overflowed unto the surroundings streets and invaded the buildings beside it.



Figure 8 The fences closer to the stadium

Reaching Iberlucea street, on the west side of the stadium, the sidewall of La Bombonera dwarfs the buildings across the street which are no taller than two stories high. Most buildings are residential, except for a couple of shops selling Boca's jerseys and other club's related items.

Brandsen street marks the south side of the stadium. There, the sidewall of La Bombonera has several murals depicting the history of the neighborhood; there's a bus stop, the stadium's main entrance, the club's museum and an official store. On Brandsen street almost all buildings across from the stadium are souvenir shops, painted in blue and yellow, though some are buildings that appear abandoned, made out of wood and zinc panels. As a result, more people gather in this street, going in and out of the shops and taking pictures. Traffic is also more prevalent here,

buses, vans and cars circulate, and so the silence that marked the atmosphere of *Casa Amarilla* shifts noticeably upon reaching this part of the neighborhood. It seemed as the end of the serene vibe that we had just been immersed in, a diffuse boundary an atmosphere.



Figure 9 The main entrance to La Bombonera, on Brandsen street

In terms of atmospheric motions, atmospheric conditions organize circulation and navigation of these urban spaces. Casa Amarilla remained mostly empty as people would not move toward that direction. Both, Caminito and El Barrio, seem to replicate a bounded circulation within even when there are no physical obstacles that mark the limits of this area other than the landmark of La Bombonera.

This speaks of the ways atmospheres hold a sense of consistency within, as bounded areas within which people tend to remain. This is evident in the way one is atmospherically oriented to move around Casa Amarilla and not just the attraction the stadium.

As I walk, I go all the way around the stadium, as if the stadium would guide the flow and movement of people. Maybe it also inflects the location of shops and the distribution of colors. Maybe cars too, it might very well operate orienting all movement in the neighborhood.

Thus, I was oriented in a similar manner while I walked around Casa Amarilla. For example, upon reaching the stadium I sensed a shift in the atmosphere and felt reluctant to move toward other directions too. It wasn't this the only occasion it happened, on several instances I intentionally evaded the area where tourists gathered, noticing a shift expressed in the loud and crowded environment and deciding I wished to evade those spaces, seeking instead the refuge of a less energetic and lively atmosphere.



Figure 10 Souvenir shops across the stadium, on Brandsen street

Thus, La Bombonera bears an atmospheric effect upon space, and even when it is not visible it acts as a spatial reference. A symbolic one within the mental map one creates of the neighborhood while moving through it, standing at the intersection of different neighborhood areas, it becomes a useful marking that organizes navigation. Many times I could remember

where I had parked my car, or what route to take to a certain destination by signaling toward where the stadium was located.

We reach the end of the tourist path, and we decide to go back. We move back to the stadium, kind of naturally, but basically because that's the way we can orient ourselves and find our way back.

Other modes in which an atmospheric articulation became expressed during our experience was in the practices we became involved in. While in *Casa Amarilla* I was also oriented toward certain practices I hadn't anticipated; an atmospheric motion resulting from a particular articulation of space. For instance, upon reaching the stadium, I spent about a full hour looking at Boca's jerseys. This was unplanned, but as soon as I reached the streets by the stadium I walked into one of these blue and yellow shops, I was immediately swept away from all previous concerns and thoughts. I was not preoccupied about my notes, taking pictures, or urban aesthetics; instead I was drawn by the amount of Boca's jerseys on display. The fact that my companions were also interested in these items also served to encourage this practice. Similarly, when I went with my relatives they started searching and looking for souvenirs and gifts, and spent at least an hour doing this. Both can be attributed to the influence of the atmospheric conditions.



Figure 11 Blue and yellow shop on Iberlucea street

With La Bombonera as a spatial epicenter of the neighborhood, the club premises toward the north, the Riachuelo river four blocks away to the south, next to the tourist area of the neighborhood, and residential areas extending to the west and the east. Around the stadium a mixture and coalescing of spatialized feelings collide, there's a noticeable change in the atmosphere: the breeze and scent can't be sensed here in the same way, it is more crowded, and both the built and sonic landscapes shift. Thus, starting off *Casa Amarilla* toward the stadium, one can sense how spread out and diffuse the boundaries of atmospheres are, and how a shift in atmospheres is not hard to detect but can be difficult to assess how or when it happens.

This is how my stroll around Casa Amarilla exemplifies the diffused and dynamic qualities of atmospheres. The desolate, peaceful and tranquil vibe that can be felt in this area, where few cars circulate and the silence of the streets allow for the chirping of birds to be heard, feel like protected and separate from the rest of the neighborhood, and so the atmosphere was quite different: there were no houses, no shops, no galleries, and almost no pedestrians. And so, it's not just how such an atmosphere slowly shifts as you move toward other areas of the neighborhood, but also how this space changes during gamedays when it's flooded with fans flocking toward the stadium to see their team play. Those are days of joy and excitement. The streets of Casa Amarilla serve to organize the circulation of thousands of bodies. Walking there, I couldn't help but think how different this location feels in those moments, expressing again, that even if atmospheres are grounded in the physicality of space, they help expose the relational qualities of place.

El Barrio: Liminal

El Barrio reminded me of traditional residential spaces of Buenos Aires. Extending toward the east of La Bombonera, in this part of the neighborhood most houses are residential –either regular houses, tenement houses or apartment buildings-, while some shops populate the landscape as well, -gathered mainly along Olavarria street-. The color scheme is less bright, of a grey hue and noticeably rundown, the density of traffic and people is lower than on Brandsen, but still livelier than in *Casa Amarilla*. As I walk through these streets the sight of La Bombonera fades away, precluded by narrow streets, the trees on the sidewalks and the height of the buildings. It is, nonetheless, a space with mostly low buildings and where visual cues are provided by the presence of murals, mosaics and graffiti. These are markings that evoke a history and actualize the past of this urban space, they are not stand-ins for what’s gone but the remains of what it was. In these spaces, stories and materiality come together, entangled, to expose the liminal location of atmospheres.



Figure 12 Wood and Metal houses

On these streets you find signs that sustain an essence of Barrio. The neighborhood's character is encrypted in space and exposed as nurtured by workers and migrants arriving from Italy and Spain. La Boca developed as a *barrio de arrabal*, a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city. So there, close to the docks it became a source for a vernacular identity to emerge: *cocoliche* developed as a mixed between Spanish and other languages, it was a hub for tango and artists, for anarchism and socialism, for social and political activism. In this context, the notion of barrio holds on to positive association that speak of traditional and vernacular values and ways of living.

This is part of the story that founds and sustains La Boca, expressed in space. For instance, upon the walls of the stadium that face the residential area, upon a blue and yellow background, a mosaic that features a tango couple dancing and workers on the docks, separated by a big star upon the background of a world map, reads:

*To the founders
And the people,
The artists and the idols,
The tango and fútbol,
That made of La Boca,
A destiny and a myth²*

Facing this wall, toward the east, the neighborhood extends. It is rather quiet, not entirely silent since cars, motorcycles and taxis circulate fluidly. People here, unlike the tourists I found on Brandsen, walk with relative haste, they appear to be headed somewhere, disregarding their

² A los fundadores y a la gente, a los artistas y a los ídolos, al tango y al fútbol, que hicieron de la Boca un destino y un mito (Trans. By the author)

surroundings. Some are sitting by the door of their houses idly, while others are engaged in conversation.

El barrio feels run-down, faded, not taken care of and dirty. This can be noted in the textures and surfaces of facades, murals and sidewalks, and also in the accumulation of litter and discarded objects that can be found on the streets. They give off a sense of old, but it all feels like part of the neighborhood's flair, consistent with the symbolic placement La Boca holds.

We stop for a drink by a bar that sits one block from the stadium. It is a picturesque location, a bit run down again, like everything around here. That's part of the flair.



Figure 13 Looking out the window of the bar

As I walk on the first things my attention is drawn to is the presence of tenement houses. I identify them because they either have metal gates or wooden doors which are fully open and so, one can glimpse into the inside to see a hallway that opens up into a bigger space, a patio with stairs and sometimes other doors. Some keep the gate closed but have several doorbells at the front. I'm also struck by the presence of wooden and metal houses, the kind of architecture

characteristic of La Boca. Many of the houses made of wood and zinc metal sheets have small doors, other have their windows at the ground level. They look odd and different from more contemporary buildings found across the neighborhood, they appear kind of run-down and bear distinctive colors, sometimes green, blue or orange, sometimes yellow, these are not bright but faded colors. Most of them have balconies, small iron balconies that look quaint but are used, dirty and old. Some of them have chairs while in others there's laundry left out to dry.



Figure 14 Several doorbells at the gate

I find several of these buildings in each block, but not all houses are tenement houses or wooden-made, contemporary ones are most common really, and there are also some apartment buildings in this area. Generally speaking, most buildings are low, the streets are narrow and the area is dirty, the presence of trees precludes the sight of the stadium. There are no tourists moving

around here that I notice, and no souvenir shops either, there are a few references to Boca Juniors throughout the landscape, but they are not pervasive as in *Casa Amarilla* –a flag or jersey hung by a window, a mural, a graffiti.



Figure 15 A wood light post painted in blue and yellow, fences piled on the sidewalk

During my stroll, I was inclined and oriented by the atmospheric aura of this space. The way its aesthetics extended toward me were marked by these stories I knew, inflecting my practices, thoughts and the general feeling I got as I moved through these streets.

For instance, my impression and disposition was to take the precarious conditions of the built environment as a positive sign of authenticity, instead of considering it in negative terms. It was consistent with the history of the place I was in, while marking my experience and involvement in it as authentic. In contrast, this is also what oriented my impressions of *Caminito Circuit* as fake and fabricated. And so, my emotional and sensual disposition toward a run-down, faded and dirty neighborhood, was both informed and constitutive of an atmosphere (in the confluence of meaning and materiality): it expresses the ways one decodes the built environment in relation to

a set of attached meanings, one that signals to a historical past that takes presence in the urban landscape.

At corners it's usual to find shops, most of the times these are bakeries. However, shops are scattered and not too prominent until I reach Olavarria street, which is noticeably more crowded than the rest of the streets in this area. It is still a narrow street, with trees, low buildings and people moving with haste, traffic also increases both in density and sound. It is certainly filled with shops, and there's a school, a church, and La Boca's Popular University, I can easily tell this is the commercial strip, since there are no tenement or wooden houses but apartment buildings that are a few stories high and businesses that sit in the bottom floor next to each other. I notice produce stores, butcheries, kiosks (small grocery stores), supermarkets, hardware stores, gyms, pharmacies, barbershops, clothing stores, and cafes.



Figure 16 Olavarria Street

Another example of how atmospheric motions incline our experience of place relates to notions of vulnerability and danger. Historically known as a low income neighborhood, some parts of La Boca tend to be designated as dangerous, and so one is expected to navigate these areas acknowledging such perils.

For example, in more than one occasion I was told not to walk on certain streets. Even before visiting La Boca, I was well aware one might get mugged here, but I didn't feel that could happen to me, not at that time of the day and only a few blocks away from Caminito. Time and space certainly conflate in the emergence of atmospheres. For example, during one of my visits I reached the end of the tourist area on Magallanes street and I kept on walking east instead of turning toward the stadium on Pasaje Garibaldi (the circuit tourists follow). Before walking a full block in this direction a cop approached me, asked me if I was from the neighborhood, and then suggested me to go back to get a cab or call for an Uber, telling me that this area was unsafe. In spite of this, I continued on this path for a few blocks, and even if I was not constantly looking over my shoulder or anxious and afraid, I still acknowledged that I was doing something that was designated as unsafe and generally not encouraged, and so I was wary of my surroundings.

Such impression inflected my experience of walking on these streets, the atmosphere of the place operated here not by directing my actions and moods in an arbitrary and direct manner, but by affecting how I moved and experienced this place. Not just wary and attentive, but also the feeling of being foreign. And so, the orientation an atmosphere provides does not always imply a straightforward and pre-established emotional stance, but at the very least a self-positioning relative to that stance. As one walks in a place atmospherically unsafe, a feel that extends even if physical threat remains precluded, one may take an alert stance, defy the dangers to feel brave or

cave in to a sense of anxiety and vulnerability. Thus, in my case, the outcome of my experience is not predetermined by the atmosphere I was moving within, but oriented and inflected by it.

Not only sensually inclined, atmospheric motions are also expressed in the way we felt oriented to take part in certain practices; or how we feel about participating in them. On my notes I reflected on my reluctance to taking pictures while I walked around the residential parts of the neighborhood:

When we were in the residential part of the neighborhood, we were hesitant to taking pictures because it felt as if people could take it as an invasion of their privacy. I actually got stares everytime I took pictures. Even as close as one block away from Caminito, I took some pictures and some of the people walking around looked at me.

I didn't feel inclined to take pictures. I captured this atmospheric motion within the structure of logic by considering it a breaching the intimacy and privacy of the residents in their homes, even if it was just the public space I was trying to capture (a street, a sign, a mural). Doing so did not disarm the atmosphere there, but resonated differently, it was disruptive in the sense that was neither expected nor welcome: A practice that feels out of place.

Moreover, when I did so, I would get gazes from locals and I felt identified as foreign by engaging in practices that were not authorized by the place. I remember walking in front of a wooden and metal house which caught my attention, but then being hesitant whether I should photograph it or not, I decided to do it but trying not to be too obvious about it. Later, when I was going over these records I noticed that a man washing a car in front of this house was looking straight at the camera.



Figure 17 Man washing a car in front of a wood and metal house, possibly a *conventillo*

In similar manner, I did feel more inclined in participating in certain activities related to the cues marked by atmospheric conditions in these spaces. For instance, I held several conversations with my companions as we strolled through La Boca, most of these were related to the history of the neighborhood, the social conditions in the early in the early 20th century, and the role and influence of immigration. The presence of Conventillos, the murals scattered across the neighborhood, the presence of the river and the docks, the art museums, the soccer stadium, the colorful and also the rundown facades, all of these elements acted like prompts, inclining the talks toward certain topics.

As we walked through these streets, we start talking about the history of the barrio, and the early 1900's. It feels like space has the power to prompt certain types of conversations, in this case about the historical past and what people have learned about Buenos Aires. The themes are migrations, the kind of work people would do by the docks, how and where they would live.

What's more, these conversations stem from the activation of certain memories and the enactment of a symbolic network of ideas. These talks I held can be attributed to the way atmospheric conditions in La Boca incline us toward certain thoughts. For example, by looking at a mural that signals to the presence of Italian migrants, and thus acknowledging La Boca as a place of ligurian heritage, certain memories are activated and then more likely to express these thoughts and ideas and engage in conversation about these topics.



Figure 18 Colorful wood and metal buildings, a sign that reads "potato sale 2x300"

However, such atmospheric motions can take place silently as well. I mentioned earlier as one of my first impression about the residential area was how similar it was to other neighborhood of Buenos Aires. Specially since the stadium is not available to one's sight, it felt like several other residential neighborhood of Buenos Aires –for example, La Paternal, Boedo, Almagro-, places

that are not gentrified and remain secluded from the massive flows of people within Buenos Aires.

For instance, as I walked through the Barrio, and I'm noticing the houses, the people calmly walking by and engaged in daily and menial activities, I am reminded of other neighborhood of Buenos Aires, I think of La Paternal, of Boedo, these are residential barrios of Buenos Aires that still bear a traditional essence of small urban communities.

And so, a network of places becomes enacted in which I locate La Boca in proximity to these locations, marking a symbolic tie to these other locales, physically distanced but brought together in my mind. Such inclinations are also how atmospheres become expressed, bearing an impact that takes place before any logical condensation can occur, they orient and affect the mental maps we formulate when we move through places.

This personal account of my experience and the examples I offered speak of the ways in which I was moved and inclined by the atmosphere in this area, and gestures toward the liminality of atmospheres as a spatial phenomenon. This becomes clear when one acknowledges that the way I felt and the modes in which the environment impacted and oriented my experience did not stem from internal moods, but were neither values encrypted in the physical surrounding alone, calmly waiting to be uncovered. Instead, they emerge as the result of a complex interplay in which I became mentally and sensually entangled in space; the textures of the tenement houses held a touching quality that became articulated with my own subjectivity in space, and marked my disposition and impressions. Tenements and wood-and-metal houses, the way people acted and moved, felt like cues of authenticity, a desirable trait within this particular spatial context. A narrative, my moving body and the material landscape coalesce under the presence of an

atmosphere that tethers in-between, detected as a spatialized feeling that results in the sensual and cognitive orientation of subjects as they move through this residential space.

While Casa Amarilla exposed the diffusion of atmospheric boundaries, such shifts are certainly more noticeable between El Barrio and Caminito Circuit. It is quite astounding the atmospheric boundaries of the residential spaces, while toward the stadium and casa amarilla there is a nuanced disentanglement, a stark contrast can be noted between residential and tourist spaces. Walking on Olavarria –which runs parallel to Brandsen- I can clearly find an end of the commercial area when it reaches the Avenue Brown, situated to the east. Turning back, about four blocks you reach a souvenir shop (*La Boquense*) on a corner, easy to spot because of its yellow and blue façade and a life-size statue of Lionel Messi with a sign hanging from its neck that reads “Fotos 200 pesos” (pictures 200ARS), across the street from this souvenir shop there’s a restaurant called Sabor Porteño (Porteño flavor). These two commercial spots, located at the intersection of Olavarria and Iberlucea, are tailored for the visitor, not the local resident of La Boca. From here, only a couple of blocks away, downhill to the south, I get a glimpse of Vuelta de Rocha and the Riachuelo river. Thus, unlike the diffused disentanglement of Casa Amarilla, this intersection marks a noticeable shift in the general vibe to be grasped in space.

Caminito circuit: Shareable & Public

Caminito Circuit feels like a fabricated space, tailored for the gazing eye, and a lively and an energetic vibe is felt within. Generally speaking, in the morning and early afternoon, I found this area to be more crowded than the *Barrio* and *Casa Amarilla*. However, it’s not just the amount and density of people in the streets, or the pace at which they circulate –which is slower than in

the *Barrio*-, that give this place a distinctive feel, but also the activities people here are involved in, the way they interact, the heterogeneous urban landscape, and the multitude of sounds that compose the sonic register in this space. A look at this space, and the motions it invites, offers an opportunity to highlight the shareable and public qualities of atmospheres.



Figure 19 Iberlucea Street, one block away from Vuelta de Rocha and Magallanes

In terms of location, *Caminito Circuit* is constrained within Brandsen street to the north (at the south end of the stadium), the streets of Iberlucea and Pasaje Garibaldi -marking east and west boundaries respectively-, and Vuelta de Rocha and Magallanes street at the southern end where it meets the meander of the Riachuelo River. Iberlucea meets Vuelta de Rocha, an avenue that follows the Riachuelo, while Pasaje Garibaldi is not a road but a path by the side of the train tracks that end at Brandsen by the stadium, and intersect with Magallanes street toward the south. Another notable spatial reference is Caminito street-museum, which runs diagonal from the intersection of Magallanes, Iberlucea and Vuelta de Rocha and ends at Garibaldi.

Atmospheres are shareable on the grounds that they orient bodies in collective fashion. Consequently, an analysis of atmospheric motions in Caminito Circuit can expose a collective involvement with space, or how emotional stances are trans-subjectively shared (across bodies). Specifically, these are evident in the way people move, the paths they follow and the practices they participate in. In terms of its atmosphere, the space gives off a feeling of rushed activity; it offers itself as lively and energetic. This is all the more noticeable due to the contrast that exists with other areas of La Boca described above. As a matter of fact, this is the atmospheric region I was more reluctant to move into: in several occasions I decided to evade this part of the neighborhood, and even when I moved into it -especially at Magallanes street- I felt the urge to leave, annoyed by its intensity and by a sense of fabrication and foreignness.

Iberlucea is populated by several grocery stores, souvenir shops and cafes, but the amount increases as you get closer to Vuelta de Rocha and Magallanes. White stalls upon the street sell craft and handmade goods, three art museums are located upon this intersection as well (Museo Benito Quinquela Martín, Museo de Bellas Artes and Fundación PROA), a couple dressed in traditional tango apparel offer themselves for pictures, while street kiosks sell jerseys and other souvenirs.

Moving downhill to the south, upon reaching Magallanes street at the intersection with Vuelta de Rocha and Caminito, it gets even more crowded. As a consequence of the confluence of these four paths, this place seems the epicenter of the *Caminito circuit*. Upon Vuelta de Rocha, buses, vans and taxis circulate and park, serving as a point of reference and docking site. This intersection also feels like the epicenter and bears a more intense atmosphere due to the higher density of sounds and places, such as stalls, street vendors, museums, restaurants, bars and souvenir shops.



Figure 20 Magallanes Street

Magallanes street appears more crowded than any other space in La Boca. Upon this narrow street –which tourist area only runs for one block- you can find two commercial galleries, a pair of restaurants (La Carbonería, Café Cultural El Aleph), and a cultural center named “Los Artistas³” which is located in a historical *coventillo* that is free to visit and resembles what a traditional tenement house would have looked like. Additionally, most restaurants on Magallanes have their tables on the street, and it is usual for them to offer tango performances. Next to it sits Caminito street-museum, which is also quite crowded and a main landmark of Buenos Aires. Featuring colorful facades, it is meant to reenact the traditional aesthetic of La Boca. Inaugurated in 1959 by a group of neighbors led by local⁴ artist Benito Quinquela Martín, it is currently, recognized as a collective work of art, and a privilege site for local artists to sell their work.

³ The artists

⁴ Local, as in born and raised in La Boca



Figure 21 Caminito street-museum, a stall sells paintings of tango dancers

Finally, both Magallanes and Caminito street end in Pasaje Garibaldi. This narrow corridor is decorated by murals made by local artists and hosts a couple of altars of vernacular cults (namely, San La Muerte and Gauchito Gil). There, are no shops or commercial sites of any kind here, only a few houses and as you walk toward the north, by the side of the train tracks, you are only a few block away from Brandsen street and the main gate of La Bombonera.

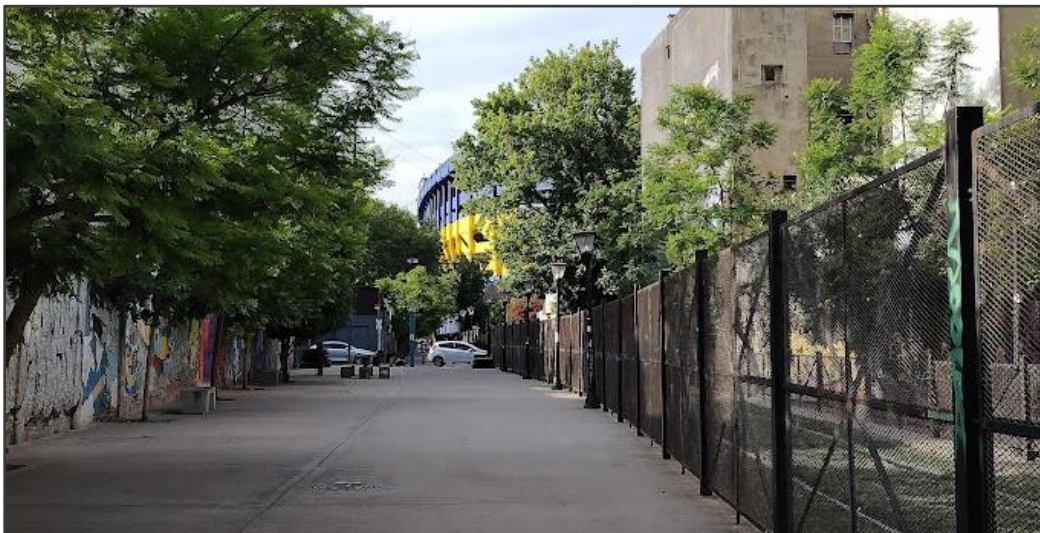


Figure 22 La Bombonera seen from Pasaje Garibaldi, between murals and train tracks

The circulation of tourists and visitors in this area not only operates as constitutive of its atmospheres, but it also expresses the modes in which the sensations spread across bodies, and most specifically, how atmospheric motions orient subjects collectively. As I moved through La Boca, I was consciously exploring their atmospheres, walking in and out of them. At times circulating by following the flows of people and accepting the cues space offered, but at other times moving against the grain, cutting through atmospheric boundaries to experience the neighborhood's heterogeneity. Doing so, I noticed that the people within these different atmospheres –Casa Amarilla, El Barrio, and Caminito Circuit- did not tend to mingle, but remained within the boundaries of these spaces. This is consistent with Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos representation of atmospheres as expunging from within “whatever does not fit with its perpetuation” (2015:129), as bounded areas that are internally cohesive and homogenous.

The ways crowds move and circulate in Caminito Circuit, it is quite different from what I found in El Barrio –and specifically Olavarria street- where people walked hastily, with disregard for their surrounding and a sense of purpose. Here, on Iberlucea street, Magallanes and even on Brandsen, by the south end of the stadium, lively overflows of people crowd the sidewalks, sometimes onto the streets, moving at different paces, here people seem to stroll, moving in groups –sometimes in pairs- and they tend to form a line as they walk. Most have backpacks or some sort of bag, sometimes hats or caps, and they look at the surrounding landscape, taking pictures, stopping at the various shops, engaged in conversation.



Figure 23 Tourists walking on Iberlucea Street

For example, as people moved to and fro the stadium on Iberlucea street, few would make turns toward the residential spaces of the Barrio, they would neither pay attention to crowded and commercial streets such as Olavarría -or any of the other intersecting streets. As a result, people would come paths that lead to residential areas of La Boca, but neglect them entirely and so remaining within –as much as constituting- the boundaries of a distinctive atmospheric area.

Another example of collective motions –and how they help delimit atmospheric boundaries- took place while walking on Magallanes street. The tourist area here, runs for a single block, and even though the street continues beyond the intersection with Pasaje Garibaldi, people immediately turned right upon reaching this corner.

I reach the end of the block and suddenly everything dissolves. There is actually a pedestrian street that runs alongside the traintracks. This is called Garibaldi Passage and leads down to the stadium again –which is about two block away- So most tourists take a turn here, and continue on this street which has a few shops, and several murals. Instead of moving that way to follow the flow of people, I continue to cross the train tracks, and the next block takes me away from the noise and the crowd. I'm walking on the continuation of Magallanes street, and here I find residential houses but no shops at all, neither tourists nor music. About 20 meters from the corner, there's a garage and above it I notice a mural, it depicts a region of Italy, it shows a port, and there is a small writing on the lower bottom of it that reads Siracusa, Porto Piccolo.

Thus, continuing toward the stadium that lies a few block up north, following the train tracks down a path where some shops, murals and houses were located they collectively reacted to the articulation of space, simultaneously acting and being acted upon by it.



Figure 24 The corner of Magallanes and Pasaje Garibaldi

Such collective motions were a common behavior to both, visitors and local residents alike, I noticed how people on Olavaria would normally evade tourist spaces. By deciding to remain within atmospheric boundaries, they evidence the public qualities of atmospheres, and how they affect the way people move around the neighborhood. At the same time, these flows appear to be quite organic, not as something that is merely consciously, but an invitation offered by a particular articulation of space. At the same time, this entails a marking of a boundary that is not only clearly identifiable, but constituted by the confluence of the built environment –the lack of shops and presence of residential buildings in the following block, for instance-, and the active intervention of a collective body of humans –whose individual decisions coincide with a collective motion. Worthy of mention, is how there were neither express directions nor signals to guide navigation in this place, evidence of how atmospheres operate relying on tangible and non-tangible cues, and emerge as quasi-objective phenomena identifiable by means of a vibe that is not encrypted in space but neither fully subjective, but liminal, tethering between both.

In spite of these motions that direct navigation, some breaches tend to occur. For instance, kids seemed to be the few willing to break this internal cohesion, and their use and navigation of neighborhood spaces could be considered disruptive. A couple of times I ran into young boys and wrote down my impressions.

I saw some kids playing hide and seek on Garibaldi street, by the train tracks. We were moving away from the tourist area heading toward the stadium, which can be reach following the train tracks, that is surrounded by a sort of walkable pathway, some shops but also houses can be found here, and then some kids were playing hide and seek. A kid, no older than 10 years olds was just finishing counting with his forehead against the wall and then he moved out rushing between the tourists. Something similar can be seen at the center of the tourist area, on Iberlucea street. Right on a corner there is an open paved space, covered

in concrete, with murals in the walls that reference the history of La Boca and its lore (Carnival dances, futbol, the bridge, the port, dock workers), which was being used as a potrero (a place to play futbol). There, among teeming crowds of loud tourists, kids from the neighborhood play fútbol.

This example of kids challenging atmospheric motions, entailing not only movement but also a different utilization of space, serves to underscore the role of collective human action in their articulation, and consequently their reversible, relational quality: how they can both, affect and be affected. The presence of kids who live in the neighborhood did not disrupt the atmosphere in these places, and could very well be integrated into the set of symbolic meanings associated with the neighborhood's tourist attractive –offering the visitors an authentic feel of Buenos Aires' barrial lifestyle-, however it evidences how atmospheres can be dismantled by collective human intervention, and so, how for their emergence and presence it is necessary for subjects to be similarly inclined. Given that they are not solely grounded on materiality but involve a relational interplay, as atmospheres don't only mark the motions within, but are constituted by these motions as well.

However, as much as atmospheres are public and shareable, this does not entail that they operate in prescribed manner. They condition, inflect, orient, but don't prescribe moods or behaviors. As much as a general feeling becomes spread out across physical extension and bodies, tinting everything located within such structure, the reaction and stance that each subject adopts is also dependent of an individual's disposition; their experiences, imaginations, opinions and impressions.

Moving back to the intersection between Magallanes and Pasaje Garibaldi that marked an atmospheric boundary and how they orient people's circulation. The fact that I decided to

continue moving forward and stay on Magallanes streets, was directed by my momentary motivations. A few moments before that, I was walking down Magallanes street among the many shops and restaurants. As I walked on this street I felt uneasy, annoyed and with the urge to leave due to the density of sounds, people and objects. I wrote down some notes to record the moment:

People are walking next to each other, it's hard to navigate this given that you bump into other people coming the opposite way, and then you have the tables from the restaurants, and people and not always walking toward a single direction, some stand and look around, others are calling their relatives, some are looking at the shops or checking out the menus. It is quite overwhelming; there is a constantly fluctuating mixture of scents and sounds, and music shifts as you move by. I find the music –and the whole ambience- quite annoying to be honest, the fast and loud beats really adds to my anxiety and puts me in a bad mood.

As a result, when I reached the intersection and noticed a different atmosphere extended across the street, I decided to continue moving forward; at the time I was eager to leave the lively and energetic atmosphere behind. But this convoluted feeling emerged out of my involvement with space, I reacted negatively toward the feeling grasped in space, which marked my next movements. Thus, even if my personal decision did not coincide with that of most visitors, this does not entail that an atmosphere was not simultaneously affecting several subjects, only that the reaction to it may vary across them.

Final comments

These three areas I have outlined above serve to account for La Boca's heterogeneity in atmospheric terms. These can be detected in experience by the different ways one becomes

inclined by these spaces. Thus, referring to the atmospheric motions means signaling to the ways of walking, feeling and acting within these locales; each articulation providing a distinctive feel that coincides with three narratives signs: La Boca's *barrial* character, a centenary soccer club, and the exploitation of its identity as a tourist attraction.

I have explored these referring to the atmospheric motions that constitute them; how as you walk through the neighborhood and move in and out of these atmospheres, one is oriented to feel, do and move in particular ways; put otherwise, the "more or less explicit prescriptions for walking and looking, for sensing and thinking" each of these areas exude (Guano, 2003:360). Unlike moods, which designate a motivation that originates within the subject, atmospheric motions entail motivations that are prompted by an interaction with our surrounding environment. They are expressed in navigation and ways of circulating; practices; and the feeling and emotions evoked by space, simultaneously prompted by, and constitutive of, atmospheres.

Each one of these cases also help expose how the liminal, diffused and public qualities of atmospheres show up. For theoretical purposes, I have tried to focus my analysis in this section, but truth is that the three nurture each other. The liminality of an atmosphere, that complex interplay between materiality and subjectivity, is what sustains their dynamism and diffuse character of its boundaries. Simultaneously, by not being attached to localized objects neither the result of internal dispositions, they can exist as public and bear the ability to circulate across subjective boundaries.

This is, simply put, how atmospheres can be grasped, in the ways we feel and the impressions we get when we inhabit them. Finally, given that the connections that allow for their emergence rely as much on the sensual proximity to urban landscapes, as on the symbolic encryption and decoding subjects make of them, it is necessary to turn attention to these articulation, attending

to their multiplicity, which entails the physical surroundings, the presence of soundscapes, the integration of aesthetics with stories, practices, and the consumption and social utilization people make of space. An analysis centered on the way they emerge will be offered in the following chapter.

3

Atmospheric Articulations

Seeing, in other words, is not neutral, and what appears—or disappears—depends on how one observes. Through the lens of mechanical physics, the whole organism disappears. Through the analogy with art, it appears.

Romantic Empiricism, Dalia Nassar

All dissections of sensation in the case of Buffon's, Condillac's, and Bonnet's sensing human being are abstractions; the philosopher has to neglect one thread of sensation in pursuing the other, but in nature all these threads are a single web!

Treatise on the Origin of Language, JG Herder

In the previous chapter I explored the feeling of spaces in La Boca, in this chapter I shift focus to examine how the atmospheres previously described gain presence. This involves focusing on how physical space -buildings, streets, a certain aesthetic- can provide stories and meaning with stability and a sense of continuity over time. In short, I explore how symbolic values become attached to materiality in the neighborhood of La boca, and how these entanglements help coordinate and stabilize the social practices and remembering activities weaved through them. This effort entails careful attention to the material space, objects within that space, and visual markers and images that guide the visitor's experience of the neighborhood.

In relation to their emergence, atmospheres do not result out of an arithmetic accumulation of discrete elements, and so they should be accounted not as “something we can understand in terms of a set of components but is instead marked by a style that infuses

everything” (Trigg, 2020:3). Consequently, I claim that their articulation can be accounted by means of a poiesis; that they arise out of an entangled interplay that involves a number of qualitatively distinct conditions such as materiality, intersubjectivity and symbolic value.

Within materiality, both the built environment that composes the urban landscape, as well as less tangible and stable elements of it play a role -such as it is the deployment of light, smells and sounds (Bille & Sorensen, 2016; Sumartojo, Edensor & Pink, 2019). More than that, bodies become sensually integrated in experiencing atmospheres, bearing also an essential role in the way they resonate upon us. In this sense, they are non-directional as atmospheric configurations challenge traditional sensorial cleavages to be apprehended in synesthetic terms instead (Griffero, 2013). Put otherwise, being felt in synesthetic form means that their emergence cannot be reduced to the accumulation of sensorial resonances –what I hear, what I see, what I touch- but as flourishing of a process of poiesis; an experience that takes hold of the body in a pre-logical manner, before any qualitative distinctions can take place (Bohme, 2010; Griffero, 2013, 2017; Trigg, 2020).

This understanding also grounds the three qualities that we have identified in atmospheres, as diffused, liminal and public. Their dynamic configuration entails that atmospheres are not idly located in the material world, but spread out over space, like the skin of a city that radiates effects –contingent on several “qualities, rhythms, forces, relations, and movements” (Stewart, 2011:445)- which then become largely shared, and which cannot be entirely “ascribable to occasional subjective vibrations” or singular objects (Griffero, 2013:2), as the result of an ontologically heterogeneous field, their boundaries remain hard to grasp and stabilize.

In this chapter, I begin by outlining the material agencies that configure atmospheres, to latter address how such agencies operate in La Boca. As noted above, and as a consequence of what Griffero defines as its *constituent vagueness* (2013:2), my assessment would fall short if all elements involved in their emergence were to be considered as discrete and separately contained. Thus, what I offer is a gesture toward a material and affective production of space that involves the articulation of stories, things, and people.

Atmospheric articulations

...that which appeals to us in a city cannot be construed as language; instead, it enters our disposition as a touching character (2016:128)

Gernot Böhme

The origin and constitution of atmospheres has drawn just as much attention as the effects they have upon us. As a sort of spatial poiesis that entails the incorporation of ontologically heterogeneous bodies, atmospheres are dynamically constituted by weaving together “the representational, the immaterial and the affective” (Sumartojo, Edensor & Pink, 2019:1). They can be organic and unplanned or intentionally designed and deployed with specific purposes: the intention of inclining subjects toward particular moods and authorizing certain activities and habits.

The three qualities of atmospheres already noted -as liminal, diffused and shareable- help inform and situate the way they become articulated and expressed. As liminal, they tether in-between subject and object-world, and so their emergence does not follow a set of prescriptive norms, instead, they are non-directional in the sense that they are simultaneously co-constituted and co-

constitutive of both, subject and object-world. Their diffuse quality marks two additional elements, first that it's hard to clearly assess where these articulations begin and end—their boundaries—, but also that they do not arise out of localized things, but instead radiate from a unified field that encompasses material and symbolic values, and that incorporates subjective resonances—in what Jane Bennet calls an *ontologically heterogeneous field* (2010).

Consequently, their “poetic quality”, as Böhme calls it, involves more than the spatial disposition of a city or its architecture (Bohme, 2016; Grifffero, 2013), it is about the way we feel in it, which can only be grasped as personal perception, tends to be apprehended as something that irradiates out of space, and which source can hardly be located (Trigg, 2020). Thus, a city's touching character remains spread out and malleable, dynamic, amorphous, impossible to fully capture like the barely visible strands of steam that rise out of a hot cup of tea. As Trigg explains, then, “an atmosphere is diffused through a given world in a porous and non-containable way” and “appears for us as an already unified and meaningful field of references, from which specific attributes emerge”:

When we enter a room and sense a specific atmosphere there—let us say an eerie atmosphere—then it would be difficult to pinpoint with precision where the atmosphere is located. Specific phenomenal features may well present themselves in a more focal way than others—modes of lighting, a disquieting silence, specific architectural aspects, etc.—but those features are expressive articulations of an atmosphere, which is irreducible to localised things (Trigg, 2020:3)

Before moving forward, I would like to address Böhme's reference to atmospheres as the poetic resonance of space. I believe this points us in the direction of a *poiesis*. A *spatial poiesis* in the sense of a making, of ‘bringing forth’ that involves the production of space not only as a making

of our world but at the same time a making ourselves (Calhoun, Sennett & Shapira, 2013), and which can be “extended to an artistic and poetical ‘bringing into appearance’ and a ‘production’ of presence, namely the disclosure through which what is produced comes into being” (Simona Gallo, 2022: 2). As Virginia Burrus explains, “poiesis is productive and performative rather than referential, representational, or propositional... it joins the ongoing processes of becoming that constitute the very universe” (Burrus, 2019:5)

This linking of atmospheres and poetics gestures toward the notion of ecopoetics (Knickerbrocker, 2012; Burrus, 2019), and following Bachelard, it leads to an understanding of atmospheric articulations as something that doesn’t follow prescribed rules of configuration but rather dynamic, diffuse and always changing articulations. By thinking within the terms of *poiesis*, atmospheres emerge not out of a “unity of an ordered multiplicity” but as the result of a “shattering noise that awakens sleeping echoes” and integrates “hesitations and ambiguities” (Bachelard, 1987: 33). Put otherwise, atmospheres can be said to radiate out of a dynamic articulation of several elements that is never static, “another person, from things, or from the surroundings” (Bohme, 2016:128) operating in simultaneous manner with no commanding gravitational pole or main anchoring point, and so, without clear delineations neither within – internal articulations- nor without -where it begins and ends.

For instance, as well as light, the quality of air and temperature, and sonic, aromatic and haptic stimuli add to the atmosphere of a setting and an occasion. The general mood might be tuned by practices that express mundane habits or conversely, by the buzz generated by a festival or other special event. Moreover, atmospheres are never temporally or spatially discrete but emerge according to the time of day or season, to the levels of activity and movement, to the weather, personal experience and predilections, or

by previous experiences in place, not to mention unexpected occurrences and encounters (Sumartojo, Edensor & Pink, 2019:4).

Some scholars have accounted for the way retail spaces rely on aesthetic configurations to draw and direct consumerism practices (Dickinson, 1997). Böhme notes how in this sense, the functional sameness of commercial locales calls for aesthetic differentiation. In fact, it is precisely because functional differences can be scarcely articulated that atmospheric differences become all the more important (Bohme, 2016:138):

The spatial organization and above all the dissimilar materials do in fact produce a feeling of being in different worlds. One result of this difference might be that the two shops would attract quite different clientele and customer personality types. And for people of the sort who have “their” bookshop, the difference in the atmospheres of the two stores certainly will determine their priorities... The effect is deep and subcutaneous, as a rule even unconscious. Only afterwards, when we already feel a certain way in a space, when the atmospheric effect of the materials has already completely bewitched us, do we perhaps try, irritated, to identify its origin. This is what is eerie and dangerous (Bohme, 2016:142).

What’s relevant for us, however, is the presence of atmospheres within urban spaces. Cities possess powerful atmospheric charges which exists not as mere extension of architectural features or a result of city planning –the precise result of a given spatial disposition-, instead they emerge from a more uneven integration of elements of diverse qualities and consistencies.

This is not to say that the material landscape should be neglected, quite to the contrary, “in the same way as the scent of a rose supervenes on the materiality of the flower, the atmosphere of a city supervenes on urban materiality (Hasse, 2008; Griffero, 2013:1)”. What this entails is that

urban landscapes are generative –and *oneiric landscape*, in the words of Bachelard-, and must be assessed by accounting for their dynamic and relational qualities: a neighborhood is not a backdrop for social life but “an inhabited reality that constantly changes in relation to its inhabitants (Nassar, 2022: 63)”; not a “frame to be filled with impressions, it is a matter which multiplies” (Bachelard, 1987:36); “not the surrounding of a particular subject or object but rather... a slow, long dance of mutual encircling in which all things participate (Burrus, 2019: 166).

In La Boca, both dimension –that of fabricated and organic atmospheres- are present, given that it is a touristic place heavily invested by gentrification and disneyfication policies (Herzer et al, 2008), the intentional deployment of an atmospheres clashes with the more “organic” articulation shown in both Casa Amarilla and El Barrio. In spite of this, the goal of the current study is not so much to analyze the differences between them, but to address the articulations of atmospheric auras that radiate from these spaces.

To do so, I have organized my analysis on the emergence of atmospheres in La Boca by centering on the meanings and stories threaded on the walls and spaces; the role of the built environment and the physical landscape –which entail not just aesthetics, but also the less-stable tangible elements such as air, temperature, smells and sounds-, and the integration of human involvement with both. Such an organization is motivated for clarity purpose, however as atmospheres mark the material/affective qualities of space, their production entails a vast field of more-than-human elements and should be considered as operating in pre-logical fashion, outside of these theoretical distinctions, dissecting processes occurs which preclude how in reality “all these threads are a single web.”

Stories about the city

Every description is more than a fixation, it is a culturally creative act. It even has distributive power and performative force when an ensemble of circumstances is brought together. Then it founds spaces. (1984:122)

Michel De Certeau

As culturally creative acts, De Certeau understands stories have the ability to create “genealogies of places” and “legends about territories” (1984:122), it is through the tales that we hear, learn and then retell that an otherwise symbolically-barren landscape –an extension of undifferentiated space- is turned into a set of places burdened by a past and origin that projects them into a future (Malpas, 1999).

These narrative elements influence the affective qualities of space, that distinctive feel which we call atmospheres, the poetic quality of a city is infused and tinted by these same stories. In this way, De Certeau condenses together stories and places by assigning the former the capacity of founding places; and considering them fundamental for their internal articulations and the marking of their frontiers (1984:115). Thus, defining them as “culturally creative acts”, entails incorporating narrations within the process of *poiesis* that births them. It would seem like the past and the things that happened weigh on the air of places, as Griffero notes, “an atmosphere will be different if the town is historical, even full of ruins... or if it is a new town, perhaps rebuilt as it was, possibly producing a kitsch result (2013:5)”.

However, the articulation of atmospheres uncovers a generative dialogue between stories and places. If narrations found places, in turn, the physicality of space operates by providing these stories with a material stability and a sense of continuity over time. In short, as symbolic values

become attached to materiality they gain stability by “coordinating and stabilizing social practices and the remembering activities” that intersect with it (Middleton & Brown, 2011:48).

La Boca offers several examples of this entwining between stories and space, and how they participate in the emergence of a certain atmospheres. It also offers an example of how a multiplicity of stories can coalesce, coexist and overlap within an urban space, and how these divergent narrative hues explain “changing configurations” and “continuous emergence” of atmospheres in La Boca (Sumartojo, Enerson & Pink, 2018).

Following Chavez and Hill, a neighborhood is already charged with meaning, a *claimed space* that involves a rhetorical dispute uncovering the distribution of power across social strata or racial and ethnic groups (Chaves & Hill, 2021:70). In Argentina, the term *barrio* is additionally burdened, it means not merely an urban space, but signifies a working-class urban living space that has an associated ethos, which finds expression even in music; for example, the genre *Rock de Barrio*, embodies a musical style marked by values such as loyalty and the rejection of wealth, with lyrics that speak about what is like living in a *barrio*.

La Boca adds rhetorical layers of complexity to this already burdened termed. It is a *barrio* with a well-established “tradition of symbolizations” (Fabaron, 2016), “a strong character” (Herzer, 2008:42), “unlike any other *barrio*” (Fabaron, 2016), and taken to be “a city within a city” (Herzer, 2008:42). In his depiction of La Boca, Rey speaks of a *barrio* “that mobilized progress in the city, in a time of industry, shipyards, warehouses, factories and port”, a site of “refuge” and a “cradle” that gave “birth” to several *barrial* clubs, “where celebrations were held on the streets, in cantinas... the place for carnivals and family gatherings” (Rey, 2014:5).

These entwinements can be detected quite eloquently in the form of murals, crests and other visual cues around the neighborhood, as I will show in this section. Murals can be easily discoverable and read as one walks around the neighborhood, while crests, colors and other visual cues operate in more nuanced manners; they whisper stories, reluctant to disclose their secrets. Also worthy of mention is how these are evenly spread out, equally present in Caminito Circuit, Casa Amarilla and the residential parts of the neighborhood, and so not offered for the voyeuristic eye of a visitor but there for the eye of the resident as well. Consequently, these elements appear particularly relevant as spatial markers in La Boca, uniting histories, places, and the rhetorical capacity of visuals, spread out across the neighborhood.



Figure 25 "Diego Lives" mural on a house

As I walked around La Boca I was presented with several references to the past, which made evident the relevance of stories for the creation and sustenance of communities. De Certeau explains that collectivities require a common history for its unity, otherwise “deprived of narrations the group or the individual regresses toward the disquieting fatalistic experience of a formless, indistinct and nocturnal totality” (1984:128). Luckily, such fate can be avoided by relying on objects’ capacities to provide a sense of permanence for collective memories. Things offer “an image of permanence and stability”, like “the permanence and interior appearance of a

home impose on the [familiar] group a comforting image of its own continuity” (Halbwachs, 1950:1). Extending the relationality between stories and objects, to include human subjects, Halbwachs highlights that a collectivity “not only transforms the space into which it has been inserted, but also yields and adapts to its physical surroundings... enclosed within the framework it has built”. This dynamic and interactive bond marks the capacity of space to anchor stories and gestures toward the rhetorical potential of places: “even if they do not speak, we nevertheless understand them because they have a meaning easily interpreted (1950:1)”. For Halbwachs, neighborhoods are especially apt for such endeavors:

the districts within a city and the homes within a district have as fixed a location as any tree, rock, hill, or field. Hence the urban group has no impression of change so long as streets and buildings remain the same. Few social formations are at once more stable and better guaranteed permanence (Halbwachs, 1950:4)

Taken as a whole, then, places operate by creating a sense of stability for histories and ideas, and urban areas in particular offer an image of stillness across time fundamental in the enactment of traditions and the memories shared by a group. This is noticeable in La Boca where one encounters its rich history anchored in a set of distinctive visual features displayed all across the neighborhood: they ground memories and sustain identities. In some cases exploited to draw visitors and fuel a growing tourist industry, it is across the residential areas where numerous references to La Boca’s European origin can be found. In addition to the presence of Italian flags, several crests can be found scattered around the neighborhood.



Figure 26 Regional crests on facades

For example, the images above were taken in the residential area of La Boca. To the left, a gate in blue and yellow topped by the crest of Liguria (Genoa) and a blue and yellow checkerboard pattern beneath it, while on the right a house boasts the crest of Galicia on a metal gate and the crest of La Boca above its main door. These markings on the walls evoke places, in Spain and Italy, and bring to mind the history of the neighborhood's origin, created by the flux of European migrants. As a result, a non-directional bond between both, history and place, becomes strengthened by these visual references spread across the neighborhood that evoke its past.

Crests not only showcase the integration of history, imagery and places, but also the potential generative dialogue between the three. The past is actualized, visually accessible in the present, and stabilized by its attachment to the houses that constitute this urban space. In addition to it, the neighborhood's crest, above all, seems to emphasize the force of local identity fostered within the neighborhood and sustained by the resilience of streets, houses and walls in La Boca.



Figure 27 The crest of La Boca

In it, stories and practices are weaved together. Composed by a red cross like that on the Ligurian crest, the image of a ship speaks reinforces the neighborhood's migrant origin; practices are expressed in the form of a painter's palette, and the juxtaposition of a screw nut, pincer tool and a hammer, that evoke its working-class character. Finally, the Nicolas Avellaneda bridge evokes a physical landmark, a symbol for the neighborhood since its completion in 1914.

But what are these constant references to La Boca doing? What is the rhetorical effect that they have? As if walking the streets of La Boca was not enough, the visitors is constantly reminded of the place in which they stand. So, if the representations of out-of-reach places by means of crest and flags seems fitting, as they stand-in for something that is not here (the past, Liguria, Galicia), these are paired with visual elements that signal toward the neighborhood itself. The crest of La Boca and the blue-yellow patterns might seem redundant, given that they represent the place in which the gazer is already emplaced, but I would challenge the notion of redundancy and claim

that these marks operate by emphasizing La Boca's identity, and the neighborhood as a distinctive urban space.



Figure 28 Puerta 12 Memorial

This reflection can be extended to account for the role of murals as well, that bear a greater degree of eloquence and a more direct speech. Above, a reference to the incident of *Puerta 12*, acts as a memorial and exposes the radical spirit of La Boca. In 1968 in the stadium of River Plate, after a match between Boca and River, the gate 12 did not open and a human avalanche resulted in death of 71 persons, all victims were Boca Juniors' fans. The mural shows cops and Boca fans on opposite ends, with the police depicted among fierce dogs and skulls, and reads: “*there was no gate, there was no turnstile, it was the cops hitting with machete*”, signaling to police intentionality in the event.

Others depictions, evoke a foundational story, the legend of the “Independent Republic of La Boca”, in which many of the symbolic values attached to the neighborhood converge: it's ligurian origin, the working class status of its residents, their political activism, and the collective

spirit of the neighborhood. It undergirds the neighborhood’s status as a myth, a symbol, even a *lieux de memoire*:

The legend says that in 1882 a labor dispute lead to a major strike. In this context, a group of genovese immigrants decided to declare the independence of La Boca from the Argentine Republic. The first measure was to sign a charter constituting the “Republica Independiente de La Boca”. Then, they communicated to the king of Italy the creation of this new republic. The idea behind the enterprise was to establish an independent State with a similar status to the one held by San Marino at the time. The genovese flag was raised. (Pareja, 2014: 12)

Scattered across the neighborhood, murals entangle history and place by referring to the truncated republic. I will reference two of these, distanced only by a couple of blocks, located within Caminito Circuit.



Figure 29 Mural on Vuelta de Rocha

One of them caught my attention as I was walking on Vuelta de Rocha, sitting across the Riachuelo river. A worn out mural with faded colors and graffiti painted over it, shows a map of the neighborhood under the rubric “República de La Boca”. It stand not only as a visual reference to a historical past, but it simultaneously offers visual access to the totality of an bounded area rhetorically organized –at least partially- by this story. As a consequence, the image enacts a spatial othering that marks the boundaries of the neighborhood and declares it a distinctive urban space, a claimed space, a city within a city.

Quite in the same way as a neighborhood is constituted, the mural is produced by an overlapping of histories, material and symbolic actions over time. Under the script “Republica de La Boca”, a map of the neighborhood is shown, which includes the names of the streets hinting at an institutional and bureaucratic organization of this are, across it a graffiti reads “Riber Puto” and beneath it “Cagón” referencing an additional spatialized narrative related to soccer. Both insults call out River as a coward. The writing refers to the athletic club River Plate, founded in La Boca in 1901, but relocated shortly after to Nuñez at the northern end of Buenos Aires, a fierce rivalry developed between Boca and River since then. This is also an expression of temporality, signaled not only by the B sprayed on top of the V (a pun that refers to the demotion of River Plate to the second-tier league named “Nacional B”, in 2011), but also by the faded colors and the weathered condition of the mural. The temporal and symbolic layers rejoin here as material expression of the several narrations that intersect and have nurtured the neighborhood over time.



Figure 30 Mural on Iberlucea street

Another example of a visual composition that exhibits a similar heterogeneity is located on Iberlucea street. The mural reiterates the trope *República de La Boca*, and includes several neighborhood staples: the bridge Nicolas Avellaenda, the crest of La Boca, the colorful façade of zinc houses, La Bombonera and a crowd celebrating the carnival identified as “Los Principes de La Boca”. Upon a white weathered background -and under a water tower-, black, yellow and blue articulate the chromatic composition, except for the red cross of La Boca’s crest which recalls its Ligurian heritage. Unknowingly, a small window disrupts the surface of the visual composition, to remind tourists and visitors this is a residential space.



Figure 31 Water tower and window on mural

Both, murals and crests, express that “tradition of symbolization” and the sort of eclecticity scholars find unique to La Boca. Consequently, the neighborhood stands not only as an example of how stories found places, but also how a multiplicity of stories can give way to spatial heterogeneity.

Nonetheless, this heterogeneity does not entail a refusal of a grand narrative, on the contrary a common story is nurtured by the multiplicity of narrations that populate La Boca, nuanced by means of variations and emphases, they nurture and sustain each other. This become clear by the stadium, on its walls a poem references the foundation of the neighborhood offering an overlap between national, barrial and club’s history; it speaks of the people, the idols, the artists, and finally, “the tango and football that made of La Boca a destination and a symbol”.

Around the corner, the concrete wall of the stadium shows a series of murals, once again, as a more eloquent form of rhetorical formulation. Here, the communion neighborhood and club is expressed, by representations located on Brandsen street that evoke the working-class and popular identity of both, club and barrio. They show the ships and the docks, multitudes taking part in carnival dances, kids playing soccer, artists draped in blue and yellow; they show grim faces, gazes into the river, heavy sacks, ropes, and the mingling of bodies in the stands of the stadium. These images speak the history of a neighborhood and a soccer club, both etched together, indistinguishable. These murals offer material support for the fans of Boca Juniors as a club of a popular, working-class character, whose loyalty to its birth place emerges as a fundamental trait of its identity.



Figure 32 Mural showing workers on the walls of La Bombonera

In this way, both stories coalesce and sustain each other. We noted how loyalty seems an essential value for the barrio ethos; Boca Juniors, presents itself as a barrial club birthed more than a century ago, in the atmosphere of a working-class, migrant, politically active, neighborhood. Physically imprinted upon the walls of La Bombonera both stories become tied together, marking the presence of the neighborhood's past, giving material stability to its mythic origin upon the walls of an octogenarian stadium: what is temporally displaced presents itself as spatially stable.



Figure 33 Mural showing fans on the walls of La Bombonera

But the physicality of place, and the stories that add to the neighborhood's its mystical quality are not always integrated in such harmonious fashion. At times they splinter, or better yet, become weaved with broader narratives beyond the locality of La Boca. For instance, close to the stadium many murals reference the sport of football without neglecting the character of the neighborhood but adhering to it and bringing it in conversation with national soccer icons, such as Messi and Maradona wearing an Argentinian jersey. This seems consistent with a rhetoric directed to international tourism.



Figure 34 Mural of Maradona on Pasaje Garibaldi, on the pillar it reads "I miss you god"

By the residential area, a mural shows an integration of local and broader narratives, adding a catholic undertone to the history of the neighborhood. Located above the entrance of a school in Olavarria street, the left side shows three workers bent by the weight of heavy sacks, on the background a ship and the bridge Carlos Pellegrini, and to the right side a multitude of persons are shown: namely, two kids with the jerseys of Boca Juniors and River Plate (the kid with Boca's jerseys has brown hair and darker skin, maybe hinting an social divide between both

clubs), a priest and a nun, a man playing the guitar, an artist painting, a woman and a men dresses in blue. The motion from left to right would seem to express the flow of time in the key of progress; and in-between, the figure of Christ rising above an anchor.



Figure 35 Mural above school entrance

This depiction of the neighborhood's story with added undertones is not uncommon, many murals add particular hues to the history of La Boca. What I intend to evidence, however, is the threading on the streets and walls of the neighborhood, the entanglements of materiality and stories that constitute the aesthetic of La Boca, and collaborate in the articulation the atmospheric aura that permeates it.

A walk around the neighborhood uncovers slight variations in these visual references. While closer to the stadium football references are most common as Boca Juniors summons a grandiose tangibility upon the massive concrete walls of La Bombonera, the shopowner across the street tries to appeal to international tourists by offering small resin figurines of tango dancers, similarly across Caminito Circuit references tie La Boca with the story of Buenos Aires and

Argentina in general, by way of Tango, Maradona, Messi, and Eva Perón. At the other end of the street, once can find a mural that shows *il porto piccolo de Siracusa*⁵, or a banner for a political local campaign that reads “Jose Palmiotti, defends your rights”, with two Italian flags on the sides.



Figure 36 Political banner close to the stadium

But more than just rhetorical references to the stories etched into the spatial framework of La Boca, the neighborhood’s history is also constituted by a generative sensuality of space. As Böhme explains, while “being old” or “having grown over time are city qualities” they do not simply manifest in signs, they become “touching qualities that are sensed” (Bohme, 2016:130), to which Bachelard might add, that each of these sensual encounters become “the point of

⁵ The small port of Syracuse

departure of a dream, a line, a creative linguistic moment”; circling back to that *culturally creative act* recognized in narrations.

How often beside a well, one the old stone covered with wild sorrel and ferns, have I murmured the name of the distant waters, the name of the buried world. How often has the universe suddenly answered. O my things, how we have talked! (Bachelard, 1987:23)

The Physical landscape

As already noted, La Boca’s particular aesthetic sustains a rich “tradition of symbolizations” that composes the neighborhood’s mythical past. Thus, in the articulation of its atmospheres histories and the built environment conflate. However, as much as stories are able to organize and articulate spaces, a distinction needs to be made between the *concept* an urban space summons and the lived-experience of it, the *feeling* of visiting in that place.

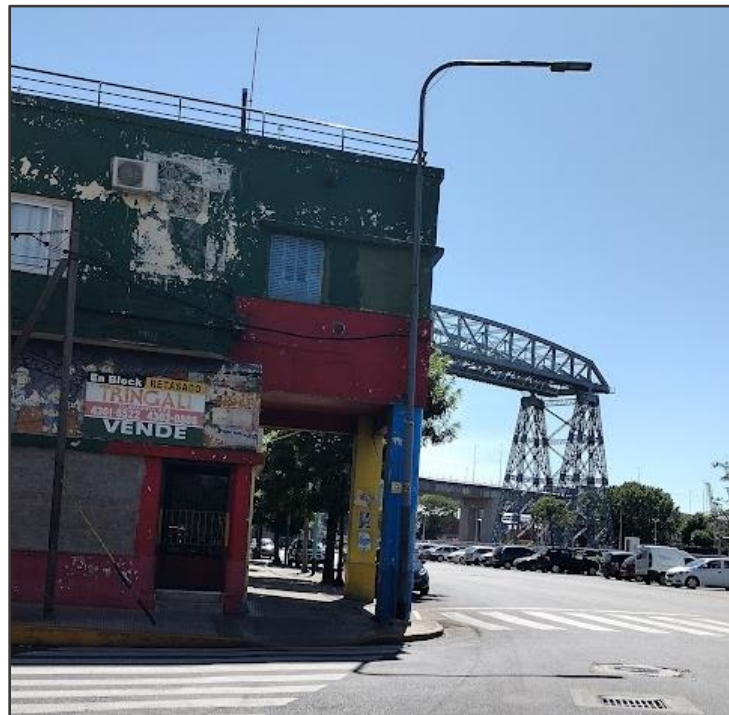


Figure 37 Building on Vuelta de Rocha with the Avellaneda bridge on the background

As Böhme distinguishes, “the image of a city is the consciously projected self-portrait, and the sum of its advantages”, while atmospheres are “peculiar to the city, what makes it individual and therefore cannot be communicated in general concepts”, simply put, “atmosphere is something that has to be sensed in order to understand what is really at stake when we talk about atmosphere” (2016:128). And so, if the atmospheric auras predicate upon the visual dimension, these features do not operate in prescriptive form, for when talking about the barrio it is not “a question of what form, for instance, a building has, or how a city is structured, but of what it radiates because of these features, or in what way it codetermines the dispositions of the inhabitants (Bohme, 2016:129)”; and such disposition can take several forms, varying according to the stories told about these places, and also with respect to a multitude of less tangible elements such as light, sound and air (Böhme, 2021).

I’ve shown how in La Boca, a general history seems to steadily spread out across the neighborhood to mark the boundaries of the neighborhood as a whole, while a diverse modulation of atmospheres within (a residential space in el Barrio-, a tourist hub in Caminito Circuit-, and of Boca Juniors in Casa amarilla) remain more closely tied to the sensual dimensions of the physical surroundings. Examples of such experiential moments, or how symbolic values associated to an urban space are paired with a physical presence, can be found in the experience of standing in front of a stadium that dwarfs surrounding buildings, walking around a neighborhood that is populated by decaying wood-and-metal *conventillos*, or by being exposed to the faded colors and textures of a mural: these are the touching qualities of a city, the physical extending as more than signs. As Halbwachs notes, these proximities tell more than stories, and “even if stones are movable, the relationships established between stones and men

are not so easily altered” given that they extend to affect “habits, thoughts as well as movements (1950: 6).”

Thus, the multitude of entanglements that infuse the neighborhood with a distinctive character and multiple atmospheres, encompasses a sensual experience that enhances symbolic meaning. The following discussion will center on the complex relationality of the material and visual features in La Boca and the bodily disposition they invoke; how they become involved in the emergence of the atmospheres the neighborhood radiates. And how, in some cases, atmospheres can invoke a sense of *authenticity*, deemed as the result of a rhetorical formulation (Meyer & Van de Port, 2019).

Casa Amarilla, for instance, is chromatically characterized by a yellow and blue pattern that extends to buildings, houses, curbs, fences and gates, and finds a symbolic and material epicenter in the stadium La Bombonera; an immense yellow and blue concrete structure. This color pattern ties together this micro-area within the urban space, marking it with an identity most eloquently expressed in the constant visual presence of the massive the stadium. Their walls are the most prominent structure in the neighborhood, in blue and yellow La Bombonera becomes a landmark, both in symbolic and spatial terms. In contrasts, the residential spaces of the neighborhood –El Barrio- this structure is precluded and so while moving around these streets, the stadiums remains out of sight due to the visual congestion created by trees and narrow streets. This differential marks a shift in the atmospheric feel of both places; the residential area feels detached and isolated from the stadium and Casa Amarilla as a whole.



Figure 38 The walls of La Bombonera, Brandsen street

It's not just the sight of the stadium that is lacking, but also the colorful blue and yellow scheme is also less prevalent here, one can find instead faded colors and rugged textures mainly attributable to the neglected condition of the buildings and their materials. The residential area is also where most *conventillos* can be found and wood and metal houses also show up frequently, which aligns rhetorically with the histories that ground La Boca as a differentiated space, an old and traditional neighborhood. And so a difference in the textured qualities of the physical environment give way to a sense of old and used, that fills it with an authentic feel. As these elements coalesce and align, the area seems deteriorated, unprepared for the visitor's gaze; these aesthetic qualities, and the feeling of authenticity they enact, finds a stark contrast with the tourist area of *Caminito Circuit*.



Figure 39 The textures of facades in El Barrio

Structurally speaking, the tourist circuit appears quite similar to the residential spaces, and there are few material boundaries obstructing the move from one area to another. The streets where the tourist move are filled with souvenir shops, restaurants and museums; some of these streets are stone-paved and the facades are normally in better condition than in other areas of the neighborhood, they show brighter colors and smoother textures. Caminito Street Museum is a good example on how the aesthetic conditions inflect the rhetorical values of place.

Symbolically, this street coincides with the several *conventillos* and wood and metal houses that are scattered in the residential parts of La Boca, reflecting the traditional quality of the neighborhood. But they differ in aesthetic terms, Caminito street museum is brightly colored and clean, while buildings in the residential area present to us as rugged, faded and dirty. All over the tourist part we come across colorful metal sheets, they are representational, a stand in for something else: they signal toward something that is not present anymore. In El Barrio, instead, what the space expresses is an entanglement of histories and materiality. The difference of such expressions is only tenable on the grounds of aesthetic form.



Figure 40 Replica of a traditional facades inside a commercial gallery of Magallanes street

However, this is not to say that one is the “authentic” La Boca while the other is a replica, a fake version of it. As far as we are concerned they are both equally constitutive of the neighborhood. What this exposes is how the sense of authenticity that one area radiates and the other lacks, stems from a rhetorical formulation that relies on aesthetic form rather than merely symbolic value: an atmospheric aura that extends from the physical environment touching qualities.



Figure 41 Contrasts and textures; above El Barrio, below Caminito Circuit

Beyond their textures, these urban landscapes are not simply paired with a set of coalescing or conflicting stories, but most importantly associated to a number of modulating factors which remain within the realm of the physical: an olfactory landscape, the spatial significance of light and sound, the flow of air and climate: these are the less tangible phenomena that Bille and Sorensen describe as “part of the sensuous experience the built environment provides” (2016:158). And so, this also entails that attempts to describe and thereby understand atmospheres are most productive when we are immersed within them rather than regarding them as the articulation of fixed physical signs (Sumartojo, Edensor & Pink, 2019:4). Consequently, Griffero attributes to such modulations inherent to urban space the dynamic quality of atmospheres in cities:

...urban atmospheres perfectly embody the fact that all atmospheres, as opposed to things in the strict sense, appear and disappear, without the possibility of asking oneself where and how they exist when they are not perceived (Griffero, 2013:3).

The role of these elements was most clearly felt in the atmospheric articulation at Casa Amarilla. As I walked it felt tranquil and serene; here I could feel the breeze and sense a scent that reminded me of a body of water, with few walkers and almost no cars, I could hear the birds chirping breaking an otherwise silent soundscape. All of that started to dissipate as I moved closer to the stadium, to change entirely in its immediate surroundings. The huge concrete walls of the stadium and building across the street from it, the circulation of busses, cars and – especially on Brandsen street- crowds of people modified the way air flowed, the scent and the sonic qualities of the space. The breeze was now blocked by the buildings around me, the silent soundscape replaced with the sound of traffic and human conversations. Thus, this shows how as I moved toward the stadium the atmosphere feel shifted not due to a change in the symbolic references offered by space, but mostly due to a difference in the articulation of the less-tangible elements that constitute the physical environment.

Such shifts also affected my body disposition. On Casa Amarilla I could attune my eyes to gaze the stadium from afar or the block of buildings rising in the distance; while on Iberlucea street buildings stood only a few meters away from me. I had to look up to see the walls of the stadium rising toward the sky. Thus, it is not just the not-so-static nature of the built environment acting in isolation, but generating a sort of spatial disposition that has an effect on subjects bodily disposition as well. Put otherwise, the internal relationality of urban design; “whether among the skyscrapers we suddenly come across a little church or, on leaving a lane, we find ourselves on an extensive square (Bohme, 2016:30) becomes notable in La Boca, not just in its architectural

heterogeneity, composed by various material, textures and heights, but also in the way one is oriented by the neighborhood's spatial disposition.



Figure 42 The open streets of Casa Amarilla

The move from one place to another also showcases the capacities of light and sound to create spaces of their own or fill them with a distinctive atmospheric character. For example, by the stadium the same walls that blocked the flow of air, projected their shade unto the streets altering the temperature in this space. But sonic and light atmospheric capabilities are even more noticeable in enclosed spaces, as Böhme points out they “lights can make that room serene, exhilarating, gloomy, festive, or eerie... while the music that fills a room can make it oppressive, exciting, or fragmented” (2016:140). Such qualities were more clearly identified in Caminito circuit, as I moved in and out of shops and roofed galleries. Here, it became evident how certain “specific phenomenal features... can present themselves in a more focal ways” following

“specific architectural aspects” (Trigg, 2010:3); certainly, the general atmosphere of Caminito Circuit could be felt more intensely inside enclosed spaces.



Figure 43 A cluttered stall inside a zinc warehouse

My experience in the zinc warehouse on Magallanes street serves as a good example for this, and speaks how atmospheres’ dynamic qualities remain grounded in “diverse energies and forces that coalesce in changing configurations to foster their continuous emergence” (Sumartojo, Edensor & Pink, 2019:4). Here, there was not so much an absolute shift in the articulation of bodies, things and space but an intensification of what took place outside, on the street. The energetic vibe of Magallanes increased inside the warehouse, elicited by a closed space that, as sonic waves to bounced back off the zinc roof and walls, elevated the volume of voices while a similar dynamic marked an increase in the temperature experienced within. These physical conditions blended with the accumulation of objects displayed in series, one next to the other, and the

constant flow of crowds moving inside from stall to stall. As one moved outside, the feeling grasped in space did not change in its essential qualities but shifted in intensities.

In conclusion, my particular experience emerged not solely from the symbolic cues inscribed in space, but out of the touching qualities of the physical landscape that help articulate the experience of place. This sort of *poiesis*, as noted before, supervenes not solely on the material, but is equally reliant on stories, things and bodies as they move and act in space, in that “long, slow dance of mutual encircling in which all things participate” (Burrus, 2019:166). Let’s move forward to consider the role of subjects, the doing and the walking that marks their involvement in the emergence and articulation of atmospheres, which are “not accessible to a representative-ocular-distal perception but to a deambulatory and synesthetic one” (Griffero, 2013:2).

Doing & Walking

The atmosphere of a city is precisely the way life unfolds within the city

Gernot Bohme

Nurtured by the multiplicity of stories threaded in space and things, and the way the physicality of the environment shapes the experience of place; atmospheres are equally dependent on subjects’ involvement. De Certeau was the first to emphasize the role of walkers and their practices in the constitution of places, which bear an experiential quality impossible to capture or freeze in time: as walkers move they weave places together in “tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation” (De Certeau, 1984:97).

It is true that the operations of walking on can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths and their trajectories. But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the absence of what has passed by (De Certeau, 1984: 97).

Consequently, what I emphasize in this last section is how human involvement participates in the emergence of atmospheres. When one considers them as liminal, situated in-between subject and object-world, a non-directional relationality is implied, both simultaneously constituted and constitutive by such bond. When Böhme speaks of atmospheres as a “subjective experience of urban reality which is shared by its people”, experienced as an objective “quality of the city” (2016:133), such reversibility is exposed. For those who experience it, an atmosphere is a tangible experience and, for example, for the residents of a place like La Boca, the histories, legacy and heritage of their neighborhood they grew up in shapes and ground their identity. In my personal experience, the visits to La Boca evidenced how the experience of place that surfaces there is informed by our own “imagination, histories and subjectivities” (Anderson, 2009) just as much as it is dependent on the collective practices that take place there.

In my stroll through La Boca, this was noticeable in a number of experiences already described. I went there burdened by a subjectivity, but again my presence there became weaved with the crowds and the rhetorical capacities of space; the touching qualities of the physical environment, the meanings inscribed in things and buildings, the atmospheric effect of collective action.

For instance, the first thing I remember noticing was a two story house made of wood and metal across the street from where I parked. At the time, it felt like a sign that announced my arrival to La Boca. But it is not simply that the built environment was speaking to me, instead this impression emerged because I was enacting a material hierarchy by considering certain

aesthetics features as more prevalent, more authentic, closer to the true essence of the neighborhood.



Figure 44 My first encounter with a wood and metal house

This impression lingered on as I moved through the residential spaces. My gaze became drawn into the several elements that I considered –due to the stories I heard and retold- to be landmarks of the neighborhood –*conventillos*, wooden houses, blue and yellow markings-, all of them spoke to my own essentialized vision of La Boca.

A similar operation took place on my first impressions walking on the residential streets of La Boca. I was first reminded of other barrios of Buenos Aires, like La paternal and Almagro. Here, I was creating a network of places grounded on my own personal experiences and memories. It felt like I could be walking in any other residential neighborhood of the city, a sense that couldn't be traced to any single identifiable feature, but radiated from a ontologically heterogeneous field of meanings I was involved in: the flow of people, the practices they took

part in, the architecture, the spatial disposition of the streets, the placement of trees, the dirt and rubble on the streets, the faded facades and signs were organized in a sort of poiesis that involved my own memories that provided the space with a poetic quality consistent with my own understanding of what a traditional porteño neighborhood looks like.



Figure 45 An urban bus at a stop, a common sight in Buenos Aires

In contrast, my impressions were drastically different on Magallanes street. I felt uneasy, eager to move out of these crowded spaces, once again surrounded by an atmosphere that could not be located in singular objects, but radiating out of the walls, the thousands of objects, nurtured by the presence of a crowd involved in a frenzy of consumerism, both material and cultural. This also tells another story about the constitution of atmospheres, it's not just individual memories that become articulated in their emergence, but also the ways people move, feel and behave in these places. Thus, this explains why atmospheres can never be perfectly designed, because they are also vulnerable to the agencies of people as much as personal impression. They are reversible and just like in *poiesis*, there is no single, stable anchoring point. Sumartojo, Emerson and Pink highlight this dynamic quality when speaking of a general mood in space that

might be tuned by practices that express mundane habits or conversely, by the buzz generated by a festival or other special event. Moreover, atmospheres are never temporally or spatially discrete but emerge according to the time of day or season, to the levels of activity and movement, to the weather, personal experience and predilections, or by previous experiences in place, not to mention unexpected occurrences and encounters (Sumartojo, Edensor & Pink, 2019:4).

I have also mentioned some moments where I became involved in practices I haven't anticipated, noting how in certain spaces human activity felt like the main source of a spatialized mood. This was mostly noticeable in Caminito Circuit, the tourist region, where an energetic vibe was felt and increased in certain locales, such as, Magallanes Street and the zinc warehouse that housed several shops. In both cases, it was not that people were moving faster, actually they circulated at a slower pace, but rather their way of interacting and communicating felt livelier. So much so, that I became anxious and felt the need to remove myself from these spaces. Another example already noted is the way people tend to remain within atmospheres. And so, by moving and walking within a bounded area, walkers are both directed by an atmosphere that marks boundaries and directs them where to move and what streets to evade, but their neglect of certain streets also modifies the atmospheric articulations in the spaces they avoid. In many instances I was able to identify the boundaries and frontiers by noticing how people turned and the paths they followed.

Human involvement in the articulation of atmospheres exposes their qualities as dynamic, liminal and shareable. Liminal due to the ways the physical environment and people interact in the emergence of a feeling that extends across space, binding both the human and non-human elements situated within that structure (Malpas, 1999). Atmosphere present themselves to us as

dynamic, in the sense that they fluctuate based on intersubjectivity, which becomes expressed in a fluctuation that follows changes in the time of the day and date of the year. The public and shareable capabilities of atmospheres is also marked by the role of people in their articulation, and so the “grasping of atmospheres through the lived experience of the body seldom takes place in isolation”, given that moods bear atmospheric effects: “the very expressivity of emotions renders them public affairs, which are, in varying degrees, extended spatially and involve a process of ‘mutual incorporation’ between participants (Trigg, 2020:4)”.

The zinc warehouse felt annoying and disturbing, not merely for the accumulation of replicated items, but mainly due to the loud voices and the frantic movements of the crowds within. The sonic qualities of human voices became articulated with the physical qualities of the zinc walls, and the spatial disposition of the warehouse. This integration of the physical and the human changed as soon as the sun went down and the shops inside closed, the atmospheres within being modified drastically due to an alteration in the way human action and the surrounding space integrate. But it was not that the vibrations of human voices were inexpressive, they were emotionally charged and bore atmospheric effects, as Trigg references in the quote above, an expressivity that inclines subjects situated within the same structure of place.

Atmospheric articulations in La Boca

The variety of atmospheres identified in La Boca -in Casa Amarilla, Caminito Circuit and El barrio- integrate several stories, a kind of aesthetic, the physical landscape and human involvement. The examples offered in this chapter serve to illustrate the complex articulations

these elements may form, and how they coalesce in a variety of modes while remaining hard to capture as discrete elements operating in prescribed form.

Nonetheless, my guiding purpose has been to gesture toward an etiology of atmospheres, utilizing my personal experiences in these spaces, and considering their origin as a sort of poiesis that involves meaning, bodies and things. If the notion of atmospheres is taken as the poetic extension of a place, one can consider it to originate out of a process that appears to us similar to poiesis, bearing articulations whose constitutive parts remain impossible to isolate. Attempts to do so, would preclude the very thing one wishes to bring to light, because in “nature all these threads are a single web!”, and because “through the lens of mechanical physics, the whole organism disappears...” while “through the analogy with art, it appears” (Nassar, 2022)

It is precisely this constantly shifting in meaning and form, how they present themselves to us in slightly different shapes every time we take part in them, and the never-fully-realized stability of its anchoring points that provides atmospheres with an ethereal character. However, this dynamism does not hinder their sensual potency, or their capacity for shaping our experiences of place, or their role at disseminating feelings across collective bodies.

In La Boca atmospheres are shown to be entangled in space, constitutive of places and of the experiences that people have in these spaces. They are simultaneously a result of them. Thus, the examples offered in this chapter serve as a glimpse into processes that escape representation and allow only a passing gesture towards them, which remains always partial and incomplete. In a way, the non-hierarchical articulation of heterogeneous agencies that can be discovered in their emergence (of people, materiality and meaning, explored under the rubric of stories, the physical surroundings and the ways of acting and moving in la Boca) contributes to illuminating a spatial phenomenon that remains dynamic, diffused and collective, and so it evidences the limitations of

symbolic and linguistic structures to capture and convey the intensities of lived experience. This is not to say, that it is impossible to talk about atmospheres at all, but maybe that reluctance to indulge in these conversations stems from the reminder that they bear about us, and the limits of our horizons of meaning.

Final Thoughts

As I start to write this conclusion, I feel there is more to say about La Boca. Many murals I failed to discuss, buildings I haven't mentioned, stories I didn't tell. But maybe this should feel natural, since it's impossible to exhaust the wealth of my experience there, maybe this impression stems from the excessive quality of place, and how that which resists representation must remain precluded for the reader. This is also the nature of atmospheres - to be in excess of our attempts to explain, categorize, or label them. atmospheres are always more than we can describe. Resisting the impulse to offer a hasty summary of everything I feel is missing, I will instead emphasize what I consider this study helps illuminate.

I set out to explore La Boca by attending to its atmospheric conditions. After providing some context on the symbolic stature of the neighborhood and theoretically framing my study, in Chapter 2 I looked at the way atmospheres guide bodily movement and experience, what I referred to as atmospheric motions. Then in Chapter 3, I shifted from the embodied towards the material to focus on their articulations, where I considered atmospheres the result of a spatial *poiesis*, a dynamic process in which meaning, materiality and bodies coalesce.

In my analysis, I considered atmospheres as having three main qualities. They are liminal, dynamic and shareable. Liminal by being located between subject and object world, simultaneously constituted and constitutive of both. This posits a sort of non-directional relationality between subject and place modulated by atmospheres. People can alter an atmosphere but may also become subdued to the poetic quality of a place, and so atmospheres can nuance the boundaries that distance subject and object-world. This in turn, entails a sort of

dynamic quality, neither entirely subjective nor objective, atmospheres are always in a process of unfolding: their boundaries are diffuse and they are hard to contain and stabilize because their articulations are dynamic. However, this does not hinder the intensity of their affective qualities. Atmospheres are public because they are shared, they stretch out across space involving the bodies and things located within that structure. As a consequence, they can help explain how certain emotional stances circulate to be shared.

I think my work here shows a way in which atmospheres can be a useful tool in thinking about the rhetoric of space. A rhetorical analysis of space grounded on atmospheres exposes the interaction between materiality, affectivity and meaning experienced in space, it also signals to the sensual qualities of a neighborhood, and it helps explain how certain emotional stances -ways of feeling and moods- can be collectively shared. Atmospheres have been described as the feeling grasped in space, a mood hanging in the air, tuned space or a spatialized feeling, but I believe a simpler way to think about them is in terms of the *sensual qualities of place*. Which situates atmospheres within the interest of rhetorical criticism, since they can help account for the processes that shape subjects and their experiences of place, as much as the impressions we project unto our surroundings.

More specifically, this study may also help expand our understanding of neighborhoods and how they are articulated. As mentioned in chapter 1, I consider neighborhoods as something that is more than merely symbolic, to the encounter of physical space with meaning one should add a sensual quality. I offered an account of La boca by attending to its material, symbolic and sensual qualities; meanings that attached to space create a *claimed space*, and the atmospheres that emerge within. This analysis of La Boca exposes how a neighborhoods' sensual qualities are

fundamental in its constitution, and to the means by which it becomes a differentiated space within the city. In addition to this, the work also helps expand the current scholarship on La Boca, which I have relied on and referenced consistently throughout my analysis. While scholars have attended to the complex characteristics La Boca as a distinctive trait (Herzer et al, 2008; Fabaron, 2016), and explored the way space is constituted and contested by social practices and associated meanings (Guano 2003, Keuchkarian et al, 2019; Hopftgarner & Vidosa, 2014), a look at the atmospheric articulations that take place within the neighborhood shows a way of attending to and considering the affective qualities of space.

I believe this study also shows how a place becomes involved in social life by mobilizing a number of cultural, economic and political processes. This speaks to the power of place. And, in the case of La Boca, its generative potential is materially evidenced in the birth of a particular aesthetic, in the creation of cultural forms such as tango and lunfardo, and in the presence of different identities that find in La Boca material ground (*el xeneize, el bostero, el rioplatense*, even a national ethos).

Methodologically speaking, the analysis I offered was based on my own experiences walking the neighborhood. Since atmospheres are only accessible to “deambulatory and synesthetic” perception (Griffero, 2013:2) and *quasi-objective*, the way we experience them is heavily inflected by subjective inclinations. Thus, my personal story and imaginative nature played a role in this sensing of place, my gender and nationality certainly marked the emphases and silences that shaped this work. However, I like to think of this not as a theoretical limitation, but an expression of the generative potential atmospheres offer: they invite several readings of a same place and allow for the juxtaposition of different gazes, because, just like our experiences of a

places are different each time we visit it, atmospheres never emerge in quite the same way. This is also why thinking about their articulations as a form *poiesis* seems fitting.

This also means that as neighborhoods radiate a particular atmosphere, our way of experiencing them partially relies on so called “social constructions”. However, such realization hardly strips places of their force, this uncovering of the veil doesn’t negate the poetic qualities of place. Here, we are moving into the Thingness of things and echoing Bruno Latour’s famous essay “Why Critique has run out of steam?”, where he claims that even if things are indeed fabricated, they “too act, they too do things, they too make you do things” (204:243).

Moving beyond deconstruction, toward analyses that consider the multitude of intensities that surround us and orient social life, has implications for the discipline of rhetoric too. This should encourage rhetorical analyses to move beyond representational structures, and incorporate the wealth of elements that become involved in the rhetorical processes that make the world.

In this work, I have tried to do so by repeatedly hinting at the force of things and their influence on us, speaking of a non-directional relationality that binds us to place and things. I used the words of Eugene Minkowski, at the beginning of chapter 1, who claimed that “science reduces all it touches to immobility” while the world “resonates with a thousand melodies, exhales a thousand perfumes, is animated by a thousand movements that make our being vibrate and palpitate (1936:150); and relied on the voice of Herder, in the final chapter, who spoke of the the philosopher as someone who dissects and isolates, and so neglects “one thread of sensation in pursuing the other... when in nature all these threads are a single web” (2002:107).

This is not to say that we can’t measure things and come to conclusions, that systematic approaches should be dismissed entirely, but that they shouldn’t be the single criteria under

which the world is scrutinized. The results of such measurements can't be taken at face value because -more often than not- they miss the point, failing to grasp the mobilizing force of experience. Put otherwise, systematic analyses are only effective for specific purposes, but certainly fall short when trying to explain how social life unfolds.

This missing-of-the-point I'm referring to signals to something which can't be captured and stabilized, and I found in atmospheres a way of gesturing toward this *elusive thing* when speaking of a place. Certainly, this is not a new idea but one that may help summarize what lies at the core of my intentions; the point I've been working to get across as I sketched out and wrote these chapters: it's about enchantment. Thus, in addition to the reflections on the way space\place becomes articulated, the capacities of places to orient subjects, and the deep entanglements that involve us both mentally and sensually, I hope this work also serves as an invitation to hold on to our sense of amazement about the world, an encouragement to let places and things surprise us still, and to humbly acknowledge that certain processes may be at work even if we lack the tools to bring them forth.

These final considerations remind me of the work by Mujica Lainez, and specifically a fragment I've found myself thinking about quite often in the last few weeks. It felt close to my concerns as I was writing, even though it's not about places or atmospheres. Instead, it speaks of that mysterious aura some things hold, that which is all around and binds us to the world. I am happy to finally find a place for it here, and offer it as a closing note.

The things, which it is claimed have no soul, are the proprietors of deep secrets that are imprinted on them and provide them with a sort of soul, quite distinctive, they overflow of secrets, of messages, and since they can't convey them but to chosen beings, they become,

with the passing of years, strange, unreal, almost thoughtful. We speak of patina, polishment, the hue of the centuries, when we speak of them, and it never occurs to us to speak of a soul.

Bomarzo, Manuel Mujica Lainez

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VITA

Gabriel Tomás O'Rourke Murolo was born in Luján, Argentina on February 15, 1990. He graduated from highschool in 2007, and obtained his first university degree in marketing, awarded by Universidad del Salvador in 2013. This was followed by a degree in History from Universidad Nacional de Luján in 2019, and was later admitted to Syracuse University, receiving a Master of Arts degree in Communication and Rhetorical Studies in May, 2023. Additionally, he also attended Universidad de Zaragoza in Aragón, Spain, and Utrecht Universiteit in Utrecht, Netherlands.