

**PLAYING IN THE CITY: FOOTBALL FANDOM AND
STREET PROTESTS IN BUENOS AIRES**

by

Jason Lyth
Bachelor of Arts, Simon Fraser University

RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF URBAN STUDIES

In the
Urban Studies Program
of the
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

© Jason Lyth 2007

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

2007

All rights reserved. This work may not be
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.

APPROVAL

Name: Jason Lyth
Degree: Master of Urban Studies
Title of Thesis: Playing in the City: Football Fandom and Street Protests in Buenos Aires

Examining Committee:

Chair: **Dr. Geoff Mann**
Assistant Professor
Department of Geography
Simon Fraser University

Dr. Noel Dyck
Senior Supervisor
Professor of Social Anthropology
Simon Fraser University

Dr. Anthony Perl
Supervisor
Professor and Director, Urban Studies Program
Simon Fraser University

Dr. Richard Gruneau
External Examiner
Professor, School of Communication
Simon Fraser University

Date Defended/Approved:

DEC. 11, 2007



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Declaration of Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the "Institutional Repository" link of the SFU Library website <www.lib.sfu.ca> at: <<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
THINKING OF THE WORLD

STATEMENT OF ETHICS APPROVAL

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

(a) Human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

(b) Advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

or has conducted the research

(c) as a co-investigator, in a research project approved in advance,

or

(d) as a member of a course approved in advance for minimal risk human research, by the Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Bennett Library
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC, Canada

ABSTRACT

This essay examines a particular aspect of certain forms of social behaviour that occur at selected times and places in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. In general terms, the essay adopts an ethnographic and culturally-informed perspective to identify and explicate particular dimensions of some publicly enacted relationships and activities that unfold within a large and densely populated city. More specifically, the essay asks whether the expressive activities of football fans, on the one hand, and street protesters, on the other, can be appropriately and usefully identified as constituting forms of 'play'. Although necessarily limited in its aims and objectives, the essay does attempt to take account of some of the larger questions and analytic possibilities that emerge out of this preliminary investigation.

To my mom,
who taught me the importance of pushing one's comfort zone;
you remain an inspiration and a great friend.

To Laurence,
for supporting and encouraging me
throughout every stage of this project.
Te quiero, I love you, Je t'aime!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the work and support of my supervisor and friend Noel Dyck. You told me exactly what I needed to hear when I needed to hear it and believed in this research endeavour from the outset. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------------|
| Approval | ii |
| Abstract | iii |
| Dedication..... | iv |
| Acknowledgements..... | v |
| Table of Contents | vi |
| List of Figures | vii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Football fans, Protesters and the Urban Milieu..... | 3 |
| Research Design, Methodology and Analytical Framework..... | 5 |
| Research Design | 5 |
| Methodology | 6 |
| Participant Observation | 6 |
| Interviews..... | 7 |
| Secondary Data | 8 |
| Analytical Framework..... | 9 |
| Performance in the City..... | 9 |
| Playing in the City | 10 |
| Ethnographic Sketch #1 Protests in the Plaza San Martin - Thursday October 5th, 2006 | 15 |
| Ethnographic Sketch #2 El SuperClassico - Sunday October 8, 2006..... | 22 |
| Ethnographic Sketch #3 Day of Protests - Thursday October 26th, 2006 | 32 |
| Ethnographic Sketch #4 Racing Club vs. Boca Juniors - Wednesday November 1, 2006..... | 43 |
| Ethnographic Sketch #5 Hospital Frances Worker Protest - Wednesday November 8, 2006..... | 49 |
| Ethnographic Sketch #6 Violence Floods into the Stadium - Sunday November 12th, 2006..... | 55 |
| Discussion and Conclusion..... | 60 |
| Playing in the City of Buenos Aires | 62 |
| References..... | 67 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| Figure 1 | Police Officer looking through a police fence. | 16 |
| Figure 2 | People gathered in the Plaza San Martin. Signs bear the faces of military personnel killed during the dirty years..... | 17 |
| Figure 3 | Protesters from Asamblea de San Telmo..... | 18 |
| Figure 4 | River fans lighting flares and smoke canisters at the start of the game. You can see the Boca Juniors section in Blue, (middle top). | 24 |
| Figure 5 | Boca Junior fans arriving to the game on public transit. | 26 |
| Figure 6 | A huge River Plate banner being unfurled in the 'curva' by thousands of fans..... | 28 |
| Figure 7 | Protesters from Asamblea de San Telmo..... | 32 |
| Figure 8 | A vendor selling cold drinks. | 34 |
| Figure 9 | Fireworks to liven up the show. | 35 |
| Figure 10 | The pirate in the crowd. Notice the news broadcasters focusing in on this charismatic individual. | 36 |
| Figure 11 | A large Argentine flag is unfurled across the street. | 37 |
| Figure 12 | The face of the protest. The man in hat led the singing by the group. | 38 |
| Figure 13 | Protesters marching around the Plaza de Mayo..... | 39 |
| Figure 14 | The 'Black Group' of protesters..... | 40 |
| Figure 15 | A moat separating the fans from the pitch..... | 45 |
| Figure 16 | Racing Club fans cheering and singing as their team enters onto the field..... | 46 |
| Figure 17 | A boy standing alongside flyers that had been posted to advertise this protest march. | 49 |
| Figure 18 | The affected workers prepare for the start of the protest..... | 50 |
| Figure 19 | Young men banging on drums. | 51 |
| Figure 20 | One of the organizers (with bullhorn) singing with another protester. | 53 |
| Figure 21 | Dozens of police officers standing at the ready behind metal fences. | 54 |
| Figure 22 | Independiente fan dressed up as a devil..... | 55 |
| Figure 23 | Independiente fans cheering, singing and pumping fists into the air during the first half of the match. | 56 |
| Figure 24 | Police spray water from a hose into the Racing Club fan section. | 58 |

Figure 25 Independiente fans react after violence in the Racing Club section
suspends the match.....59

INTRODUCTION

I arrived in Buenos Aires on August 24th, 2006 after a gruelling 36-hour journey from Vancouver, Canada. The weather that greeted me was cold and the apartment I had found was similarly frigid in design and feel. I had arrived in Buenos Aires, a city of over 13 million people, to conduct ethnographic research on the public plazas of this great city. My interest was peaked after I stumbled upon photographs and articles depicting the Plaza de Mayo, an almost mythical plaza located in front of the seat of the National government, the Casa Rosada. It was here that for nearly thirty years the Madres de Plaza de Mayo had been marching every Thursday in protest against the atrocities committed by the Argentine government in the 1970's and 1980's. Originally, my intention had been to study the relationships and behaviours of people who frequented the Plaza de Mayo. However, I quickly grew tired of spending hours in the same plazas while the city, with its myriad of activities, seemed to be passing me by. I yearned to explore Buenos Aires and experience the many facets of life this city had to offer.

My research into the plazas of Buenos Aires began as I had proposed, by situating myself daily in two plazas: the Plaza de Mayo and the Plaza San Martin, the latter being a beautifully constructed plaza that included mature trees, fountains and a wonderful view of the surrounding parts of the city. Initially, I would spend between 2-4 hours daily in each respective plaza observing and recording the activities taking place in these spaces. Taking cues from William Whyte (1990) and Setha Low (2005, 2003), I hoped to create an ethnographic picture of the uses and activities carried out within the plazas. I should mention that this was my first formal ethnographic research and I was finding the task of conducting a meaningful ethnography of the plazas extremely challenging. I did not completely understand the research method and rapidly encountered doubts over my staying power and my general interest in the topic I had chosen to research. What had interested me up to this point, however, were the street protests that I had witnessed in both plazas and the way in which people were acting during these dynamic performances.

It was never hard to find street protests in Buenos Aires, which always seemed to be drawn to the public plazas; I would usually hear them well before actually seeing them. Sitting quietly in a plaza, separated from the noise of the traffic, it is surprising the clarity with which one can hear beating drums, whistles and shouts. Hearing these, I would nearly always go investigate what sort of protest was taking place, who the actors were and what their message was. Soon I realised that I was more interested in the protests than in the mundane activities of the plaza and understood that I needed a change in direction.

At about the same time that this research dilemma was taking place in my mind, I attended my first football match in Buenos Aires; a monumental game dubbed 'El SuperClassico' between the cities' two most popular teams, River Plate and Boca Juniors. Their rivalry had begun over a hundred years earlier, both having originally been located in the same poor neighbourhood of La Boca at a time when professional football was exploding onto the scene in Buenos Aires. This had been a time when football was starting to take root in the minds and souls of Argentinians (Archetti 1999). I had not been prepared for the spectacle that I witnessed in this first match. What was even more interesting was that it was the crowd itself that intrigued me the most. I found it difficult to focus on the game below while another performance of sorts took place in the seats and aisles all around me. Although not immediately apparent, it soon became clear that both football fans and protesters moved and acted in a similar fashion and that this was perhaps an interesting avenue for research. It was from this recognition that I dove into an ethnographic examination of football fans and protesters in hopes of trying to understand how they acted, what their performances consisted of and why these activities were occurring in the urban environment. In addition I hoped to understand why these separate and seemingly unconnected actions resemble one another as much as they do. Interestingly enough, it was the obviously playful character of football fans that helped to shed light on the nature of 'play' in street protests, a characteristic of street demonstrations which is often omitted from or understated within the existing literature.

Accordingly, this project draws upon ethnographic research conducted in Buenos Aires, Argentina between September 2006 and December 2006. Through the use of detailed ethnographic notes and accounts of fans' behaviour at football matches and of participants' activities at street demonstrations and protests, the essay seeks both to describe and analyse the nature of public performances carried out by football fans and

street protesters. These ethnographic accounts illustrate how certain urban performances manifest themselves in the city and why in some respects they often include behaviours commonly associated with the notion of 'play'. Drawing from and building upon the existing literatures on both the nature of 'play' in social life and its place within large urban settings, the project considers these forms of 'play' in Buenos Aires, their significance, and the manner in which they fit into various domains of social relationships and activities that can be observed and examined within a complex urban environment.

Football fans, Protesters and the Urban Milieu

The importance of football as a global game has been studied extensively in the past few decades. Numerous sociologists and anthropologists have been quick to identify the cultural importance of a game that is played and followed by people all over the world (Archetti, 1999; Armstrong & Guilianotti 2001; Brown 1998; Finn & Guilianotti 2000). Furthermore, extensive research conducted by a number of individuals has dealt with the specific nature of football fans, and the effects of the game on social and national identity (Armstrong & Guilianotti 1999; Armstrong 1998; Brown 1998; De Biasi & Lanfranchi 1997). Football 'hooliganism' is a loaded term used to define the activities of violent fans. Its numerous and notorious connotations have been studied extensively since during the 1970s and 1980s when Britain and Europe generally seemed to be facing a growing problem of what some termed to be 'rampant hooliganism' in and around their football grounds (Armstrong 1998). In each case, research has focused on the importance of the global game and the actions of its supporting fans, concerned primarily by the sense of identity created through the sport.

In the same vein as football, street protests and crowds in general have also been identified as an urban phenomenon whose actions, motives, political repercussions and influences are primarily confined to the urban setting. Historical analyses of large urban demonstrations have included studies of French and English crowds in the 18th century (Rudé 1964), which have attempted to explain the participants and the motivations of crowds, protests and riots of that century. These performances invariably took place on an urban stage, where densities of people were sufficient to draw crowds capable of capturing the attention of the local or national governments. Recent studies have identified numerous traits and causes of street protests in cities around the world (Auyero 2003, 2002; Epstein 2003; Goldstein 2004; Jansen 2001; Podalsky 2004). The

attention of such research is typically focused on political and social factors often termed as 'social movements' (Auyero 2003; Davis 1999; Epstein 2003; Galafassi 2003; Podalsky 2004). These are usually connected to mass demonstrations and are linked to the spatial aspects of people temporarily occupying urban public space (Chatterton 2005; Jansen 2001; North & Huber 2004). In one example, Auyero (2002) identifies the various meanings a single violent protest can have for the citizens of a single city in Northern Argentina, of Santiago del Estero. This account illuminates how a single performance can illicit numerous meanings, both for the audience who witnessed the spectacle and for the actors who participated in the performance, providing a telling example of the ambiguity of large street protests. In another example, protests taking place in Buenos Aires after the economic crisis of 2001/2002 are vividly described and analysed through the lens of social movement theory (Epstein 2003). This project will differentiate itself from previous work conducted in this field by attempting to delve deeper into the performance itself; thereby exploring the nature of play in both football fandom and street protests within different urban domains.

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Research Design

Between September 2006 and December 2006, I conducted ethnographic research in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Utilizing participant observation as my primary method of data collection, I investigated the reasons for and meanings behind both the performances of football fans in the stadium and protesters in the streets. That said, my initial research approach was confined to the Plaza de Mayo and Plaza San Martin and had started with a rather different approach.

Following the methods suggested by William Whyte (1990) and Setha Low et al. (2005, 2003), I began to visit each plaza everyday, spending between two to four hours in each respective space. I took careful observations of the ways in which people were using these spaces throughout the day with the hope of finding some trends or patterns worth pursuing. Unfortunately, during this period, which lasted approximately one month, the only trend I was able to identify was my growing boredom and disdain for my Urban Studies research project. It was at this point that I decided that I needed to shift the focus of my project and re-think what it was I wanted to learn from this research endeavour. With guidance from my supervisor, I began to stray from the plaza and to view certain public activities in the city of Buenos Aires through the lens of performance studies.

I pursued my interest in street protests, which invariably led me back to both the Plaza de Mayo and the Plaza San Martin where the investigation had begun, but also to a variety of places throughout the sprawling metropolis. In particular, my interest in sports and more precisely football led me to playing fields and stadiums on the weekends. I now started to participate in these events not only as a fan, but also as an ethnographic researcher. It quickly became apparent that there were many avenues of inquiry possible in the sporting arenas of Buenos Aires and that this research might in fact be complimentary to the one I had instigated in the plaza.

During this period, stretching from October 5, 2006 and December 22, 2006, I diligently followed the activities of protests and football within the city, reading Buenos Aires' largest daily newspaper early each morning for bulletins of scheduled protests and daily reports from the football scene. Throughout this period of research, I engaged in numerous specific reading assignments pertaining to performance studies, knowing that I would need a basic understanding of the field if I was going to record and make use of my role as a participant observer in these public performances.

Methodology

Participant Observation

By choosing participant observation as my primary research method, I was able to learn and analyse the situation through my own presence and participation, while at the same time being able to test my analysis by my own ability to successfully participate in the field (Fife 2005). I regularly attended football matches on the weekend and street protests during the work week and with time, became familiar with certain observable patterns and enacted roles which allowed me to identify what constituted 'normal' actions or activities as compared to 'oddities' or patterns which went against the usual. In some cases, I would verify the identification of patterns by simple counting schedules that helped to confirm my observations and add to the reliability of the data (ibid.).

While wearing my researcher's hat in the field, I did my best to record 'everything' that I could possibly notice while participating in the stadium as a football fan or while passively participating and watching protests. I had to continually remind myself to reflect on the context within which these performances were taking place (ibid.). I recorded as much detail as I could but made an effort to focus on the events as performance, noting what the message of the performance was, how the 'actors' were transmitting their messages, who was listening, and what the 'audience' thought about the performance. In addition to these factors, I also began recording the variety of tools, props and routines that protesters and football fans use to make their performance happen.

During the fieldwork, I did my best to analyze my fieldnotes as I recorded them, as suggested by Wayne Fife (ibid.) but found this difficult given my relative inexperience in ethnographic research and within the field of performance studies. Nevertheless, I did

my best to identify events or observations that were relevant to the theory and labelled them as best I could so that I could focus my future observations of these trends and patterns as they related to the overall analysis of the data. Examples of my preliminary analysis included: identifying audience viewpoint; performance routine; context (specific to Argentina's history); props and costumes; message; gestures; appearance; and role in the performance, e.g. supporting actors, leaders, and adversaries; side-shows; and took note of the general mood or atmosphere of each respective performance.

Interviews

I was also diligent in engaging both the participants and the audience in brief unstructured interviews, hoping to gain a glimpse into what various individuals were thinking throughout the performance. Typically holding my notebook, I would approach people at random, before, during and after the performance, introducing myself, the study and to ask whether they would be willing to participate. The response was overwhelmingly positive. It seemed that people were both willing and interested to speak with a grad student from Canada, whose basic skills in Spanish were good enough to instigate a brief conversation.

The questions asked were rather general and open-ended and were intended to allow the informant maximum flexibility to lead the interview. Possible questions included:

- What do you think about all of this (referring to the protest or actions in the stadium)?
- What does it mean?
- Who is this message directed at?
- Why do you think they are doing that?
- Why are you protesting today?
- Why are you celebrating?
- Why are you angry?
- Why are you happy?
- Why are you shouting?

Utilizing these open-ended questions and the completely informal setting of the performance itself, I feel that I have been able to get an informed sense of what both the public audience and the performers are thinking during such events. In addition to these in-situ unstructured interviews, I also conducted more formal unstructured interviews with eight of my primary informants, who included two protesters, three football fans and three more individuals whom I became acquainted with during my time in Buenos Aires. These interviews were conducted in formal settings, where I asked to meet with informants for the specific reason of speaking about the topic of my research. Again, however, the interviews were completely unstructured as I simply wished to get a sense of the actors' perspectives on activities of protest and football fanaticism.

Secondary Data

In addition to the primary data collected in Buenos Aires, I was also able to collect and record crucial secondary data that helped to frame the context in which these performances were taking place. I accomplished this by reading the 'Clarín' newspaper, a daily newspaper with Argentina's highest readership. In my estimation it was a tempered and centre minded daily, although I will admit that it was difficult for me to interpret bias in the language of the articles given my intermediate Spanish reading skills. That said, I am confident that it provided me at least an overview of Argentinian society, and kept me abreast about the activities and opinions of the populous with regards to both protests and football.

I also supplemented my data by reading a sports-only daily newspaper entitled, 'Olé' whose first 15-20 pages were typically focused on football, yet also included coverage of many other sports taking place in Buenos Aires and the country. The newspaper was very helpful in providing me with a clearer picture of the unfolding events in the football tournament, which included topics both on and off the field.

In addition to this contemporary source of information, I also studied the history of Argentina in the 20th century, reading about its economic, political and social development, (including the role of football) through time (Archetti 1999 & 1997). This included learning about the rise of Peronismo (Skidmore & Smith 2005; Keeling 1996; Podalsky 2004), the 'dirty years' of the military dictatorship (1976 – 1983) (Skidmore & Smith 2005; Bouvard 1994); and more recently the economic crisis of 2001, all of which helped me to better understand Argentinian society (Auyero 2003; Epstein 2003).

Other sources of secondary data which I used in my research were the numerous flyers, pamphlets and newspapers printed for and distributed during protests. These ranged from simple one-page flyers, often thrown into the air and available on the ground for any who cared to read, to other more 'professional', multi-page newspapers.

Analytical Framework

As mentioned earlier, I did struggle with the analytical framework in which to situate this research at the beginning of the project. Starting with a loosely defined framework based in part on the works of William Whyte (2005, 1990) and Setha Low (2005, 2003), the project originally sought to better understand how the public spaces of Buenos Aires. Nevertheless, it quickly became apparent that this avenue of inquiry by itself was of little interest to me and so, the analytical framework of the project shifted to that of performance studies.

The project was revised to attempt to describe the playful nature of football fans and street protesters in Buenos Aires and provide a better understanding of these complex performances which takes place regularly in this South American capital city. Drawing inspiration from Victor Turner's (1980) and Richard Schechner's (2002, 1993) work on performance studies, the project will build upon the notion of 'play' as described by Johan Huizinga (1949) and Allen Guttman (1978), and will situate this particular behaviour within the 'urban domains' as described by Ulf Hannerz (1980). The research is framed to shed light on particular activities and roles that occur at street protests and within football stadia through the lens provided by these scholars, whose work on performance and urban studies have provided the basis for the analysis of the data collected in the field.

Performance in the City

In 1980, Victor Turner managed to capture why it is necessary for ethnographers to understand and incorporate performance studies into the discipline as a whole.

Cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performance.... A performance is a dialectic of "flow," that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and "reflexivity," in which the central meanings, values, and goals of a culture are seen "in action," as they shape and explain behavior. A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the

uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know one another better by entering one another's performances and learning their grammars and vocabularies (Wenner-Gren Foundation, planning meeting minutes 1980).

According to Richard Schechner (2002), performance studies have had a renaissance of late and will be increasingly important in the coming decades. Explaining the utility of incorporating studies on human performance and mentioning the growing awareness in the academic community, Schechner (2002:162) states:

In one way or another, all these scholars emphasize how performances mark identities, bend and remake time, adorn and reshape the body, tell stories, and provide people with the means to play with the worlds they not only inhabit but to a large degree construct.

Schechner argues that this growing importance is a product of the increasingly powerful and emerging communication technologies that are being disseminated around the world. These technologies enable audiences to explore visual and audio performances ranging from the mundane to the spectacular taking place all over the globe. This technological ability has also empowered the viewer or audience, who will increasingly demand more and more spectacular performances. Furthermore, a generation of youth have now come to expect vivid imagery in all sorts of performance based activities, buttressed by the availability of images on television, through the internet and cinema. Powerful imagery has the power to capture the attention of the masses and needs to be explored by ethnographers (ibid.). In short, the importance of understanding the nature of performance in contemporary societies, as encountered within urban environments, is increasingly apparent as densities within cities spiral upwards, making the spectacle and message of each performance accessible to larger numbers of people than ever before. Citing a pop figure from the 1960s, this approach can be summarized thus:

Life is theatre and we are the guerrillas attacking the shrines of authority.... The street is the stage. You are the star of the show and everything you were once taught is up for grabs (Rubin 1970:25)

Playing in the City

In play the beauty of the human body reaches its zenith. In its developed forms it is saturated with rhythm and harmony, the noblest gifts of aesthetic perception known to man (Huizinga 1976:51).

Johan Huizinga (1872 - 1945) wrote numerous works on the notion of 'play', identifying its cultural importance and examining the meaning of these dynamic performances within human societies. Huizinga (1949) specified the universal qualities of play and described how such activities manifested themselves. He argued that play is not restricted to childhood games and feats of strength in the sporting arena but rather is also to be found in numerous human behaviours, occurring in a variety of physical settings. Huizinga (ibid.) goes further, compelling the reader to consider the gamut of ways in which humans play and to consider the possibility that these playful activities are not restricted to the mundane and frivolous but rather include components such as 'seriousness' and 'tension'.

To our way of thinking, play is the direct opposite of seriousness. At first sight this opposition seems irreducible to other categories as the play-concept itself. Examined more closely, however, the contrast between play and seriousness proves to be neither conclusive nor fixed. We can say: play is non-seriousness. But apart from the fact that proposition tells us nothing about the positive qualities of play, it is extraordinarily easy to refute. As soon as we proceed from "play is non-seriousness" to "play is not serious", the contrast leaves us in a lurch – for some play can be very serious indeed (Huizinga 1976:49-50).

I would add that the line between what is seriously fun, and, what is serious and violent, is often teetering on collapse and that the line between the two is rather complicated and somewhat porous. Huizinga contended that forms of play often require a real or imagined opponent in order to instigate a contest. The contest itself and the 'give and take' between players is what provides the satisfaction from this form of play. Be it a contest of wits or contest of strength, Huizinga (ibid.) is of the opinion that competition is a major element in many forms of organized play.

Huizinga (ibid.) identifies the characteristics of play, and, while subtle and albeit somewhat general, they begin to ferment slowly offering a new and interesting way of understanding the urban realm and the social relationships which take place within this decidedly human environment. The first characteristic of play as described by Huizinga (1976) is that it is a completely voluntary activity and that forced actions do not exhibit any quality of play or at best represent a poor imitation of the real thing.

Be as it may, for the adult and responsible human being play is a function which he could equally leave alone. Play is superfluous. The need for it is only urgent to the extent that the enjoyment of it makes it a need. Play can be deferred or suspended at any time. It is never imposed by

physical necessity or moral duty. It is never a task. It is done at leisure, during "free time" (Huizinga 1976:51).

A second main characteristic of play which Huizinga identified is that it resides outside the realm of the 'ordinary' and is in no way part of 'ordinary' urban life. Huizinga's final main characteristic of play is that in addition to being outside of the "ordinary" it is often distinct in its location and duration and that "...its secludedness [and] its limitedness" are its final characteristics. Play does not occur continually or just anywhere. On the contrary, the act of playing has temporal limits and requires spatial confines; in other words it requires a 'playground' and a 'playtime'. This additional feature helps to limit the nature of activities included within the broad framework of play as described by Huizinga and will help limit the scope of urban play for the remainder of the discussion.

On the other hand, Allen Guttman (1978) categorized play quite differently from Huizinga, first breaking down play into spontaneous play and organized play, the latter being associated with 'games'. Breaking down this category further, Guttman identified that games can be further separated into non-competitive and competitive games, the latter being 'contests'. At this point, contests could be divided into intellectual and physical contests with the latter being equal to 'sport'. Guttman (1978) identified numerous errors in Huizinga's work, illustrating that many forms of play occur without an opposition or competing factor. Furthermore, Guttman (1978:13) rejected Huizinga's (1949:13) claim that play "proceeds within proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner". On the contrary, he insists that fixed rules belong only to games, a form of play separate from spontaneous play, adding, that spontaneous play can occur without fixed rules or constraints. Play, therefore, is not bounded by limits and can take place anywhere and at any time.

While each approach contains insights into the nature of play and is interesting in its own right, a more comprehensive debate on the exact nature of play is beyond the scope of this project. What is important to consider in our discussion is the general notion of play and its importance and role within the urban environment. The importance of playing in the city is a topic which has not been much addressed within the existing urban and anthropological literature. Relatively little attention has been paid to an activity which sometimes potentially affects entire urban populations. Play involves acts which people strive to include in their lives, acts which can produce or illuminate deeply held and important emotions and interactions within a particular society.

Ulf Hannerz (1980) identified that within modern western cities, individuals perform social roles that are standardized and in some senses routine. Within these roles, people can interact with others in a variety of ways. Moreover, it is an individual's set of roles, or "role repertoire" which make up an individual's urban life. To better understand these role repertoires, Hannerz (1980:102) suggests that all possible roles can fall within or across the following urban domains which make up cities. The domains are as follows: household and kinship; provisioning; neighboring; traffic; and; recreation. Within these domains, both external and internal relationships exist between various roles.

A housewife deals with the members of her household, but she also goes shopping for its food and clothing. When "the gang" goes out for a drink, its members take pleasure in one another's company, but they also have transactions with the bartender as well. (Hannerz 1980: 103)

The domain of household and kinship will contain the relationships found in the home and between family members, while the provisioning domain might include the ways in which an individual earns their livelihood, trades money for goods and services, or barter their time. In the domain of neighboring, roles may reflect where, and who, you live beside or work around. Hannerz (1980: 105) captures the essence of the traffic domain, stating:

One manages a traffic relationship by avoiding sidewalk collisions; by following the rules for standing in line, taking the end position of the queue as one arrives, without crowding the individual immediately in front;...The time period involved may vary but is generally brief—a split second for not bumping into somebody at a street crossing, a few hours with a stranger in the next seat at a concert.

Finally, Hannerz (ibid.) identified that the roles and relationships existing within the domain of recreation are less well defined, as one might invoke a number of roles while partaking in "free" or "leisure" time activities. Meaning, that while one might attend a football match on Sunday as their means of recreation, they may also do so with a friend, neighbour or family member. Nevertheless, it is clear that Hannerz's use of the five domains, while not perfect, do help us to better understand the almost infinite number of roles and relationships which take place within the city.

Building upon Guttman's premise that spontaneous play can occur anywhere and at anytime, play can therefore be occurring in any one domain at any moment,

manifesting itself in numerous behaviours or roles. While spontaneous play at home might be hiding your child's toy behind their back, play in traffic might then be to cut someone off with your car on your way to work. The point being, that play can occur at in any one of the urban domains and at any time.

The following excerpts from my ethnographic field work will, therefore, be viewed from the perspective of performance studies with a particularly focus on 'play'. This discussion will seek to illustrate that football fans and protesters alike, share numerous behaviours which suggest they may be usefully viewed as performing acts of play in the city-of Buenos Aires. This paper will now explore a number of respective performances as they occurred chronologically during the author's time in Buenos Aires, utilizing the detailed ethnographic notes that were collected and produced during and after the actual performances. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate the evolution of my own thinking vis-à-vis the experience and imagery created in the football stadium and in the street, and the lasting impressions of participating in these environments. It will soon become clear that both types of situations follow similar scripts and are carried out quite precisely, and are intimately linked together. These exist comfortably within all domains but particularly within the 'trafficking' and 'recreation' domains as described by Hannerz (1980), furthermore exhibiting many of the qualities of 'play' as described by Huizinga (1949) and Guttman (1978).

ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH #1

Protests in the Plaza San Martin - Thursday October 5th, 2006

I arrived at the lower entrance to the Plaza San Martin at seven minutes after 6pm, and found it to be largely vacant of people. Apparently the advertised rally which had drawn me to the plaza was being held in the upper portions of the plaza and would not be taking place next to the Falklands War memorial as I had envisioned. I came expecting to see a rally calling for the remembrance of those who had died of terrorism; namely the 30,000 or so individuals who 'disappeared' during the 'dirty years' (1973-1983) when Argentina's military had taken control of the government, but what I found was something all together different.

As I ascended the large set of steps that takes you from the lower section to the upper, my first impression was that there was a large police presence for this event. Surrounding the central monument; a statue depicting General San Martin triumphantly riding a chiselled stallion, were more that 30 police officers standing in a line and creating a sort of permeable human wall. I walked through this human chain, as I saw that many others were doing the same and made my way to a large group of people that had gathered in front of the statue, where a stage had been erected. On either side of the stage I could see large black speakers set on tri-pods, while on the stage itself stood two men who were erecting what looked to be a large screen and projector. I immediately noticed that this group of people, those who were mulling about plaza, were quite different from the people I had seen at other protests and rallies.

These people were very well dressed, men wearing nice looking suits, while women wore beautiful shawls, delicate scarves and currently fashionable gigantic sunglasses. It was also clear that this crowd was on average, much older than the protesters I had seen before. I saw many small groups of men in tight circles, shaking hands and greeting each other as if it had been a long time since they had last met. Another aspect of the crowd that was plainly visible was the ostensible ancestry of these people. Everyone in the crowd, without exception appeared to be of European appearance. Greying hair does not mask fair skin and the height of Europeans,



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 1 Police Officer looking through a police fence.

which was typically far taller than what I had seen to be the average throughout the city. Rarely did I see a woman with black hair, instead I saw shades of orange, blond, dirty blonds and brunette. The only dark skinned and black haired fellows that I saw in this crowd were three vendors that had come to sell candied peanuts at one peso a bag.

As I walked through the crowd, which would not have looked out of place on Vancouver's Dunsmuir Street, or New York's Wall Street, I saw a man being interviewed by a daily television news channel. He was dressed in an ankle length trench coat. This handsome man, approximately 6 feet tall, had wavy blond hair and piercing

blue eyes and spoke elegantly of his support for the families of soldiers who had died during the 'dirty years'. His shoes were polished to a high shine and sparkled in the camera light, and he looked incredibly distinguished, even within this crowd of elegant men and women. I continued wandering about the crowd snapping pictures and trying to find someone who seemed friendly enough to approach and ask what the heck was going on here. I found a solitary grey haired man, in his 60s or 70s, who smiled politely when I asked my question; "Good afternoon Sir, would you tell me what this rally/protest is for?" However, he did not reply, but rather chose instead to walk away from me with both hands held behind his back. Not a great start!

I was then asked by a young woman, who was maybe 20-years old if I would be interested in signing a petition demanding that the government recognize October 5th as a day of remembrance to those military officers who had sacrificed and died during the military dictatorship. I politely declined, saying that I was from Canada and that I did not feel comfortable signing a petition. She continued on; however I

did notice that she was being accompanied by a short, youngish looking guy who was busy talking on his cell phone. I waited for him to finish talking on his phone, smiled and then asked "Pardon me, but could you tell me why this rally is happening"? He replied "For sure" and began to explain to me why the rally was being held. He said that during the years when the military controlled the government, many soldiers and military personal had been killed as a result of the conflict and that the people assembled in the Plaza San Martin were the families and



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 2 People gathered in the Plaza San Martin. Signs bear the faces of military personnel killed during the dirty years.

friends of those fallen soldiers. He said, that they were here to show solidarity and demand that the government recognize the sacrifices of the soldiers and memorialize them with a day of mourning, October 5 (Dia Nacional de Homnaje a los Muertos por la Subversion).

The young man continued, saying that his father had served in the military, having just retired last year and that he was a proud supporter of the military and its history even if the 'Left' didn't think so. He

said that the 'Left' (La Izquierda) were two blocks away at a counter march that was protesting this rally tonight. I asked if that was the reason for the considerable security presence and he nodded his head, "Yes, the police are here tonight so that the two groups do not have a chance encounter in the Plaza, where tempers could flair and fighting could start". I then asked him whether or not this was a political rally? He replied that no, not at all but that nevertheless the people gathered in the Plaza tonight were primarily supporters of the 'Right' (El Derecho). We continued to speak, making casual conversation about my life here in Buenos Aires and why I had come to the plaza tonight as a researcher. I thanked the man for his time and turned to continue on my way; however before I could take one step I was offered a large wooden placard by an adolescent male, one of a half dozen whom were walking through the crowd giving people signs to hold up. The sign offered to me read

"Dante Salvatierra Victima del Terrorismo Nunca Recordada"; it didn't seem to matter much that I was not a relative of Sr. Salvatierra or that I was a Canadian. These signs looked brand new and were being handed out to the crowd by the dozen. I wondered who was paying for this material, which I imagined would look even better once it was televised on the nightly news. Declining the offer to wave a sign with the face of a dead soldier, I began walking away through the crowd; I wanted to see where this 'counter march' was and what they were doing here.

As I sliced my way through the growing crowd and began to near Avenida Santa Fe, I started to hear the drums and songs of what must have been the 'counter march' by the 'Left'. It was now nearly six thirty pm, the advertised start for this rally for the Victims of Terrorism. By this point a single helicopter was circling overhead and the riot police were firmly stationed at the corner of Avenida Sante Fe and Esmeralda, holding a solid line of men, separating the Plaza and the throngs of people supporting fallen soldiers from the hundred or so protesters that were marching down Avenida Sante Fe towards the police line. The riot police were dressed more fiercely than the ones in the plaza, wearing full face shields, shin pads, helmets and body armour. They were definitely an intimidating presence and provided a barrier between the two competing demonstrations.

Marching and dancing in time with numerous drums, tambourines and whistles, this second group was definitely capturing the attention of both the police and the people occupying the Plaza San Martin. Singing what sounded like protest slogans, the protesters continued to march towards the police line, waving flags and holding banners. Most were darker skinned and wore regular, if not tired looking clothes. Some had blue vests reading "Asamblea del Pueblo (the people's assembly)" or "Asambleas de San Telmo" coupled with iconic images of what looked to be a tortured soul, neck



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 3 Protesters from Asamblea de San Telmo.

strained in an upward glance holding the remnants of a broken chain. Others were dressed more casually. However there were some wearing backpacks with the face of 'Che' Guevara while another young man I saw wore a bright red shirt with the hammer and sickle of the USSR on it.

The members of this group were generally much younger yet far more diverse in age, with toddlers running alongside mothers, teenagers lighting fire crackers alongside old and bearded men shouting slogans into bull horns. They shouted slogans directly at the line of police officers and banged their drums intensely, trying to disrupt the rally taking place only 50 meters in front of them. I asked a young woman who was part of the group to explain why there were here tonight. She replied, that they were marching in protest of the rally that was taking place in the Plaza San Martin. She described that rally as a "Right wing group that was trying to commemorate members of the military, who in her opinion had been the cause for many of the atrocities committed during the 'dirty years' when the military controlled the government". She also said that her group had only had a little time to organize themselves for the counter march and that their protest had been organized only hours before. I thanked her for the information and watched her dance off to the rhythms of the drums, chanting and singing along with the song that was being sung all the while punching her fist into the air.

While I was watching the counter march by the so-called 'Left wingers' I was handed a small flyer that read:

| |
|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">"El 5 a La Plaza San Martin Asesinos, Devuelvan a Julio Lopez</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Castigo a todos los culpables y responsables del proceso Proteccion popular a los testigos de las 1200 causas Juicio y castigo a todos los asesinos, no solo algunos Disolucion de las fuerzas armadas irreformables</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Asamblea de San Telmo Asambleas del Pueblo</p> |
|---|

It reads something like:

Assassins, Give us back Julio Lopez

Punishment to all those responsible for these actions (kidnapping of Julio Lopez)

Protection for those testifying in the 1200 cases

Judgement and punishment for all assassins, not just some

Dissolve the armed forces since they are un-reformable

This flyer makes reference to the current situation surrounding Sr. Julio Lopez, a prominent national figure who was supposed to testify in the on-going case against a group of military commanders accused of crimes that took place during the period known as the 'dirty years' (1976-1983). He himself had been tortured and witness to numerous crimes against the people of Argentina. On September 18, 2006 just one day before Julio Lopez was scheduled to testify in court against a number of former high ranking military officials, he mysteriously disappeared and had not been seen or heard from since. In response, protests have been taking place in Buenos Aires, La Plata (the capital of the province of Buenos Aires) and in cities around the country demanding that the national government do more to search for Sr. Lopez and the criminals who perpetrated his 'disappearance'. Given these circumstances, it would seem as though the second group of protesters found the timing of this military rally inappropriate.

I returned to the Plaza San Martin just in time to hear and watch the speakers there begin to articulate their position. It was quite a contrast to go from being in the middle of the street listening to drums, firecrackers and protest songs to being in the Plaza San Martin, where the air was filled with almost religious hymns and opera-like singing and music emanating for the large black speakers at the front of the crowd. It is hard to explain the genre of the music but it would not have been out of place in a church or funeral. While I tried to understand everything the speakers were saying, I was not able to. In the end I was only able to get bits and pieces of the speeches that were read that evening. The feeling I got was that the members of the panel on the stage, including the president of the Asociacion Victimas del Terrorismo Argentino, a lawyer named Jose Sacheri and a woman who was the daughter of one of the Lieutenants killed in 1976, named Ana Lucioni was that there were strong statements made against the "Marxist Subversives" who had purportedly reeked terror on the military during the 1970's and that these "Marxist socialists" were still a force today. The speakers restated time and time again how the military must be empowered to deal with these types of subversives if Argentina is to fully recover and become a strong nation in the future. After these strong words, a 15-minute film began to play on the large screen that had been erected for the event.

It began with a close-up of Argentina's flag waving proudly in the wind. I recognized the music playing in the background from the movie 'Gladiator' and later

found that it was titled "Pronto Venceremos" by Maria Elena Walsh of the Zupay Quartet. It is very powerful and triumphant music that does ignite the patriot inside you, or at least it did me. The shot of the flag then faded to newspaper clippings, whose headlines described the terrorist activities and the murders of military officers. From there the movie began to show the photos of soldiers that had died with the date of their death listed underneath, all the while with music played in the background. These memorial shots continued for ten minutes until the film ended with some remarks from the wives and families of some of the more noteworthy officers. I watched one woman in the crowd, who began to cheer and clap loudly when one picture came up on the screen. She then began to cry, obviously distraught; perhaps from the memories of a loved one who had died.

After the film, some closing words were said from the stage, once again calling for the end to Marxist subversion and calling for the government to recognize the sacrifices of the military during these difficult years. People applauded the speakers and pledged not to give up this fight. The rally then ended somewhat abruptly and people began to walk away from the Plaza. Each protest group separated by fences and police had successfully performed its own act, each with their own script, props and means of illustrating two separate messages. The night ended without further incidents and both groups would receive equal media attention that night and in the following days to come.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH #2

El SuperClassico - Sunday October 8, 2006

After repeated efforts and numerous phone calls, I finally managed to find a pair of tickets to the 'SuperClassico' football game between River Plate and Boca Juniors. It was taking place at the Estadio Monumental Antonio Vespucio Liberti (Monumental Stadium), home of River Plate on Sunday October 8, 2006 at 16:00. After watching the diehard fans that had arrived the night before on the television, Laurence (my partner) and I decided to head to the stadium early, so that we could secure the best seats possible.

Street vendors selling flags, pirated jerseys, hats, jewellery, key chains, beverages, food and programs lined the street and filled the air with shouts and slogans enticing people to buy, buy, buy! Nearing the stadium you begin to understand its name. It is an enormous edifice with a capacity to host 66,000 people divided into four separate and distinctly unconnected sections: two end zones and two sidelines. The stadium, built circa 1938 in the shape of an oval, has no roof and only has numbered seating in the lower bowl and general, first come, first serve tiered bleachers in the upper bowl. We encountered the first police checkpoint approximately 400m from the stadium itself. There we were forced to abandon the two water bottles that we had brought and were subjected to a fairly lacklustre pat-down. Now we were very close to the stadium, beneath the shadow of this enormous antiquated and slightly rundown sports palace.

We took our seats which were located just right of the centre line and about six aisles up from the lowest tier in the upper bowl. The time was 13:30, a little under three hours prior to kick-off. But already there were dozens of banners hanging from the seating sections and thousands of people chanting River slogans and singing their team's songs. The crowd that had already assembled in our section was definitely made up of some 'hardcore' River fans because, flags, jerseys and hats were abundant and many of the fans had clearly been there since the doors had opened an hour earlier. At this point in time, the stadium was maybe one-third full. To our right was the Boca Junior section, quarantined from the River section by 12ft high fences topped with razor wire. It was obvious that these games sometimes got

out of hand and that opposing groups of fans needed to be physically separated to prevent violent incidents from occurring.

At 14:00 an under-21 match began between both River and Boca's development teams. This was explained to me as a warm-up for the main game and a tradition in South American football. Warm up was right; the crowd that was there now had something to cheer about, and it was hard not to watch the crowd rather than the players during this match. As the players took to the field, each side of supporters respectively sang their teams song. It was a give and take between the River and Boca fans. Sometimes the Boca section would quiet a little, allowing for the songs of River to be heard a little better, while other times they would strike up the drums and trumpets trying to overwhelm the River crowd and vice versa. It seemed at times that the crowd would quiet for a moment allowing the Boca fans and their songs to reverberate around the stadium and then, as if on cue the River crowd would start to whistle, described to me by the man next to me like 'Boooooiinng' and eventually overwhelming the smaller Boca contingent.

At 15 minutes into the first half Boca scored and their fans went crazy; the band struck up, fists began to pump in the air and flags waved even more furiously. That is until the young scorer ran to the corner nearest to the River fans and made a strong-man gesture, flexing, posing and taunting the River crowd. Immediately, the referee came over and red carded this goal scorer for apparent poor sportsmanship. He was sent off immediately and the referee was having nothing to do with the complaints from the Boca captain. The River fans jumped on this immediately and began singing full bore, glaring at the Boca fans and throwing their hands in the air, in a sort of Italian 'capiche' kind of way, all the while yelling obscene remarks, the translations of which we had not yet figured out.

Between the two halves of the youth match, I walked around the small concourse that linked different sections of the stands to the outside, stopping to buy a hamburger and a coca-cola, the only drink available in the entire stadium. As I left the food stand I could see people leaning over the edge of the concourse, facing the Boca Stands and shouting at people that I could not see. Making my way to the edge of the crowd I could now clearly see a large gate and chasm separating the two crowds, which clearly needed to be separated and segregated in two unconnected buildings. The comments and gestures were intense and the largely male crowd were definitely getting hostile. I could only hear and understand the River side and the comments made by them towards the Boca crowd, but I am sure that similar

comments were being made on the other side. Examples of the comments I heard and understood were the following:

"Go fuck yourself"

"You fucking immigrants, go back to Bolivia"

"Your all just a bunch of dirty immigrants"

"Your mother works in my house"

There were many others that I wasn't able to understand but I imagine that these were along the same lines. There is definitely no love lost between these two teams, which have had a long and sometimes violent history.

Originally, both teams had played in the southern portions of the city, River establishing itself in 1901 while Boca was established 4 years later in 1905. That is until 1938 when River Plate moved north into the upper class neighbourhood of Nuñez. Since then they have been known as the upper class rival to the lower class



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 4 River fans lighting flares and smoke canisters at the start of the game. You can see the Boca Juniors section in Blue, (middle top).

Boca Juniors. It is this sort of competing class structure that also plays a major part in this famous rivalry and is evident in one of River's favourite fan chants: "Somos Millonarios, Vamos a Ganar!" "We are Millionaires, We're going to Win!" It is this sort of chest thumping that often incites terrible violence during these games, which fortunately was not the case at this year's SuperClassico. I returned to my seat, somewhat energized, with adrenaline and maybe a little anxiety flowing through my veins and the game hadn't even started yet.

At the 15:30 the ambience of the stadium really began to change. The crowd was quickly filling in and seats in our section were now at a premium; the stadium was now nearing its 66,000 capacity and seemed to be overflowing with more people than there were seats. All around the field were signs and banners flapping in the wind, attached to any portion of the stadium that would allow it. The Boca supporters had also done the same, hanging banners in blue and yellow all over the cages that secured their visiting section. Eventually all of the staircases became impromptu seating and when you looked across the field towards the other side, the stairs were no longer visible having been completely overwhelmed with people clambering for a spot to watch the game; it was one giant mass of people everywhere. To the far right of our seats, nearest to the Boca section, stood a line of police officers running up the length of the section separating the two crowds that were already separated by a 4-metre physical gap between stands. The same human fence had been constructed on the other side of the stadium, although this time, it was constructed within a vacant section that appeared to be a spatial barrier between the two crowds; this entire section remained empty, except for a couple policemen clad in riot gear for the entire game. It was obvious that by no means were the two crowds to meet and be able to 'greet' each other face-to-face.

Try and imagine the Boca Juniors' end zone section otherwise known as the 'curva' that is only made up of the upper portion of the bowl (De Biasi & Lanfranchi 1997). It is separated into four distinct zones that from left to right, are vacant, full of blue clad supporters, vacant followed by the final section brimming full of Boca supporters. We asked ourselves why two sections had not been filled so close to game time. The man sitting next to me replied that the middle section that was currently vacant was being reserved for the Boca 'Barrabravas' who would be arriving shortly before the players entered the field of play. "Jesus Christ!", I thought. The 'Barrabravas' were the notorious football fanatics, whose only translation is reminiscent of 'hooligans' in English. I envisioned a prison bus driving

up to the stadium and unloading a group of brass knuckled, chain carrying, ball busting fans, not to mention a Hannibal Lectoresque character on a dolly in a blue and yellow straight jacket. Wow, I couldn't wait to see who would show up!

It was at about this time that the Boca 'fan club' or 'Barrabravas' started pouring in through the one open gate leading to a section. Carrying huge drums, even bigger than the ones already there, blowing trumpets and carrying flags of all sizes, this group which must have numbered in or around a hundred individuals who began to push their way into a section that was already full. Where would these people go? Minutes passed and the fans somehow managed to file into the remaining spaces. At the very top of the stadium, where the security fence met the upper limits of the building itself, throngs of men were swinging around this barrier, risking a deadly fall to the parking lot below, flooding the empty section. In addition to this route, a second way over the barbed wire fence had materialised. It was as if a group of militia were assaulting an enemy strong hold. One guy was sitting on top of the barbed wire, on what looked to be a jacket or banner of some sort over which he had placed a plastic seat that had been ripped from the stadium's bleachers. Kids, teenagers and grown men were lined up to go over the fence. Soon, between the two places in the fence that had been compromised, the formerly empty section



Photo: Clarín

Figure 5 Boca Junior fans arriving to the game on public transit.

had filled with Boca supporters. The 'hooligans' or 'Barrabravas' did show up although it was not in the prison bus that I had imagined.

After the Boca 'fan club' had forced the occupation of another section of the El Monumental stadium, the River Plate 'Barrabravas' began pouring in through the gates on the other end of the stadium within the 'curva'. First came hundreds of supporters carrying an enormous length of fabric which they snaked through, over, up and around the fans until all of these pall bearers of sorts lined the upper extents of the entire section. Then came the band, beating their own red and white drums, trumpet players, and people waving enormous signs, flags and umbrellas all bearing the River Plate insignia or slogan "El Mas Grande. Lejos." "The Biggest, by Far."

After these supporters had filled a section of the upper 'curva' that had been sectioned off for them, they continued to play their songs and ignite a passion in the crowd that is difficult to explain. All of the stadium, or at least those supporting River, were completely focused on this section; singing, pumping fists into the air and waving flags and banners. The intensity of the crowd was palpable and it was difficult not to join in the jubilation. After trying to understand what the crowd was actually singing, I joined in shouting words that made no sense what so ever, but that sounded something like the ones that were echoing and reverberating around the oval walls of this monumental stadium. People were jumping up and down, awaiting the arrival of the River Plate team which would be taking the field momentarily.

Then just minutes before 16:00, the 11 players sporting their white and red home jerseys took to the pitch, running up onto the field from a subterranean locker room, making a short sprint and then settling into the side-to-side, stretching and jump around routine that is typical of professional athletes awaiting the opening whistle of a big game. At that precise moment thousands of people threw millions of pieces of paper that they had been torn from newspapers into the sky, creating a dizzying confetti effect that was coupled with rolls of toilet paper streaming onto the field. It was an amazing moment of movement and noise, colour and sound. Looking towards the end zone of the River supporters, we could see a gigantic flag being unfurled across the entire upper portion of the section. It was being pulled downwards, making its way across dozens of rows of people. It was so big in fact that when it made it to the bottom of the upper section it continued to fall over and downwards from the last railing separating the upper bowl from the lower bowl. The flag did not stop its downward fall until the supporters at the very bottom of the

stadium, seated behind the goalkeeper had caught the edges of the banner and were desperately holding it tight, struggling with the winds that were circling inside this giant bowl. The flag covered the entire end zone portion of the stadium and the thousands of people seated underneath this incredible piece of fabric could only be seen as silhouettes of fist pumping and shaking, which added life to this enormous show of support.

Then without delay the Boca Juniors team came running through a plastic tunnel that had been erected for their protection, so that fans would not be able to reach them with objects thrown from the upper portions of the stadium. This arrival set a light the fire in the Blue section to our right and Boca began to unfurl its own enormous flag, although it was maybe one-half the size of the River flag. The stadium was complete pandemonium with either end covered in the two teams' distinctive colours, amid plumes



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 6 A huge River Plate banner being unfurled in the 'curva' by thousands of fans.

of coloured smoke billowing from the smoke flares set a light by either side. Red and White smoke co-mingled to my left, while blue and yellow smoke was filling the air of the section to my right. The sound of firecrackers, drums, trumpets and most of all singing filled the air. It was a glorious occasion! Both teams applauded their respective fans and started to take their positions on the field. It was 16:15 and the SuperClassico was about to begin.

The noise continued after the first whistle, which was barely audible and did not stop for the next three hours. River scored first at the 29th minute of the first half and set the crowd into a frenzy. It seemed as if

the entire stadium turned their attention towards the Boca section and started to sing as loudly as they could and make the most obscene gestures imaginable. A personal favourite of the men sitting in and around our section was to push one finger from one hand through a circle made by two fingers from their other hand, in a highly suggestive way. It was hard not to take part, and in the end I even began to join in this crude gesture enjoying the camaraderie of the crowd and the give and take between the supporters of both sides.

I saw another fan, seated below us wrap his flag around the long staff and start to insert it through a circle made by his other hand, moving it in and out. It was clearly a sexually gesture intended to describe the act of penetration. This gesture was coupled with hand throwing in the direction of the Boca crowd and general jubilation that included jumping up and down, hugging your neighbour and looking to the sky as if to thank god himself for scoring the goal. It was truly an incredible sight to see. Nevertheless, the jubilation in the Boca section did not miss a beat. They continued singing, banging drums and waving banners with the same passion and intensity as before.

Only moments later at the 31st minute of the first half, Boca scored, sending their fans into a pandemonium that matched the one that had not yet finished. The Boca fans rushed the fence at the bottom of their section, climbing it and banging it with enormous pride. Looking over towards the fence that separated our section from theirs, I could see the crowd shouting and gesturing much in the same way as ours had done only moments earlier. I saw one guy who had climbed half way up the fence and for lack of a better description was 'humping' the fence and staring suggestively at our section of stadium. The crowds were in a flurry and our section chanted "Puto, Puto" (implying different meanings in different usages but which is translated into the equivalent of, "Fuck you" or "Eat shit"). We also started yelling "Hijo de Puta (Son of a Bitch)".

These goals were followed by the end of the first half and a half time show which featured a performance by an anti-violence group that was demanding an end to violence within the stadium and claiming that arms were bad for society as a whole. Two large flags depicting a gun with a cross over it, was walked around the field for approximately ten minutes. In between the flags, other flag bearers from another group walked with a large banner demanding the "Aparicion con Vida"(Be found alive) of Julio Lopez. They held posters with photos of the missing man. This was a uniting message which everyone in the stadium could accept, acknowledge

and support. An image of Julio Lopez, with the inscription "1976 –2006" was shown on the big screen and everyone clapped in support. The mood had turned somewhat sombre and it is obvious that people are quite afraid at what might happen when and if this man or his body are ever found. It is a reminder that there remains a sinister underbelly in Argentina today and that the bright future assured from politicians is not set in stone; anything seems possible in this passionate and troubled country. During this performance, the national anthem of Argentina was played. This was the only time this song was played in the stadium.

The second half of the game played out in much the same way as the first; River fans shouted slogans, danced in their seats and made harsh and sometimes lewd gestures towards the Boca fans. These actions came to a head when River scored the last of its three goals and secured a 3-1 victory in the 24th minute of the second half. With under ten minutes to go the chants of "Somos Millionarios, Vamos a Ganar (We are Millionaires, We are Going to Win)" and "Un momento de silencio, para Boca que a Muerto (A moment of Silence because Boca is dead)!" filled the stadium and were obviously directed at the thousands of Boca Junior fans still singing and waving flags in an effort to rally their beloved side. When the final whistle sounded the River fans erupted into an unparalleled level of noise and jubilation. Couples kissed each other, men hugged one another and everyone seemed to look around catching the eyes of other spectators; smiling, nodding and generally celebrating this monumental victory with anyone who would make eye contact. The feeling was great!

The Boca fans continued to sing, chant and wave their flags, seemingly unfazed by their team's loss. Things however, quickly deteriorated in the cordoned off Boca section as vocal and physical fans began to take their anger and frustration out on the stadium itself. Earlier, the loud speakers announced that at the end of the game the Boca fans would be required to leave first before any of the 60,000 or so River fans would be allowed out of the stadium. Given this, the Boca supporters seemed quite content to take their time leaving and were finally forced to leave only after dozens of orange vested police officers had filled their section, formed a human chain and slowly herded them towards the exit. All the while the Boca fans, mostly young teenage men from what I could see, began tearing the plastic seats from the concrete tiers of the stadium. They then tossed the flat, plastic moulded seats over the barbed wire fence, past the specially designed lip that was intended to catch flying objects, onto the River spectators below. It was as if the sky had opened up

and was raining seats onto the home side fans located below the visiting side's stands. As if that wasn't enough, the Boca supporters had also piled dozens of ripped seats together and had set them ablaze, causing thick plumes of black smoke to fill the section. I watched as fans from our section pulled out binoculars to watch the spectacle that was taking place in the section to our right. It did not seem to phase the River fans who continued to taunt and subject the remaining Boca fans to verbal abuse, obscene gestures and continued singing. I watched one man wave his arms in the air, middle fingers outstretched like an orchestra conductor, leading a group of musicians. It was not the cleverest gesture I had seen, but it was rather funny nevertheless. He then climbed up some scaffolding that had been erected near our own exit and seemed to thrive on the attention its height afforded him. He continued to make rude gestures and remarks which were both antagonizing to the Boca fans and entertaining to the River fans.

After nearly 40 minutes of throwing seats and lighting fires, the entire Boca crowd had finally been forced into the exits by the police officers that had now overrun their section, not to mention the teams of firefighters putting out the flames of the bon-fires which littered the upper end section from where Boca's fans had watched their team lose. The celebrations continued in our section but line-ups had formed and people were slowly exiting the building. It was an amazing event filled with an incredible sporting display that was matched by a passionate crowd that made the entire day a memorable and enjoyable experience.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH #3

Day of Protests - Thursday October 26th, 2006

I arrived in the Plaza San Martin, on Thursday October 26th, 2006 at 13:45 expecting to find a quiet urban plaza filled with sunbathers and young lovers enjoying the quaint confines of this lovely space. What I did not anticipate was to hear and then see a well organized protest beginning to manifest itself only steps away from the plaza. What caught my attention was the noise coming from the direction of Avenida Santa Fe, a main shopping street that ends at the Plaza San Martin. Through the trees, water fountain, dog park and children's laughter it was hard not to hear the thumping of drum beats near-by. Making my way through the plaza, I caught my first glimpse of the protest.

Gathered in front of an office building which had been secured with police and steel fencing, I saw that a group of perhaps 80 people had congregated to protest. Looking for someone to speak to, I happened upon a man who turned out to be the main organizer of the group protesting today, something I should have known since he was holding a bullhorn in his hand. The Asamblea de San Telmo was a group I had observed earlier in the month, during a counter protest in this exact same spot



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 7 Protesters from Asamblea de San Telmo.

against a rally held in the Plaza San Martin. They were a worker's movement group from the San Telmo neighbourhood, located south of the Plaza de Mayo.

I recognized many of the people in the street from previous protests I had witnessed and facetiously wondered if these weren't professional protesters. I asked the older man with greying hair and a blue vest why he and his organization were protesting here today. I explained that I was

a student from Canada conducting research here in Buenos Aires. He replied that the Asamblea de San Telmo were here, in front of the Finnish embassy because of a pulp mill project that was being built in Uruguay, across the Rio Uruguay from an Argentine community by the name of Gualeguachu. They had chosen to use the Finnish embassy as their stage because the pulp mill was being built by a joint Finnish-Bosnian consortium. Since my arrival in Buenos Aires, the project had received a lot of attention on the television news and in the press. The greying leader continued, explaining that the pulp mill, which was precisely 27 km from the Argentine town, was going to have a terrible impact on the health of the community and the surrounding environment and that it must not be allowed. The man asserted that the new mill would spew toxic sulphur dioxide gas into the atmosphere and cause localized acid rain in and around the agricultural region. Explaining to me that he was in fact very busy and that they were expecting a large group of protesters from the affected community, he left me with a much better picture of what was going on. Seeing my interest in the group and the issue, he did however invite me to stay and participate in the protest, even passing me a sign to hold. I politely declined to hold the sign but did continue observing the protest for the next two hours.

The mood at this street protest had a particularly carnivalesque and family friendly atmosphere. Kids were running around everywhere, taking advantage of the room left to them by the two and a half road lanes which had been closed for the performance. Young boys kicked and chased anything that would pass for a football, the most successful of which was an empty plastic pop bottle. The girls on the other hand seemed more content sitting or standing next to their mothers, quietly passing the afternoon away.

It is impossible to ignore the incessant drumming that accompanies every protest, and while it is often off beat and sporadic, it does create a festive atmosphere in the street. In addition to the drums, banners and flags were being unfurled and attached to long bamboo poles or were already being handled by some of the participants who were fighting with the larger banners in the strong spring winds. Sporadic clapping and singing accompanied the drumming, bringing smiles to those in the protest and drawing glances from people walking on the sidewalks. The drumming alone garners a lot of attention from passers-by who can't help but look and see what is going on, and hear noise which disrupts the normal street routine of honking horns and wailing sirens. The circus-like atmosphere is capped off by the

arrival of an older man pushing a two-wheeled cart. On the cart, is a large Styrofoam container that is filled with cold drinks and candies. Making his way to the middle of the protest, he begins making his sales pitch for cold pop, a perfect solution for the thirsty protesters and on-lookers. The combination between the drumming and the calls from the vendor added to the carnival atmosphere, and if one were to close one's eyes, it would not be hard to imagine acrobats overhead, or crisp passes of the football underfoot. The street had been reprogrammed for the performance!



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 8 A vendor selling cold drinks.

There was an ebb and flow in the rhythm of this particular protest similar to the flow I had seen in the stadium. Sometimes, singing and drumming would completely fill the street, while at other times the crowd was for the most part silent, seemingly waiting for the real show to start. During one of the lulls, I watched an interesting interaction between an older man, holding a drum in his hands and a younger boy, aged 12 or 13, also carrying a drum around his neck. I watched as the older man took the time to help the young boy learn how to drum to the rhythms of the songs they were singing. He patiently demonstrated then helped the eager boy find the rhythm and keep it. Both appeared to be having a great time, with smiles on their faces and laughter easily passing between them. It was nice to watch and a telling sign of how some of these skills are passed down between generations. Taking a step back, ignoring the passing cars filled with furious drivers, ignoring the line of armed police officers in full riot squad, this protest in some ways looked more like a neighbourhood BBQ, than a contentious street protest.

The protest at this point seemed to be waning a bit, for not many people were watching or stopping to hear the cause and the protest itself seemed to be slowing. This all changed with the introduction of fireworks. The organizers had quietly



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 9 Fireworks to liven up the show.

brought out a box of fireworks from an unknown place and began lighting them off in the middle of the street. This seemed to re-ignite the fire in the protesters, who, following the lead of the banging and smoke show above, started drumming, whistling, dancing and singing. In a blink of an eye, the protest had regained the energy it had lost only minutes ago and was back in full swing.

It was 14:20 when I noticed the first news team arrive. The team was composed of three individuals: a reporter, director and a cameraman. I watched as they prepared to broadcast live from the scene of the performance. I was fairly certain now that the main protest had yet to begin and that a full blown performance was only minutes away from happening.

By now the numbers of protesters had swelled to what I estimated to be approximately 150 people. The size and focus of the protest made moving along the sidewalk difficult and passers-by became entangled in the gridlock created by the spectacle; now whether you liked it or not you were stuck watching the performance. In addition to the people now blocking the sidewalk, the police barricade and fence has been extended from right in front of the doors out to the edge of the sidewalk, where an impromptu walkway had been fashioned out of yellow police tape. In the midst of this chaos, I was approached by a middle aged man dressed elegantly in a grey suit.

He asked me what was going on, apparently mistaking me for a local journalist or student. I told him that it was a protest against the pulp mills in Uruguay. He nodded, assuring me that he had understood my Spanish, while also taking the opportunity to light a cigarette. A moment of silence passed as we both

watched the spectacle before us: fireworks banging above us, drums, cymbals and whistles sounding all around us and a group of impassioned people singing and shouting at the embassy of a country who was seeking to build a pulp mill across the river from Argentina.

The man then piped in: "It's good to see them here but there are lots of other causes to complain about. I understand the importance of the environment but let's not forget the economy and the need for jobs." He continued, seeing that I was interested to hear what he had to say. "Look at the U.S., they're the



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 10 The pirate in the crowd. Notice the news broadcasters focusing in on this charismatic individual.

world's biggest polluter and no one seems to care, for them it's the economy or nothing". I nod, adding my own opinion, that a balance is needed between environmental concerns and economic interests. He smiled, nodding his head in recognition and agreeing to disagree. Finishing his cigarette, he continued on his way saying "Ciao" to me as he left.

By 14:45 there were three news teams on the scene and all seemed to be getting ready to broadcast, pointing at and discussing locations to shoot their reports from. I guess that 15:00 is the scheduled start to the protest. As if on cue with my thoughts, the performance already underway stepped up a notch, as if the volume were turned up somehow. I look behind me to see that a large chartered bus has pulled up to the intersection behind the protest and that the police have now closed off the entire street starting two blocks back. The camera men scramble to get in position for a shot, as dozens of costumed protesters exit their rented bus.

More police had also shown up with the bus. Out of the bus, dozens of protesters dressed in orange and green vests, step down onto the Avenida Santa Fe. Each vest bearing a slogan reading: "Si a las Vida, No a los Papeleros – Gualeguachu



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 11 A large Argentine flag is unfurled across the street.

Entre Rios" (Yes to life, No to paper mills). Some have also come with props of their own to add to the overall effect of today's performance. Some carry drums, trumpets and cymbals in hand, while others are busy unfurling their own banners and flags in preparation for when the curtain finally opens on this act.

As they make their way towards the group already assembled, someone throws a handful of flyers high into the air, causing a snowstorm of

paper for a brief moment. The flyers list the concerns of the group, their message and a website where more information can be found. Throughout this flamboyant entrance the news cameras and now photographers are busy snapping pictures of the event. An electric atmosphere is created by fireworks exploding overhead, while below everyone is smiling, hugging and dancing with each other as the two groups unite. The musicians who arrived with the bus have made their way into a drum circle of sorts and are now playing with the others. The drum beats seem amplified in the narrow roadway that is bordered by high apartment and office building.

Some protesters are dressed quite comically, wearing black eye patches over one eye, bearing signs comparing the action of the Finlandia-Bosnia project to one of piracy and the pillaging of a healthy way of life (see Figure 10). In addition to these costumes, banners are unfurled with messages especially made for the protest. One is a Finnish flag with skull and crossbones in the middle. The top of this flag read "Aushwitz" while the bottom read "Finlandia". While open to interpretation, the message was clear that the protesters were very upset over the project.

Once the two groups had managed to organize themselves, a huge Argentinian flag was unfurled and laid across and above the entire five lane road,

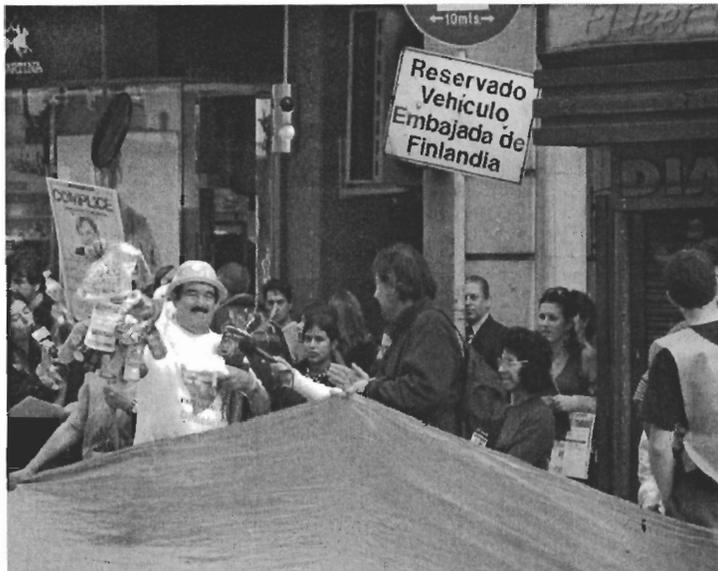


Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 12 The face of the protest. The man in hat led the singing by the group.

held by protesters on all sides (see Figure 11). As a firework explodes overhead, the woman standing next to me cries "Yes" and pumps her fist into the air, while swaying back in forth to the rhythm of the drums. I smile, looking at her and shouting in her ear how great this feels. She leans in close to my ear so that I can hear her say, "These paper mills are terrible and its so good to see this many people here to

protest against it" while she continues smiling, engaging me in a brief dance.

By now there are six news teams and eight photographers documenting the protest, the numbers of which have swelled with the addition of the second group. In addition to these onlookers, the audience made up of passers-by has also increased dramatically as the mood is now completely festive and patriotic with the moving Argentinian flag covering a five lane arterial road. It is hard not to stop and watch when such a performance is taking place in Buenos Aires. While it may be the protest itself which is drawing people in, the sheer size of the flag and the congestion it is causing is also contributing greatly to the number of people watching the protest; the cleverest tactic I have seen thus far.

Out of this large crowd of people, one man with a bullhorn, not the same one I spoke with earlier but another from the Guleguachu camp, is positioning himself amongst his fellow protesters and is now shouting into the bullhorn, which is pointed at the upper floors of the office building where the Finnish embassy is housed. He says that this project will not be tolerated and that the people will not stop fighting this until the project is halted. He continues shouting through the bullhorn, but I fail to understand what his message is. What is clear though is that the protesters had come from a community nearly 2 hours north of Buenos Aires to the door step of a

foreign embassy to plead their case and demand that their concerns be heard. When he finishes his barrage against the embassy, the band which was briefly quieted in order to allow the speaker to get his message across, strikes up again, with more fervour and energy than before. The songs are difficult to understand, although I can make out some words and phrases including, "No a los papeleras" (No to paper mills). They are sung to the familiar beats I hear in the football stadium and are full of swearing and vulgar language.

One of the men who arrived on the bus (see Figure 12), is clearly dressed in a clown-like manner and has taken charge of the protest leading everyone in singing. He is holding a thermos in one arm and a hand-made noise maker in the other. A man is standing beside him holding the microphone of the bullhorn to his mouth, as he clangs together the homemade noisemaker all the while singing the lyrics to a song everyone seems to know. He wears a t-shirt sporting the anti-paper mill slogan, but also has a funny hat on and an exaggerated maté gourd in which he has planted a fake plant. His noise maker is made from empty metal containers: hairspray bottles, tuna cans and soup cans connected on a metal wire, which clang about as he moves to the rhythm of the drums and his own lyrics. His lyrics are not generic and directly reflect the particular cause, often making specific references to 'papeleras', Finland and Bosnia. What is not unique is his use of football tunes, or more precisely popular rock tunes that are utilized by football fans as well to construct their own parodies. Later on after I arrived back at home, I see that this character was to become the leading figure of the protest in the broadcast of the evening news. It was clear that he knew that his outrageous outfit would draw the attention of both the TV news cameras and the photographers lens.

At 15:30 I decide to leave the protest, knowing that the Madres de Plaza de



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 13 Protesters marching around the Plaza de Mayo.

Mayo were about to begin their own regularly scheduled performance, one which I am anxious to see. However when I arrived at the Plaza de Mayo, I found that in addition to the Madres who were performing as per usual, another group was stationed in front of a municipal building located adjacent to the plaza and were waging a protest of their own. Before I had a chance to go and inspect this group, whom I would later dub the 'Black Group' for their costumes, another protest entered into the road encircling the Plaza de Mayo (see Figure 13). If you could imagine, there were three separate protests going on within meters of each other at the same time.

This second group marching southwards was enormous, consisting of perhaps a thousand people. This group was made up of all ages. The socio-economic class appeared to be lower given the types of clothes and the appearance of the crowd, made up largely of darker skinned faces. Unfortunately, in Argentina the colour of one's skin is still a telling sign of one's socio-economic class.

There were numerous flags and banners being waved by individuals in the crowd, however the overall message of the protest remained unclear to me. This is not that uncommon given the sheer number of protests that take place in and around Buenos Aires and I am confident that people regularly encounter protests or marches, whose message they are unaware of. The police were following the group from the rear, providing a barrier between protesters and angry drivers.

Different groups within the crowd were easily identifiable by their specific



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 14 The 'Black Group' of protesters.

choice of costume. Some wore purple hats, while other wore bright yellow construction hard-hats. In addition to the head wear, many groups wore different coloured vests, similar to those of the protesters from the earlier action but different in colour. In this instance blue and red were representative of distinctive groups. Banners and flags were adorned with numerous logos and images

including: the former USSR Hammer and Sickle; many sported the visage of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, while others simply bore slogans such as: "Viva la Lucha de Zanon!". Tourists who had come to the Plaza de Mayo to see the 'Madres' were now moving towards the outer limits of the oval shaped plaza to snap pictures of this unexpected demonstration.

As the march continued, I noticed a truck that was moving slowly amongst the crowd. As it neared I could start to hear that it was a truck for music, equipped with huge speakers mounted on the roof and inside the cab. From it, Manu Chao, a well known musician who often sings about protests and revolutions, inspired the crowd, encouraging many to sing along with the lyrics or march to its beats. Once again, the atmosphere of the protest was not quiet, violent or confrontational for that matter. On the contrary it appeared to be a fairly open and inviting atmosphere filled with music, dancing and a political message to whomever the protest was aimed at.

After this large group had passed, I quickly shifted my attention to the 'black group' who remained in front of a Buenos Aires civic building located along the Avenida de Mayo. I walked over to the protest, hovering on the edge of the group of people trying to understand what they were doing and why they were protesting. Once again, drumming, cymbals, whistles and singing filled the air surrounding this small manifestation. One man was holding a bullhorn and singing into it, igniting the crowd. Behind the crowd there were numerous large construction vehicles which looked like they were part of a re-paving project taking place on the Avenida de Mayo. Firecrackers were being set-up and lit from the ground between the protesters and the construction equipment, and the air was already full of smoke. The actors in this performance wore black vests and black hats, although some wore new yellow hardhats that looked as if they had never been used on the worksite before. Flags and banners fluttered in the late afternoon breeze reading "Trabajadores en Negro" (Black market workers).

I ask a woman what they are here to say and she tells me that they are here to protest against the unfair wages which these workers receive for working as under-the-table contractors for the municipal government, adding that a typical wage is about 250 pesos every month (~ \$90 CDN every month). The men and women who are standing, cheering and singing in front of this municipal building do not seem angry; the atmosphere is more of frustration than anything else. The

woman continues, "It is not as if we want to become employees of the city, we just want to be paid fairly". It was and is hard to argue against these types of demands.

From the large wooden door of the civic building, two men emerge, smiling and holding each other's hands in the air, a sign of victory perhaps. These men had apparently been permitted a meeting with a decision maker working for the city of Buenos Aires and by all appearances the meeting had gone well. The men accept the clapping and cheering and signal the crowd to be quiet so that they can recount what had just taken place inside. The men were very excited and it was impossible for me to understand exactly what they were saying given the extremely rapid delivery of news, overtop the clapping and cheering from the crowd; however by the response of the crowd it was apparently very positive. The band erupted into a new song and people started jumping up and down, grasping at one another and hugging each other. Behind us a barrage of firecrackers were exploding, soaring into the air, and filling the street with noise and smoke. I cannot describe the joy and happiness that these people were sharing amongst each other. As the minutes passed, the group began a slow joyous march away from the Plaza de Mayo along the Avenida de Mayo, blocking traffic one last time. They were singing, laughing, holding hands and hugging each other as they made their way home. Some of the protesters, men dressed in work clothes and hardhats, remained behind unlocking chains that had been wrapped around the equipment, lighting cigarettes and chatting with friends or co-workers. It appeared as though the performance had been convincing and that hopefully in time the demands of these people would be heard and acted upon.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH #4

Racing Club vs. Boca Juniors - Wednesday November 1, 2006

I met Mario outside of his apartment at 3pm on Wednesday November 1, 2006. It was a beautiful sunny day and we were happy to see each other, especially given the circumstances. I had not seen Mario in over 3 weeks and was anxious to catch up with him. Having met him on the plane ride into Buenos Aires and knowing that he was a Racing Club fan, I knew that I needed to get tickets for us sometime during the Apertura tournament. Through unusual circumstances, I happened upon two tickets to the Racing Club vs. Boca Juniors match that was being held on a Wednesday afternoon instead of the usual Sunday schedule.

The original match had been scheduled for Sunday October 22, 2006 but had been postponed because of a violent melee that occurred on October 17, in the neighbourhood of San Vicente. This clash between two labour unions had occurred during a ceremony commemorating the opening of a new mausoleum and museum in honour of Juan Peron. A scheduled speech by President Nestor Kirshner was cancelled and the match between Boca Juniors and Racing was postponed. It was postponed because a number of well know 'Barrabravas' from the Boca Junior fan club had been identified in police and media videos and the league (AFA) was worried that with tensions high there would be violence during the weekend game, since many of the men who formed these rival unions would likely support either of the mentioned teams.

Fortunately for me, this had resulted in tickets becoming available at the last moment. I bought them on-line, and invited Mario to come with me which he gratefully accepted. So here we were, on Bus #10 on our way to the neighbourhood of Avellanade. It was always a pleasure going out and about Buenos Aires with Mario because his knowledge of the city was vast and his patience with my Spanish was incredible; I always learned something about the city or the country when speaking with Mario.

On our way to the stadium, we talked about the incident that had forced the postponement and the violence associated with football in Argentina. Mario explained to me that there was a lot of in-fighting in the unions at the moment

because of internal struggles for power. Younger men were beginning to challenge the established leaders of the unions and were demanding better wages and conditions in light of the new economic situation since the crisis. Mario continued, explaining that there were deep and known connections between organized labour and the 'Barrabravas' inside the stadiums and that the two were inseparable. In addition to this, organized crime had also penetrated the unions and had therefore penetrated into the 'Barrabravas'. He explained to me that like many teams, Racing Club had two separate 'Barrabravas', one named La Guardia Imperial (the Imperial Guard) and the other being Racing Stone (a take off of Rolling Stone), whose logo was a blue and white tongue. In Mario's opinion a lot of the money made from organized crime ended up in the stadiums every Sunday in the hands of the 'Barrabravas'.

Mario continued, explaining that for many of the men involved in the 'Barrabravas', football represented a integral part of their lives. Our conversation continued as we rode south through the Distrito Federal (DF or national capital city). Upon crossing the Puente Pueyrredon, we entered into the Barrio Avellanade, which was home to much of the city's industrial base. Up to that point, I had never been outside of the clean DF and it was clear that this was not a wealthy neighbourhood like my own. Bordered by one of Argentina's most polluted river's, the Rio Riachuelo, Avellanade has historically been a working class neighbourhood full of industrial activities. Mario explained that the people living here were much poorer than those living in our neighbourhood, Barrio Norte, yet there were people living elsewhere on the periphery of the city who lived much worse.

Exiting the bus, we joined the crowd of Racing fans making their way to the stadium. Earlier in the week, the newspapers had shown maps depicting where Racing Club fans would be entering the stadium and where Boca fans would enter. Each route would be lined with police officers, some on horseback ensuring that the two 'hinchas' (groups of fans) did not meet before the game.

People wearing Racing jerseys and holding blue and white flags sang their teams songs as we made our way towards the stadium. Police lined the path and before getting anywhere near the stadium we were forced through a police checkpoint that was frisking people, looking for weapons and other contraband. Making our way slowly through this bottleneck, we finally entered into the stadium known as the 'Cilendrio', for its perfectly circular shape. It was a stadium which Juan

Peron had built in the fifties and it was no secret that Peron had been an avid Racing Club fan.

Upon entering the stadium, I was amazed at the noise made by the crowd and the intimacy of this 50,000 capacity stadium built specifically for football. We were so close to the field, separated only by a small moat which circled the field and barbed wire which also separated the fans from the playing surface. The back and forth singing was already well underway between the two 'hinchas' located in either 'curva' of the stadium. The Boca 'Barrabravas', known as the 'El Doce' or the 12, meaning the 12th man, were out in full force and filled their assigned section. They were singing their own songs, while the Racing Club fans sang theirs. Whenever the Boca fans became too loud, the stadium would fill with the sound of high pitched whistling aimed at drowning out the visiting team's fans.

I watched as Mario first quietly joined the crowd in singing, then, seeming to gain more confidence with his memory of the words, began to join in at full volume. It had been a couple years since Mario had been to a game and it was fun to see him loosening up in the stadium. Asking him where he had learned these songs, he replied "When I was a kid! All of us boys knew the songs and sang them at school or during games, or whenever".

When the players finally entered the stadium, a storm of confetti, made up mostly of ripped newspapers, filled the air as if the fans were welcoming home heroes from battle. It was very impressive. Emerging from a long tunnel, the Racing Club players united at centre field and applauded the fans. Holding their hands above their heads, turning along three points of the compass acknowledging every part of the stadium, save the Boca section and applauded the fans for having shown up and for the support they were



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 15 A moat separating the fans from the pitch.

preparing to give to their beloved team. The visiting Boca team did the same, looking towards and acknowledging their fans that had entered a foreign stadium, completely outnumbered should anything go wrong, to support and cheer the team they loved.

Sitting next to us in the aisle was a man who was very serious about Racing Club and his role as a fan. He was a 'fanatico' as Mario explained, someone that existed to live and breathe Racing blue. This man was so passionate about the game, shouting when plays were missed, nearly foaming at the mouth and screaming when the referee made a bad call, and cheering loudly and jumping for joy whenever Racing Club made a good play. He was truly a spectacle unto himself.

Everyone sitting around us could not help but look over and watch his reactions to the game because they were so loud and emotional. I asked him why he was so emotional. "Racing is more than football, it is my life". This seemed hard to argue with given that bad calls and vicious plays against the players of Racing Club seemed to be an attack on him. At one point, after a Racing Club player had been tackled from behind, he stood up clutched his chest and yelled, " Ohh mi



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 16 Racing Club fans cheering and singing as their team enters onto the field.

corazon" (ooohhh my heart). He said so in all seriousness, although it did draw laughter from me and the two men sitting to my left.

In front of us was a man, accompanied by a young girl, who was also very vocal during the match, constantly swearing and making gestures towards the players and referees. It seemed at one point that he was about to have a heart attack because he was so angry at the referee. My guess was that he was the girl's uncle because I watched as he taught her how to gesture towards the Boca fans in a provocative manner and even encouraged her to swear at the opposing team whenever they made a play or stole the ball from Racing Club; while never confirmed these seemed to me, to be the actions of an uncle and not a father.

I realised, watching the fans and talking with Mario, that there was no such thing as a 'bandwagon' fan in Argentinian football and that once you chose or inherited a team it would be the one that you died supporting. Mario had inherited his love for Racing Club through his father who had been a fan and had passed on his allegiance to his two sons. Mario explained to me that for many men, football was the most important thing in their lives, certainly more important than work and of equal importance to their family. It reminded me of a conversation I had had with my barber when I first arrived in Buenos Aires.

I had visited him for the first time the day after his team, San Lorenzo lost to Boca Juniors by a score of 7 - 1. I had read about this game, as it had been described in the papers as 'historic' and a travesty for the San Lorenzo club. When I brought up the game, my barber named Jose stopped cutting my hair and walked over to a closed cabinet. Opening it, he revealed a San Lorenzo shrine of memorabilia and posters and explained how ashamed he was today following the horrific result. He continued, telling me how he had forced himself to come to work, overcoming the strong embarrassment and shame he felt having his team San Lorenzo lose in such a shocking manner only the day before. This was serious stuff, the loss by his team and the sheer magnitude of defeat had affected him greatly and illustrates the importance of Argentinian football to some fans.

During the Racing Club - Boca Juniors match, there was moment when the stadium was complete pandemonium and it seemed as though everyone was singing at the top of their lungs and jumping up and down, shaking the cement tiers with each step. Mario, tapped me on the shoulder and yelled into my ear "You can feel it in your blood", I smiled and yelled enthusiastically "Yes!". It was true, the energy created in the stadium was a unique sensation and it was great to feel the voices and

movements of 40,000 other people, all drawn together and acting in unison because of a common passion for the game of football. The camaraderie and emotions spinning through the stadium was an amazing feeling. The result of the match ended up being a 0-0 tie, terrible by anyone's standards, but the fans found happiness nevertheless; pointing out that it was a point for Racing Club against the best team in the league. As we waited for the Boca fans to exit after the game, the singing continued, a sign that everyone was just happy being part of the spectacle. Exiting the stadium, the festive atmosphere continued as fans made their way back home and back to reality.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH #5

Hospital Frances Worker Protest - Wednesday November 8, 2006

I arrived at the Hospital Frances, right around 3pm, the scheduled start time for the March. I had read about this protest in the Clarin newspaper that morning and knew that I had to attend what seemed to be a well organized and highly publicized performance.

Around the hospital the streets were closed off and barricaded by a small group of police officers. In front of the hospital the protesters were beginning to unfurl large banners, attaching them to long

bamboo poles. In addition to these, banners had already been hung all along the fencing of the hospital, most of which bore striking similarities to the banners hung in the football stadium and were clearly painted with the same type of brush. There was one camera crew on site, getting ready to broadcast the start of the protest live on-air. As we neared 15:00, the drumming and singing started to increase as the crowd grew, swelling onto the sidewalks of the closed street. Drums instigated clapping which gave rise to singing of protest songs proclaiming the plight of the hospital workers.

Over the past three months, the hospital staff had not received their salaries and were demanding to be paid. In addition to this, there were calls to nationalize



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 17 A boy standing alongside flyers that had been posted to advertise this protest march.



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 18 The affected workers prepare for the start of the protest.

the large hospital, as it was currently a privately owned and operated facility. What they wanted most, as one hospital staff explained to me, was to have some dialogue, to be spoken with and listened to by the hospital management and the national government. "We want to be heard"!

At 15:23, the march started down its route, which was unknown to me. Led by a man carrying a bullhorn, the crowd began marching in line to the beat of the band, whose drumming, trumpeting and whistle blowing created a fun and once again carnival-like atmosphere. From the balconies overlooking the street, one older woman came to wave, clap her hands and blow kisses to the protesters, seemingly in full support of their cause. Whistles and shouting drew the attention of most people within earshot of the moving protests. Store owners popped their heads out of store windows and some shops even chose to close for a couple minutes while the protest passed, allowing workers to sit on the outside steps and enjoy the parade. The protest crowd was made up of more women than men, however the numbers were pretty close. Twelve women led the group, marching

arm-in-arm bearing T-shirts reading "Hospital Frances en Lucha" (poorly translated as 'Fighting or Wrestling with Hospital Frances).

It is hard not to start dancing or ignore the comedic protest songs as this spectacle passes you by and even harder not to participate. I will admit that I too, started to sing the protest songs once I managed to decipher the words, and enjoyed the singing and eye contact made with those who were also singing. It is fun to shout and sing in streets that have been closed especially for you.

As usual, opportunistic vendors had also taken notice of this roving spectacle and joined in, selling cold drinks and snacks to both participants and on-

lookers as the protest marched down two of Buenos Aires' busiest arterial routes, first Avenida Belgrano and then Avenida de Mayo on its way to the Plaza de Mayo.

The singing was led by a man who was walking in front of the group, shouting into the bullhorn initiating songs that seemed well known and rehearsed by the group. When I asked one participant how they knew all the songs she replied "We all have our own songs. I mean every union has their own songs and these are ours. Also, we have been doing this for some time now so they are not new to us." She smiled and nodded, noting that I had understood what she said and then continued to sing loudly and march to the rhythm of the drumming. I noticed that they were singing songs that sounded very similar to the ones that I had heard in the football

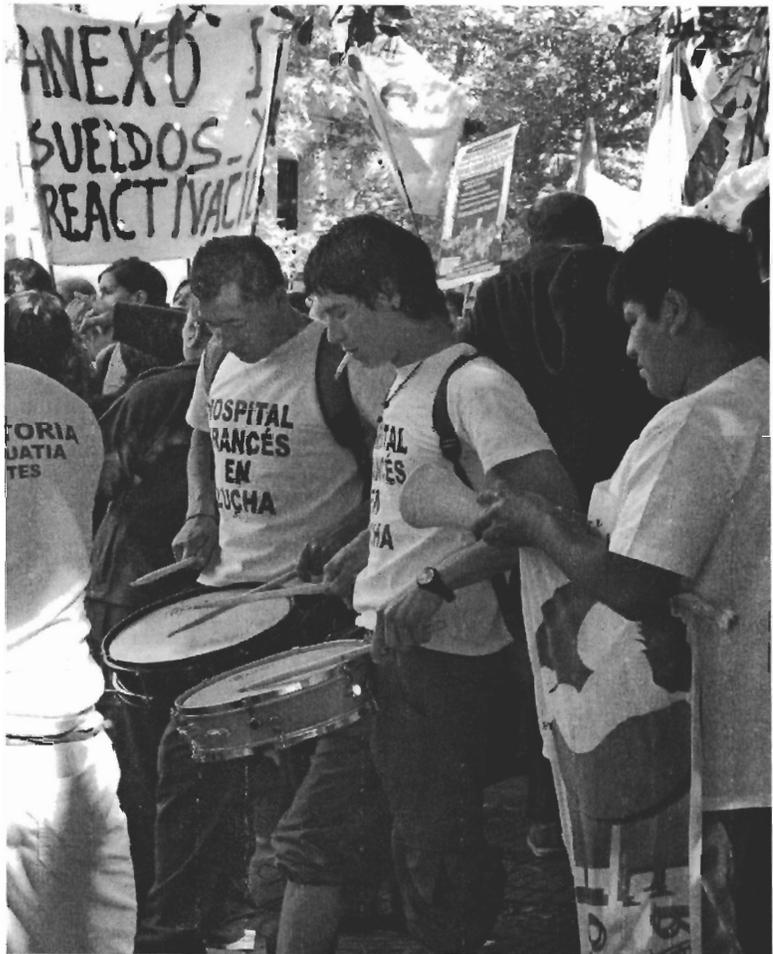


Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 19 Young men banging on drums.

stadiums, knowing that these too used popular rock songs. I asked another protester if this was the case? "Yes, they are similar to the songs heard in the stadiums and are created around popular songs and tunes, since it makes it easier for everyone to sing along as the beats are well known." I then asked where the singing of songs in protests had come from. "Football for sure! They are created and made up in the football stadiums and eventually make their way to the protests. Unfortunately there have been lots of protests in the last few years, so it doesn't take that long for new versions of songs to make it to us. Many protesters are also avid football fans!" I was beginning to understand the connection between what I was seeing in the stadiums and what I was seeing in the streets. While different messages were being spelled out in the stadium and in the streets, both seemed to be using well known Argentinian means of communication.

As the march progressed there seemed to be times when it veered on new unplanned courses to avoid and make work for the police who had set up barricades blocking traffic. It seemed that the protesters wanted to disrupt traffic and spread their message to as many people as possible, including those frustrated drivers stuck behind the long line of marchers. In addition to these unplanned route changes, the march also passed by other significant government buildings that were obviously being targeted by the protest. One such planned stop, was in front of a private clinic where all the patients and staff waiting inside heard the message of the protest, which changed from singing to demands. When the main speaker stopped to shout at the people in this building, he yelled: "We will no longer work for free!"

I walked beside one young man, who was busy moving up and down and in and out of the protest. He was holding a red cardboard box in his hands and was going through the crowd and into the streets soliciting donations from passers-by who had stopped to watch the protest. He was having some success and seemed to be enjoying the work of engaging people and explaining the reason for the march.

Vulgar terms like "Hijo de Puta" and "La Cancha de tu Madre" filled the streets in the songs of the protesters and was another reminder of the links between football songs and protest songs. In addition to the messages being yelled, written leaflets were also being handed out. It seemed as though other collective action groups, including workers groups, Marxist and socialist parties were piggy backing onto the protests and using it as a platform to spread free pamphlets and sell cheap

newspapers. They seemed to be doing well, as I bought a paper and watched many others do so as well.

I really got the sense that the protest was not only for spreading word about the plight of these people, but also, as an act of release for the disgruntled workers who seemed to be enjoying the day in the streets, a break from a work



Photo: Jason Lyth

environment that must be tiring and frustrating

to say the least. I spoke with one woman about the choices they were faced with. "We can't quit our jobs, that's all we have but at the same time we are not being paid for the work we are doing and the wages we have already earned. There is no other option but to fight in the streets for justice."

Once the group made it to the 9 de Julio Avenida, they were joined by the Asamblea San Telmo, a group that seems only a phone call away from every workers movement and has been present at every street protest I have attended. As the two groups merged the singing got louder, some even started to jump up and down like in the stands of football match. Approaching the Plaza de Mayo, the singing and drumming became noticeably louder and the atmosphere in the group reached a feverish pitch.

Police barricades had been set-up in the Plaza de Mayo in anticipation of the large demonstration. These barricades separated the protests and the Casa Rosada. The large metal fences had been extended across the roundabout circling the plaza and no traffic, neither automotive nor pedestrian, was getting through. The marchers first congregated in front of the barricade, now shouting their message at the police. However, the protest seemed to stall and lose coherence once it arrived

Figure 20 One of the organizers (with bullhorn) singing with another protester.

in the Plaza de Mayo. It seems as if the script had only been written to get the protest to the plaza and that when it arrived no one had an idea of what to do next.

The music and singing continued but the group was starting to thin out as it seemed that the protesters had made their point and delivered their message. Some people did however linger in the plaza, sitting down to have a snack or enjoy a maté before making their way home. The protest had

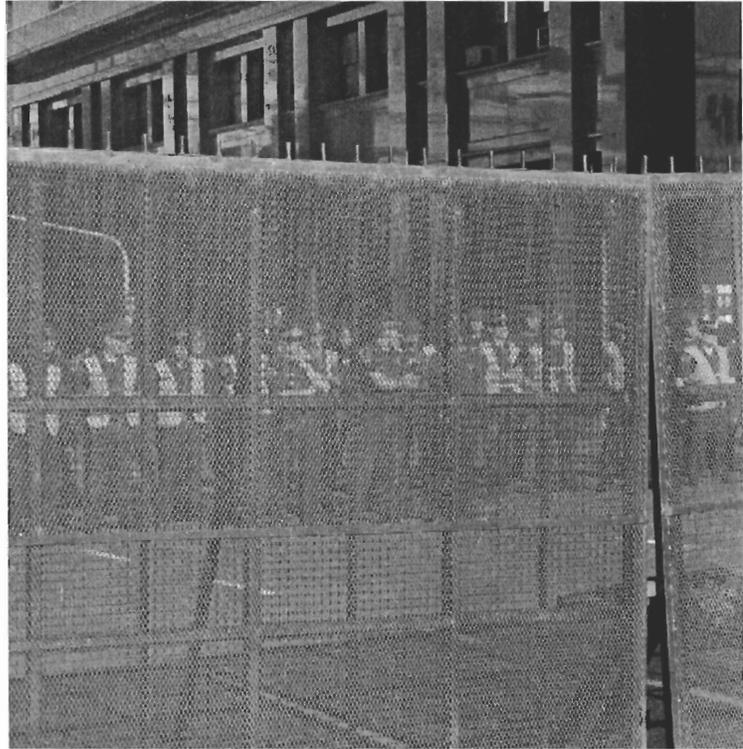


Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 21 Dozens of police officers standing at the ready behind metal fences.

ended and it seemed that for at least an afternoon, the protesters had made their demands heard and had relished the act of doing so, while at the same time, enjoying a release from the stress of their day-to-day routine.

ETHNOGRAPHIC SKETCH #6

Violence Floods into the Stadium - Sunday November 12th, 2006

On November 12th, 2006 I attended a match between Independientes and Racing Club, dubbed as the 'Classico' of Avellanade. The enormous stadiums of these two teams are situated adjacent to each other, and the rivalry between them parallels the intensity between River Plate and Boca Juniors, two teams who at one time, had shared the same neighbourhood.

The mood before the game was slightly tense given that the city of Buenos Aires had labelled this match as being high-risk and that there was thus a good chance for violence in the stadium. These predictions eventually proved true in the 19th minute of the second half.

On the way into the stadium, the crowd seemed relatively docile, understandable given the noticeably high police presence on the day. There had however, been jubilation on my bus into Avellanade with riders breaking into spontaneous singing and shouting out of the bus windows. One had even unfurled a large Independiente banner, holding the waving flag outside of the moving bus window. When I entered the stadium, the crowd was already singing and chanting songs aimed at their rivals Racing Club. I met a lady, who had dressed up her baby daughter as a devil, Independiente's mascot. In addition to this tiny fan, I also saw a man, fully dressed as a devil who was making people laugh with his antics and



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 22 Independiente fan dressed up as a devil.

gestures. The fans in this section of the stadium were more similar to those I am used to from home and it seemed like there was a balance between single men, families and groups of women.

This game was to be the last 'Classico' between Independiente and Racing Club in Independiente's Historic stadium which was constructed in 1928 and was Latin America's first to be built in concrete. It was going to be a memorable day. Before the match, the Independiente fans were busy quelling the singing of the assembled Racing Club fans, who were doing their best to fill the stadium with the sound of songs directed against Independiente. Whenever this happened, the Independiente fans would start whistling, drowning out the songs of Racing Club. An old man standing next to me said, "We don't want to listen to their shitty songs".

As the scheduled kick-off time neared, the loud speaker blared "AAAAAATTTTTTTTTTTTTTEEEENENNNNNNNNTTTTTTTIIIIOOOOON", which everyone



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 23 Independiente fans cheering, singing and pumping fists into the air during the first half of the match.

joined in saying, obviously a scripted Independiente tradition (confirmed at the next game I attended). It allowed everybody to know that the main performance was about to begin and that the kick-off was imminent.

I noticed one of the many Racing Club signs which read "Te doy todo lo que tengo" (I give you everything I have) a sign of the passion and commitment of these fans. I counted a total of between 10-12 different songs during the match. They were later described to me as all being "somewhat sexual in nature". "We are fucking you!" was a repeated phrase in one song, where everybody joined in, including mothers, children and older people. After the introduction of the players, the Racing Club team made their way to their bench, located just in front of our section. The crowd was brutal, telling the coach to "go fuck himself" and included one man spitting at the fence and yelling at the substitute players, telling them they were all "pieces of shit" and to "go fuck themselves" as well. It was a charged atmosphere to say the least.

With Independiente leading Racing Club by a score of 2-0, the Racing Club fans, safely segregated in one of the stadium's end zones, began to riot against the police, throwing insults and debris their way and generally trying to instigate a fight with these officials. Before this took place, I had noticed a group of young men getting a lot more physical with each other. It had reminded me of a 'moshing' scene at a rock concert; them pushing one another into each other and running along the steps of their section in a back and forth motion.

Given the histories of each team and the present conditions in the stadium, the police entered the Racing Club section in full riot gear and aggressively dealt with those responsible for the outbreak of violence. Tear gas was launched into the section and was followed by a fire hose being turned onto the crowd, in hopes that both tactics would disperse the crowd of aggressors, mostly young males, and stop the violence. In time, these measures did quell the violence but only after the game had been suspended by the referee. It was interesting to see that the players and the referees had also stopped to watch the performance taking place in the Racing Club section. According to some Independiente fans, the Racing Club fans were trying to make up for their team's shitty play by getting violent with the police.

During this riot, the Independiente fans were unrelenting in their verbal attacks on the Racing Club fans. They were upset because the Racing Club fans had affected the outcome of the 'Classico' and had stopped the game before its completion. There was tension in the air, and I am sure that fighting



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 24 Police spray water from a hose into the Racing Club fan section.

between factions would have taken place if the opportunity had arisen. Up until this point, the exit doors of the home side remained locked, which in turn sparked a protest against the police by the trapped Independiente fans. It was hot and people were tired of waiting for the doors to open and began chanting and shouting slogans against the police and shaking or breaking anything they could get their hands on.

The atmosphere was quite volatile and reflected the incredible amount of passion and emotion which these football fans invest in both their team and the game itself. It was over an hour later, after the game had been stopped, that we, the Independiente fans, were allowed to exit the stadium.

Walking back to the main street to catch my bus, I made chit-chat with one guy whom I had been standing next to during our wait to exit. He re-iterated what I have been hearing all season with regards to the crazy Apertura tournament. He conceded that while all of Latin America was crazy for football, this type of 'shit' as he called it, was uniquely Argentinian. He qualified this by the fact that things (the economy) were still 'fucked up', and that this type of confrontation reflected the larger issues still affecting most people.

At this point, I met two other young fans, Carlos and Herman, 19-year olds who joined in the conversation with an obviously foreign guy asking questions about football. I joined Carlos and Herman's invitation to grab a beer, knowing that I would have to wait for the crowds to dissipate a little before I would be able to catch my bus home. Making the most of a chance to talk with two new informants, I quizzed the young men on their take of what had happened tonight and about



Photo: Jason Lyth

Figure 25 Independiente fans react after violence in the Racing Club section suspends the match.

football in general. Our conversation shed light on the deeply held beliefs in Argentinian football, and the desire of the crowd to be heard, to participate and to play in the enormous city they called home. Carlos added, that football "provided regular people an outlet and venue to be heard and to celebrate a game they loved". For him, the stadium provided a sanctuary away from the difficulties of the real world, a place where he could escape one day a week and celebrate the simple joy of living in the city.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The intention of the above ethnographic sketches has been to illustrate with sufficient data that there is a compelling case to be made that both football fans and street protesters are in fact engaging in acts of play within the urban environment. The juxtaposition of two seemingly disparate performances is intentional and clearly highlights some selected ways in which people engage in play in Buenos Aires. On one hand, the notion that football fans hooting and hollering in the stadium comprise acts of play is not hard to accept and is easily understood. On the other hand, suggesting that the performances featured in street protests in Buenos Aires bear a striking resemblance to those of football fans and that this urban performance is in fact what Huizinga and Guttman contend to be forms of 'play' is not often assumed to be the case. This will be the subject of the remaining discussion. How are street protesters in Buenos Aires playing in the city?

I would like to begin the discussion from the premise that performances have a specific grammar, or vocabulary and perhaps even a basic script of sorts. This contributes to the idea that performances are integral parts of an individual's role repertoire and can therefore be seen as contributing features to the five main urban domains. In addition to these features, a performance typically makes use of props and a specific setting that serves to pull the audience some distance away from 'reality', if only for a brief moment and to invite them to enter into the imaginary world created by the actors and their staged performances. I would argue that many of these features may hold true for most urban performances in public spaces and in particular, remain so for the performances of football fans and street protests in Buenos Aires. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the above ethnographic sketches, both performances utilize similar, if not identical means of re-creating reality within the very real and distinctive city of Buenos Aires. It is within this newly created world where recreation can often take place. The very meaning of the word to 're-create' implies that the individual intends on reshaping the ordinary by means of playing within the extra-ordinary. Another way to consider this is to assume that during the act of recreation, an individual can draw upon

and derive pleasure by performing less common roles within his or her personal repertoire.

In both cases, a specific stage is chosen to carry out these performances. In the case of football, the stadium permits fans a brief repose from the realities of living, working, commuting and managing family relationships in Buenos Aires. It acts as a place to release the tension built up during the previous week under the normal conditions of urban life. For many fans, Sundays are reserved for going to the stadium, where for a couple hours they can play with friends, strangers and competing fans in a relatively controlled and secure environment. This setting and the security provided by fences, police and other fans of the same team, enable play to occur in the stands in a fashion whereby fans are allowed to shout profanities, make gestures, light fireworks, dance and literally play in ways that would otherwise be frowned upon or prohibited within the real world that exists outside of the stadium. These roles are vital in the lives of these people whose personal repertoire places great importance upon recreation. Moreover, the performance itself, might fulfil and utilize other roles in other urban domains, particularly that of traffic relationships. While fans enter into and engage in play within the stadium, they are surrounded by and interact with thousands of other people. Bodies bump into each other, voices carry across space, smiles and glances are shared among strangers and there exists an obscure but powerful human energy that is unique to large social gatherings.

These acts take place in much the same way as do protests, which occur in very specific public spaces, including certain major roads and urban plazas. It is the very public nature itself of these settings which provide protection for acts of protest, whereby they might otherwise be prohibited or quelled before they had even begun, had they taken place in private spaces. It could be argued that in a city like Buenos Aires, whose history has included many tragic events, some stemming from government repression of protests, presenting such a performance in a private setting is far more dangerous than when it is performed in public, where many scrutinizing eyes can watch over the police. Moreover, the arrival of a protest transforms the street and reshapes this urban space. In this case, the police must not only tolerate protests but must also facilitate their movement through the city, ensuring that safety and order are maintained and speaking to the complex trafficking relationships existing in protests .

To a large degree, music helps to recreate the setting, and fosters an atmosphere that exists outside the ordinary of a busy city. Trumpets, drums and

whistles entice musician and actors alike, away from the normal, transporting them into an imagined setting where joy, laughter, tensions and drama form the basis of this playful other world. There is something very basic about the beating of a drum that is difficult to ignore, which sets feet moving in dance and bodies swaying in rhythm. In both cases, music provides the soundtrack for football fans and protesters in a similar manner, masking the real world and creating an imagined atmosphere where smiles, laughter, shouts and gestures replace the regular routine of living in the city. Thereby helping to recreate one's life in the city, if only for a brief moment.

While singing in the rain might not be everyone's idea of a good time, singing is another common activity that separates the ordinary from play. Singing in the streets, following the lyrical prompts of a conductor with a bullhorn or performing well rehearsed verses with so many others, sometimes numbering in the tens of thousands, is easily understood to be an enjoyable activity and a form of play. In all of the ethnographic sketches, there are elements of the above described grammars, scripts and props clearly indicating that both are in fact examples of performances taking place within Buenos Aires and worthy of attention.

Playing in the City of Buenos Aires

Johan Huizinga (1949) identified three major characteristics of play, which can to varying degrees, be found in both football fandom and street protests. The first characteristic being that the act of play is voluntary. Clearly, fans paying money out-of-pocket to watch the sport of football and participate in the performance of play in the stadium is voluntary. Autocratic government dictators have never forced the people of Buenos Aires into the stadiums, demanding they play and have fun. In much the same way, the act of protesting is one that is voluntary and requires people to leave the comfort of their homes in order to enter the street and make their cause or plight known, sometimes at potential danger to their own safety. It cannot then be disputed that acts of street protests in Buenos Aires are acts that occur voluntarily and therefore meet the first of Huizinga's characteristics of play.

A second major characteristic of play is that it is an activity which resides outside of the ordinary. In both football fandom and street protest, the play performed in both is not part of the day-to-day routine of working, family relationships, or dealing with your neighbours. Furthermore, play is a distinct part of recreating oneself within the urban

environment. The above discussion has cumulatively identified the scripts, props and grammar used to create a play world that exists outside of the ordinary. This is true for both football fandom and street protests. In both cases, the actors involved are acting in a very different way than they would in normal life and have removed themselves through performance, from the constraints and realities of life in Buenos Aires.

During my time in Buenos Aires, I did not otherwise witness the type of vulgar language and lewd gestures performed in the stadium or on the streets during protests. Never did I see someone calling another “A fucking immigrant” as I did during the Boca-River football match. Never, did I see people making lewd gestures towards one another in the subway or at the grocery store as I had witnessed in all of the football matches I attended. Nor did I see people wandering down the street, or waiting for the bus on a Monday morning, clanging a set of cymbals or banging on an oversized drum. In all of the cases when I did witness these activities, they were reserved for the out-of-the-ordinary world created in the stadium or in the streets during protests. Football fans and street protesters understand that the actions carried out during these specific performances exist outside of the realm of normality and permit them to act and play in a way that might not otherwise be permitted in the city.

As mentioned previously, Guttman correctly identified the inherent error in this characteristic, explaining that play does not merely exist outside of the ordinary but rather permeates many facets of urban life. Furthermore, Guttman identified that play can be either spontaneous or organized. The included ethnographic sketches demonstrate both very spontaneous acts of play and other very organized performances. The former, is well represented by the actions of the Racing Club fans who quite spontaneously changed their play to disrupt and suspend the football match which led to the collapse of the play-world that had briefly been created within the stadium on game day. The latter, is documented in many of the well organized street protests which had been advertised ahead of time, with scheduled routes and specific start times. This suggests that this performance is in fact far more complex than that of spontaneous play and perhaps even exhibits the characteristics of a ‘game’ as described by Guttman. While interesting, this question is beyond the scope of this project and will remain so.

Another aspect of play is that it is spatially secluded and temporally limited. This characteristic is also debatable, but nevertheless remains an important element of play in the opinion of the author. Acts of play in the city cannot last forever or take place

anywhere. The latter we have already touched upon, identifying the importance of the stadium and the public nature of the streets and plazas of Buenos Aires. However, we have not discussed the temporal containment of football fandom or street protests. In both cases, the city requires that each have limited time spans. The logical consequences of them not being constrained in space and time would be that the city could fall into a chaotic and disorganized orgy of limitless play. Football fans understand that their performance on Sunday does not typically carry over into Monday morning (with certain exceptions) and that acting as they did in the stadium at work the next day would not be tolerated.

Protests follow much the same rules; they do not carry on forever and accept that for a city to function, normality must resume at some point once the protest has been permitted to complete its course. A large reason why a city or government will respect and tolerate a disruption of the normal by a street performance is based upon the assumption that the protest has limits and will soon end. This was the case with all of the street protests which I witnessed during my time in Buenos Aires. Nevertheless, some protests can take place regularly or might be scheduled in advance as in the one I witnessed at the Hospital Frances.

The final aspect of play that I would like to discuss is its possible seriousness and the role of competition within play. In both football fandom and street protests the performance itself can reflect or even create enormous tension between rival actors. In the stadium, as illustrated in the Boca Juniors - River Plate match and in the Independiente-Racing Club match, the actions of fans can foster high levels of tension and make for a very serious showdown in the stadium. In both cases, because the 'playgrounds' of opposing fans are located at very close quarters and are separated by wire fencing and lines of police, the consequences of one group finding themselves on the wrong side can lead to violence and in some cases death (Archetti & Romero 1994). Because of this threat, play in the stadium demands order, without which play transforms into violence. In the case of the Independiente-Racing Club match, the performance of the fans and their conduct towards the police resulted in the game being suspended, a quick end to the short-lived play-world created on that day. "The spoil-sport breaks the magic of the play-world, therefore he is a coward and must be ejected" (Huizinga 1976:54). When order was lost in the stadium, the police responded by firing water and tear gas into the stands and ejecting the Racing Club fans from the playground. However, by acting in a way that forced the suspension of the game, the Racing Club

fans spoiled the sanctioned play taking place in the Independiente section, ending the fun of those who had come to play within the order provided by the stadium and the police. In the street, the role of spoil-sport takes on a variety of guises.

In some cases, the performance of the protest itself can act as the proxy spoil-sport as was the case in the counter protest undertaken against the 'right-wing' rally in the Plaza San Martin. In this case, the protesters had arrived specifically to play spoil-sport to a message they did not agree with. Therefore, their own act of play was a response to the other performance taking place across a street separated by a police barrier. The seriousness of the performance on one side and the reason for that performance -- a memorial for members of the military who died during the 'dirty years' -- left the opposing group of actors with a choice of options. In this case, their performance reflected the option of playing the spoil-sport, drawing attention away from the scheduled rally and leaving the audience, both live and through television with more to consider. In both cases, acts of play were diminished by another group's act of playing spoil-sport; it provides part of the larger evidence that play is taking place in the stadium and during street protests.

This finally brings us to a point of conjecture, which is where then in the urban domains described by Hannerz does play exist as described in our ethnographic sketches? Try and imagine all of the individual roles and repertoires existing within the city of Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina with a population of approximately 13 million people! The sheer numbers of individuals and size of the city would suggest that the roles and their behaviours would be virtually infinite in an urban agglomeration of this size and complexity. Yet, during my short time in this magnificent city, I encountered numerous performances that played out in very similar ways. Ways, as I have described which amount to forms of spontaneous and organized play. In this sense, the act of playing at a football match or marching in a protest is a major part of one's personal repertoire and a critical element within the urban domains of recreation and traffic.

Neither Hannerz's notion of urban domains and roles, nor Huizinga's or Guttman's interpretations of play can adequately or completely account for all the complexities of the performances in the football stadium or on streets of Buenos Aires. On the contrary, the ethnographic data raises many more questions than these approaches can easily answer. In fact, no theory can perfectly describe what is taking place in either football fandom or street protests. Many different ways of thinking and interpretation are needed to begin to grasp the complexity of these uniquely human

phenomena. Nevertheless, the framework provided by these analysts does help us to better understand the complex phenomena of football fandom and street protests in the city of Buenos Aires.

In conclusion, the aim of this project was to identify and highlight some distinctive aspects of play in the city of Buenos Aires, using ethnographic data collected during fieldwork carried out by the author in 2006. Hopefully, the nature of these performances were successfully captured in each respective ethnographic sketch and contributed to answering the question: "How are street protesters in Buenos Aires playing in the city?" By purposely juxtaposing an accepted form of play, that of football fans' deportment in the stadium, against the actions of street protesters, this paper has aimed to present an interpretation that shows how street protesters are in fact performing acts of play in the city of Buenos Aires.

REFERENCES

- Arbena, J., 1988, *Sport and Society in Latin America: Diffusion, Dependency and the Rise of Mass Culture*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Archetti, Eduardo P., 1999, *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina*. Oxford; New York: Berg.
- Archetti, Eduardo P., 1997, "‘And Give Joy to My Heart’: Ideology and Emotion in the Argentinian Cult of Maradona". In Armstrong, G. & Guilianotti, R. (eds.), 1997, *Entering the Field: New Perspectives on World Football*. Oxford: Berg.
- Archetti, E. & Romero, A., 1994, "Death and Violence in Argentinian Football". In Guilianotti, R., Bonney, N. & Hepworth, M., (eds.), 1994, *Football, Violence and Social Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Armstrong, G. & Guilianotti, R., (eds.), 2001, *Fear and Loathing in World Football*. New York: Berg.
- Armstrong, G. & Guilianotti, R., (eds.), 1999, *Football Cultures and Identities*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd.
- Armstrong, G., 1998, *Football Hooligans*. Oxford: Berg.
- Armstrong, G. & Guilianotti, R., (eds.), 1997, *Entering the Field: New Perspectives on World Football*. Oxford: Berg.
- Auyero, J., 2003, *Contentious Lives: Two Argentine Women, Two Protests, and the Quest for Recognition*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Auyero, J., 2002, "The judge, the cop, and the queen of carnival: Ethnography, storytelling, and the (contested) meanings of protest". *Theory and Society* 30: 151-187.
- Bouvard, M., 1994, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc.
- Brown, A., (ed.), 1998, *Fanatics!: Power, identity and fandom in football*. London: Routledge.
- Chatterton, P., 2005, "Making autonomous geographies: Argentina’s popular uprising and the ‘Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados’ (Unemployed Worker’s Movement)". *Geoforum* 36: 545-561.
- Davis, D., 1999, "The power of distance: Re-theorizing social movements in Latin America". *Theory and Society* 28: 585-638.

- De Biasi, R. & Lanfranchi, P., 1997, The Importance of Difference : Football Identities in Italy. In Armstrong, G. & Guilianotti, R. 1997, *Entering the Field: New Perspectives on World Football*. Oxford: Berg.
- Epstein, E., 2003, "The piquetero movement of greater Buenos Aires: working class protest during the current Argentine crisis" *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 28 (55/6) 11:35.
- Fife, W., 2005, *Doing Fieldwork: Methods for Research in Developing Countries and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Finn, G. & Guilianotti, R., (eds.), 2000, *Football Culture: Local Contests, Global Visions*. London: Frank Cass.
- Galafassi, G., 2003, "Social Movements, Conflicts and a Perspective of Inclusive Democracy in Argentina". *Democracy and Nature* 9(3): 393-399.
- Goldstein, D., 2004, *The Spectacular City: Violence and Performance in Urban Bolivia*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Guttman, A., 1978, *From Ritual to record: The nature of modern sports*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hannerz, U., 1980, *Exploring the City: Inquiries Toward and Urban Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Huizinga, J., 1976 "Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon". In Schechner, R. & Shuman, M (eds.). 1976, *Ritual, Play and Performance*, 46:66. New York: Seabury Press.
- Huizinga, J., 1949, *Homo Ludens*. London: Routledge.'
- Isbell, B., "Violence in Peru: Performances and Dialogues". *American Anthropologist* 100(2): 282-292.
- Jansen, S., 2001, "The streets of Beograd: Urban space and protest identities in Serbia". *Political Geography* 20: 35-50.
- Keeling, D, 1996, *Buenos Aires: Global Dreams, Local Crises*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Low, S., Taplin, D., & Scheld, S., 2005, *Rethinking Urban Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Low, S. & Lawrence-Zuñiga, D., eds., 2003, *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- North, P. & Huber, U., 2004 "Alternative Spaces of the 'Argentinazo'". *Antipode* 2004: 963-984.
- Podalsky, L., 2004, *Specular City: Transforming Culture, Consumption, and Space in Buenos Aires, 1955-1973*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Rubin, Jeff., 1970, *DO IT!: Scenarios of the Revolution*. New York: Simon and Shuster

- Rudé, G., 1964, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730-1848*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Schechner, R., 2002 "Performance Studies in/for the 21st Century" *Anthropology and Humanism* 26(2): 158-166.
- Schechner, R., 1993, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*. New York: Routledge.
- Schechner, R. & Shuman, M., (eds.), 1976, *Ritual, Play and Performance*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Skidmore, T. & Smith, P., 2005, *Modern Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Turner, V., 1980, "Wenner-Gren Foundation, planning meeting minutes". In Schechner, R., 2002 "Performance Studies in/for the 21st Century" *Anthropology and Humanism* 26(2): 163.
- Whyte, W., 2005, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* [videorecording]. Santa Monica, CA: Direct Cinema Ltd.
- Whyte, W., 1990, *City: Rediscovering the Center*. New York: Doubleday.