Chapter 1

The City in Common

On 10 August 1806, British invaders under the command of Colonel Beresford found themselves trapped in Buenos Aires. Ill prepared for street fighting, particularly in a city of flat roofs, the British soldiers were forced to surrender under a barrage of stones, boiling water, and sniper fire from above. This act of defense was Buenos Aires's first insurrection. The second came only a year later, in 1807, when Lieutenant General Whitelocke invaded the city with some 7,000 men. Again, the inhabitants of Buenos Aires put up a determined defense, repelling the invaders in another act of urban resistance. In 1806, with the Spanish Viceroy Rafael de Sobremonte retreating to the city of Córdoba, the arriving British forces were not initially repelled—the Audiencia and the Cabildo preferred to surrender rather than follow Sobremonte's order to resist. But spurred on by the French-born Santiago Liniers, the inhabitants of Buenos Aires formed secret urban resistance groups. Certainly some of those revolting were dissatisfied Spanish businessmen unhappy with British plans for commerce (Ternavasio, 2009, p. 29), but the militias of both 1806 and 1807 were by no means merely Creole, as subsequent narratives would suggest in an attempt to establish these events as the first truly *national* acts; rather they were comprised of a hodgepodge of urban dwellers, from Creoles to slaves, from Catalans to those from what is now Paraguay. A British officer subsequently described the stalwart defenders of 1807 as being "of every description, from the original Spaniard down to the Black: some of them were clothed in uniform, others not" (Whitelocke, 1808, p. 370). As the vanquished made clear, the defenders were a multinational and multiracial mix of slaves and freemen, of trained soldiers and ad hoc combatants; this group, not the Viceroy's forces, defeated the British.

The defense of Buenos Aires in 1806 and 1807 is a key moment in the city's history. It was a rejection of European military and economic imperialism, and also of Sobremonte's order to withdraw and surrender.

Ignoring the security of the fort, which, like Sobremonte, was the local manifestation of the Spanish Crown, the city relied on its own streets and inhabitants to repel the invaders. Looking to France and the United States, the inhabitants of the city demanded a Republic via public marches and graffiti, a demand that highlights that this was a city in limbo—it had rejected the Crown, but an alternative Republican government would not materialize until 1810. The period was, in the words of historian Marcela Ternavasio, "a crisis of authority without precedent" (2009, p. 29). Different to Manuel Belgrano's declaration of "amo viejo o ninguno" (old master or none) when he left for Uruguay in 1806, an act of exile undertaken to avoid swearing allegiance to the British Crown, the defense of Buenos Aires rather revealed a desire for neither old master nor new: It was a spontaneous declaration of liberty from and through a city held—albeit briefly—in common. The crowds that gathered outside the town hall on 14 August 1806 to demand the removal of Sobremonte, a "cabildo abierto" that prefigured the more famous open council meeting of 1810, finally got what they wanted: Santiago Liniers as military chief of Buenos Aires. Together, in and through their own city, they had built their own destiny.

In 2001 an assortment of inhabitants of Buenos Aires gathered to affirm their constituting power. Already tired of a government that was unable to control a growing economic crisis, that was forced to rely on loans from international monetary bodies to sustain a currency that had been fixed to the U.S. dollar at the rate of one-to-one by the 1991 Ley de Convertibilidad, and that was dogged by allegations of corruption, Argentine citizens were then confronted with an austerity measure known as the *corralito*, a restriction on access to cash in private bank accounts, introduced by Fernando de la Rúa's administration to avoid a bank run and subsequent financial collapse. After days of strikes, supermarket sackings, marches, and roadblocks, the protests came to a head throughout Argentina on 19 and 20 December. A huge crowd gathered in downtown Buenos Aires to demand the removal of President De la Rúa, ignoring the implementation of martial law with the cry, "De la Rúa, boludo, el estado de sitio te lo metés en el culo" (De la Rúa, you dickhead, stick the state of emergency up your arse). On 20 December, after 2 days of violent struggle with the police in which five people were killed in Buenos Aires alone, the crowd was successful and the president fled ignominiously. In the wake of De la Rúa's resignation, three more heads of state were forced out over the following 2 weeks.

These two civic uprisings, occurring almost 200 years apart, could not be further apart in the narrative of Argentina and its capital city.

Colonial Buenos Aires at the time of the British Invasions was a small trading outpost, a far cry from the Buenos Aires of the new millennium, a vast metropolis that not only lays claim to having a major political and cultural role within Latin America but also to being a significant player in the region's interactions with a globalized economy. And if the first act of resistance was one against colonial invaders, the second was a rejection of an elected president and economic policies that encouraged foreign investment and financial regulation at the expense of middle and lower classes. Nevertheless, these two moments in Argentine history—these two Buenos Aires—are not merely two ends of an historical spectrum. They also share a number of traits that highlight other possible readings of the city's history and its role in the formation of the Argentine nation. Both of these cities were experiencing troubled national identities: The colonial city wanted to become an independent national city; the postmodern city expressed a desire for greater autonomy in the context of post-dictatorship trauma and neoliberal globalization, both of which had destabilized the nation as a site of belonging. Both cities experienced successful insurrections that placed them in unresolved states: The colonial city was not only defending itself against foreign invaders but also liberating itself from colonial rule; the rallying cry of the city of the new millennium was "¡que se vayan todos!" (get them all out!). And, crucially, both insurrections were formed by a mix of peoples and groups who came together to utilize the nature of their own urban environments to bring about change.

Just like 200 years earlier, the protestors' ability to utilize the city in 2001—breaking up asphalt for missiles, setting up lines of bodies at key vantage points—enabled them to get a foothold in the streets. Like the British Invasions, the area in and around the Plaza de Mayo was essential to the geography of conflict, symbolized by the death of a protester at the intersection of Avenida de Mayo and Chacabuco, for example, or the police barricade set up outside the Banco de la Nación. Protesters and police variously used all the downtown streets during their battle for the Plaza de Mayo, the symbolic heart of Buenos Aires and, indeed, of Argentina. Of the streets fought over in and around the Plaza de Mayo, two key arteries were Calle Defensa, the street that runs from Parque Lezama in the neighborhood of San Telmo to the Plaza, and Calle Reconquista, the continuation of Defensa on the other side of the square, running to the bottom of Plaza San Martín. Both streets had been named after the lines of defense taken by those defending the city from the British invaders almost 200 years earlier. By using the very same streets as part of their rejection of the government's curfew, the protestors created a topographical

bond between these two cities. Given that Buenos Aires has forever been shaped by a tension between the "people" and what, following Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, I will call the "multitude," the links between these moments in the city's history highlights that December 2001 was not the genesis of the multitude but rather a moment when it once again emerged into the spotlight.

Buenos Aires and the Multitude

Writing in 1899, the historian José Ramos Mejía analyzed the British Invasions alongside the Primera Junta of 25 May 1810 and the dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas in an attempt to understand the politics and violence that lay behind the latter's period of rule in the mid-18th century. Ramos Mejía believed that to truly understand a figure like Rosas, the *caudillo* whose presence dominated 19th-century Argentine political thought, the historian should address Rosas's followers—the ordinary citizens that formed his power base. Ramos Mejía's work, *Las multitudes argentinas*, therefore, is an attempt to grapple with the importance of the general populace in Argentine history and not just the individual. The term that he uses for this general populace is *multitud*. On the one hand his description of the meeting that declared independence from Spain in 1810 as formed by "more *multitud* than simple group, because it is of a more uniform . . . level" (1977, p. 58) suggests that he is describing the uniformity of the entity known as "the people." But as Ramos Mejía states, "the *multitud* is not what we commonly call *the people*, the group of inhabitants of a city or a country, even if that does not mean that it can not, in specific circumstances, present itself to us as *multitud*" (1977, p. 99). Highly conscious of the differences between group, people, and *multitud*, Ramos Mejía emphasizes the *multitud*'s heterogeneous makeup, its animalistic, biological characteristics and its nature as an antagonistic force of protest, forever threatening violence, all of which distance the *multitud* from the people (1977, pp. 32–40). And his portrayal of its molecular nature, the aptitude that "simple bodies have for forming more or less complex combinations with another simple body" (1977, p. 36), is not sufficiently explained by the crowd, which tends to oneness rather than multiplicity. Thus, *Las multitudes argentinas* is an early attempt to grapple with the notion of the multitude within Argentine historiography.

Ramos Mejía anticipated the philosopher Paolo Virno's more recent discussion of the struggle between multitude and people, a struggle that,

Virno argues, lies at the heart of the birth of modern sovereignty and nation-states in early modern Europe. Virno has argued that post-Fordist transformations such as the collapse between public and private spheres, the amalgamation of producer and citizen, and the development of intellect, perception, and linguistic communication as productive resources all contribute to the contemporary return of the multitude. But Ramos Mejía's text highlights that the multitude does not only belong to the postmodern globalized world order. In the examples taken from the history of Buenos Aires that I refer to briefly in this chapter—the British invasions, the immigrant city, the Peronist city, and December 2001—the multitude emerges as a potent force, problematizing Virno's belief that the multitude is a concept without a history (2004, p. 43) and Horacio González's suggestion that the multitude has no future (Moreno, 2002b, p. 146). Not just tied to the neoliberal economic policies of the 1976–1983 dictatorship and rejecting the implied post-dictatorship truce of "dictatorship or democracy" (Colectivo Situaciones, 2002a, p. 9), December 2001 has a far longer history that predates the founding of a specifically Argentine people.

The foundation of Latin American nation-states was also dependent on the creation and institutionalization of the people (Williams, 2002, p. 4). Jon Beasley-Murray's analysis of posthegemony (2010), in which a case is made for the political potential of the multitude, begins in 1492 and the precarious, even fictional, relationship between constituted and constituting power that highlights the tensions between multitude and people. Ramos Mejía saw that tension in the forces unleashed in Buenos Aires—he saw the plurality of the multitude, its commonality, rather than simply the single, unified will of the people. The inhabitants of Buenos Aires were often very different from each other, even speaking different languages, and yet they were able to act in common. Still unable to lay claim to an alternative nation-state, they rejected their status as a Spanish people and rejoiced in the city's newfound lack of sovereignty. As such, they rejected the sovereign's ability to rule *over* the people by constructing a multiplicity that countervailed sovereign authority, giving the city democratic potential.

Buenos Aires at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century was a city similarly inhabited by the multitude. Large numbers of European immigrants began to transform the social, cultural, and physical assembly of the city. Whilst intellectuals tried variously to conceptualize the nature of Argentine national identity, this city of immigrants destabilized that vision. As Adriana Bergero shows, Buenos Aires at

this time was linguistically and culturally very diverse, inhabited by what she calls the "heteroglossic multitude of the grotesque city" (2008, p. 47). In the face of a proscribed and exclusive set of commonalities proposed by nationalist thinkers such as Leopoldo Lugones, the cultural expressions of urban dwellers offered a synchronous city in common. Over the course of the coming decades, intellectuals and politicians wrestled over what kind of a national "people" could be fashioned from this diversity. In *El hombre que está solo y espera*, first published in 1931, Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz put forward "el Hombre de Corrientes y Esmeralda" (the Man at Corrientes and Esmeralda) as the archetypal figure of Argentine national identity. Despite writing that "the *porteño* man has a crowd in his soul" (1933, p. 27), Scalabrini Ortiz's white man from Buenos Aires was hardly representative of the nation in gender, class, geographical, or racial terms (Garguin, 2007, pp. 171–172). Nevertheless, it was precisely that lack of representativity, suggests Enrique Garguin, that enabled thinkers like Scalabrini Ortiz to build a vision of Argentina in which the oligarchy was in opposition to a people that still included the middle classes. With the growing recognition and visibility of the racial and class diversity that came with Peronism, however, Garguin argues that the "people" was subsequently reconfigured as being specifically working class, causing, in turn, the emergence of the middle class as a discursive category (2007, p. 179).

Whether Garguin is right about this late emergence of the notion of the middle class as such, his argument highlights the conflictual nature of the development of an Argentine people at this time. That conflict was symbolized in the events of 17 October 1945, the day when vast numbers of Peronist supporters descended on the center of the city to demand the release of Juan Domingo Perón, then Minister of Labor. Scalabrini Ortiz himself celebrated this multitude as "the most heteroclitic crowd imaginable" (2009, p. 29). Ivana Incorvaia suggests that Scalabrini Ortiz moves here from the solitude of his earlier book to delight in these collective forces, and she emphasizes the importance of the fact that he uses the term "multitudes and not the category of people" to describe these forces (2012, p. 2). But Incorvaia ignores the one reference Scalabrini Ortiz does in fact make to the "people," which appears in the final paragraph of his short piece: "the substance of the Argentine people . . . was present there" (2009, p. 31). His shift in terminology reveals precisely how the multitude is not an end but rather what precedes the formation of the people. That shift from multitude to people is what, in many ways, defines Peronism: the need to bring under control the unruly constitutive force that brought

Perón to power. This narrative, which dominates the period between 1946 and 1955, is described by Daniel James as the "attempt to institutionalise and control the heretical challenge it had unleashed in the earlier period" (1993, p. 34), and by Beasley-Murray as the desire to curb the excesses and energies of the "unrepresentable, overwhelming and fanatical" multitude and transform it into a people (2002, p. 39).

Like the British Invasions and the Peronist city, December 2001 likewise reveals the tension between multitude and people. Those seeking further examples of global unrest in the wake of the protests against the World Trade Organization that took place in Seattle in 1999 quickly inscribed the Argentine crisis of 2001 and especially the days of 19 and 20 December within a global narrative of resistance. Advocates of the multitude, perhaps the most hotly debated theoretical intervention of the left at the time following the publication of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* in 2000, pounced on the events in Argentina as the manifestation of a force that could combat the new form of globalized sovereignty Hardt and Negri called "Empire." Though the driving forces behind theories of Empire and multitude were external to Argentina, the concepts spread quickly and with considerable enthusiasm within a country that has strong connections to Western philosophical and political thought, particularly that from Italy (e.g., Virno, Negri, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito). Negri, for example, was invited to give a talk via videoconference on 14 December 2002 about the Argentinazo and it seemed to matter little that the philosopher himself seemed somewhat uneasy at being asked to comment on the situation in Argentina, stating in his very first sentence that "there's not much I can say" (2003, p. 27).[1]

There was—and still is—considerable debate as to whether the multitude is an appropriate term to apply to the events of December 2001. After all, the palpable presence of national flags and the protestor's discourse of saving the nation ("la patria no se vende, se defiende" [defend the fatherland, don't sell it]) is evidence of the persisting force of the people and an accompanying national identity. The canvas of Hardt and Negri's work, furthermore, especially with the addition of *Multitude* in 2004 and *Commonwealth* in 2009, is huge, taking in vast tracts of World—though especially European—history and philosophy and discussing class, labor, and war in contemporary society. Thus, when using the notion of the multitude in other contexts some elements fit better than others, which is one reason it is so contested. Nevertheless, it is striking that Negri, Giuseppe Cocco, Aída Quintar, Perla Zusman, Colectivo Situaciones, Virno, and Horacio González all, to a greater or lesser extent, saw the multitude

in the events of 2001 and beyond, highlighting the manner in which diverse bodies, groups, and singularities had been brought together into a period of collective, self-determined action. The expressions of autonomy and political protagonism voiced by *piqueteros*, *asambleas barriales,* and *cacerolazos* were read by some as a movement of movements.[2] The protests were a moment of popular insurrection that made visible feelings of discontent that were already in existence, as Quintar and Zusman affirm: "from the December event onwards, diverse expressions of collective action, which, until then, had only been noticed and valued sporadically, become visible" (2003, p. 63).

Critics of such readings in the immediate aftermath of the events tended to highlight that the so-called "collective" nature of the multitude was nothing more than, on the one hand, working-class poverty stirred into supermarket sackings by opposition parties trying to de-stabilize the incumbent government and, on the other, a middle class awakened by an economic crisis that, in the shape of the *corralito*, was suddenly knocking at their doors. It was in this line that sociologist Alejandro Kaufman argued that the suggested anticapitalist traits of the pots and pans *cacerolazo* protest was undermined by the protagonists' belief in private wealth and property generated out of social exclusion and the appropriation of national wealth (Moreno, 2002a, pp. 138–141). Kaufman saw in Buenos Aires the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed, according to certain rabbinical readings of the bible, for wickedness, inhospitality, and the veneration of personal property. Likewise, Ignacio Lewkowicz further refuted the notion that supermarket sackings, roadblocks, *cacerolazos*, protests against military impunity, and local neighborhood assemblies be seen as part of a coherent political movement, suggesting instead that they reflected a disbanded desire for "good capitalism" (2004, pp. 84–88). Even if, as María Moreno points out, accusing the middle classes for acting only when the crisis affected their pockets is somewhat disingenuous since the *piqueteros* were also motivated by personal economic concerns (2011, p. 13), the subsequent economic growth and concurrent manner in which the middle class have embraced representative politics once again appears to lend credence to perspectives such as those of Kaufman and Lewkowicz.

Many of the protesters were reacting to the immediate economic crisis of 2001 and to specific government measures such as the *corralito* that affected mainly those reliant on cash savings and who managed their finances through the banks. But Olga Onuch (2014) also makes the point that many of those who participated in the events of 20 December did not

return to the streets for subsequent protests, leading her to conclude that it was a political demand and not material deprivation that was the prime driver for the mass mobilization that took place on that day. The observation is an important one, even if neoliberalism makes it increasingly difficult to differentiate between the economic sphere and other areas of social existence (Fornazzari, 2013). Nevertheless, it would be misleading to see 19 and 20 December 2001 as events in isolation. The diversity of protestors and the forms of protest demonstrated how economic and social policies introduced over the previous two-and-a-half decades had drawn together many sectors of Argentine society—the sense of anger that exploded in December 2001 had been building up not just over the previous months but over an entire decade during which the vast majority had seen rises in unemployment, undernourishment, and the cost of living. The protests against, for example, the government's desire to repay its increasingly expensive loans and to rely on emergency payouts from the International Monetary Fund emerged equally from a disenfranchised working class desirous of reclaiming a stake in national politics and from middle-income earners. Likewise, the supermarket sackings that took place during December 2001 highlighted that the crisis had affected far more than just bank account holders. In Buenos Aires, the sackings took place predominantly in the working-class districts of Avellaneda, Quilmes, San Martín, Boulogne, San Miguel, Ciudadela, Moreno, Lanús, and Lomas de Zamora. The supermarket sackings harked back to similar protests that took place in 1989, undertaken by a similar sector of the populace in the face of the uncontrolled hyperinflation that brought down the government of Raúl Alfonsín. Thus, whatever the specific motivations behind the various waves of protest and the assembly of protestors during 2001, they were united by a shared discontent specifically related to the context of neoliberal Argentina and expressed in the joint maxim "¡que se vayan todos!" ("get them all out!"). Ana Dinerstein has described the cry as "the joyful collective energy of civil disobedience and rebellion" (2014, p. 116), its creativity producing "a surplus or *excess* that has no grammar in the logic of state power" (2014, p. 117). It was, for a time at least, a demand for a complete overhaul not just of politicians but political representation in general.

The more recent widespread commitment to national elections, the gradual dissipation of neighborhood organizations, the decline in worker-owned factories, and the alliance between the government and many *piquetero* groups has encouraged some to see the cry "¡que se vayan todos!" as a failed political project. Beatriz Sarlo, for example, has argued

that the failure of the *asambleas* to provide a viable form of action led the majority to return to a desire for political representation: "the majority wanted a 'normal' president, who would take difficult decisions and take responsibility for evaluating the consequences. They wanted someone with whom they could take a break from a lack of certainty seen by those who were mobilized as productive unrest but which bewildered those who weren't" (2011, p. 173). Sebastián Carassi is even stronger: "the December 2001 outburst can be read . . . as the end of the 'end of politics,' as a spontaneous and untidy reaction against the desertion of politics that took place during that long decade of the 1990s" (2007, p. 53). Quintar and Zusman suggest that the 2003 elections in which Néstor Kirchner was elected might be read as "a means of once more posing the rejection of an exclusionary economic and social system and a system that underestimated the more participatory alternatives of citizens, prioritizing, instead, the politics of spectacle" (2003, p. 65). The key point about "¡que se vayan todos!" is, however, made by Colectivo Situaciones, who point out that the act of enunciation itself highlights that an enunciator remains (2002a, p. 172). The phrase acts not as the expression of a political void, nor simply as an expression of disgust and a rejection of the past, but as an affirmation of the desire for autonomy in the present.

The figure of the multitude persists in analyses of the consequences and implications (or lack of them) of the Argentinazo. Carassi has argued that the Argentinazo was simply an expression of "the impulse to participate in the political life of the country in a more active way than that prescribed by electoral democracy" (2007, p. 50), suggesting that the only quality held in common by the protestors was that of "being against" (2007, p. 47) and leading him to argue that "a multitude may be formed by a huge collection of angry solitudes" (2007, p. 48). But we should not be so quick to dismiss the multitude out of hand when thinking about December 2001 or, indeed, the Kirchner era that followed. "Being against," if indeed this was the only point of commonality, is already a powerful shared site of politics. In any case, the discussions over the multitude both at the time and now indicate that the multitude remains a useful tool for thinking through the last decade of Argentine politics. Theorizing the multitude is a sustained and affirmative attempt to tackle the nature of political life and to advocate a means for establishing democracy. Thus, even if the Argentinazo was recognizably not a Paris Commune, the multitude provides a prism for thinking through exactly what it was.

Though the specificities of the acts listed above in terms of political and social motivations, origins, and protagonists should not be col-

lapsed into sameness, they do have many things in common. Like the insurrections of 1806 and 1807, they demonstrate how diverse political and economic motivations can work together toward a common goal and, indeed, through shared practices and uses of the city. The events of 2001 illustrate how a multiple social body built its own destiny, drawing strength not from sameness—their protagonists, motives, and past histories were not all the same—but rather what they shared in terms of aims, methods, and historical consciousness. One key site of commonality for these struggles has been the city itself, both material and imagined. The British Invasions, fin-de-siècle immigration, Peronism in the mid-20th century, and December 2001 are all moments of Argentine history when the city, specifically Buenos Aires, plays a leading political role. The historian José Luis Romero called the British Invasions the first urban experience of Buenos Aires (2009, p. 302). That urban experience was the first moment when the city saw itself as such, the heterogeneity of the multitude creating a common space from and through Buenos Aires, a city that desired to be neither a British nor a Spanish colonial outpost. Not yet Argentine, the city had its first moment as a city in common. The immigrants that later came to Buenos Aires transformed the city center, turning the mansions that used to belong to the urban rich into multifamily tenement housing. The day the crowds bathed their feet in the fountain of the Plaza de Mayo in 1945 violated expectations about who had the right to do what in Buenos Aires. These new working-class political actors turned the city into "the space of the unknowable, threatening 'other' and the locus of an epistemological crisis" (Podalsky, 2004, p. 4). This Buenos Aires, made strange for the urban middle and upper classes, was precisely "foreign" because it was a city in which those normally excluded from urban politics began to stake a claim to political ownership; this was a city to which the wealthy were not accustomed.

Like the new urban protagonists of 1945, the protesters of December 2001 also used the fountain in the Plaza de Mayo to refresh themselves (Zibechi, 2003, p. 187), a further symbol of the urban narrative established by these uprisings. Thus, even though Lewkowicz expressed his skepticism about there being ties between different social movements during the crisis, he himself argued that the rebuffal of De la Rúa's curfew on 19 December 2001 turned the city's streets into spaces of inhabitation (2002, p. 22). Also advocating the figure of the neighbor as a new form of commonality that connects bodies with other bodies (2002, p. 134), Lewkowicz argued that one form of potential shared commonality in Argentina during the crisis was, even when contested, precisely "being in

the street" (2002, p. 132). Occupying these spaces, whether on marches or as part of neighborhood assemblies, resulted in bodies gathered together in acts of urban encounter that put into spatial practice urban commoning and political autonomy.

The City, Enclosure, and the Commons

The prevailing trend of urban planning in recent decades has been toward greater private capital investment, the private management of public spaces, and the development of a range of initiatives to safeguard private property. Neoliberal economic policies, the reduction of state involvement in urban design, and the expansion in urban populations have all contributed to cities dogged by extreme poverty, unemployment, crime, and fear, creating an atmosphere of social division and disunity. As David Harvey writes: "This is a world in which the neoliberal ethic of intense possessive individualism, and its cognate of political withdrawal from collective forms of action, becomes the template for human socialization" (2008, p. 32).

Overturning the postmodern celebration of the fragment as a means of dismantling overarching narratives of power (Kozak, 2008), contemporary urban theory has tended to describe these trends in terms of negative fragmentation. Analyses of Latin American cities in particular are characterized by the discourse of fracture. Already in 1976, the Argentine historian José Luis Romero wrote that rapid urban growth in Latin America had brought about a transformation in the urban landscape, such that cities "stopped being cities in the strict sense and became a juxtaposition of isolated and anomic ghettos" (2005, p. 322). Such a reading of the Latin American city has continued over subsequent decades. More recently, Teresa Caldeira's seminal *City of Walls*, for example, a study of crime and policing in São Paulo, analyses the way in which "privatization, enclosures, policing of boundaries, and distancing devices create a public space fragmented and articulated in terms of rigid separations" (2000, p. 4). Jaime Joseph has written of how Lima, particularly on its urban periphery, is fragmenting both as a consequence of enclosed, private neighborhoods and the ghettoization of the city's poorer areas (2005, p. 209). Jaime Lizama has looked at the transformations of public space, city neighborhoods, and transport networks in Santiago de Chile under the title *La ciudad fragmentada* (2007), a city in which the wealthy flee urban encounter, denying the city as dwelling place and using it merely as

a provider of services. The collection edited by Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt, *Fractured Cities* (2007), includes essays that look at the deteriorating, divisive effect of urban violence and insecurity on various Latin American cities, including, for example, "divided Caracas" (Briceño-León, 2007, p. 86) or the "fortified network" of Managua (Rodgers, 2007, p. 71). And Tom Angotti has recently written of "enclave urbanism" in Latin America (and beyond) as "the conscious design and development of fragmented cities and metropolitan regions (2013, p. 11).[3]

The Buenos Aires of the new millennium has been described in similar terms of damaging urban fragmentation. It has been variously called a de-collectivized "multiplicity of societies, like islets" (Svampa, 2005, p. 296), an enclosed city dominated by "territorial insularization" (Tella, 2005, p. 66), a "city of islands" (Janoschka, 2005, p. 102), and "various cities, one inside the other" (Wagner, 2008, p. 8). Despite the possibilities opened up by the crisis of 2001, Adrián Gorelik argues that Buenos Aires has gone back to being an archipelago, a form of urban growth that was established in the city during the 1990s (2006, p. 34).[4] And Beatriz Sarlo wrote an essay on urban imaginaries in Buenos Aires with the subtitle "Buenos Aires from Integration to Fracture" (2008). Following the nostalgia for the modern city often expressed in her writings, Sarlo constructs a narrative that culminates in the wistful reflection that "a proud city that had managed to develop its style through a combination of European influences has found its Latin American destiny" (2008, p. 46). She indicates how, for many Argentine critics, Buenos Aires is far from being the Paris of South America and has become all too Latin American. That urban Latin American destiny, it seems, is fragmentation.

Urban fragmentation can take many forms: physical barriers within the city, such as the grilled fences that surround the Casa Rosada; political fragmentation, such as *barrios*, which are partially self-governed; social fragmentation, such as the peripatetic red-light district, which was relocated from the highly visible area around Godoy Cruz to a considerably less visible part of the park Bosques de Palermo; racial fragmentation, in which access to spaces is limited as a result of racial difference (Williams Castro, 2013); and in conjunction with all these is the city imagined in terms of frontiers and barriers. In many ways, not least when remembering the physical, architectural layout of Buenos Aires, organized into blocks and squares, fragmentation appears to be the very definition of the city itself. Fragmentation is a useful concept for thinking through the threats to the shared nature of urban spaces and encounters, particularly when understood in conjunction with the notion of enclosure, a term that

highlights how the transformations in the urban landscape described here are a threat to the productive potential of commons. Thus, the increasing trend of urban dwellers to resort to material and imagined means to resist perceived threats to their way of life, such as the "conflict" being played out on the urban periphery of Buenos Aires between enclosed neighborhoods and shantytowns, might be better understood as a tension revolving around the enclosure of the urban commons.

Despite genuine concern for the city's future, narratives and analysis of fragmentation do run the risk of focusing only on the darker realities of urban living in Latin America. When Koonings and Kruijt ask whether there is an "antidote" to the "social and spatial fragmentation of Latin American cities" (2007, pp. 4–5), such terminology frames Latin American cities as diseased or poisoned spaces. There is no doubt that Latin American cities are highly divisive and violent, and we should not be blind to such traits, which have a very real, material impact on the lives of a staggeringly high number of urban dwellers who live below the poverty line. Moreover, within the network of Latin American cities, Buenos Aires is often safer and more integrated than many other urban areas in the region. Nevertheless, Buenos Aires, like these other cities, can remind us that other readings of the Latin American city are possible and that those readings should find a place alongside discourses of fragmentation. If not, the danger is that, as Angotti argues, Latin American cities are caught within the dualism of "urban Orientalism," in which experts either express "dire predictions of a catastrophic urban future" or promote urbanization as a means of steering urban Latin America toward a misleading promise of North American urban prosperity (2013, p. 5). Moreover, as Dennis Rodgers, Jo Beall, and Ravi Kanbur argue, sustained and overwhelming focus on the fractured city has led to what they call "a Latin American urban 'impasse,'" in which we are blinded to the ongoing ways in which cities remain unified entities (2012, p. 5). Buenos Aires is a place of extreme inequalities and conflict and has its fair share of despondent nightmares. But it also offers more affirmative readings of the urban, underlining how the city also produces spaces of togetherness in which productive commons can countervail the drive toward enclosure.

Historically, the commons was a concept pertaining to rural life, a reference to land held in common and used as a shared resource or to land held by an individual but which commoners had common right to use in certain designated ways. Thus the ancient commoning right to woodlands was of vital importance to subsistence as wood was used as fuel, building material, or to fashion footwear or tools (Linebaugh, 2008,

p. 32). But even medieval commentators were clear that the commons was not simply related to land but also to less obvious material commons such as air or intellect, both seen as gifts from God to be shared by all. Even such universal commons have been subject to conflict over use—more recently, tensions over these global commons can be seen in debates over the nature and management of entities such as the Internet, climate change, and intellectual property rights (McShane, 2010, p. 105). At the heart of these debates lies a tension between private ownership and common use. That tension between ownership and use harks back to the earliest notions of the commons, defined not in terms of ownership but how a particular resource is used. Following earlier theorists who argued that common was also a verb (i.e., "to common"), the historian Peter Linebaugh in his study of the Magna Carta stresses that "to speak of the commons as if it were a natural resource is misleading . . . the commons is an activity" (2008, p. 279). The emphasis on the act of commoning means that though the urban commons can be seen "as common pool resources resulting from the urban transformations of industrial economies—with roads, car parks, waste disposal facilities and recreation areas given as examples," the *shared* nature of the commons is better explained by a combination of the material and the social (McShane, 2010, p. 102).

Not all commentators, however, have seen the decline of the urban commons in negative terms. Garrett Hardin's famous and influential essay "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968), in which he argued that humans' inherently selfish nature means that common use will inevitably lead to the irrecoverable decimation of shared resources, has influenced some contemporary urban theorists. To take one example, Shin Lee and Chris Webster echo Hardin by stating simply that "urban spaces as urban commons deplete with overuse" (2006, p. 27). They list the reasons why enclosure and privatization now dominate and order urban infrastructure and services:

> The weakness of the state, problems with raising local taxes, a revolt against high local taxation, an ideological shift towards lean government, problems with accountability, transparency, and responsiveness of municipal governments, the superior knowledge of the private sector in supplying capital, the superior knowledge of communities in organising and evaluating demand for shared goods and services, and the active divestment of state responsibilities. (2006, p. 29)

Aside from assimilating common property rights with "primitive communities," describing the shift from common rights to private goods as inevitable, and taking the market line by arguing that "clearer boundaries make for more efficient exchange (lower transaction costs) and the more efficient the exchange system, the easier it is for boundaries to change, usually by subdivision" (2006, p. 30), the danger posed by positions such as the one set out by Lee and Webster is that they construct communities that are necessarily private entities. In their vision, local enclosed communities are more efficient, less corrupt, and have a greater interest in action; but this positive enfranchisement of local politics does not envision a series of communities working a shared resource in common with other communities. Instead, it promotes enclosed communities using "private" commons as a means of bypassing the state in order to generate greater profit.

Lee and Webster's argument about local communities does, however, highlight the need for a more nuanced reading of the commons than mere celebration, for individual communities can build and use individual commons that perpetuate enclosure rather than expand access to the city and its production. As Margaret Kohn has illustrated, not all commons are alike: "The commons of a gated community is not the same as a Boston Commons" (cited in McShane, 2010, p. 105). And David Harvey, controversially suggesting that indigenous communities might need to be removed from their Amazon homelands to preserve the rainforest, has argued that "some sort of enclosure is often the best way to preserve valued commons," adding that "one commons . . . may need to be protected at the expense of another" (2011, p. 102). All these views emphasize that the commons is a site of conflict, a shifting entity to be negotiated over and through, and one that is not necessarily always in conflict with enclosure (or, indeed, fragmentation). How, then, is it possible to understand urban communities and urban commons in a way that confronts the negative elements of such enclosure? One answer might lie in the relationship between the multitude, (urban) space, and culture.

Commons, City, Culture

Urban communities, much like the commons, can promote enclosure and division. The centrality of private property and monetary consumption within contemporary citizenship does not simply produce a city in which individuals hoard their goods and defend them against other individuals;

rather, the city is more frequently inhabited by private communities that defend themselves in common against other private communities or entities. Nevertheless, the notion of the commons or the act of commoning is still one meaningful way of enabling greater democratic control of the city. In particular, when urban communities function as a multitude, they enable us to imagine a politically productive urban commons.

Community, as Jean-Luc Nancy has suggested, is not an essence: "Such a thinking constitutes closure because it assigns to community a *common* being, whereas community is a matter of something quite different, namely, of existence inasmuch as it is *in* common, but without letting itself be absorbed into a common substance" (cited in Berman, 2001, p. 14). The texts analyzed in this book portray a wide variety of different communities, many of which act in common. And yet some of them act in common to perpetuate enclosure. The distinction I wish to draw, then, is between those communities that are open and expansive—offering the potential for political encounter and commonality with a wide variety of potentially entirely different communities—and those that are introspective, built necessarily around fixed boundaries that encourage exclusion. To put it in the terms of philosopher Roberto Esposito (2008), if immunity protects the individual from common law, releasing them from the gift giving that lies at the heart of every community, then we can see the latter introspective communities as immune from the process of gift giving that forms the city as a whole. The commons that such communities create can be called "anticommons" (McShane, 2010, p. 104), or perhaps better, "exclusionary commons" (Harvey, 2011, p. 103).

The city lends itself particularly well to any discussion of the friction between inclusive and exclusionary commons. As Paul Chatterton argues, the city is "the ultimate contemporary common . . . thoroughly characterised by both the powerful forces of capital accumulation and the practices and potentials of the common" (2010, p. 627). Privatization, enclosure, and the commons are not solely urban concepts, but it is in the city that they are laid bare, not least because they are so often in such close proximity to one another. With ever-expanding urban populations, the capitalist city, which has always been the site of surplus of different kinds, is the prime location for surplus labor, one that can be transformed into an inclusive commons.[5]

Here too the multitude, one example of an entity that embodies the notion of being-in-common, emerges as a particularly powerful urban presence. As Hardt and Negri argue, the metropolis is "the skeleton and spinal cord of the multitude, that is, the built environment that supports

its activity, and the social environment that constitutes a repository and skill set of affects, social relations, habits, desires, knowledges, and cultural circuits" (2009, p. 249). The city encourages people to act in common. Buenos Aires is particularly suitable as a space for thinking through such commoning not just because of the struggle between multitude and people highlighted in my abbreviated history set out above, but also because it is in the Argentine capital that the material and symbolic failures of neoliberal economic policies have come to the fore, putting (some) brakes on the drive toward enclosure. The period from the military coup of 1976 to the beginnings of the Kirchner era is emblematic of the contemporary trend toward privatization and enclosure, evident in such urban phenomena as gated communities, shopping centers, the citizen as consumer, and shantytowns. But how can the city in common—or, indeed, the multitude—be thought of in a specific place? How is Buenos Aires a city in common with Mumbai, Hong Kong, Madrid, and Mexico City, and yet still recognizably Buenos Aires?

Hardt and Negri have rejected struggles founded in the local, going in the face of the Left's emphasis on "place-based"—particularly nation-based—movements and their defense of local boundaries in the face of globalization (2000, p. 44). The limitless, boundaryless nature of what they call Empire, intensified by the flows of globalization, particularly of people, goods, money, images, and information, has disrupted fixed territorial entities such as nation-states and cities. Despite attempts by the nation-state and, indeed, the city, to regulate flows and reterritorialize boundaries, increasingly permeable borders and displaced "peoples" ultimately threaten the mutual constitution of the nation-state and its people. Such fluidity has intensified the power of the multitude, freed from the rigid impositions of the state and its fixed national boundaries. In sum, Hardt and Negri argue, in Empire there "is no *place* of power" (2000, p. 190; italics in original) because "we are confronted no longer with the local mediations of the universal but with a concrete universal itself" (2000, p. 19).

But the understanding of space set out by Doreen Massey (2005), who sees space as a sphere of constantly shifting, heterogeneous trajectories, allows the local and place-specific to be valued without the inscription of exclusionary boundaries. The fluid multiplicity of interrelated paths and narratives constantly reconstruct place, overturning its assumed dependence on boundaries, difference, and otherness. Place is thus created through the combination and intensity of "stories-so-far," the joining points of geometrical, abstract, imagined, and material trajectories, such

that place is best understood as "*meeting* place" (2005, p. 68). As meeting place, Buenos Aires illustrates not only how power can be located but also how that power can be resisted without reinforcing insides and outsides. Buenos Aires is not a place apart but a place within simultaneous narratives of global urbanism. And yet, at the same time, Buenos Aires is also specific, local and historical, a city held in common and built around the shared intensity of a situational spatial praxis.

The concept of fluid place and encounter indicates why the city is such a potent site for layers of communities. Though advances in technology and virtual space are potent sites for resistance, they are ultimately at their most powerful when they facilitate the coming together of urban dwellers in material practices of resistance. It is within the commons of everyday life, habits, and practices, which Negri describes as "a great wealth of life styles, of collective means of communication and life reproduction, and above all of the exceeding of common expression of life in metropolitan spaces" (2002), that the city gathers together multiple narratives in a gesture of expansion. The political potential of public space has often been seen as one of the principal facilitators of physical encounters between citizens, frequently those who do not know each other. Such "moments of encounter" (Amin & Thrift, 2002, p. 81), based around an ontology of meeting place, are a large part of the process of building the city in common. As Amin has stressed, however, public engagement is also formed through the urban dweller's participation in a much wider range of experiences: "the collective impulses of public space are the result of pre-cognitive and tacit human response to a condition of 'situated multiplicity,' the thrown togetherness of bodies, mass and matter, and of many uses and needs in a shared physical space" (2008, p. 8). But the city is not only formed by the conglomeration of the people who live there, by its material objects or its habits; the city is also built through the imaginative dialogues constructed by its dwellers about their relationship to such objects, habits, and dwellers (Podalsky, 2004; Biron, 2009).

Here I follow Abril Trigo's definition of culture, or "the cultural" as he prefers, as the "historically overdetermined field of struggle for the symbolic and performative production, reproduction and contestation of social reality and political hegemony, through which collective identities evolve" (2004, p. 4). Given Trigo's emphasis on struggle and contestation, I would question Peter Linebaugh's suggestion that commoning is somehow inherently "a natural attitude" (2008, p. 45). Commoning (as his book demonstrates so powerfully) is historically contingent, a field of struggle forever shifting between enclosure and the commons. Commoning is not

natural; it is to be learnt and to be built. As such, contested cultural imaginaries, themselves a kind of commons, offer a window onto the equally contested construction of the urban commons (whether material or imaginary). Cultural production is an act of commoning that thinks, imagines, and questions urban communities, and, as such, it is an inherent part of their very materialization.

Massey's aforementioned definition of place as "stories-so-far" intensifies the link between culture and the city. Her emphasis on the narrative construction of space, the writing of space that is geography, and of the constant change implied by "so-far," highlights how culture might have a role in thinking the urban future. Analyzing cultural geographies and urban imaginaries, as Arturo Escobar implies, is vital to analyzing the political nature of contemporary Latin America: "The geographies of responsibility that emerge from relationality link up with issues of culture, subjectivity, difference, and nature" (2010, p. 42). Culture both reflects and informs, and that ability to inform, to question, and to imagine a commons plays a crucial role in refashioning political imaginaries. Culture is thus an act of commoning (intellect was one of the earliest forms of the commons), creating an active link between culture and city that means urban imaginaries are themselves part and parcel of the urban commons; imaginary acts provide a common wealth of political values and visions.

Jessica Berman argues that "communities come into being to a large extent in the kinds of stories of connection we have been told or are able to tell about ourselves" (2001, p. 3). The particular power of such stories, she suggests, is that they can reinsert into political communities "the varieties of 'being-in-common' that are often relegated to the margins of the national discussion and . . . the kinds of voices, such as those often present within fictional narratives, that seem to speak outside of politics in general" (2001, p. 15). Like all forms of commoning, however, cultural acts are not by definition inclusive or desirous of imagining cities in which urban dwellers work in common with all; many urban imaginaries either celebrate private communities (whether consciously or unwittingly) or are pessimistic about the urban future in terms of togetherness and cohabitation. The chapters that follow, therefore, highlight both exclusionary and inclusive urban communities and spaces depicted in literature, comics, collective art acts, films, music, and photography. At the meeting place of these various cultural trajectories and imaginaries lies the city in common.

The interdisciplinary methodology employed by this book places it squarely within cultural studies. The nature and future of Latin American cultural studies has been the subject of some debate in recent years