

Financing the Modern Research University: The Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires by Caminos and Catalano (1959–66)

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ABSTRACT

The new campus of the Universidad de Buenos Aires entered architectural discourse in 1967 with a publication on the design of its typical block. While the university was considered the epicentre of urban and architectural development in Latin America, contemporary descriptions of the new Ciudad Universitaria assumed a technical tone and focused on structural diagrams and managerial tools. This article examines the spatial implications of this episode, which are inextricably connected with a sophisticated financial process within the bureaucratic apparatus of the university. It reveals the extraordinary managerial skills and mediation practices of university authorities—attempting to liberate capital flows in their favour—in ensuring a fruitful dialogue with executives and intermediaries of foreign private entities. An analysis of the hollowed-out typical block building designed by Argentine architects and educators Horacio Caminos and Eduardo Catalano traces the uneven delimitation of the urban interior as the new contested territory where knowledge production is controversially cultivated.

KEY WORDS

Latin America; campus design; Caminos and Catalano; knowledge economy; financialisation

Prevailing concerns in the historiography of Latin American architecture are typically infused by historiographical habits that direct attention to the region's "modernisation." As scholars have frequently observed, this process often coincided with the injection of capital and foreign subsidies into the region within a mid-century climate of international cooperation. Its effects are both general (shaping economies and the provision of social and concrete infrastructure) and specific in their manifestations as works of architecture or building programs. US-based private foundations played a leading role in stimulating the economic and social development of South American countries, cities and institutions in what has often been interpreted as a form of soft power.¹ New financial instruments, considerable amounts of capital and novel modes of collaboration and exchange between Latin American states and foreign private actors emerged against a backdrop of shifting global economic parameters and the unprecedented political conditions precipitated by the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution. These processes and initiatives were particularly felt in the growth of the global knowledge economy, ultimately paving the way for the modern research university as an institution and as a setting for architectural production.

The Ford Foundation was among the various foreign actors that attempted to shape the modernisation of the region and Argentina was one of the first countries towards which it directed its gaze. In 1959, it released a first report into the quality and extent of the scientific research that was being conducted in Argentinian state universities in order to formulate a plan for financing their immediate development.² As a first step in the Foundation's broader attempt to establish its so-called *Programa para Latinoam'rica*, the report can be considered part of what is commonly referred to as the "philanthropic domination" of Latin America, enacted by means of cultural diplomacy and a multitude of investment initiatives from outside the region.³ Importantly, such initiatives were characterised by increasingly fluid relationships between foreign and local actors, couched in the modern vernaculars of institutional "exchange" and "networking." Investment in the Latin American university sector served to establish direct connections between educational institutions and funding bodies who shared an interest in the production and dissemination of knowledge as a new type of commodity that, in turn, required new urban and architectural forms.

The analysis presented in this paper attempts to elucidate how this wider project of modernisation in post-war Latin America becomes legible in the nexus of novel financial mechanisms, institutional structures and forms of spatial production. It examines the case of the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires: a little-known and largely unfinished project for a "university city" ultimately designed by two Argentine architects, Horacio Caminos and Eduardo Catalano, between 1959 and 1966⁴ (fig. 1). It precedes by several years the so-called "lost decade" of economic decline in Latin America and the neoliberal turn that followed into the 1980s. In broad terms, the project followed what had already been set out in the *Plan Director para Buenos Aires*, completed by Le Corbusier, Jorge Ferrari Hardoy and Juan Kurchan in 1938, which characterised the university as an interconnected function of the city along the north coast of the La Plata River. However, it also departed from the *Plan Director* in a number of important ways, notably in the absence of monumental iconic forms (fig. 2). Given its marginalised status within scholarship in the history and criticism of architecture, the history of the development and reception of the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires offers a surprisingly compelling account, in its specificity, of the ways in which Latin America was modernised from without.

The historiography of Latin American campus design sees the Ciudad Universitaria de

Buenos Aires as lagging behind other iconic examples of the “university city.” The project finds no place in major surveys of modern Latin American architecture.⁵ Moreover, when the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires does enter the modern architectural discourse it does so via trade journals and construction periodicals that foreground the pragmatism and efficiency of its construction as opposed to its formal or aesthetic merit⁶ (fig. 3). This paper repositions the project within the broader history of modern campus design in Latin America, situating it within a widespread and celebrated typological development. It also explores the financial and bureaucratic conditions of its conception and realisation as an agent of “change” and “growth.”⁷ I commence with a discussion of the transformative educational project undertaken by the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA) in the early 1950s, which combined economic pragmatism with ambitions for urban and societal modernisation. The UBA’s administrators developed a new bureaucratic apparatus to facilitate a rapid influx of investment capital—both foreign and public—as well as to transform working conditions, institutional protocols and the behaviour of the new “knowledge worker.” The discussion then considers the role of architectural design in this context, as a technology with which the strategic objectives of multiple institutions could be reconciled. Finally, the analysis explores the interior space of the typical university building designed by Caminos and Catalano for the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires. The paper closes with a discussion of the atrium spaces these typical buildings contained, arguing that, as an architectural and urban element, the atrium subverted the hegemony of the UBA administration and its attempts to depoliticise the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires as a modern research university.

Labour, Bureaucracy, Innovation

Until the 1950s, direct foreign investment in the UBA was limited and sporadic, and generally restricted to funding for individual researchers. From the 1950s on, however, private foundations became increasingly involved with universities and other research institutions in a post-war climate of international cooperation. As Sergio Miceli has argued, this was also a period in which foreign investment capital was increasingly directed at non-government organisations, as opposed to regional or national administrations, which were “no longer viewed as preferential clients.”⁸ Argentina, particular, lent itself to the strategic objectives of these investors, owing to the opportunities posed by the country’s gradual political and economic decline following the ousting of President Juan Peron in 1955. Within this context, the financing of the UBA rendered the university a site of international and political exchange, whereby foreign capital was incorporated into the university to modernise its education and research. The phenomenon was controversial, drawing critique from conservatives and progressives in equal measure.⁹ As Rolando Garcia—Dean of the Faculty of the Natural and Exact Sciences (FCEN) and Deputy President of the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET)—reiterated in 2003:

Our detractors deliberately exaggerate the process through which our departments are being financed by [private] foundations. In doing so, the enormous amount of

managerial work we undertake through our university fund (*Fondo Universitario*) in line with our development plan (*Plan de Reequipamiento*) is overshadowed. The university's development is financed by the state and is only supplemented by private financial subsidies.¹⁰

The subsidies to which Garcia refers included those contributed by the Ford Foundation, which collaborated directly with the UBA administration through its various funds and administrative bodies. Foreign investment intensified in the early 1960s, with the Ford Foundation's contributions increasing from two percent of the UBA's annual budget to twenty-two percent from 1960 to 1966. This delivered approximately US \$1.2 million to FCEN directly.¹¹ But statistics alone do not convey the full extent to which foreign capital, working together with the state bureaucracy, transformed the UBA over this period, in keeping with the objectives set out by its rector, Risieri Frondizi, who had been appointed in 1957.

Frondizi was a well-known philosopher who had studied at the University of Michigan, Harvard University and the National Autonomous University of Mexico and he approached his rectorship at the UBA through his theoretical work.¹² In particular, he conceptualised the university as being in a reciprocal relationship with society—a principle termed “externsion”—which challenged the prevailing educational paradigm wherein knowledge was simply transmitted to students, largely detached from the social and political conditions that existed beyond the university. According to Frondizi, modern educators should also be active researchers—effectively a new subject within the emerging “knowledge economy” in which the UBA sought to establish itself.¹³ Networking, innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration would characterise this new “knowledge worker” who, unlike previous arrangements, would be employed full-time by the university.

At the UBA, the knowledge worker also needed to navigate new internal protocols for accessing and maintaining research funds. Stringent and systematic reporting accompanied every phase of a project from pre-approval, through ongoing technical and budgetary reports, to the final evaluation of its outcomes. Reports were scrutinised by experts in the field of research, as well as by administrators. In those instances where the Ford Foundation collaborated with the UBA directly, the university appointed dedicated managers and intermediaries in order to maintain an open and fruitful dialogue with the Foundation's executives, who were also involved in evaluating research applications and progress reports.¹⁴ Of course, investing in research also meant undertaking excursions into the unknown, asking new questions and attempting new challenges, which the UBA's protocols for project funding needed to and did recognise. In other words, new approaches to the place of the university in society precipitated new bureaucratic techniques for organising its finances and employees, while also establishing new mechanisms for investment by foreign organisations.¹⁵

The conditions of intellectual labour introduced at the UBA during the period of Frondizi's rectorship also involved significant technological innovation. In 1962, Argentina's Ministry of Economy signed an agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo) to finance new technical-scientific equipment for the country's eight national universities. Equal contributions from the bank and the state comprised the subsequent budget of US \$10 million, following significant amendments to the terms of the loan due to the fact that the bank had never before invested in applied research and related equipment.¹⁶ At the UBA, the agreement led, among other initiatives, to the establishment of the Calculus Institute

and the acquisition of “Clementina”—the most advanced computer available at the time (fig. 4). The new knowledge worker would be provided with access to advanced and emerging technologies; they would be managed according to new bureaucratic protocols; they would innovate, collaborate and share knowledge across disciplines; and they would come to work every day on a radically new urban campus.

City, Block, Atrium

Ideas for a new university city, steeped in a climate of collaboration and knowledge exchange, had been in circulation since the mid 1950s. These ideas were the mid-century progeny of an earlier interest in “scientific urbanism,” which had arisen in the 1930s and was consolidated in the *Plan Director para Buenos Aires*.¹⁷ The *Plan Director* is widely known for its proposal to insert a functionalist city into the existing conditions and natural setting of Buenos Aires, reserving a corridor of land along the river- front for what it described as a university city¹⁸ (fig. 5). Only later, however, was the dominant “university-within-the-city” paradigm abandoned in favour of the self-contained “university city” proposed by Hardoy, Kurchan and Le Corbusier. In part, this shift was due to the basic pragmatics of accommodating a large number of newly appointed full-time academics and their equipment in the same place, whilst also attempting to establish the proper working conditions for the modern research university.

The first steps taken in addressing these objectives were advanced by the UBA planning committee directly, which organised a restricted design competition in 1958 for members of the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism (FADU). The winning proposal, submitted by a large team of FADU faculty members, translated the new need for spatial proximity between teaching and research activities into a rather obvious configuration¹⁹ (fig. 6). A sequence of cloister-like structures were produced by simply stacking an upper research floor above a teaching ground floor, with each side of the quadrangular arrangement dedicated to a different department. Although the proposal was rejected for its exaggerated scale, the same team was given the task of redeveloping the UBA’s Department of Mathematics, Physics and Meteorology. This project was known as Pabellon I and it would contain the newly funded Calculus Institute and the aforementioned “Clementina.” Here we begin to see how the new working conditions and protocols of the modern research university were negotiated in architectural terms. Rolando Garcia, Dean of FCEN, remembered the design development of the project as follows:

In conversations with the architect who was leading the team, I discovered they paid a lot of attention to the aesthetic aspects (including the construction of a grand entrance with a black marble staircase). They had not considered something as elementary as an adequate distribution of laboratories, offices, classrooms, etc. in terms of circulation of students, teachers, assistants, administrative staff ... It was necessary to readjust the project. Among other things, the grand staircase was removed and replaced by the unsightly mezzanine that still exists today, allowing intercommunication inside the pavilion without the need to go outside.²⁰

At this early stage of the university city project, the aesthetic, formal and spatial qualities of an architectural proposal were being delegitimised and relegated in an attempt to increase “circulation” and “intercommunication.” Pabellón I therefore represents the first building in the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires designed according to the new objectives and protocols Frondizi introduced during the term of his rectorship.

In this sense, it is not surprising that when the university administration eventually approached different architects to develop yet another masterplan for the Ciudad Universitaria, the architectural language of Pabellón I was again evident. The proposal, designed by Horacio Caminos and Eduardo Catalano between 1959 and 1962, attempted to create the effect of an urban environment within the university, combining blocks of varying sizes along the orthogonal axes of an invisible grid²¹ (fig. 7). The blocks conformed with a typical elevation that was only reproduced in Francisco Bullrich’s *Arquitectura Contemporanea in Argentina* (1963) alongside the masterplan proposal²² (fig. 8). The urban effect this produced was further amplified by myriad squares, excavations, raised platforms and open-air rooms that combined to produce a constructed topography stretching across reclaimed land on the bank of the La Plata River.

By 1962, the ambition and dynamism of Caminos and Catalano’s original proposal had been substituted for a drastically simplified version (fig. 9). Likewise, the typical block had been significantly rationalised, described in a contemporary architecture magazine as a simple “box to contain everything.”²³ The revised design was praised for its “regularity, typical of a classical building,” and for its apparent lightness, which, from a distance, made the buildings appear as though they were floating.²⁴ Caminos and Catalano adopted the most essential of plan configurations: a one hundred and fifty by seventy-four metre rectangle with two symmetrical service cores situated at either extreme of a central axis, establishing the “minimum and generic equipment required to enable any type of vertical construction,” and delivering the “maximum degree of flexibility” in the sequencing of the project, in turn minimising the risk of delays due to supply shortages²⁵ (fig. 10). The orthogonal structural grid continued across all six levels in addition to a basement level that housed an auditorium²⁶ (fig. 11). Metal formwork was used to cast the modular concrete elements comprising the primary structure of the typical block, reducing the amount of formwork overall and ensuring that it could be reused on all four buildings in the Ciudad Universitaria masterplan. Taken together, the various components incorporated in the revised scheme reflected an attempt to establish the most efficient, flexible and generic architecture possible for housing a modern research university.²⁷

In this, the real room in which the two Argentine architects could manoeuvre at UBA was clouded by the technical and pragmatic considerations in realising the prototypical, and anything but neutral, educational spaces of a modern university. This itself had a history. When Frondizi commissioned Caminos and Catalano in 1959, he knew the two architects and educators had made their debut in the field of campus design more than a decade earlier, in the monumental yet unfinished project for the new Ciudad Universitaria de Tucuman (commenced in 1947). This was a state initiative funded by the first Perón government intending to extend its presence into Argentina’s peripheral regions. The imagery created by the newly established Instituto de Arquitectura y Urbanismo (IAU)—a collective of local and international architects, planners and educators—was that of a new city built on top of the Andes and overlooking the entire region. It was a privileged field of action²⁸ (fig. 12).

The Tucuman project drew attention both for its conception of a modern urban space, whose asymmetrical and three-dimensional composition appeared in line with post-war CIAM prescriptions,²⁹ and its oversized buildings, which included a “university residence” for four thousand people and a “civic center,” both of which were later

illustrated among “beginners and begetters” in Banham’s chronicle on *Megastructures* (1976).³⁰ Completely unnoticed, however, was the typical “university block”: a hollowed-out form that was never built (fig. 13). After the failure and consequent abandonment of the Tucuman state initiative, Caminos and Catalano readjusted their role as architect-educators, perfectly introduced within the bureaucratic apparatus of a local university institution, to that of precarious and itinerant academic workers, moving between Latin America, Europe and the United States—where both were based when they received the UBA commission.³¹ At Buenos Aires, then, they quickly tempered their architectural ambitions in a revised project that safely expressed the university’s own declared values.

Little is known of the architects’ own views on the typical block in the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires. Caminos and Catalano never officially established a firm and they remain peripheral figures in the discourse on modern architecture. For this reason, a short article authored by Caminos in the *AA Journal* during his tenure as a visiting lecturer at the Architectural Association in London in the early 1950s provides valuable insight into his design thinking. In a particularly revealing passage, he criticises the tendency for architects to design what he terms “simple boxes”:

Every experienced builder knows very well that not all the boxes or primary geometrical forms are consequently architecturally simple. Simplicity of pure forms cannot be achieved without a clear idea of the whole conception. ... A building is an inner space in relationship to, or conforming with, an outer space. A building must be planned from inside out and from outside, in a double and reflected process. ... A building is a shelter created to perform a function. It is essentially a space. Roofs, walls, openings, and floors are the means to shape this space. Proportions, generosity and relationship between the different elements, are the means to make it agreeable and pleasant to the travelling eye.³²

This thinking is clearly evident in the typical block design for the Ciudad Universitaria from over a decade later. Here, Caminos and Catalano hollowed-out the interior space of the typical blocks, introducing a full-height atrium shaped around the functions of a modern university as understood by the architects. To appease the UBA administration, the atrium would facilitate a collaborative research culture, encouraging the incidental interactions and exchanges that were deemed central to academic culture and work (fig. 14). It would accommodate the functions and elements that could not be incorporated into the modular construction system.³³ And, most importantly, the atrium would literally “internalise” the urban complexity that had been stripped from the original masterplan proposed by Caminos and Catalano. Student dissent, political protest, demonstrations and public discourse—once open and embraced, but suppressed in the revised scheme—were effectively programmed into the atria of the typical blocks (fig. 15). Ironically, it was precisely these types of interactions and exchanges that sealed the project’s fate. On July 29, 1966, four hundred students and professors were arrested after staging a protest against changes to the university’s governance structure. Progress on the project stalled as a result and only two of the four university blocks proposed by Caminos and Catalano were ever built.³⁴

Pier Vittorio Aureli has argued that “with the advent of mass education and the dramatic increase of the student population after World War II, universities were built as largescale complexes,” shaped by “the relentless necessity of generic and flexible space.”³⁵ More than ever, this trend is evident in today’s new educational paradigm of flexible and hybrid learning, which continues to pervade both the theoretical and political conceptions of what a “successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society” looks like.³⁶ In the history of modern architecture, flexibility has long been associated with radicality and progressiveness, whether in terms of learning environments or in relation to entire urban schemes, but as Aureli and others have repeatedly suggested, flexibility is clearly also an inexorable instrument of capital.³⁷ Financial mechanisms, operating in conjunction with

neoliberal political agendas, have played a decisive role in destabilising the agency of architectural design in shaping the outcomes of university campus projects.³⁸ However, the analysis presented in this paper has sought to avoid neat generalisations about the relationship between architecture and finance, proposing instead that the production of space—both as process and as final product—offers opportunities for understanding specific administrative and organisational logics as they were shaped by the terms and conditions of finance capital.

From the mid-1950s onwards, the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires was approached as an opportunity to combine new funding streams with new bureaucratic protocols in order to develop a modern research university in Latin America. The terms and conditions of finance were therefore merely one factor in the overall transformation of the UBA. The university administration, state bureaucracy and a new workforce were equally decisive in realising the objectives set by Frondizi, Garcia and others. Moreover, the modernisation of the UBA depended on the capacity of architectural and urban design to reconcile the myriad ambitions held for the project into a cohesive, realisable whole. The concessions and compromises Caminos and Catalano made over the duration of their involvement with the UBA betrays the difficulty of this task. As does the significance of the atrium space in their final design for the typical university block building. Internalising within the building what could not be accommodated in the wider campus masterplan was a subversive strategy intended to disturb the hegemony of the UBA administration. In establishing a site of encounter within each building—presented in terms of “collaboration” and “networking”—Caminos and Catalano effectively preserved a level of urbanity and the possibility of contest within the very heart of the UBA as a modern research university.

Notes

1. Considering the specific way this has functioned in the education sector, the concept of “dominación filantrópica” is given by Álvaro Morcillo, and reviewed by Juan Morales Martín, when they ask how a philanthropic foundation that funds a foreign university or research center is related, in terms of power, with the beneficiaries of these resources. See Juan Morales Martín, “Dominación filantrópica y gobernabilidad democrática: el caso de la Fundación Ford y CIEPLAN en Chile (1976–1990),” *Revista Historia* 1, no. 51 (2018): 141–63.
2. The Ford Foundation’s connections with Argentina are well illustrated by María Elina Estébanez, “La modernización en Exactas: los subsidios de la Fundación Ford durante los años 60,” in *La construcción de la ciencia académica: actores, instituciones y procesos en la Universidad argentina del siglo XX*, ed. Carlos Prego and Oscar Vallejos (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2010), 253–68.
3. Martín, “Dominación filantrópica,” 146. For such purposes, the Ford Foundation established an office in Rio de Janeiro in 1960 and in 1962 offices in Buenos Aires and Bogotá.
4. Recent historiographical reconstructions connected to the project are from Mario Sabugo, *Historia urbana y arquitectónica de la Universidad de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2019); and Beatriz Barra, Carlos Borches, Eduardo Díaz de Guíjarro, and Raúl Carnota Eudeba, *Historia de la Facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales. Universidad de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2015).
5. Patricio del Real analyses deliberate attempts by the Museum of Modern Art (New York) to present a sense of unitary expression, consistency and order of Latin American architecture in his essay “Building a Continent: MoMA’s Latin American Architecture Since 1945 Exhibition,” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 16, no.1 (2007): 95–110. Despite the fact that the project for the new Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires remained beneath the radar of Latin American studies, campus design was considered a driving force of the modernist agenda in South American capitals such as Caracas, Bogotá and Mexico City as evidenced in Valerie Fraser, *Building the New World: Studies in the Modern Architecture of Latin America, 1930–1960* (London: Verso, 2000); and Carlos Garcíavelez Alfaro, *Form and Pedagogy: The Design of the University City in Latin America* (Novato: Applied Research + Design Publishing, 2014). On the construction of “Latin America,” see also Daniela Ortiz dos Santos, “Italian Roots in Latin American Architectural History,” in *Italian Imprints on Twentieth-Century Architecture*, ed. Denise Costanzo and Andrew Leach (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 265–77.
6. That is the case of the two consecutive issues of the Argentine magazine *Nuestra Arquitectura* which illustrated the project of the UBA university block in the section “técnica.” The first article (no. 439, March 1967) focused on the construction system while the second (no. 440, April 1967) exposed the PERT system and other managerial tools applied to the project.
7. These are recurring terms in Stefan Muthesius’s chronicle *The Postwar University: Utopianist Campus and College* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). For a critical examination of the construction of the “modern university” see also the recent work by Reinhold Martin, *Knowledge Worlds: Media, Materiality, and the Making of the Modern University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).
8. Translation by the author from Sergio Miceli, ed., *A Fundação Ford no Brasil* (Sao Paulo: FAPESP-Sumaré, 1993), 41. It is indicative that, as evidenced by María Elina Estébanez, who has examined the archival documents, the valuation reports used quantitative and standardized parameters that excluded considerations of the political landscape. See also Estébanez, “La modernización en Exactas,” 254.
9. The infiltration of private capital from the US foundations symbolised, for the exponents of the Marxist wing, a new season of imperialism in the region. Conservatives, on the

other hand, saw the university's scientification project as a clear attack against humanistic culture.

10. Translation by the author from Rolando García's introductory essay reported in *La construcción de lo posible. La Universidad de Buenos Aires de 1955 a 1966*, ed. Catalina Rotunno and Eduardo Díaz de Guíjarro (Buenos Aires: Libros del Zorzal, 2003), 42–70.
11. As for the entire University of Buenos Aires, its financial statement increased fifty-five percent from 1957 to 1961, twenty percent from 1961 to 1963, and thirty-seven percent to 1965. See Estébanez, "La modernización en Exactas," 261.
12. His brother, Arturo Frondizi, served as President of the Argentine Republic from 1958 to 1962, while Alfred North Whitehead, author of *Process and Reality*, was Frondizi's mentor during his stay at Harvard. On his return to Latin America, Frondizi published the seminal article "La Universidad y sus Misiones," *Comentario* 13 (October–November 1956): 89–100; and his speech titled *Hacia la universidad nueva* (Resistencia: Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, 1958).
13. In the same years, higher-education policies in Chile aimed at reinforcing the national plan of the Universidades Técnica del Estado with the immediate construction of the new university campus in Santiago de Chile designed by the architecture firm BVCH (Bresciani, Valdés, Castillo, Huidobro). See Marco Moro, "The Project of Informal Education: A Design Trajectory of University Architectures in Postwar Latin America and Italy" (PhD diss., University of Cagliari, 2021).
14. It should be noted that García's financial operations were not only for the benefit of hard-science departments, but for all areas of scientific research: "The first visit I made at the Ford Foundation, in agreement with Risieri Frondizi, was to manage the funding that the School of Letters and Philosophy have requested to establish the Department of Sociology when the Italian expert Gino Germani arrived in Argentina." Translated from *La construcción de lo posible*, 61.
15. This happened, for instance, with the establishment of Fondo Universitario, as a consequence of the national law declaring the financial autonomy of Argentine universities. This allowed the university to retain the amount of unspent public resources in a single deposit, waiting to be reallocated among those departments that were used to present operational programs and innovative projects with a research-oriented approach. Régimen Legal de Autarquía Financiera de las Universidades, Decreto-Ley N° 7.364 (July 1, 1957).
16. These amendments were so effective that in a later period of growing instability and consequent austerity, when the purchase of furnishings and supplies was prevented, it was sufficient to fill in the funding applications replacing current-usage terminology with a painstakingly created scientific lexicon. Desks, for example, were described as "antigravity supports for scientific material" and typewriters were referred to as "phoneme transcribers." See *La construcción de lo posible*, 54–55.
17. A "plan científico integral" which reflected the need for a new university city of Buenos Aires was disseminated through the pages of *Revista de Arquitectura* (September 1938), the specialized magazine published by the Sociedad Central de Arquitectos de Buenos Aires. On this initial debate and its consequences, see Mercedes Bracco González and Lucía Romero "La creación de Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires (1958–1966): Proyección de una Ecología común para la transformación de la vida académica en la facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales," *Redes* 20, no. 39 (2014): 115–37.
18. Maximum diffusion was given through the monographic and highly illustrated issue of *La Arquitectura de hoy* 4 (April 1947), and the film *La Ciudad Frente al Río* (1948), when Ferrari Hardoy and other disciples of Le Corbusier were asked to coordinate the implementation phases known as Estudio del Plan de Buenos Aires (EPBA). Residential projects, however, took centre stage and the idea of a new university city was abandoned. For a better understanding of these vicissitudes see Jorge Francisco Liernur and Pablo Pschepiurca, *La Red Austral. Obras y proyectos de Le Corbusier y sus discípulos en la Argentina 1924–1965* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2008).

19. This appeared in "Un proyecto para la Universidad de Buenos Aires," *Nuestra Arquitectura* 356 (July 1959): 19–24. The team of young professors from the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism (FADU) included Francisco Rossi, Raúl Rossi, Elio Vivaldi, Enrique Massarotti, Florencio Alvo, and the architect Alberto Trozzoli. Their efforts materialized in a merely functional configuration and prefabrication systems.
20. *La construcción de lo posible*, 48.
21. As recalled by Carlos Coire, FADU dean between 1958 and 1962, the university authorities initially thought of a design competition restricted to eminent personalities from the international architecture scene. The project was then commissioned to a diverse group including Argentine architects Eduardo Catalano and Horacio Caminos (who had already been working in the US for some time), Eduardo Sacriste and Carlos Picarel (who abandoned the project rather quickly), with the local consultancy of engineers Federico Camba and Attilio Gallo. See Carlos Coire, *Eduardo Sacriste. El hombre y su obra* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Morón, 2004).
22. See Francisco Bullrich, *Arquitectura Contemporánea en Argentina: panorama de la arquitectura argentina 1950–1963* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Vision, 1963), 154–55.
23. Translation by the author for "caja para contener algo," from *Nuestra Arquitectura* 439 (March 1967): 44.
24. Translated by the author from *Nuestra Arquitectura* 439 (March 1967): 37. See also *Nuestra Arquitectura* 440 (April 1967) and *Revista Construcciones* 219 (1969).
25. Translation by the author of "equipamiento mínimo y genérico para habilitar cualquier tipo de edificación vertical" and "grado máximo de flexibilidad" from *Nuestra Arquitectura* 440 (April 1967): 34–35. This included vertical circulation elements, electrical services and air conditioning systems. Adolfo Rubinstein, the civil engineer who describes logistical and managerial aspects of the project, argued that unpredictability went well beyond climatic variations, material supplies or contracts, because the increasingly unstable economic-political context required a superior managerial capacity to control every project task.
26. The basement in fact corresponds to the ground level covered by excavated soil.
27. This prevalent narrative is also echoed by the few contemporary commentaries, such as that of Mederico Faivre who assimilates the UBA typical block to a case of "systemic architecture" in *La Nación*, May 2, 2019, while Marcelo Faiden builds his argument on similarities with Mies' American university projects in "Ciudad universitaria de Buenos Aires, el proyecto inmaterial de Catalano y Caminos," *Summa+* 135 (April 2014): 126–28.
28. Franco Marigliano has thoroughly explored this recently rediscovered episode within the broader history of radical pedagogies. See Franco Marigliano, "El Instituto de Arquitectura y Urbanismo de la Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 1946–1955. Modelo arquitectónico del estado y Movimiento Moderno en Argentina" (PhD diss., Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2003).
29. See Liernur and Pscheperca, *La red austral*.
30. See Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 36–37.
31. Most of the members of the Instituto de Arquitectura y Urbanismo (IAU) who collectively advanced the state project of Tucumán were increasingly displeased with the intrusive Peronist mandate and left the country. Caminos and Catalano moved to Europe and the US, taking part in the vibrant environment of Raleigh School of Design in North Carolina. They then moved to MIT in Boston, where they developed their respective professional and academic works in good connection with funding institutions.
32. Horacio Caminos, "Around the Simple Box," *AA Journal* 766 (1952): 73–74.
33. "Coverage [of the atrium] is made of pyramidal trunks with a larger base of 4.00 meters side and 2.10 meters high, with skylights located on the smaller base of 1.00 meter side. ... The bleachers [overlooking a central podium] are made of special wooden formworks ... The basement is covered with pre-stressed beams 1.30 meters high (exceptionally,

- these beams will be hidden by a reinforced ceiling due to acoustic requirements).” Translation by the author from *Nuestra Arquitectura* 439 (1967): 44.
34. In 2021, a new building designed by the Uruguayan architect Raphael Virioly was completed with financial support from the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF).
 35. Pier Vittorio Aureli, “Form and Labor,” in *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class and the Politics of Design*, ed. Peggy Deamer (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).
 36. The *Memorandum on Education and Lifelong Training* (Lisbon, 2000) introduced a competence-based approach as a political recommendation in the European context, formulated and then updated on the basis of *skills* and *learning outcomes*. More generally, reference is made to the process started with the Bologna Declaration (1999), in which knowledge was reinterpreted as a tool in the hands of a student-entrepreneur called to implement his own education to higher levels. For a critical examination of this process see Gert Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (London: Routledge, 2013).
 37. Aureli, “Form and Labor,” 113. On the principle of deterritorialization as applied to the interior organization of higher education environments, see also Douglas Spencer “Ravensbourne College: The ‘Learning Landscape’ and the ‘Univer-city’,” in *The Architecture of Neoliberalism*, ed. Douglas Spencer (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 113–37.
 38. See, for instance, the recent analysis made by Sabrina Puddu and Francesco Zuddas in “Corporation Takes Command: The Project of the Sir John Cass Faculty of Architecture and Design between Complicity and Resistance,” *Architecture and Culture* 9, no. 1 (2021): 154–71.



Figure 1. Satellite image of the UBA campus on the bank of La Plata River (c. 2000s). Source: Atlas/Archivo, <http://www.atlasarchivo.com.ar/?page=archivo&id=2107>.

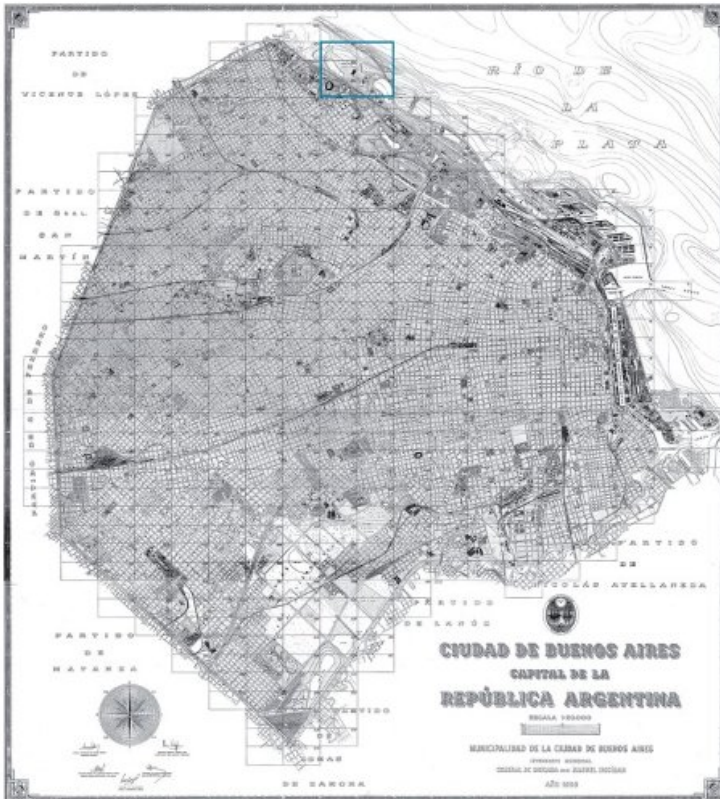


Figure 2. City map of Buenos Aires (1968) in which the university blocks under construction are already indicated. Source: Muñoz Larreta, H. Linda Buenos Ayres; Planos, <http://lindabuenosayres.blogspot.com/p/blog-page.html>.

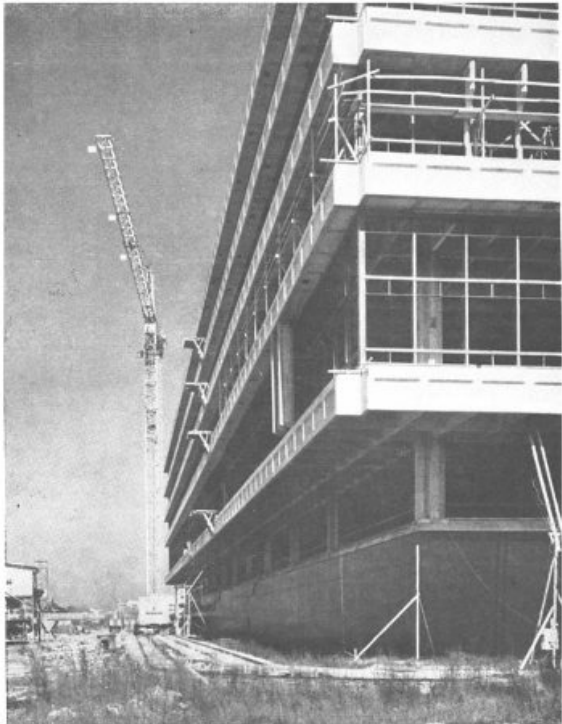


Figure 3. The typical UBA block (Pabellón II), as designed by Caminos and Catalano, under construction. Source: *Nuestra Arquitectura* 439 (March 1967): 40.



Figure 4. "Clementina," the Calculus Institute's new computer. Source: FCEN Archive (photo Grete Stern, 1961).

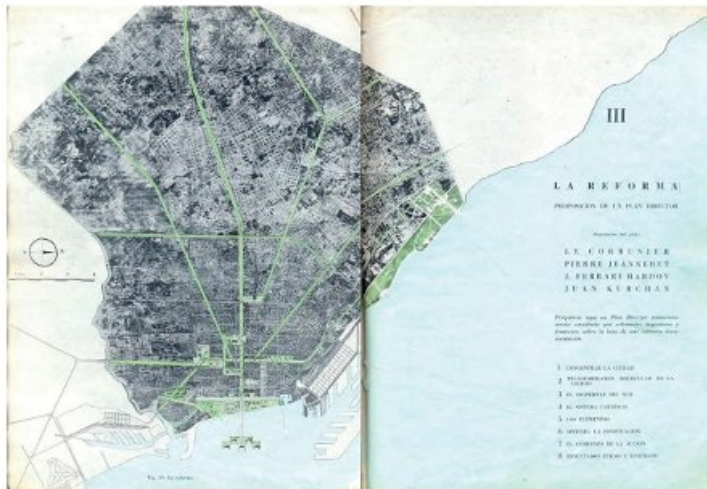


Figure 5. The *Plan Director para Buenos Aires* as proposed by Hardy, Kurchan and Le Corbusier. Source: "La Reforma. Proposición de un Plan Director," *La Arquitectura de hoy* 4 (April 1947): 21–22.

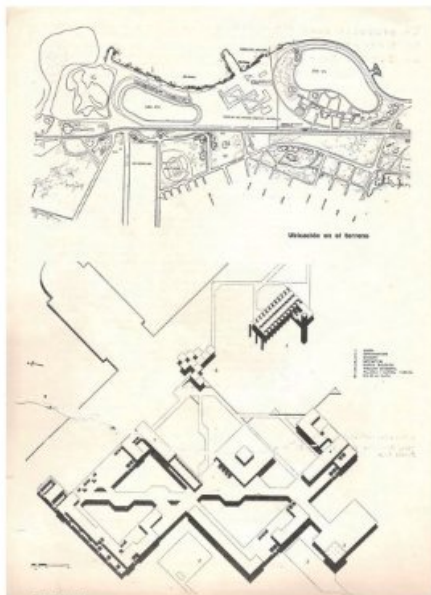


Figure 6. Early masterplan proposal for the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires by members of the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism. Source: "Un proyecto para la Universidad de Buenos Aires," *Nuestra Arquitectura* 356 (July 1959): 20.

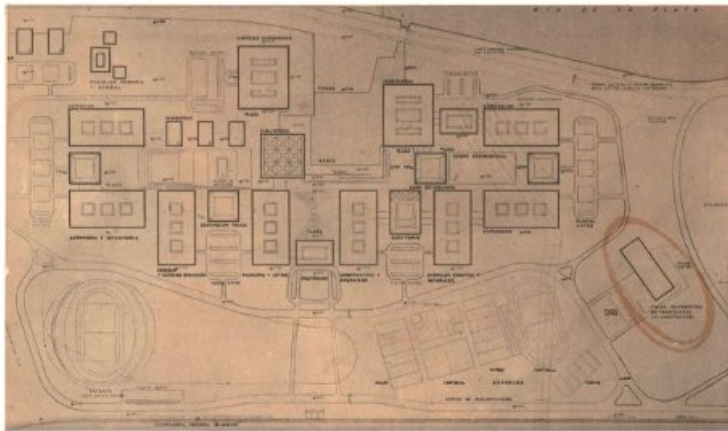


Figure 7. Original masterplan proposal for the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires by Caminos and Catalano (1962). Source: FCEN Archive.



Figure 8. Physical model of original masterplan proposal by Caminos and Catalano and elevation of original typical block design. Source: Francisco Bullrich, *Arquitectura Contemporanea in Argentina: Panorama de la Arquitectura Argentina, 1950–1963* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Vision, 1963), 155.

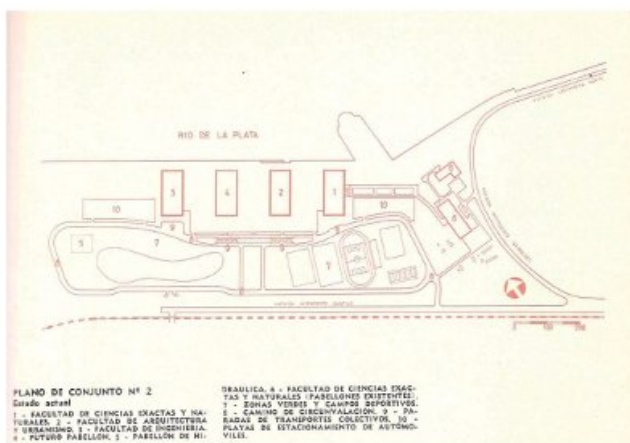


Figure 9. Final masterplan proposal for the Ciudad Universitaria de Buenos Aires by Caminos and Catalano. Source: "Ciudad Universitaria de la Universidad de Buenos Aires," *Revista Construcciones* 219 (1969): 463.

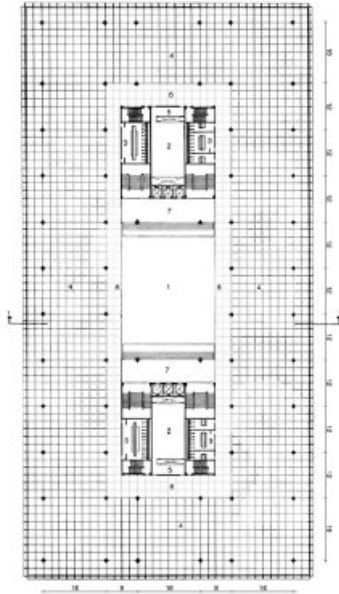


Figure 10. Plan of the typical UBA block. Source: *Revista Construcciones* 219 (1969): 466.

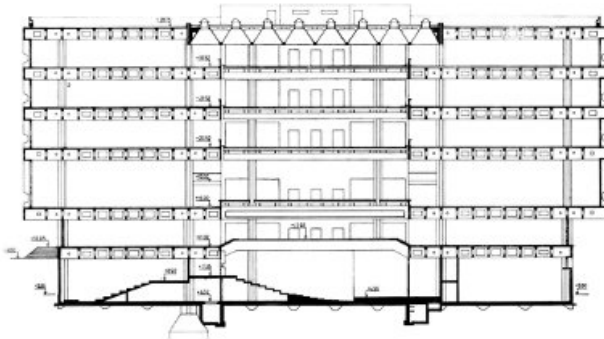


Figure 11. Section of the typical UBA block. Source: *Revista Construcciones* 219 (1969): 467.



Figure 12. Physical model of the original masterplan proposal for the new Ciudad Universitaria de Tucumán. Source: "La città universitaria del nord-ovest Argentino," *Urbanistica* 8 (1951): 47.

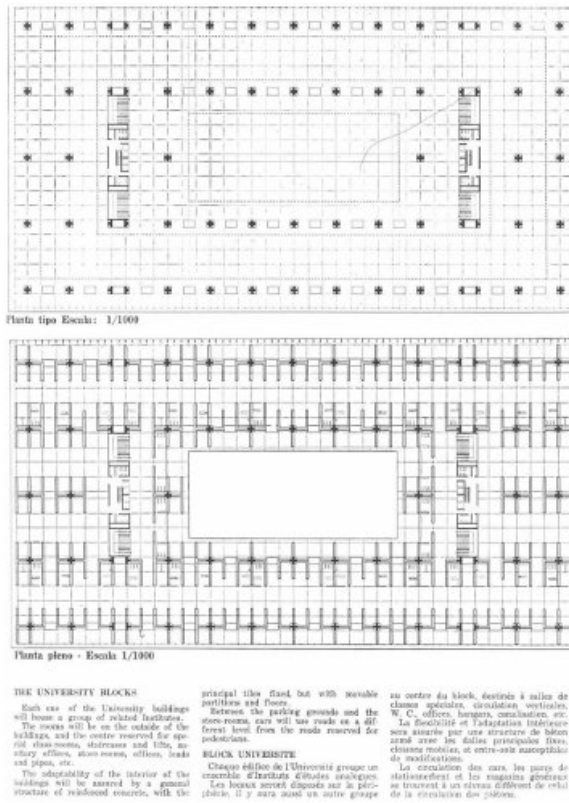


Figure 13. Plan of the typical university block as designed by IAU's members in Tucumán. Source: "Ciudad Universitaria de Tucumán," *Nuestra Arquitectura* 254 (1950): 22.

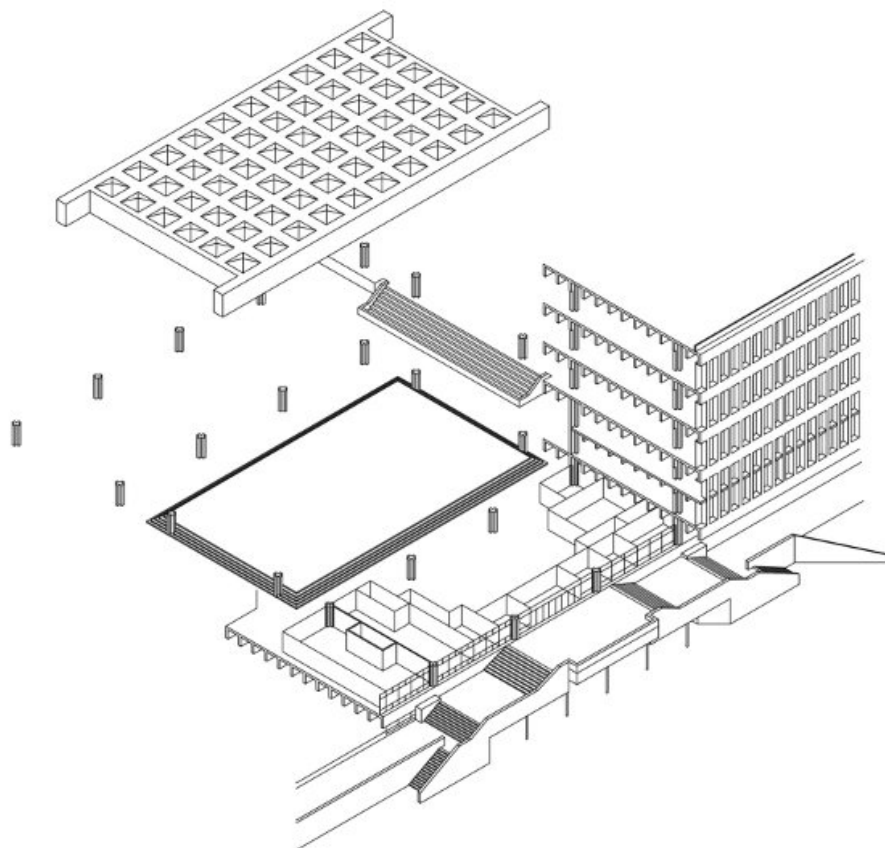


Figure 14. Axonometric drawing of the typical UBA block. Source: Author.



Figure 15. Interior view showing raised central podium and circulation elements.
Source: Author.