

[working title] Grounding Buenos Aires: Representations and uses of soil and land in urbanisation (1875–1945)

The central hypothesis of this dissertation is that the ground as a multivalent entity has been a central force in urbanisation, both through its material features and through the ways it has been socially and culturally constructed. This ambivalence becomes particularly evident in the context of Argentina's rapid urbanisation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The growth of the Argentinian capital, Buenos Aires, was at once fuelled by the agricultural exploitation of the surrounding grasslands, the pampas and by the increasing penetration of underground infrastructure. Underpinning these uses of the soil were representations, such as military maps and cadastral plans, often produced with the involvement of German technical experts, scientists and businesses. Their presence highlights the transnational entanglements of Buenos Aires' urbanisation and points to the ideological charge of the ground. Soil and land have long played central roles in expansionist agendas, notably in the slogan "blood and soil" (Blut und Boden), popularised by Nazi Germany but traceable back to the *völkisch* movement of the late 19th century.

Building on these observations, I analyse the representations and uses of the ground taking into account their ideological background to explore the ground's overlooked role in urbanisation. I examine how this layered understanding can challenge dichotomies such as "urban" vs "rural" or "natural" vs "technological." A cross-section through the ground of Greater Buenos Aires opens up a horizontal and a vertical perspective, while the emphasis on German technical actors examines the transnational dimension of a place-specific entity such as the ground. Thus, I aim to shed light on the multiscalar dynamics of urbanisation through the ground.