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Between Innovation, Sustainability and the City: Placemaking and Urban Design in the Socio-Spatial Performance of the PIT (São José dos Campos) and the DTPP (Buenos Aires)

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Abstract

This article analyzes, from a comparative and relational perspective, the socio-spatial performance of two Latin American territories of innovation: the São José dos Campos Technology Innovation Park (PIT), in Brazil, and the Parque Patricios Technology District (DTPP), in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The central argument is that technology parks and innovation districts cannot be assessed only by the attraction of firms, the presence of universities, the production of corporate buildings or the construction of urban images of sustainability and smartness. They must also be evaluated by their capacity to generate urban porosity, institutional cooperation, productive inclusion, territorial permanence and spatial justice. The article mobilizes placemaking as an analytical framework and proposes the concept of placemaking dissonance to identify the distance between the landscape promised by innovation and the social, productive and territorial conditions effectively produced. The PIT is interpreted as an urbanized technology park grounded in a long historical formation of public missions, aerospace industry and scientific institutions. The DTPP is interpreted as a reimagined urban area produced through legal, fiscal, symbolic and real estate reclassification over a working-class neighborhood. The comparison shows that both cases perform innovation through urban design, but face limits when image does not translate into collective capabilities, redistribution and democratic territorial integration.

Keywords

Innovation, Placemaking, Urban Design, Technology Park,

Innovation District

1. Introduction

In the contemporary context, the dominant mode of production differs substantially from the nineteenth-century industrial order associated with coal mines, foundries and dense emissions of smoke (Castells & Hall, 1994). Immersed in the technical-scientific-informational milieu, technical change and its interaction with space not only transform territory but also create new starting points for relations between individuals and society (Santos, 2006). As global dynamics become increasingly organized around communication services and information technology (Castells & Hall, 1994), cities, as centers of power and coordination, acquire new capacities to mobilize economic resources at large or global scales. They implement new forms of production in a historical gradient that runs from factories and skyscrapers to incubators, accelerators and coworking spaces. At the same time, these places, as stages for renewed interactions among land, capital and labor, operate as cultural nodes where societies imagine, justify, adapt to and resist economic change (Zukin, 2020).

Empirical evidence has long suggested that the technological capacity of countries is directly related to their ability to conceive, produce and implement advanced technological products within industrial processes. From the 1970s to the end of the twentieth century, sectors associated with new technologies were among those with the fastest rates of economic growth. Countries and regions specialized in the production of complex and low-ubiquity inputs required by other industrial structures therefore tend to occupy strategic positions in the technical and social division of labor (Castells & Hall, 1994; Hidalgo & Hausmann, 2009). Strategic insertion into global production networks, combined with the production of complex goods and services, contributes to autonomy, economic prosperity and prestige (Coe & Yeung, 2015).

After the economic success of Silicon Valley and other technopoles around the world, innovation complexes began to emerge in urban centers as arrangements marked by both material and symbolic dimensions (Castells & Hall, 1994; Williams, 1990). In territorial terms, cities invest in buildings, campuses, parks and districts in the expectation that innovation will eventually emerge. Symbolically, they are affected by what may be called a cultural anxiety: it is not enough to host such spaces; cities must also appear to master innovation, avoid irrelevance and compete with other urban economies (Zukin, 2020). For better or worse, image becomes a high-value strategy in contemporary cultural and economic competition. The intensive territorial use of technology reflects an effort of agency and sovereignty, a refusal to accept stagnation within inherited spatial logics and a deliberate attempt to shape an alternative urban future.

Nevertheless, this cultural anxiety, associated with the search for relevance in

the new social division of labor, often feeds an uncritical global mobility of urban models. In practice, the planning of innovation districts and parks may override empirical evidence and conceptual complexity, simplifying dense theoretical debates into narratives that are more easily absorbed by political and business fields. This process reinforces belief in formulaic solutions, frequently promoted by consultants and based on fiscal incentives, generic infrastructure and iconic images, that promise to replicate the success of Silicon Valley in any context. The prioritization of image over theoretical and institutional depth may lead to fragile arrangements: costly ruins of failed dreams, lacking real meaning and incapable of transforming local productive structures (Castells & Hall, 1994; Katz & Wagner, 2014; Zukin, 2020).

Against this background of replicated models and often disappointing results, this article proposes an urban reading of innovation territories by investigating how their performance is affected by placemaking and urban design decisions. It observes the extent to which these choices affect socio-spatial relations in the immediate surroundings and the capacity of innovation complexes to achieve their stated objectives. The discussion draws on broader empirical syntheses developed in two related studies on Parque Patricios and São José dos Campos (Fantin & Veiga, 2026a, 2026b), but reorganizes that material around a specific analytical question: how does placemaking shape the socio-spatial performance of Latin American innovation territories?

The article is guided by the hypothesis that dissonances in the articulation of placemaking, combined with insufficiently sophisticated urban strategies, compromise the transformative potential of the arrangements studied: the São José dos Campos Technology Innovation Park (PIT), in Brazil, and the Parque Patricios Technology District (DTPP), in the southern area of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA), Argentina. Contrary to their theoretical ambitions, these territorial approaches frequently neglect critical local externalities, such as gentrification, poverty, housing vulnerability, labor exclusion and uneven access to technological opportunities. These phenomena are often masked by image-based narratives of sustainability, smart cities and creative economies. In empirical terms, these concerns are not treated as automatic effects of innovation policies, but as case-specific risks and tensions documented in the two territories: in São José dos Campos, through studies on industrial urbanization, socio-spatial segregation and uneven access to urban opportunities (Arantes et al., 2000; Souza, 2008; Souza & Costa, 2010); and in Parque Patricios, through analyses of state-led gentrification, real-estate valorization, creative-district policies and housing disputes in the southern area of Buenos Aires (Di Virgilio & Guevara, 2014; Goicoechea, 2017; Lerena Rongvaux, 2019; Lerena & Orozco, 2020; Socoloff, 2017; Socoloff et al., 2012).

Recent innovation policies have sought to move beyond the old model of the isolated science park, usually difficult to access and relatively detached from the everyday city. In this shift, the district form has gained strength, especially in un-

derused, deindustrialized or supposedly declining urban areas. Using the typology proposed by Brookings, the PIT and the DTPP may be understood, respectively, as an urbanized science park and a reimagined urban area (Katz & Wagner, 2014).

Under policies of urban restructuring and the stimulation of new productive vocations, real estate activities also play an important role. They help reactivate economic dynamism in these areas, now within an advanced tertiary sector that is intensive in technology, services, image and information.

Methodological Approach

This article adopts a qualitative and comparative case-study design. Its empirical basis consists of: a) the broader empirical syntheses developed in the two related studies on Parque Patricios and São José dos Campos (Fantin & Veiga, 2026a, 2026b); b) academic literature on innovation territories, placemaking, urban entrepreneurialism, regional innovation systems and socio-spatial inequality; c) legal and planning documents related to the PIT and the DTPP; d) institutional reports and public information from the park, the district and local governments; e) press and real-estate records used to reconstruct firm attraction, urban change and land valorization; and f) field observations and qualitative testimonies reported in the broader research project.

The cases were selected through a logic of analytical contrast. The PIT represents an urbanized technology park grounded in a long technical-scientific and aerospace trajectory, while the DTPP represents a reimagined urban area produced through district policy, fiscal incentives and symbolic reclassification within an existing working-class neighborhood. This contrast allows the article to compare how two different spatial forms of innovation—a park and a district, produce distinct forms of urban porosity, institutional proximity, socio-spatial inclusion and territorial memory.

The observation period concentrates on the institutional development of both arrangements from their creation and consolidation in the late 2000s to 2026, while historical sources are used to reconstruct the longer trajectories that preceded them. The empirical material was selected purposively: documents, spaces, actors and secondary sources were included when they helped explain the production, management, use or socio-spatial effects of the two innovation territories. The purpose was not statistical representativeness, but analytical comparability across the four dimensions defined in Section 3.

The analytical procedure followed a thematic interpretation. Evidence from literature, documents, field observations, institutional material, press reports and interviews was read according to the four dimensions of the framework: urban and territorial porosity, institutional and cognitive proximity, socio-spatial inclusion, and territorial memory. Claims are presented as documented findings when supported by case-specific documents, literature, secondary data or convergent sources. When the text moves from empirical evidence to an evaluation of desirable policy directions, the argument is explicitly treated as a normative or interpretive assessment.

2. The Production of Innovation Territories: Historical and Urban Contexts

2.1. São José dos Campos: From Sanatorium City to Urbanized Technology Park

In the Brazilian context, São José dos Campos has consolidated itself in recent decades as a technological, scientific and aerospace hub. Its trajectory has been shaped by significant investments in science and technology and by productive activities with strong returns for the municipality and the region. This process was marked by two major industrial phases since the 1920s. Between the beginning of the twentieth century and the years preceding the mid-century, the designation of the area as a climatic and hydromineral resort, together with the belief that its climate favored the treatment of tuberculosis, inaugurated a phase in which the city was marked by a sanatorium complex (Souza, 2008; Souza & Costa, 2010). This condition was gradually superseded after the first laws encouraging industrial activity attracted large manufacturing establishments. The first industrial phase was based primarily on textiles, ceramics and food production. A second phase, from 1946 onward, was defined both by the arrival of large transnational firms and by the emergence of a pioneering segment oriented toward the aeronautical industry in the 1960s (Souza, 2008).

During a period of intense industrialization and accelerated urban growth, between 1950 and 1970 the number of companies rose from 65 to 284, while the population increased from 44.8 thousand to 150.8 thousand inhabitants. By the end of the 2000s, the municipality approached 540 thousand inhabitants (Souza, 2008). This rapid development can be explained by an interrelated set of circumstances: the accumulation of capital derived from the coffee economy in the state of São Paulo; the Brazilian state's intention to build science and technology capabilities for the aeronautical industry; the process of industrial decentralization from the São Paulo metropolitan core; and the difficulty of importing consumer goods during and after the First World War, which stimulated the development of national industry in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro and later extended its dynamism to São José dos Campos.

The link between scientific knowledge and industrial production became visible in the consolidation of a new productive space. Institutions such as the Technical Center of Aeronautics—today the Department of Aerospace Science and Technology (DCTA)—the Aeronautics Institute of Technology (ITA), the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), and companies such as Embraer are among the most concrete examples of the success of the programs implemented in the city. São José dos Campos can therefore be understood through the concepts of informal and formal technological poles (Medeiros, 1991):

a) informal pole: the coexistence, within urban space, of companies and teaching and research institutions without a formally constituted coordinating entity. In the absence of an institutional arrangement designed to articulate relations among actors, interactions occur more spontaneously through shared initiatives

and joint projects;

b) formal pole and technology park: the existence of a legally established structure designed to accelerate business creation, support company operations and promote integration among different actors involved in technological innovation. In this case, the technology park is characterized by the physical concentration of firms in a specific location, including the availability of land and built structures for productive and technological activities.

Given this history of productive and territorial transformations, the Technology Innovation Park, although the technology-park model had already circulated in Brazil before the 2000s, is a relatively recent manifestation in São José dos Campos. Founded in 2008 after the adaptive reuse of a former industrial plant belonging to Solectron, which had ceased operations in 2002, the park became part of the landscape of the city's eastern zone.

The creation of the PIT should therefore be understood less as the starting point of innovation in São José dos Campos and more as one of its most recent historical forms. The park rests on a long territorial sedimentation composed of public science and technology institutions, aerospace culture, high-complexity industry, qualified labor, universities, public funding and a technical identity accumulated over decades (Fantin & Veiga, 2026b; Steiner et al., 2012; Vedovello et al., 2006).

The adaptive reuse of the former Solectron plant is revealing. On a structure associated with the crisis of Fordist industry and productive restructuring, a new territorial layer was built around entrepreneurship, technological services, open innovation and the language of ecosystems. In this sense, São José dos Campos moved from the image of an industrial and aerospace city toward the image of a city of entrepreneurship, smart technologies and innovation branding (Machado, 2019).

This reading brings São José dos Campos closer to other contemporary experiences, while also preventing its transformation into a generic model. Unlike parks implemented as empty spatial shells of innovation, the São José case has its own historical density. The critical question is whether the placemaking of the park strengthens a new public mission based on territorial inclusion and technological sovereignty, or whether it merely reorganizes this density as image, real estate value and urban marketing.

2.2. Parque Patricios: Industrial Decline, Cultural Heritage and the District Turn

In its urbanization process, Parque Patricios shares many characteristics with other neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, especially those located in the southern part of the city. As the capital expanded, these areas lost relative centrality and assumed a peripheral position in relation to the more valued northern and central zones. The strong Spanish and Italian migratory flows, together with the subsequent consolidation of a working-class population attracted by local industry, were key elements in the neighborhood's identity formation (Guevara et al., 2011).

In the nineteenth century, the consolidation of Argentina's agro-export model, parallel to crisis in Europe, favored the inflow of foreign capital, the modernization of national infrastructure and the formation of an urban elite. Parque Patricios was linked to this context through the presence of municipal slaughterhouses, which attracted inhabitants who made this activity their main source of subsistence. The rapid settlement of families in precarious conditions fostered a process of self-construction with fragile materials. For this reason, the area was first known as the Barrio de las Latas, because of the use of kerosene tins, and later as the Barrio de las Ranas, because of its propensity to flooding from the Riachuelo River.

Located near the municipal dump and incinerator, known as La Quema, the inhabitants of the Barrio de las Ranas gradually turned this equipment into a main source of livelihood, collecting and selling materials from the waste piles. The area was therefore marked by critical socio-environmental conditions, both because of irregular disposal from the slaughterhouses and because of the almost constant haze produced by burning waste. This condition began to be overcome only in the early twentieth century, after the transfer of the slaughterhouses and the subsequent closure of the dump and incinerator. Literature and tango later recovered the image of the neighborhood in symbolic, nostalgic and romantic terms, often mobilizing its former marginality as cultural memory.

Before this improvement, however, the image of degradation was amplified by the late implementation of basic sanitation infrastructure and by the construction of several unpopular public facilities, including the cemetery used to bury victims of the cholera epidemic between 1867 and 1868 and those who died in the yellow fever outbreaks, especially in 1871; hospitals for infectious diseases; and the Caseros prison complex, which was also used to detain political opponents during Argentina's authoritarian period.

The improvement of local conditions was associated not only with the closure of the slaughterhouses and dump, but also with the implementation of a park designed by the landscape architect Carlos Thays, named Parque de los Patricios, from which the neighborhood's current name derives. As a deliberate governmental attempt to improve local conditions, the park gave the area coherence and identity. Nevertheless, industrial activity remained in the region until the second half of the twentieth century, which explains the persistence of industrial sheds and warehouses in several parts of the neighborhood. This fact does not erase the decline of productive activity, a condition reinforced by policies that pushed industrial functions out of already urbanized areas from the 1970s onward. Since the turn of the century, among the activities still preserved, heavy freight and logistics have remained in specific parts of the neighborhood, where the circulation of high-tonnage vehicles is still permitted.

3. Placemaking as an Analytical Framework: Theoretical Foundations

The term placemaking is often associated with the improvement of public spaces

and with the creation of places that are lively, accessible, recognizable and appropriable by users. In its most widespread meaning, it involves urban design, furniture, mixed uses, walkability, environmental comfort, diversity of activities and the strengthening of local identity. In innovation territories, however, placemaking assumes a more complex role. It does not merely make places more pleasant; it helps produce the image, value and legitimacy of innovation itself.

Technology parks and innovation districts need to appear innovative. Their landscape must communicate future, technology, sustainability, collaboration, creativity, well-being and economic dynamism. Thus, transparent buildings, glass facades, green areas, bicycle lanes, cafes, auditoriums, coworking spaces, flexible offices, labs, startups and iconic architecture are not neutral elements. They compose a grammar of innovation and teach users, investors, public authorities and residents how the territory should be perceived.

This symbolic dimension does not eliminate the material dimension; on the contrary, it reinforces it. Placemaking operates simultaneously on flows, accesses, real estate values, land uses, public narratives and investment expectations. In dialogue with Castells and Hall (1994), Santos (2006), Harvey (1989, 2005), Katz and Wagner (2014) and Zukin (2020), this article understands placemaking in innovation districts as a socio-spatial device that links urban form, economic strategy, institutional governance and territorial ideology.

In the Latin American context, this approach is especially relevant because many parks and districts are implemented in contexts marked by urban inequality, technological dependency, institutional fragility, selective real estate markets and strong pressure for territorial competitiveness. Therefore, an innovation territory must not be evaluated only by the number of firms it attracts, the volume of square meters built or the visibility of its image. It must also be evaluated by the quality of its urban integration, institutional cooperation, social inclusion and capacity to recognize local memories and conflicts, in line with broader debates on regional and national innovation systems (Asheim & Gertler, 2005; Lundvall, 1992; Nelson, 1993).

To operationalize this reading, the article uses four analytical dimensions. The first is urban and territorial porosity, that is, the ability of the park or district to integrate with the existing urban fabric, avoiding the logic of enclave, closed campus, corporate showcase or exceptional perimeter. This dimension includes public access, continuity of streets and paths, connection to public transport, active ground floors, walkability, mixed uses and integration with neighboring areas.

The second dimension is institutional and cognitive proximity. Innovation and regional innovation systems literature often attributes value to the spatial concentration of firms, universities and the state (Asheim & Gertler, 2005; Lundvall, 1992). However, geographical proximity does not guarantee cooperation, learning or innovation. Boschma (2005) distinguishes geographical, cognitive, organizational, social and institutional forms of proximity. For innovation to occur, actors must share not only space, but also languages, capacities, objectives, routines, trust and

rules. In this sense, the Triple Helix cannot be reduced to the physical co-presence of university, industry and government (Etzkowitz, 2008; Etzkowitz & Zhou, 2017).

The third dimension is socio-spatial inclusion. The performance of an innovation territory must be evaluated by its ability to open real opportunities for residents, students, workers and small entrepreneurs in its surroundings. Qualified jobs, courses, internships, scholarships, training programs, local hiring and digital inclusion must not be treated as secondary externalities, but as central criteria for evaluating public policies that mobilize fiscal incentives, public land, infrastructure and collective resources.

The fourth dimension is territorial memory. Parks and districts rarely emerge on empty land. They are superimposed on former industrial areas, working-class neighborhoods, public lands, inherited infrastructures, labor landscapes, scientific institutions, community memories and urban conflicts. Placemaking may either recognize these layers or erase them through an abstract aesthetics of the future. In the first case, memory becomes urban infrastructure. In the second, it becomes a decorative trace or an obstacle to modernization.

From these four dimensions, the article proposes the notion of placemaking dissonance. The concept refers to the distance between the landscape promised by innovation and the social, productive and territorial conditions effectively produced. Dissonance occurs when a territory appears sustainable, creative and innovative, but does not produce urban integration, institutional cooperation, social inclusion, protection of vulnerable groups or redistribution of the value generated by public investments.

This concept is related to, but distinct from, established categories such as enclave urbanism, state-led gentrification, entrepreneurial urbanism and symbolic urban regeneration. Enclave urbanism primarily emphasizes spatial closure and selective access; state-led gentrification highlights displacement and valorization processes induced by public action; entrepreneurial urbanism focuses on the governmental use of the city as a competitive asset; and symbolic urban regeneration stresses the production of images and narratives of renewal. Placemaking dissonance does not replace these concepts. It names the specific mismatch between the promise performed by innovation-oriented placemaking—ustainability, creativity, smartness, collaboration and public benefit, and the actual socio-spatial outcomes observed in each territory, such as weak cooperation, limited inclusion, selective valorization or the erasure of memory.

4. Comparative Assessment of the Socio-Spatial Performance of the PIT and the DTPP

Before presenting the two cases, it is necessary to specify the evidence used to assess the four analytical dimensions in both territories. Urban and territorial porosity was assessed through field observations, transport and access conditions, urban form, public-space continuity, land-use patterns, active frontages, relation

with neighboring areas and evidence on mobility barriers or integration. Institutional and cognitive proximity was assessed through governance documents, legislation, institutional reports, the presence and role of universities, firms, public agencies and intermediary organizations, and evidence of cooperation, R&D, technology transfer or shared projects.

Socio-spatial inclusion was assessed through evidence on training programs, technical education, access to qualified employment, local hiring, opportunities for youth and workers, housing pressure, land valorization, mobility conditions and the presence or absence of mechanisms to distribute the benefits of public investment. Territorial memory was assessed through historical literature, inherited land uses, former industrial and working-class landscapes, public facilities, neighborhood cultures, symbolic anchors and the extent to which placemaking recognized or erased these layers.

The following sections distinguish between documented case findings and interpretive assessment. Documented findings refer to evidence supported by literature, legal and institutional documents, secondary data, field observation or interview testimony. Interpretive assessment refers to the authors' analytical evaluation of what these findings imply for urban justice, democratic territorial integration and innovation policy.

4.1. São José dos Campos Technology Innovation Park

The PIT should be interpreted as an urbanized and historically thick technology park. Its singularity lies not only in its contemporary infrastructure, but in the fact that it rests on one of the most important technical-scientific formations in Brazil. Over the twentieth century, São José dos Campos concentrated the DCTA, ITA, INPE, Embraer, aerospace industries, research laboratories, qualified labor and a symbolic identity linked to aviation, space and engineering, in a trajectory that also reflects the institutional role of national systems supporting technical advance in industry (Dahlman & Frischtak, 1993; Fantin & Veiga, 2026b; Souza, 2008; Souza & Costa, 2010).

This characteristic differentiates the PIT from policies that simply import the park form as a development recipe. In the São José case, the spatial form of the park has density because it connects to a history of public missions, scientific infrastructure and accumulated productive capabilities. This does not mean that the park automatically produces inclusive innovation. It means that its socio-spatial performance must be measured by its ability to activate this density in favor of contemporary public problems.

From the perspective of placemaking, the PIT materializes a planned landscape of innovation. Campus spaces, institutional buildings, green areas, business centers, auditoriums, events, clusters, hubs and connection programs compose an atmosphere of technological modernity. This landscape dialogues with the image of São José dos Campos as a smart, aerospace and innovative city. It reinforces local pride and strengthens the city's competitive positioning.

The strength of this narrative, however, entails risks. The first dissonance in the São José case lies in the distance between the showcase city of innovation and the unequal city. São José dos Campos combines aerospace excellence, leading scientific institutions and high-technology firms with peripheralization, socio-spatial segregation, housing inequalities, mobility asymmetries and unequal access to educational and professional opportunities. The city of engineering, aviation and space is also the city of popular neighborhoods and fragmented urbanization (Arantes et al., 2000; Harvey, 2005; Souza, 2008). In this paragraph, the coexistence of technical-scientific assets and unequal urbanization is treated as a documented contextual finding, whereas the claim that placemaking should connect technological excellence to inclusion is an interpretive and normative assessment derived from the framework.

The second dissonance concerns the transition from mission to ecosystem. The technological history of São José dos Campos was built around national missions: aviation, defense, space, territorial integration, techno-scientific sovereignty and the training of engineers. In the contemporary phase, this trajectory is increasingly narrated through the language of ecosystems, startups, open innovation, smart cities, rankings and branding. The problem is not the existence of ecosystems, but the risk that the ecosystem may lose strategic direction when detached from public missions (Mazzucato, 2014, 2021; Fantin & Veiga, 2026b).

The third dissonance refers to porosity. The PIT has the conditions to function as a territorial platform for innovation, but its urban contribution depends on how it connects to the real city and to the broader technical-scientific fabric that preceded it. The issue is not only whether firms, universities and government are close to one another, but whether this proximity produces shared projects, professional training, access for young people from popular neighborhoods, public transport integration, applied research, technological sovereignty and responses to collective problems. In the São José case, this also means strengthening the relationship between the PIT and the older network of firms, laboratories and public institutions of technological development, including DCTA, ITA, INPE, Embraer and related suppliers. Without these mediations, the park may become a high-quality landscape with limited social reach, or a visible showcase disconnected from the long-standing knowledge system that made it possible.

For this reason, the São José case suggests that the placemaking of a technology park should not be assessed only by its landscape quality or its ability to visually represent innovation. Its main test is political and territorial: to what extent does the park landscape open pathways between high technology and the everyday city, between scientific excellence and social inclusion, between inherited technical capacity and new democratic missions?

4.2. Parque Patricios Technology District

The DTPP presents a different urban form. While the PIT approximates the urbanized technology park, Parque Patricios is an urban area reimagined through a

district policy. The district was not implemented as an isolated campus, but as a legal, fiscal, symbolic and real estate layer over an existing urban fabric, composed of residents, shops, warehouses, industries, hospitals, public facilities, cultural practices and housing conflicts. It also reflects the broader Buenos Aires policy turn toward economic and creative districts as instruments of urban renewal and sectoral specialization (Fantin & Veiga, 2026a; Fonseca, 2020; Socoloff et al., 2012).

Parque Patricios was not an empty space awaiting innovation. Its history involves slaughterhouses, La Quema, warehouses, depots, factories, hospitals, public facilities, the Caseros prison, popular housing, Club Atlético Huracán, tango, boxing, community theater, neighborhood commerce and forms of working-class sociability. The Technology District reclassified this territorial thickness as an opportunity for investment, revitalization and attraction of information and communication technology firms (Guevara et al., 2011; Goicoechea, 2017).

From the perspective of placemaking, the DTPP operates through a symbolic rewriting of the neighborhood. Law No. 2,972/2008 created an economic promotion perimeter for information and communication technology companies; fiscal benefits reduced location costs; public surveys identified warehouses, plots, depots and vacant properties; the H subway line improved accessibility; the Government Headquarters designed by Foster + Partners served as an institutional and architectural anchor; and new corporate buildings, cafes, universities, offices and public spaces began to compose the landscape of innovation. This territorial strategy connects sectoral promotion to the longer Argentine debate on innovation systems and productive modernization (Katz & Bercovich, 1993).

The first dissonance in the Buenos Aires case lies in the relationship between revitalization and valorization. The district produced real effects: it attracted companies, increased daily circulation, stimulated investment, improved certain urban spaces and altered the public image of the neighborhood. However, these effects were selective. The success of the district cannot be measured only by the number of firms installed, jobs announced or square meters built. It must also be examined through land valorization, housing conflicts, changes in commercial uses, pressure on residents and the capture of gains generated by public investment and fiscal incentives (Di Virgilio & Guevara, 2014; Lerena Rongvaux, 2019; Lerena & Orozco, 2020; Socoloff, 2017). The attraction of firms, improvements in accessibility and changes in neighborhood image are treated here as documented case findings; the evaluation that these effects are selective is an interpretive synthesis grounded in the cited literature on valorization, housing conflicts and state-led urban renewal.

The second dissonance concerns productive inclusion. Physical proximity between ICT firms and neighborhood residents does not guarantee access to the jobs promised. Technology jobs often require programming, English, mathematics, certifications, cultural capital, professional networks and familiarity with corporate environments. Without structured policies linking firms, public schools,

technical education, universities, scholarships, internships and local hiring, the proximity between young people and technology companies may remain merely geographical. This claim does not assume that all residents are excluded from technological work; rather, it identifies the conditions that the cited literature and the field evidence indicate as necessary for physical proximity to become actual access to technological opportunities.

The third dissonance refers to the Triple Helix. The presence of firms, universities and the state within the perimeter produces the image of an ecosystem, but it does not guarantee technological cooperation. Companies may share addresses and fiscal benefits without sharing projects. Universities may operate more as symbolic anchors than as agents of research and development. The state may function more as a facilitator of real estate and fiscal conditions than as an organizer of technological missions. This is the risk of a performative Triple Helix: strong in image, weak in institutional density.

The fourth dissonance involves memory and culture. Parque Patricios was already creative before the arrival of ICT firms. Its creativity was present in clubs, football, community theater, working-class memories, neighborhood practices and everyday urban life. The rhetoric of the creative class tends to recognize as creative only those practices capable of attracting firms, talent and investment (Florida, 2012). In contrast, community creativity produces belonging, memory, participation and local bonds. A substantive placemaking strategy would need to recognize this cultural infrastructure rather than subordinate it to branding.

5. Placemaking Dissonances and the Limits of Innovation Narratives

A concise cross-case synthesis shows that some dissonances are shared, while others arise from the distinct park and district models. In both cases, the landscape of innovation is more visible than the institutional mechanisms capable of converting proximity into cooperation, image into capability, and urban qualification into social inclusion. Both cases also reveal a gap between the symbolic performance of sustainability, creativity and smartness and the slower work of building public missions, democratic access and redistributive mechanisms.

The model-specific dissonances differ. In the PIT, dissonance derives mainly from the park form: a historically dense technical-scientific territory risks becoming a specialized showcase if it does not strengthen physical porosity, public transport, institutional articulation and links with surrounding communities. In the DTPP, dissonance derives mainly from the district form: insertion into an existing working-class neighborhood favors urban vitality and accessibility, but also intensifies risks of selective valorization, housing pressure, cultural branding and co-location without cooperation.

The comparison between the PIT and the DTPP reveals a common pattern: territorial innovation tends to produce landscapes of high symbolic legibility, but its social effects depend on mediations that do not automatically result from urban

design. Qualified buildings, green spaces, environmental certifications, mobility infrastructure, institutional anchors and attractive public images are important, but insufficient.

In the PIT, the main strength is prior institutional density. The city has a rare technical-scientific history in Brazil, articulated with excellent institutions and high-complexity industry. Its main weakness lies in the risk of converting this history into image, certification and urban promotion. In this case, placemaking may reinforce a city-showcase if it does not build bridges between technological excellence and the unequal city.

In the DTPP, the main strength is the capacity to reactivate an existing urban territory, attracting firms and investments to an area historically subordinated within the geography of Buenos Aires. Its main weakness lies in the risk of transforming revitalization into selective valorization, proximity into co-location, culture into branding and innovation into a real estate frontier. In this case, placemaking may mask conflicts if it does not include mechanisms of redistribution, housing protection and productive inclusion.

These dissonances reveal that sustainability, frequently mobilized in the image of innovation territories, must be politicized. Sustainability cannot mean only efficient buildings, green areas, bicycle lanes, lighting, environmental certifications or corporate landscapes. In unequal territories, sustainability must include permanence, access, redistribution, public transport, social inclusion, technological training and protection against displacement.

Similarly, the notion of the smart city must be displaced from the plane of image to the plane of rights. A city may have sensors, rankings, certifications and technology parks and still maintain deep inequalities. A city or district will be effectively smart only if it expands collective intelligence, democratizes access to technology, strengthens public capacities and responds to concrete social and environmental problems.

6. Toward More Porous Parks and Districts: Urban Strategies for Spatial Integration

The comparative analysis allows the formulation of guidelines for more porous, inclusive and socially oriented parks and districts. The first guideline is to expand physical porosity. Parks and districts should avoid the condition of enclave, corporate condominium or exceptional perimeter. This requires continuity of public space, clear access, active facades, mixed uses, connection with public transport, walkability, opportunities for lingering and integration with neighboring districts.

The second guideline is to produce institutional porosity. The presence of firms, universities and government must be converted into permanent cooperation programs. Shared laboratories, R&D platforms, applied research calls, internships, scholarships, mentoring programs, innovative public procurement and projects oriented toward collective problems are mechanisms capable of transforming geographical proximity into cognitive and institutional proximity.

The third guideline is to guarantee social porosity. Innovation territories implemented in unequal cities must create concrete entry trajectories for local youth and workers. This includes technical training, programming, data science, English, applied mathematics, technological maintenance, design, project management, collective entrepreneurship, digital solidarity economies and territorial hiring programs. The issue is not only to attract external talent, but also to produce local talent.

The fourth guideline is to protect permanence. Innovation policies in working-class neighborhoods or areas undergoing valorization must incorporate instruments for real estate monitoring, housing protection, support for small businesses, public capture of part of the valorization generated, social counterparts and community participation. Without these mechanisms, innovation may qualify space and, at the same time, make it more difficult for the groups that gave life to the territory to remain there.

The fifth guideline is to recognize memory as infrastructure. Warehouses, factories, clubs, squares, theaters, schools, hospitals, popular housing, scientific institutions, labor trajectories and neighborhood cultures are not obstacles to the future; they are layers that give meaning to territory. Substantive placemaking does not erase these layers, but incorporates them critically, avoiding both nostalgic museumification and empty aesthetic recycling.

The sixth guideline is to place public mission back at the center of innovation. Both the PIT and the DTPP show that attracting firms is insufficient. Innovation territories must respond to public questions: which social, environmental, technological and productive problems guide their actions? What capabilities will be built? Who will benefit? How will the social returns of fiscal incentives and public investments be evaluated? In the case of the PIT, this requires a deliberate effort to connect the park to the pre-existing technological ecosystem of São José dos Campos, so that the knowledge accumulated in older firms, laboratories and public institutions is not treated as a mere background narrative, but as an active component of contemporary innovation policy. Without mission, the ecosystem may become a network without direction (Mazzucato, 2021).

7. Conclusions

This article analyzed the socio-spatial performance of the PIT and the DTPP through the lens of placemaking and urban design. The comparison showed that technology parks and innovation districts are more than economic infrastructures. They are urban forms, symbolic devices, governance instruments, real estate vectors and arenas of dispute over the future of the city.

The PIT demonstrates that the park form gains density only when supported by a long territorial formation of technique. São José dos Campos did not become a city of innovation because it built a technology park; the park became possible because the city had already accumulated institutions, missions, aerospace industry, research, engineering education and technical identity. Its contemporary chal-

lenge is therefore twofold: to transform this heritage into a democratic mission and to establish a stronger relationship between the park and the older technical-scientific network of firms, laboratories and public institutions that preceded it. Without this articulation, the PIT may concentrate visibility and resources without fully activating the long-standing knowledge system that gives São José dos Campos its singularity.

The DTPP demonstrates that the district form can generate urban dynamism, attract firms and positively change the image of a historically devalued area. However, it can also operate as a device of selective valorization when it does not incorporate robust mechanisms of productive inclusion, housing protection, technological cooperation, community participation and recognition of neighborhood culture. Parque Patricios shows that territorial innovation is not installed on empty land, but on territories that are lived, worked and disputed.

The theoretical contribution of the article lies in the formulation of the notion of placemaking dissonances. This notion makes it possible to examine the distance between the landscape promised by innovation and the concrete conditions of urban integration, institutional cooperation and spatial justice. In both cases, innovation can produce powerful images; however, its social relevance depends on the ability to convert image into collective capability, proximity into cooperation, valorization into redistribution and sustainability into the right to the city (Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 2001).

The article concludes that the true test of innovation territories is not whether they look innovative, sustainable or smart. The decisive test is whether they expand public capabilities, create real opportunities, connect institutions, train people, recognize local memories, reduce inequalities and produce technological development oriented toward collective problems. In the Global South, technology parks and innovation districts will be socially relevant only if they cease to be mere landscapes of the future and become democratic infrastructures for territorial transformation.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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