

TERRA. Revista de Desarrollo Local  
e-ISSN: 2386-9968  
Número 12 (2023), 150-172  
DOI 10.7203/terra.12.26540  
IIDL – Instituto Interuniversitario de Desarrollo Local

## **University and territorial development. The role of UNPAZ in José C. Paz, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

**María Florencia Rodríguez**

Universidad Nacional de José C. Paz (UNPAZ).  
Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani (IIGG-UBA).  
Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET).  
Dra. en Ciencias Sociales (UBA)  
mafloro@gmail.com  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6410-5931>



Esta obra se distribuye con la licencia Creative Commons  
Reconocimiento-No Comercial-Sin Obra Derivada 4.0 Internacional

## **University and territorial development. The role of UNPAZ in José C. Paz, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

*Abstract:* This paper addresses the relationship between university and the city, specifically taking into account the case of the National University of José C. Paz (Universidad Nacional de José C. Paz or UNPAZ, for its acronym in Spanish). The UNPAZ is situated in the second belt of the suburban districts surrounding the City of Buenos Aires (conurbano bonaerense) in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area (Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires or AMBA, for its acronym in Spanish), in Argentina. This research—which was conducted by applying a qualitative approach and relying on both secondary and primary data (semi-structured interviews with leading experts on and long-serving teachers with expertise in the field of university affairs administration, as well as with officials from the local government),—shows how the UNPAZ location in José C. Paz made it possible to locally and gradually guarantee the right to education to individuals, and, also, brought about progressive changes in the urban space and at the city level. The construction of university facilities in the José C. Paz municipality involved new public investments that paved the way for urban transformations in a long-neglected area. Hence, the research findings allow for reflection on the role the UNPAZ serves in the territorial development of a historically segregated district, influencing and altering the local environment. This is about a public university impacting the area where it sits, a key piece, as an urban, social and building component.

*Key words:* *University equipment, Territory, Urban transformations, Socio-spatial impacts, Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires*

Reception: 25/04/2023

Acceptance: 29/06/2023

*Citation:* Rodríguez, M. F. (2023). Universidad y desarrollo territorial. El papel de la UNPAZ en José C. Paz, Buenos Aires, Argentina. *TERRA. Revista de Desarrollo Local*, (12), 150-172. DOI 10.7203/terra.12.26540

## IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

1. La UNPAZ emerge dentro de las Universidades del Bicentenario para garantizar la inclusión educativa.
2. Se localiza en José C. Paz una localidad con niveles de precariedad socio-económica y habitacional.
3. Sumado lo educativo, dicha institución asume un carácter urbano generando cambios en clave socio-espacial.
4. Las transformaciones generadas implicaron nuevos equipamientos universitarios, comercios, e infraestructuras públicas que dinamizaron la zona.
5. Su incidencia territorial como equipamiento universitario contribuye al desarrollo social y urbano local en relación con su comunidad

1. UNPAZ emerges within the Bicentennial Universities to guarantee educational inclusion.
2. It is located in José C. Paz, a town with levels of socio-economic and housing precariousness.
3. Added to the educational aspect, said institution assumes an urban character generating changes in a socio-spatial key.
4. The transformations generated implied new university facilities, shops, and public infrastructures that revitalized the area.
5. Its territorial impact as a university facility contributes to local social and urban development in relation to its community.

1. La UNPAZ emergeix dins de les Universitats del Bicentenari per a garantir la inclusió educativa.
2. Es localitza en Josep C. Pau una localitat amb nivells de precarietat socioeconòmica i residencial.
3. Sumat l'educatiu, aquesta institució assumeix un caràcter urbà generant canvis en clau soci-espacial.
4. Les transformacions generades van implicar nous equipaments universitaris, comerços, i infraestructures públiques que van dinamitzar la zona.
5. La seva incidència territorial com a equipament universitari contribueix al desenvolupament social i urbà local en relació amb la seva comunitat.

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

The National University of José Clemente Paz (UNPAZ) was created by law in 2009 with the aim of promoting the educational inclusion of a historically neglected population, in one of the districts with the greatest poverty and social vulnerability. The district of José C. Paz, where the university is located, is located in the second north-western sector of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, 40 km from the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. One of the characteristics of the territory of José C. Paz is that it is crossed by precarious housing conditions (in which formal urbanisations are mixed with a predominance of popular habitat modalities), marked deficiencies in the provision of urban services and equipment (mains water, sewage, pavement) (Palma Arce and Miño, 2017) and a high level of population excluded from higher education (UNPAZ, Plan de Desarrollo Institucional, n.d.).

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the reflection on the role of a public university, in this case UNPAZ, in the territorial development of a historically relegated party in order to study its contributions, impacts and transformations, both as a university facility and as a social and urban component. Part of the questions that guide this research are: How did this university emerge, what actors influenced its territorial inscription, what urban and territorial implications did this university facility generate in José C. Paz, what territorial transformations and changes developed in the area as a result of the presence of the UNPAZ?

Various studies have shown the close relationship between the emergence of universities and the process of urban configuration of cities. According to Fuentes Hernández (2007), Izquierdo Uribe (2005), Román Núñez (2013), universities emerge as a historical result of the social and cultural processes of a society and also in accordance with the existence and deployment of large urban facilities and services necessary for their functioning. According to Fuentes Hernández: "the university is an urban institution par excellence" (Fuentes Hernández, 2007, p.118), since throughout history it has been a reflection of the development of society (due to the civic sense it has) and consequently of the city itself. In this way, the typologies and constructive characteristics of universities are subject to the model of the city and the urban conceptions adopted by society at a given time. Historically, two urban university models have taken place in the face of population and city growth: the university city and the citizen university (Román Núñez, 2013). The university city is usually represented through the figure of the university campus, and the citizen university through study centres scattered throughout the city (Fuentes Hernández, 2007; López and Martínez, 2009). The notion of the university campus refers to the "place of the university", i.e. the "place of the universal" in the city (Izquierdo Uribe, 2005, p. 220). Under these notions, university cities are characterised by being located in self-enclosed urban areas, with the presence of university residences and controlled access routes to the rest of the city, which reveals a logic of functional and spatial concentration with segregated and self-sufficient elements, and which form part of urban policy with a long-term perspective (Izquierdo Uribe, 2005). The citizen university, on the other hand, is characterised by a logic of more dispersed location, where university facilities are located in a punctual manner and with greater integration into the urban fabric, although without planning and in diverse buildings, located without a long-term perspective of permanence (Izquierdo Uribe, 2005; Marcano, 2011).

The expansion of university facilities involves processes of reconversion and revitalisation of areas, at the same time as the implementation of large infrastructure

---

<sup>1</sup> Traducción exclusiva de los autores / Authors' exclusive translation.

works and public investment. Marcano (2011) points out that, among the transformations, universities can contribute to urban renewal processes as an instrument of Large Urban Projects (GPU). Although the installation of UNPAZ cannot yet be thought of as a GPU, it is important to identify the role of the state in the rehabilitation processes that are deployed in a complementary manner to the university. In April 2022, work began on the remodelling of the José C. Paz station of the San Martín railway, where the adjacent commercial premises have already been demolished to extend the platforms and add two long-distance train tracks that did not stop at José C. Paz. This work is considered by the university community as an important intervention for the area, since among the tendered works is included the construction of an elevated pedestrian bridge that can generate a more direct access way between the station and the university area. The remodelling of the station also includes green spaces and a new shopping centre, which invite to invigorate and add value to the railway area, a central place of great importance for José C. Paz.

The presence of the university also boosts territorial development in social and symbolic terms. Given that it is located in one of the most impoverished districts, the UNPAZ centrally provides those living in José C. Paz and surrounding areas with the possibility of studying, training and projecting a future with better life opportunities. This can already be seen in the course of studies, where advanced students are inserted in subjects through assistantships or work as employees in the administrative areas of the university.

In its urban character, UNPAZ generated several transformations in José C. Paz. In the first place, its installation generated changes in the place where it was located, since the public railway premises that were used as a paddock, and considered by many to be a wasteland, unsafe and unlit, began to take on a new meaning through the educational establishment, with new improvements and services. Secondly, the location of the university created new urban demands and needs. The existence of the university facilities promoted the transformation of the surrounding areas through new commercial activities and services in articulation with the needs of the university community. The presence of kiosks, cafés, food shops, resto bars, clothes and clothing shops and other services (health and beauty), together with the family businesses of the neighbours in the area, are evidence of the economic and employment engine that the university has created.