

Abstract¹

This essay explores in a socioeconomic crisis context whether the forms of articulating and disarticulating class and ethnicity in popular neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires have changed. During the 90s, amidst increasing unemployment and social exclusion, and coupled with very few possibilities for organising or political mobilisation, social processes tended to lead to the fracturing of groups and their demands. In lower class neighbourhoods, with a strong presence of immigrants from Bolivia and Paraguay, the scarcity of resources and the daily struggles for access to them was increasingly tied to xenophobic attitudes and actions. The flipside of these processes of ethnic segregation was the sustained growth of border-immigrant organisations, their festivals, their presence on low frequency radio stations, their football leagues, and other similar activities and networks. As the context changed, it was also necessary to ask whether dynamics of differentiation, which involved the culturalisation of the popular sectors' demands, had been accentuated, or whether a new situation had developed. The research presented aims find out whether the main identifying categories, and the signifiers to which people refer when they form groups to participate in the political arena, have changed.

Keywords: Class, Ethnicity, Local politics, Argentina

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¹Because of ethical and political reasons that will soon become clear, the first version of this text was not published in Spanish until 2008. This study is based on field data that was collected in 2002 and 2003, and the first draft was written in early 2004. At that time, the tensions between organisations for the unemployed were at the centre of political processes, and it was unclear whether new forms of official xenophobia would resurface. This led me to believe that some of the data might be taken out of context and used against the people I had studied. Hoping this is no longer the case, and safeguarding the identities of the people and places involved, I now present the following text.