

Chapter 6

Social Movements and Territorial Dynamics in Argentina and Latin America (1980–2018)

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, Argentina and Latin America have undergone significant processes of social unrest and mobilization. Within the larger context of the various movements and dimensions where social mobilization unfolds, the territory has emerged as an increasingly relevant element for the interpretation of its dynamics, continuities, and transformations. Indeed, the spatialization of political production, which accompanied the processes of spatialization of production and the social life, caused a politicization of space that shaped the territory. Thus, processes developed whereby space becomes politicized and politics becomes territorialized. These features have shaped organizations and demonstrations often led by young people, which has given rise to territorially situated, generational political forms.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the medium-term transformations experienced by capitalism during the second half of the twentieth century, we can identify that the territorial dimension has acquired increasing centrality in our manner of being and in social dynamics. This has led some authors to concur that since the nineteenth century, Western societies

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have begun to experience a substantial shift from the rule of temporality towards a spatial-territorial dimension, whereby the world is experienced less as a great life unfolding in *extensities* over time and more as a network of spatial *intensities* which articulates different points and forms networks (Foucault, 1984; Soja, 2011). Thus, the territory gains relevance as a material element that carries symbolic constructions with significant social impact; it can be constructed, reproduced and modified in a two-way relationship that results in the production of the Other, mediated by spatiality, its forms, and potentialities. In this way, the territory is also an agent of production, reproduction, and modification of a variety of political configurations, among which we can single out the generational aspect, to be tackled in this article. This transformation, evolving steadily over the last few decades, has focused studies on a phenomenon whose relevance had not been sufficiently appreciated until then: the *spatialization* of politics and its practical uniqueness, both in immediate and tangible lived spaces and in more comprehensive and symbolic social spaces.

In this article, we set out to analyze the spatial dynamics of political participation that can be considered non-institutional with a diachronic, youth-centric outlook. We see this production of participation with a generational outlook as a process where territorial disputes and ongoing and emerging political practices play out, as do multiple political and communal constructions and tensions on both local and generalized dimensions.

We believe that these processes of politicization of social life, when addressed with the aforementioned perspective, spark a transformation of the relationships between politics and the space where it is produced. This is how a socially produced space, understood as a network of dynamic social and political relations, becomes a territory and shapes an ambivalent process of territorialization of politics and politicization of territory (Vommaro, 2015).

Therefore, it is our belief that over the last few decades, Argentina has undergone a process of politicization of space which has territorialized political practices. This can be interpreted by examining the generational configurations that reinforced its development, as well as from a diachronic perspective that contributes to a thorough understanding of the process. These features began to gestate in the late 1960s, but it was in the early 1980s that they consolidated and emerged, forging a territorially situated politics. In this respect, political forms produced by young people in later decades would be marked by surviving features that, updated and reconfigured, contain many of the main characteristics of the spatial politicization of the period where our analysis begins.

Thus, our research explores territorial forms of producing politics with a generational outlook by looking at three experiences of participation and territorial trajectories of youth activism which took place in Argentina over the last few decades, on the basis of a study conducted in the south of the Greater Buenos Aires

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