

Teun Heuvelink

# *“Mobsters and hooligans”*



**The identity construction of the barra brava of Boca Juniors in the Buenos Aires neighbourhood La Boca**

# ***“Mobsters and hooligans”***

**The identity construction of the barra brava of Boca Juniors in the Buenos Aires neighbourhood La Boca**

**Master thesis**

07-08-2010

Teun Heuvelink

0473693

Latin American and Caribbean Studies

Universiteit Utrecht

Tutor: Dr. K. Koonings

## **Abstract**

In the heart of the Buenos Aires neighbourhood La Boca, resides football club Boca Juniors. This club has one of the most infamous and feared group of supporters in the world: La Doce. In Europe La Doce would be compared to a group of hooligans, but in reality they are very different from hooligans. It is an organized crime group that has its roots in the La Boca, but over the years the connection to the neighbourhood grew thin. They also have some things in common with Latin American youth gangs. Although members of La Doce see themselves as hooligans, residents and non-residents of La Boca, a marginalized immigrant neighbourhood, identify La Doce as a mafia. Residents do not identify La Doce with La Boca anymore, because most members of La Doce do no longer live in the neighbourhood. Non-residents do identify La Doce with La Boca because they have some characteristics that they share. These characteristics are mainly based on prejudices coming from stigmatization, especially in the case of the neighbourhood. The self-image of La Doce differs from the way residents and non-residents identify them, but these differences are very relatable to each other.

*Keywords: hooliganism, neighbourhood, identity, organized crime, La Boca, La Doce, barras bravas, youth gangs, football, mafia*

# Contents

<b>List of illustrations</b>	
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Hooliganism</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 The European concept of hooliganism	6
1.2 The Argentinean concept of hooliganism	7
1.3 La Doce	11
1.3.1 The history of La Doce	11
1.3.2 Modern day La Doce	14
1.4 La Doce and the phenomenon of hooliganism	20
1.5 La Doce: Cosa Nostra or common criminals?	24
<b>2 The neighbourhood</b>	<b>29</b>
2.1 The concept of neighbourhood	29
2.2 A short history of La Boca	32
2.3 Inside La Boca	35
2.4 Club Atlético Boca Juniors	39
2.5 La Boca from a theoretical perspective	41
2.6 The role of La Doce in La Boca	44
<b>3 Identity</b>	<b>47</b>
3.1 The concept of identity	48
3.2 La Doce and their hooligan identity	50
3.3 La Doce and youth gangs: similarities and dissimilarities	55
3.4 La Doce and the people	57
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>65</b>

## List of illustrations

### Boxes

Box 1.1	Examples of <i>barra brava</i> violence in Argentina	10
Box 1.2	The Riquelme case	19
Box 2.1	War for the paco	38

### Figures

Figure 1.1	Neighbourhoods of the members of La Doce	15
Figure 2.1	The neighbourhood La Boca	33
Figure 2.2	The comunas of Buenos Aires	36

### Pictures

Picture 1.1	La Bombonera, North side stand	16
Picture 1.2	La Doce, situated in the middle of the first ring	16
Picture 2.1	The modern day harbour of La Boca	34
Picture 2.2	Reminder of the former Independent Republic of La Boca	34
Picture 2.3	Houses in El Caminito, they represent the old La Boca and are now a tourist attraction	34
Picture 2.4	Shacks and improvised houses in the heart of La Boca	36
Picture 2.5	The Boca Juniors stadium ‘La Bombonera’	41
Picture 2.6	<i>El Superclásico</i> in La Bombonera	41
Picture 3.1	The yellow banner with the black writing spells: <i>Nunca hicimos amistades</i> . This banner is shown at every game.	54

All pictures have been taken by the author.

### Tables

Table 1.1	Primary activities of organized crime and La Doce	26
Table 1.2	Enabling activities of organized crime and La Doce	27
Table 3.1	Hooligan identities and La Doce	54
Table 3.2	Youth gangs and La Doce	56

## Acknowledgments

The three months I spent in Argentina were a unforgettable experience. During the time I lived in La Boca I got to know the neighbourhood better and started to feel right at home there. I am very happy that I have been able to learn more about Argentina, Buenos Aires, La Boca and in particular La Doce and I am glad that I have been able to write a satisfactory thesis about my research. This would not have been possible without the help and support of a lot of people.

I would like to thank all the people that helped me with information about my research topic. The journalists Gustavo Grabia and Julio Chiappetta helped me a lot with their knowledge about *barras bravas* and La Doce in particular. I explicitly want to show my gratitude to the Juárez family who have been helping me a great deal with their knowledge about the neighbourhood and the club Boca Juniors, but even more because of their heartwarming hospitality. Patricia and Pedro also helped me a lot by giving me their vision on things and for helping me with a lot of other things in La Boca. Furthermore I would like to thank Román and Luis for their visions and opinions on my research topic. I am also very grateful to all the other people that took the time to talk to me and help me with my research.

I owe many thanks to my friends and their families in and around Buenos Aires for helping me in any way they could with my research, for the enormous hospitality in their homes and for simply being very good friends. Thank you Juancito Criado, Lucas ‘Rulero’ Libardi, Nicolas Grundnig, Ale Lencina, Alexandre Ferreira and all the others I got to know. Your friendship means a lot to me, it was truly heartwarming.

I would like to thank my supervisor Kees Koonings for his help constructing this thesis during my fieldwork as well as in the Netherlands. Without his advice, guidance, support and eye for different perspectives I would not have been able to write the thesis you see before you.

Last but definitely not least I want to show my deepest gratitude towards my parents Lucienne Veldhuis and Theo Heuvelink, my sister Bibi Heuvelink and my girlfriend Mandy Mensingh for never stopping to believe in me and for their ongoing support. Their love and support helped me a lot in the process of writing this thesis. Thank you so much. Also I want to thank my aunt Mariëtte Veldhuis for her support in doing my fieldwork.

Utrecht, the Netherlands, August 2010

# Introduction

## *Research topic and relevance of the study*

The football team Club Atlético Boca Juniors is one of the most famous football teams of Latin America and they have one of the most infamous and feared supporters groups of the world. This group is known as La Doce, which means ‘the twelfth man’. In Argentina, groups like La Doce are known as *barras bravas*, which literally means ‘fierce opponents’. Most professional football teams in Argentina have a *barra brava* and these groups can best be compared with European hooligans. Yet as we will see in this study, *barras bravas* are very different from European hooligans. *Barras bravas*, and especially ones like La Doce, are known in Argentina for their violent behavior, their involvement in politics and their involvement in all sorts of criminal activities. The focus of this thesis will be on La Doce, the *barra brava* of Club Atlético Boca Juniors.

There are multiple reasons for why I chose to do my research on La Doce. First of all I wanted to do my research on a combination of two things: violence and football. La Doce has the reputation of being one of the most violent supporters groups in the world. This reputation in combination with football interests me a great deal. Secondly I was intrigued by the fact that there is an extremely violent group of people who allegedly have a very strong connection with the neighbourhood that their club comes from, namely La Boca. I wanted to find out how these things go hand in hand. What is their exact relation with the neighbourhood and how do residents see them? Finally I wanted to know more about the involvement of Argentinean *barras bravas* in politics and their involvement in criminal activities. La Doce, being the most violent, infamous, feared and powerful *barra brava* of the country (Grabia 2009), would be an excellent research subject.

For this thesis I did three months of research in the field. For three months I lived in La Boca, an immigrant neighbourhood in the south of Argentina’s capital Buenos Aires. I decided to live in La Boca because I was under the impression that most members of La Doce would be living in La Boca. My initial plan was to look at the identity that La Doce had created in La Boca from their own perspective. This approach obviously involved interviews with members of La Doce. Yet during my three months of fieldwork it became apparent that it would not be possible to conduct an in-depth interview with members of La Doce. They were not very receptive to interviews if you did not pay for the conversation. Paying them for an interview was off course never an option. Because other potential sources that could help me

get information on La Doce, like Boca Juniors club officials and representatives of neighbourhood associations, were also very reserved when it came to giving interviews, I decided to change my approach. After about two months in the field I focused my approach to residents and non-residents of La Boca with the goal to find out how they view La Doce.

I chose the informants I used for my in-depth interviews for different reasons. The journalists I interviewed were able to give me a professional opinion about *barras bravas*, and La Doce in particular, and they provided me with more background information about them. The residents of La Boca were extremely useful and I chose them because they had lived in La Boca all their lives. One family was crazy about Boca Juniors which also made their connection with La Doce stronger and the other family did not care much for football which meant they had a more distant outlook on the situation. The non-residents I interviewed had to have no connection with La Boca but at the same time they had to be Boca Juniors fans, so that they had somewhat of a connection with La Doce.

### ***Research question***

This thesis presents a study of the identity that La Doce has formed in relation to the neighbourhood La Boca, as seen through the eyes of residents and non-residents of La Boca. In order to do this there are three concepts that need to be clear, namely the concepts of hooliganism, neighbourhood and identity. The concept of hooliganism needs to be understood because *barras bravas* are often compared to hooligans and to make a comparison it has to be clear what the concept of hooliganism entails. Through understanding the concept of neighbourhood we can determine what kind of neighbourhood La Boca is. Once these two concepts are clear it is also easier to determine the relationship between the two. When there is a clear notion of the relationship between La Doce and La Boca, there is a basis on which residents and non-residents can comment. That is when it becomes necessary to understand the concept of identity. We need to understand how people see themselves, how they are viewed by others and how one constructs an identity. After all this it is then possible to answer the main research question:

*What kind of identity has La Doce constructed in the neighbourhood La Boca according to residents and non-residents and how does this identity relate to La Doce's self-image?*

The term non-residents applies in this particular case to people who live in other neighbourhoods of Buenos Aires and thus not in La Boca.



### ***Research design and methodology***

For this study I have gathered my research data in different ways. The research techniques I used were open and semi-structured interviews, participant observation and document analyses. Through the open and semi-structured interviews I managed to gather the most information about my research topic. I needed the view of La Boca residents on La Doce and the only way to get this information was through interviews. I also had a lot of informal conversations with different people and although these conversations were no real interviews, they did sometimes have the value of an interview because of the information I gathered through these conversations. The participant observation also proved to be a very fruitful research method. I managed to experience and see a lot of things that gave me the right insights to put things in perspective and the information I gathered through participant observation also gave me a lot of background information on my research topic. Through document analyses I learned more about incidents that had taken place and I was able to read more about the history, current activities of La Doce, and *barras bravas* in general.

During my fieldwork I conducted six in-depth interviews with people belonging to different research groups. I conducted interviews with two different families who live in La Boca, I conducted interviews with two different journalists who are specialized in the activities of the Argentinean *barras bravas* and who work for Olé, Argentina's biggest sports newspaper, and Clarín, one of the leading Argentinean newspapers. Furthermore I conducted interviews with two Boca Juniors fans who live outside La Boca. The interviews with the La Boca residents gave me a clear view on their relation with the neighbourhood and on how they think about La Doce. The interviews with the journalists gave me more background information on La Doce and on the *barras bravas* in general. I was able to gather information on the way non-residents of La Boca view La Doce through my interviews with the Boca Juniors fans who live outside La Boca.

Through participant observation I managed to gather a lot of information on the neighbourhood La Boca, on the way La Doce behaves in the stadium during home games and on the visibility in every day live of La Doce in La Boca. Living in La Boca proved to be essential for my research. Not only did I get in contact with a lot of people because I lived in the neighbourhood, I also would not have been able gain insights on La Boca if I would have lived in a different neighbourhood of Buenos Aires.

The document analyses was a research method that helped me gather a lot of facts and detailed information. I read papers to see if any incidents involving La Doce or other *barras*

*bravas* had occurred and I read books to get more information on La Doce and the Argentinean phenomenon of *barras bravas*. In this study I used a lot of details that I gathered through document analyses.

### ***Outline of the study***

In chapter one of this study I will be looking at the concept of hooliganism as it is understood in Europe and in Argentina. After clarifying this concept I will be looking at La Doce. First I will give a brief history of this *barra brava* and then I will look into the modern day situation of La Doce. I will then compare the concept of hooliganism to La Doce to see if this group can actually be called a group of hooligans. Finally I will make a comparison between La Doce and organized crime to see how much they have in common with that phenomenon.

Chapter two focuses on the neighbourhood of La Boca. In order to get a notion of what a neighbourhood is I will first explain the concept of neighbourhood followed by a history of La Boca. After a historic overview of this particular neighbourhood I will look at what kind of neighbourhood it is and how it is to live in La Boca. Because the club Boca Juniors plays an important role in the neighbourhood, I will also look at the history of the club and the role of the club in the neighbourhood. Furthermore I will look at La Boca from a theoretical perspective by comparing the theory on neighbourhoods with the reality of La Boca. Finally I will look at the role of La Doce in La Boca.

The final chapter, chapter three, focuses on the identity that La Doce has created in La Boca from different point of views. In order to do this it has to be clear what identity is. This will be explained in the first part of the chapter, followed by an analysis about the alleged hooligan identity of La Doce. After that I will compare La Doce to youth gangs to see if the two could be sharing the same kind of identity. Finally I will look at the views of residents and non-residents of La Boca on the identity that La Doce has created in the neighbourhood.

In the conclusion I will answer the main research question and give an overview of the findings of this study.

Furthermore I have to add that all quotes from interviews and all citations from Spanish literature have been translated into English by myself. Also the names of the interviewees, except the journalists, have been changed in order to guarantee anonymity.

*“Ah, estás haciendo una investigación a los de Boca?  
Es muy simple, son todos negros”*

-Taxi-driver in Buenos Aires-

## **Chapter 1 - Hooliganism**

In this chapter I will take a look at the group La Doce, that is part of the fan base of Boca Juniors, and compare that group to the concepts of hooliganism and organized crime. Why the comparison to hooliganism? Hooliganism is originally a European concept, it was born in Europe. Therefore the hooliganism that we encounter in Europe is considered to be the hooliganism as it is officially understood. Hooliganism is closely related to football violence in general and therefore the term hooliganism is also used in countries outside of Europe to indicate football violence. Although hooliganism is considered a worldwide phenomenon, football violence and hooliganism are not always the same thing, especially when the situation regarding football violence in Europe is very different from the one in Argentina. It is therefore interesting to look at the European concept of hooliganism and compare it to La Doce. If they are not hooligans, then they have to be something else. Because of their involvement in illegal activities, I will also look at whether La Doce can be called an organized crime group.

Because I concentrate on the hooligans of Boca Juniors, which is an Argentinean and not an European team, the conceptualization of hooliganism consists of two parts. The first part of the conceptualization will be on hooliganism as it is understood in Europe. The second part of the conceptualization will focus on Argentinean hooliganism and the way it is understood there. This way one has a clear notion of the differences that exist between European hooliganism and Argentinean hooliganism. After the conceptualization of hooliganism, I will focus on La Doce. In order to get a clear understanding of La Doce I will first look at their history and background. Secondly I will look at modern day La Doce. Then a comparison will be made between the European concept of hooliganism and La Doce, to find out whether the *barra brava* of Boca Juniors can actually be called a group of hooligans. Finally I will compare La Doce to the concept of organized crime. After discussing first the concept itself, a comparison will be made between La Doce and organized crime. After this chapter it should be clear what kind of group La Doce actually is and we will be able to discuss, in chapter two, their influence and role in the neighbourhood of La Boca.

## ***1.1 The European concept of hooliganism***

Where many concepts can be explained with the help of a definition, hooliganism does not yet have a generally accepted definition. This is partly due to the fact that it is often hard to determine whether or not an incident can be considered hooliganism. According to Spaaij (2006) 'football hooliganism' is something that has been constructed by the media and politicians rather than it being a real social scientific concept. Minor violence and more serious cases of violence are bundled together to form the term 'football hooliganism'. Dunning, Murphy and Waddington (2002: 2) add that because of the variety of incidents that could be labelled as football hooliganism, the phenomenon is very complex and many-sided. Spaaij (2006) gives a more precise conceptualization of football hooliganism: '[...] an ideal typical distinction can be drawn between spontaneous incidents of spectator violence and the behaviour of socially organized fan groups that engage in competitive violence, principally with fan groups of opposing football clubs' (Spaaij 2006: 4). The distinction between spontaneous and organized violence is historically observable in a shift from a pattern of attacks on match officials and opposing players to inter-fan group fighting and fighting between groups and the police (Spaaij 2006: 4). What remains is where the phenomenon of hooliganism comes from.

Great Britain has been confronted with football hooliganism since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and hooliganism has therefore been a social issue that has been the topic of many public discussions. Therefore there have been sought many explanations for the phenomenon by the media, politicians and members of the general public. These explanations that claim football hooliganism is caused by excessive alcohol consumption, violent incidents on the field of play or biased and incompetent refereeing, unemployment, affluence and permissiveness, are too shallow to explain the phenomenon. Therefore these explanations can be considered popular explanations. Yet there are also academic explanations to the phenomenon (Dunning, Murphy and Waddington 2002: 11-12).

Dunning, Murphy and Waddington (2002: 13) distinguish different academic approaches to the phenomenon of football hooliganism but only one approach seems particularly interesting: The 'figurational' approach of Norbert Elias that was later adapted by Dunning and his colleagues. The figurational approach can be understood as an approach that does not only examines the present, but also examines historical developments. The research topic that is under investigation must be seen as a process, examining past, present and future. It is also an approach that views individuals, in this case hooligans, as being interconnected

and not as being separate. The figurational approach is more based on actual fieldwork and involves in the first place an exploration of the meanings of hooligan behaviour via an analysis of verbatim statements by the hooligans themselves. Secondly it involves the location of football hooligans in the overall social structure (such as a neighbourhood), especially in the class structure. Finally it involves an examination of the dynamics of the relationships between them and groups in the wider society (Dunning, Murphy and Waddington 2002: 15).

Studies on the first part from the list above show that the fighting involved with football hooliganism is basically about ‘masculinity, struggle to control territory, and excitement. For them [hooligans], fighting is a central source of meaning, status or reputation, and pleasurable emotional arousal’ (Dunning, Murphy and Waddington 2002: 16). Studies on the second part show that football hooligans are mostly members of the working class. About 70-80 percent of football hooligans are working class in their social origins and most of them still are considered working class in their adult life since the majority has failed to rise above their parents’ social level. When we then look at the third part, studies show that groups lower down the social scale are likely ‘to be less highly individualised and more likely readily to form intense we-group bonds and identifications which involve an equally intense hostility towards outsiders’ (Dunning, Murphy and Waddington 2002: 21). The outsiders in this case would be the opposing team and its supporters (Dunning, Murphy and Waddington 2002: 16-21). Although a lot of research on hooliganism has been done in Great Britain it is important to add that research on the social class of football hooligans in Scotland, Belgium, The Netherlands and Italy suggests that hooligans in other countries tend to come from social backgrounds similar to those of their English counterparts (Dunning, Murphy and Waddington 2002: 19). We can thus state that the European situation on hooliganism is, in a broad perspective, rather consistent.

## ***1.2 The Argentinean concept of hooliganism***

In the above I have explained hooliganism as it is broadly understood in a European context. The situation regarding hooliganism in Argentina is very different from the one in Europe. One might state that the hooliganism we encounter in Argentina is a unique sort of hooliganism in the world. Hooliganism in Argentina has a different background than its European counterpart. In Argentina, a group of hooligans is called a *barra brava* and members of that group are known as *barras bravas*. This is the general term, but usually a group of hooligans also has a nickname. For example the *barra brava* of Boca Juniors is

commonly known as La Doce while the *barra brava* of their fierce rival River Plate goes by the name of *Los Borrachos del Tablón*.

In Argentina, football has always been intertwined with politics. Football clubs in general were very well organized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The clubs have always been private member associations. This means that the members (*socios* in Spanish) elect the club officials. This democratic system made it very important to be popular amongst the *socios* in order to win votes. When democratization came knocking on Argentina's door in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the newly formed political parties had no adequate organization of their own so they borrowed the infrastructure that a lot of football clubs had already in place (Duke and Crolley 2001: 99).

Every club obviously also has a chairman, who is called a *presidente* in Argentina. Besides being the chairman of a football club, most *presidentes* are also associated with a political party. This means that the ties between football and politics are very strong and that the fans and *socios* of a club play a very important role in this tie. They have a very important role in running the club (the *socios* have to elect the club officials) and in the career development of politicians. Being the *presidente* of a football club in the highest national league gives you a great platform and steady rank and file. Rival political lists even appear in club elections because party politics play a major role in club elections. To this tie between politics and football clubs one can also add the national football association and the fans. The national football association comes into play because the *presidente* of the AFA (Argentinean Football Association) had usually three characteristics: he was involved in politics, he had a business career and he was involved in running a football club in the national league. The fans obviously played an important part since they constituted the masses, the voters and the consumers. The links between these four elements are complex but are all connected to each other. Besides these four elements, businesses, local communities and the mass media also have a part to play. These connections between different elements became established during the 1920s and 1930s. This is also the period in which football clubs played an important role in their neighbourhood. They became the sporting, social and political centre of their neighbourhood (Duke and Crolley 2001: 99-100; 102).

The concept of hooliganism in Argentina first made its way to the public scene in the late 1920s. *Barras bravas* were then referred to as *barras de hinchas*. These gangs of ruffians defended the honour of their club against others in fights. The aim of these fights was to capture the emblems and banners of the opposing fans as trophies. The football violence that

took place during the 1930s and 1940s was not related to the political arena. The violence was concentrated most to events that took place on the pitch and the aggression turned to players or match officials. Fights between rival supporters groups did take place, but not on a large scale. Yet the contours of the *barras bravas* we know today became visible in the late 1950s. At that time they were called *barras fuertes* and they were seen as a group of violent fans who were organized in a formal manner. Although these *barras fuertes* were now more organized, they did not have a connection to politics, at that time the Perón government, any other than the general population:

The relationship of the *barras* with politics is much stronger since the 1980s. Before the 1980s they had a relationship with politics like all the people of Argentina had a relationship with politics. During the 1940s and 1950s Argentinean society was very politicized and mobilized. From the beginning of the 1980s when there was more money involved and when there was more of a political struggle between different parties and unions, that is when the *barras* gained importance. They started to rent themselves out to politics (Interview Grabia 2010).

During the 1960s and 1970s Argentinean football developed into the mature state it is today, meaning a professional league and institution. The 1978 World Cup was a confirmation of this achievement. With the development of the Argentinean football also came the development of Argentinean hooliganism (Duke and Crolley 2001: 104-106). Although nowadays most *barras* are hired for political purposes, during the military dictatorship from 1976 until 1983 very few *barras* aligned themselves with the dictatorship. According to Grabia (Interview 2010) most *barras* were Peronists and against the dictatorship, yet they were not involved in any oppositional activities. One of the *barras* that did collaborate with the dictatorship was the *barra* of C. A. Quilmes. Although not yet heavily involved in politics, the 1980s were the time in which the *barras* started making profits through selling tickets on the black market and controlling the car park around the stadium on match days.

Because of the professionalization of most *Primera Division* clubs, results became more and more important. This and the fact that there were strong links between football and politics meant that there was a temptation to manipulate violence in order to influence game results or for a certain political purpose. *Presidentes* of football clubs who were also politically active could make use of the *barras bravas* of their own club in order to accomplish a goal. They could make use of the *barras* through hiring them for a sum of money or material goods. This was, like Grabia says in the citation above, part of the business

that the *barras* ran. Football violence became institutionalized. The year 1967 marks the beginning of this institutionalization with the murder of Huracán fan Hector Souto. This is also the year in which the term *barras bravas* was introduced to describe Argentinean football hooligans. Where the hooligan violence in Europe mostly consisted of fights between rival groups, in Argentina, from the 1960s onward, the violence escalated often into the killing of rival supporters (Duke and Crolley 2001; 107-108). Although the first killings appeared in the late 1960's, football violence really started to push through in the mid-1980's: 'The violence of the *barras* is getting worse each time their business expands. So when serious money was being made in and with football in the mid-1980's, that is when the violence started that we know today' (Interview Grabia 2010). In box 1.1 a couple of examples are given of recent football related violence.

### **Box 1.1: Examples of *barra brava* violence in Argentina**

During the Torneo Clausura game between San Lorenzo and Huracán on Sunday 18 April, fights broke out in the visitors stand of the stadium, the section where the *barra brava* of Huracán, *La José*, was seated. The fight was allegedly part of an internal struggle within the *barra*. The fight left four police officers injured and two people were arrested. The police used rubber bullets in order to control the situation.

*El Clarín* – 'En la tribuna de Huracán se desató una dura batalla' - Lunes 19 de Abril de 2010.

On 2 March a policeman was hit in the head when two men opened fire from a car on a group of *barras* from Estudiantes de La Plata. The *barras* were waiting at the trainstation in La Plata to catch the train to Quilmes where their team had to play Argentinos Juniors. The two men were arrested shortly after the incident and were both members of another group inside the *barra* of Estudiantes. The policeman who received a bullet in the head died shortly after the incident and another policeman and a bystander were injured because of the internal fight within the Estudiantes de La Plata *barra*.

*El Clarín* – 'Atacaron a balazos a hinchas de Estudiantes e hirieron a dos policías' – Miércoles 3 de Marzo de 2010

*Barra brava* members are relatively young in general. Most are between 20 and 25 years of age, except for the leaders who are generally in their thirties. Their group usually consists of 200 to 300 men. But they are not just a group of young men who mess about and occasionally get into fights. Instead they are highly organized; they have a clear political element and a militant role in the electoral process. Their organizational style is even being considered military. The fact that the core members of a *barras bravas* group are fulltime militants shows the highly organized structure of these hooligans and that their activities are



profitable, considering they do not have conventional employment. The *barras bravas* are usually linked to someone in the club, often someone who is running for club president or who is already club president. This would also explain their relative power when it comes to club related issues. The Argentinean judge Bergés who inquired a case involving *barras bravas* of Boca Juniors and Chacarita was said to be ‘plunging his sword deep into the heart of the *barra*, but also deep into the heart of power’ (Río Negro, 18 October 2003, as cited in Miller and Crolley, 2007: 175).

### ***1.3 La Doce***

The *barra brava* of Boca Juniors, La Doce, has the name of being one of the most dangerous and feared group of hooligans in the world. Translated into English, La Doce means ‘the twelfth man’. The name originated from ‘*El Jugador Número 12*’, a name that was given to the only fan that joined Boca Juniors on their first European tour in 1925. La Doce is an official part of the Boca Juniors fan base and can even be considered the representatives of fanship of Boca Juniors. First we will take a look at the history of La Doce and then we will take a look at how La Doce is today.

#### ***1.3.1 The history of La Doce***

The first hardcore fan base of Boca Juniors existed as early as 1925, while the first incident in which fans of Boca Juniors were involved was recorded as early as 1908. Although those fans cannot be compared to the *barras* of today, the year 1925 marks a starting point of what we know today as La Doce. Incidents started to occur more frequently and the first football violence related deaths in a national stadium were registered in 1939. Two Boca fans of forty-one and nine years old died in the Lanús stadium. From the late 1930s until the end of the 1950s, the hardcore fan base of Boca Juniors grew in numbers and violent behaviour also increased, yet without deadly consequences. In the 1950s the *barra brava* of Boca Juniors became known as ‘*La Barra de Cocusa*’ after their leader in those days. The *barra* became more organized and serious incidents occurred (Grabia 2009: 16-23).

By the end of the 1960s Enrique Ocampo took charge of the *barra* and with that he also changed his name into Quique el Carnicero (Quique the Butcher). The *barra* now also became known as La Doce. Quique ruled the *barra* military style and with the idea that power should be in few hands. There had to be total obedience to the general and his deputies. La Doce’s first ring of power consisted of twenty persons, all were men from La Boca and most

of them were twenty and thirty years old. In total, Quique had about forty men that followed him blindly. Whilst living in La Boca I once had a conversation with Tito, a man well in his sixties, who used to be a member of La Doce when Quique was in charge. He showed me how they would always make a hat out of their handkerchiefs for protection against the sun when they were in the stand. He told me things were very different back then. All members of La Doce were from La Boca whereas nowadays only a few still are. Also when they fought, they fought with bare hands. Nowadays guns and knives are more common than fists. Quique had more of an economic spirit than his predecessor and he was the first who negotiated free tickets from the club, this way he and his boys could get in for free and even sell some tickets on the black market to generate an income. These were the first steps of something that would grow into a very big business (Grabia 2009: 16-23).

The most interesting years in the history of La Doce are the 1970s and 1980s, because those were the years in which the *barra* started developing into the way they are now. In 1981 the most famous and feared leader of La Doce would take power by more or less staging a coup against Quique. José Barrita, better known as ‘El Abuelo’ (The Grandfather, because of his grey hairs and Marlon Brando type of voice at a relative young age) became a member of La Doce in 1975. He was a popular man who quickly assembled his own group of followers. When dissatisfaction increased within the *barra* about the way Quique was dividing the money that came in, El Abuelo assembled his troops and aligned with different groups within the *barra* that felt displaced by Quique. El Abuelo offered Quique a deal: they would divide the incoming money 50-50 over the two factions that were now in place. Quique’s faction and the faction that was being led by El Abuelo. When Quique refused the deal, El Abuelo took over by force, outnumbering Quique’s men in the final battle between the two factions in La Boca (Grabia 2009: 29-33).

José Barrita is probably the most famous and feared leader of La Doce. Barrita had Italian parents and was also born in Italy. His family emigrated to Argentina and settled in La Boca. Little José only spent a few years in La Boca because his family soon moved to San Justo, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Although he did not grow up in La Boca, José had a lot of friends living there so he was a frequent visitor of the neighbourhood and the Boca stadium. Barrita further organized La Doce and introduced the ‘*Fundación Jugador Número 12*’. Officially this fund was created ‘to help and benefit the sick, the physical disabled and impeded people, to help the people from the neighbourhood with nun or scarce economic resources, to help hospital, educational and social institutions, and especially

to attend and satisfy all types of needs of Boca Juniors. All this without a profit view' (Grabia 2009: 68). Yet most people, and especially the ones behind the fund, knew that the fund was created to whitewash the illegal funds that were obtained through selling tickets on the black market, the extortion of club officials, players and famous fans and through demanding parking tolls on match days (Grabia 2009: 66-68). Despite the true nature of the fund, La Doce is known to sometimes use the fund for the good. According to lifelong Boca resident and passionate Boca Juniors fan Pablo, members of La Doce often bring presents to sick children in the hospital on the *día de los niños* and they sometimes help people in the neighbourhood, 'in their own way they are something like a Robin Hood' (Interview Juárez family). The bringing of gifts to children's hospitals is something that Grabia (2009: 69) also describes in his book. Argentinean journalist Mora y Araujo (1997: 80) has an even more positive outlook on the way La Doce sometimes spend its money: 'when there is some money left, they use the money to renovate schools in the neighbourhood or to buy hearing aids for deaf children'. Drug trafficking, mafia-like-killings and extortion are often mentioned as activities through which members of La Doce make this money (Mora y Araujo 1997: 80).

Violence thrived heavily under the leadership of El Abuelo. He even created a strong-arm group of marginalized and humble youngsters to execute his planned criminal activities and do all the dirty jobs for him. In 1994, El Abuelo got convicted to a thirteen year stretch, which was later turned into nine years, for being considered the leader of an illicit organization. In 1998 he was given parole and he died in 2001 after he could not be cured of his pneumonia (Grabia 2009: 88-97). Despite the violence, a leader of a *barra brava* was and is often a public figure signing autographs and appearing in public with players and club officials (Mora y Araujo 2006).

With El Abuelo behind bars, La Doce needed a new leader. In the beginning of the 1990s there were two other figures that played an important role in the organization of La Doce, Rafael and Fernando Di Zeo. The Di Zeo brothers were considered the deputies of Barrita, but they did not so much like his violent approach (The *Fundación Jugador Número 12* was initially their idea). So with Barrita out of the picture, Rafael Di Zeo, the one with the most leadership skills and political contacts of the two brothers, took over the leadership of La Doce in 1996. Rafael 'Rafa' Di Zeo continued to run La Doce until he too was arrested and convicted to more than four years of prison in March 2007. Rafael Di Zeo was convicted for acts of aggression against the *barras bravas* of Chacarita during a game in La Bombonera in 1999 (Grabia 2009: 104-185).

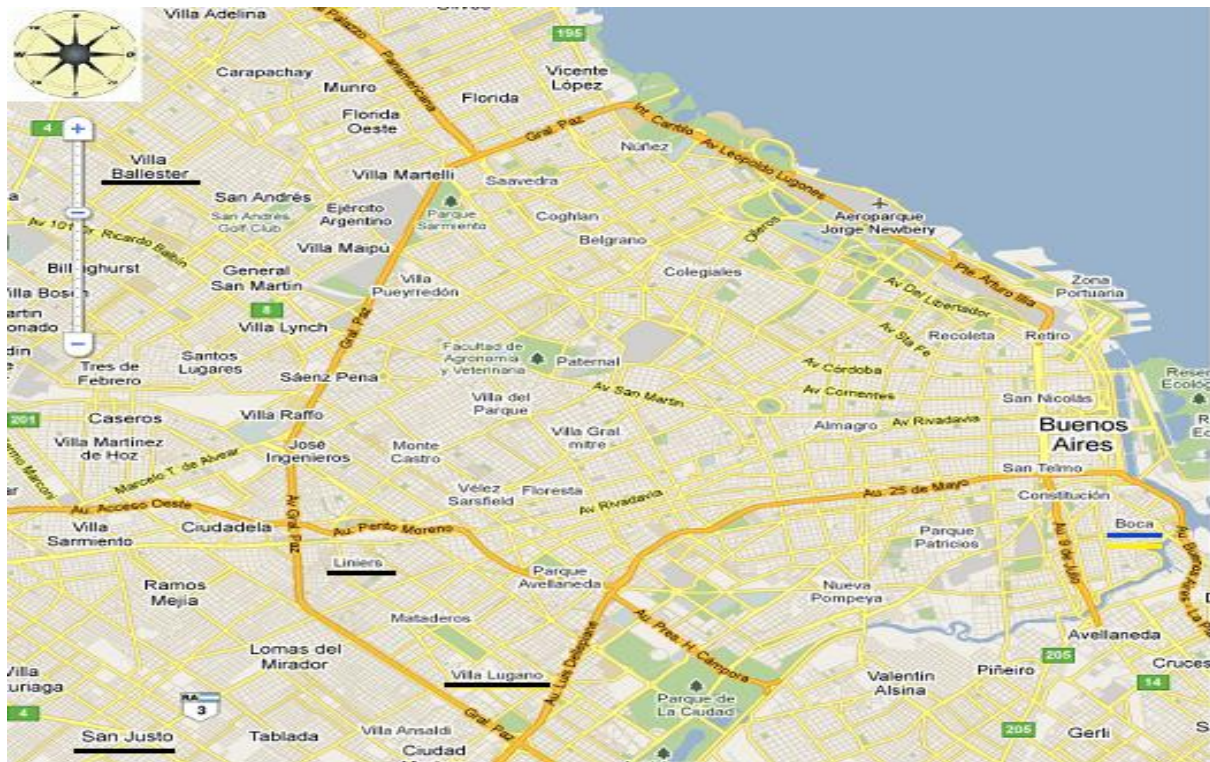
After 'Rafa' was imprisoned, another power struggle broke out which caused La Doce to break into two factions. Mauro Martín and 'El Uruguayo' Richard Laluz Fernández were the two leaders of these factions and they were in a constant battle with one another, but in the end Martín and his faction came out victorious as 'El Uruguayo' was jailed. Until this day Mauro Martín is still the leader of La Doce and the struggle for power has calmed down, at least for now (Grabia 2009: 187-241).

### ***1.3.2 Modern day La Doce***

Before we make a comparison between La Doce and football hooliganism and organized crime, we will first take a look at the modern day situation regarding La Doce and how residents and non-residents of La Boca view La Doce.

La Doce is a group which consist roughly of about five hundred people. There exists a clear hierarchy within the group, which is divided into three rings of power. The first ring consists of the leaders of the different factions of La Doce. Most *barras* have rings of powers and in the case of La Doce the first ring consists of six people including the current *Jefe* of La Doce, Mauro Martín. The second and third ring of power consist of people who carry out the orders from the people in the first ring of power. During the days of Quique 'El Carnicero' all the people from the *barra* came from La Boca, nowadays most people come from outside of La Boca. There is only a little group inside La Doce that still comes from La Boca. The other groups come from neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, far from the city centres, like Lomas de Zamora, Caballito, Lugano, Ballester, Liniers and San Justo. Figure 1.1 gives an impression of how far away these neighbourhoods are from La Boca.

**Figure 1.1: The neighbourhoods of La Doce members**



The neighbourhood of La Boca is underlined with blue and yellow and the black underlined neighbourhoods from left to right are: San Justo, Villa Ballester, Liniers and Villa Lugano. Source: <http://maps.google.com>.

When La Doce enters the stadium, they situate themselves in the middle of the first ring of the stadium. Although this stand holds a capacity of around four thousand people, only the ones standing in the middle are part of La Doce. Standing next to them during a match is a very special experience. Especially when it is the *superclásico* against fierce rival River Plate. If you have the right contacts it is not very difficult to obtain a ticket in the same stand as La Doce. Although the ticket is not obtained in an official and legal way, you would not encounter problems when entering the stadium. Hours before the game, members of La Doce start preparing the stand for the game. Huge flags and banners are being carried into the stadium, as well as smaller flags on sticks, umbrellas in the colours of the club and long strings that they stretch over the entire stand, as one can see in picture 1.2. About forty-five minutes before kick-off they start singing and dancing. A large amount of drums and trumpets take care of the musical accompaniment. The singing and dancing increases in volume when kick-off draws closer. When everyone has taken their position in the stand, flags on sticks and umbrellas are being handed out to people who sit on the edge of the first ring. The whole stand is now singing and dancing and members of La Doce climb onto the banisters, maintaining their balance by holding the strings that are stretched over the stand. During some

games, the game against River Plate was such a game, huge flags that cover the entire grandstand<sup>1</sup> are unrolled. People start unrolling the flags on the second ring and more or less start pushing the flag downwards until it covers the entire grandstand. Sometimes different flags are enrolled one after another.



Picture 1.1: La Bombonera, North side stand



Picture 1.2: La Doce, situated in the middle of the first ring

The fact that these big and small flags and the people on the banisters block almost the entire sight of the pitch does not seem to bother anyone. A lot of them do not even try to get a glimpse of the game since they are just singing, dancing and mocking about. The people on the banisters are even standing with their backs towards the game, only occasionally turning around to see what is going on. The score-line and the result seem therefore not of very big importance to them. Whether Boca Juniors wins or loses, they keep singing and dancing. Often they are still singing after the game has long ended. This might also be to fill the time considering they cannot leave the stand before the away fans have long left the stadium. Because the game is one big party, one does not feel unsafe standing next to members of La Doce. Although there are a lot of grim faces, the vibe in the stand is quite good. The only form of danger would be some kind of game that a couple of youngsters in the stand play. It is a game where one of them has to walk through a hedgerow of people whilst getting beaten for about twenty seconds. Although it is possible to distinguish a member of La Doce from other fans because they are situated in the middle of the stand, there are no physical nor material signs that show that someone is part of La Doce.

In the stadium La Doce is capable of creating a fantastic vibe, making it seem like everything is just one big party. This also comes back in some of the songs<sup>2</sup> they sing in the

---

<sup>1</sup> The grandstand would be the complete area that is visible in picture 1.1.

<sup>2</sup> A lot of songs that *barras bravas* sing in the stadium are on the melodies of famous *cumbia* songs, also known as *cachenque*. Sometimes the lyrics are very similar to the official song's lyrics, only changing a few words.

stand: ‘*si queiren ver fiesta, vengan a La Doce, porque esta es la hinchada más loca que hay*<sup>3</sup>’. But obviously in the case of La Doce, there is more to it than meets the eye. According to Grabia (Interview 2010) La Doce has two goals: ‘what they would tell you is that their official goal is to bring *fiesta* to football and to help Boca Juniors in every way possible. Yet their real goal is to make a living out of being a *barra brava*. There are people who do not have another job other than being a *barra brava*. It is a full-time job and it generates quite a lot of money’. So besides creating a good vibe in the stadium, they also have created an environment in which they make serious money.

So how does La Doce make this money? Officially they have the *Fundación Jugador Número 12* which has been mentioned before. Yet it is a public secret that La Doce makes money in many different ways. During local, provincial and national elections as well as elections for club president, they side with a certain candidate that pays them, or promises them certain things when elected. Through banners in the stadium they express their support for certain candidates and they participate in political rallies on, for example, the Plaza de Mayo (Grabia 2009: 57-60). Although La Doce might be involved in politics, they do not have a political ideology that they believe in. They work for however pays them:

The *barras* here work for all the political parties and they work for all the unions. They are fundamental parts of the political violence in Argentina. There is for example a permanent fight between union factions over workers’ contributions and the *barras* are always contracted for these fights. Today they could be contracted to faction A and tomorrow for faction B because they do not have a political ideology. They go wherever they are contracted (Interview Grabia 2010).

Obviously nobody really knows how much money is involved with these contracts, but there is no doubt that it involves a lot of dollars and not pesos.

Besides their involvement in politics, La Doce also generates an income from other criminal activities. The group from the neighbourhood La Boca that forms part of La Doce controls all the criminal activities that go on in La Boca. They have a firm hand in the drug trade and the petty crime in tourist areas like El Caminito<sup>4</sup>. They also sell match tickets on the black market. These tickets are being obtained through the club, who gives them these tickets in exchange for services to the club. One of these services is keeping an eye on the safety

---

<sup>3</sup> Translation into English: If you want to see a party, come with La Doce because it’s the craziest fanbase there is.

<sup>4</sup> El Caminito is a famous street in La Boca where tourists come to see the colourful painted houses and tango performances on the street. Busloads of tourists visit this street every day.



inside the stadium. Furthermore they sell Boca Juniors merchandise on which they have a monopoly in La Boca, they get a percentage from the sale of food and drinks in and around the stadium and they control the parking of cars on match days. If you would like to park your car in the direct surroundings of the stadium on a match day, you have to pay the man that guides you to your parking spot (Interview Grabia 2010). If you refuse to pay him they will trash your car completely and there would be nothing you can do about it. People also say that La Doce receives a percentage of the transfer money when a player of Boca Juniors is sold to another club.

An even more serious way for them to make money is by extorting players from their own club. Most players of Argentinean *Primera Division* clubs make a contribution to their club's *barra brava*. In the case of La Doce this money goes into their fund (Grabia 2009: 66). Sometimes players refuse to make a contribution and La Doce then makes it clear to them that it is best they do pay. In box 1.2 a recent example will be given of what happens when a player refuses to make a contribution.

One does not have to be an accountant to know that the income generated from all the above is a significant amount. But what do the leaders of La Doce do with all this money? First of all they pay 'salaries' to the *barras* from the second and third ring of power. There are paid according to their status and duties within the *barra*. The biggest percentage of the money is obviously divided amongst the leaders, with the *Jefe* being at the top of this division. They spend their money on investments in real estate, buying luxurious cars and houses and other material goods. Also they are known to sometimes spend a little money on good causes that are already mentioned. Alejandro (38), a Boca resident and former member of La Doce, knows how it works: 'the current *Jefe* of La Doce, Mauro Martín, lives in a fancy house in Puerto Madero<sup>5</sup> and drives the latest Audi TT' (Interview Alejandro 2010). The economic violence that La Doce is now practicing seems to have diminished the physical *barra* against *barra* violence to a minimum. According to Gustavo Grabia, the violence has changed because being a *barra brava* became more profitable:

When business was not yet so profitable, the violence was one *barra* of a club against the *barra* of another club. This was more comparable with European hooliganism. It all changed when more money was being made. Nowadays there are a lot of people who want to be full-time *barra*. So the fights are no longer one *barra*

---

<sup>5</sup> Puerto Madero is one of the most expensive and luxurious neighbourhoods of Buenos Aires.



against another to see who is the most brave, but the fights are internal, in the *barra* itself (Interview Grabia 2010).

Basically one could say that there has been a change from hooliganism to organized crime.

All these activities that La Doce is involved in beside supporting their team, are very uncommon in relation to the phenomenon of hooliganism as we know it in Europe. That is why it is useful to make a comparison between the phenomenon of hooliganism and the activities of La Doce, to see whether La Doce can be called a group of hooligans or that they should be called something like a mafia, a group that is involved in organized crime.

### **Box 1.2: The Riquelme case**

During the *torneo Clausura* match between Boca Juniors and Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata in La Plata on Sunday 18 April, La Doce put up a banner stating: '*Martin Palermo, mi único héroe en este lío*' (Martin Palermo, my only hero in this mess). Boca was having one of the worst seasons in fifty years so a sign like that would normally not be very extraordinary, also considering that Palermo is an important player at Boca and was one of the few players who had a good season. But another important player, if not the most important player, of Boca is Roman Riquelme. Putting up a banner like that makes one thing very clear to the public: La Doce and Riquelme do not get along anymore. Obviously there is a story behind the banner.

The week before the game against Gimnasia and also before the home game against Arsenal de Sarandí, Riquelme was pressured and threatened by members of La Doce after a training. They told him he had to pass the ball more to Palermo, because according to them he at least would score. But the encounter was not only about playing the ball to Palermo. It was allegedly also about Riquelme denying to give money to La Doce for their trip to the World Cup. So La Doce pressured him. Or as he said himself: 'Sunday I experienced a situation that was not very nice. There are things I can take and there are things I cannot take. I think it was very clear' (Bossio and Chiappetta 2010). When Riquelme then refused to celebrate a goal with Palermo, that he assisted, at the side on the field where La Doce was situated, people started asking questions as to why he did not celebrate the goal. His explanation was that he did not want to celebrate the goal with La Doce. He also hinted at what happened before the game. La Doce was not amused and reacted by showing to the public that Riquelme was out of favor.

The district attorney from Buenos Aires tried to make a case against La Doce for the alleged threatening of Riquelme, but the people involved, like Riquelme, were not very cooperative so there was not much of a case.

*El Clarín – Idolos en Aprietos (20/04/10)/Un Fiscal citó a Román y también llamaría a Palermo (20/04/10)/Faltó el 10, el que tiene que estar (19/04/10)*

## **1.4 La Doce and the phenomenon of hooliganism**

In a lot of literature and documentaries La Doce is being portrayed like a group of hooligans, the hooligans of Boca Juniors. Yet a lot of literature and documentaries fail to look at what

hooliganism really is and means, they just assume that since La Doce is a group of violent fans, they must be hooligans. It has to be said though that most members of La Doce also view themselves as hooligans according to Grabia (Interview 2010): ‘They are proud to be hooligans, they think that football would not exist without them’. In this chapter the concept of hooliganism as it is understood in Europe has been made clear. With that theoretical framework we can now make a comparison between hooliganism and La Doce.

To start the comparison, we will once more look at the definition of hooliganism given by Spaaij (2006: 4): ‘[...] an ideal typical distinction can be drawn between spontaneous incidents of spectator violence and the behaviour of socially organized fan groups that engage in competitive violence, principally with fan groups of opposing football clubs’. This definition speaks of organized encounters between, in this case, *barras* from different clubs. This is something that happened on a regular basis in Argentina about ten years ago, but the modern day situation is different Grabia (Interview 2010) states: ‘The business is very big, so in a fight you could lose this business. A fight is not convenient for them. The violence that comes with these encounters means that there could be arrests, a court case, etc. They could lose their power within the *barra*, so fighting is not convenient for them’. So it appears they do not even want to fight. But can this argument be backed with facts? On the La Doce website they keep track on all the fights that La Doce was involved in since the 1980s. Most fights with other *barras* and the police took place in the 1980s and 1990s, but there were also some fights in the period between 2000 and 2005. The last noted fights were in 2005. There was a fight with the *barra brava* of Gimnasia de Jujuy on a train station and in the same year there was also a fight with the police when La Doce tried to face *barras* of Rosario Central close to the neighbourhood of La Boca (Combates 2010). That there were no more noted fights after 2005 involving La Doce does not mean that the violence stopped. However it does indicate that organized fights between La Doce and other *barras* do not longer occur as much as they used to. Grabia (Interview 2010) does admit that when La Doce would meet another *barra* by accident on the street, they would get into a fight. But they would not organize the fights beforehand. The organized fights between fan groups of opposing football clubs is an important aspect of football hooliganism when we look at the definition of Spaaij. So based on this definition, modern day La Doce cannot be qualified as hooligans. But there is more.

Fights between opposing *barras* might not occur as much as they used to, yet the violence in Argentinean football is far from gone. The *barra* against *barra* violence has been replaced by internal violence between different factions in the *barra*. This internal violence

occurs when there is a power vacuum within a *barra* or when one group challenges the group in power. In the case of La Doce the last power struggle dates from 15 March 2008 when a power struggle led to a shootout in a McDonalds restaurant on the edge of La Boca. A group led by Richard ‘el Uruguayo’ Laluz Fernández contested the leadership of the group of Mauro Martín. The conflict was disputed when the group of Mauro Martín opened fire on the McDonalds restaurant. Miraculously only two person got hit, one of them a innocent woman who was just having a burger, and no deaths were counted. It did settle the conflict in the advantage of Mauro Martín who today is still the leader of La Doce.

These internal fights are not very common within groups of hooligans. Obviously in a group of hooligans there is not as much need to be in charge since a group of hooligans is usually not involved in economic activities that make a huge profit. Some clubs do have multiple groups of hooligans, like Ajax Amsterdam who have ‘Vak 410’ and the ‘F-side’, but they are not known to fight each other over a power position. So the internal fights that occasionally take place within *barras* are also a big difference with the hooliganism as it is understood in Europe. Also the economic activity that is mentioned above is not something that the typical group of European hooligans is involved in. In Argentina, as we saw, this economic activity stems from the relations with politics that *barras* had and have. European hooligans have never had relations with politics, on the contrary, they have always been outcasted and contested by politics. According to Grabia (Interview 2010) the reason for this is that European hooligans are part of the world of football, the football system, and they are excluded from politics and power, whereas *barras bravas* are part of the system as a whole (state institutions, society, etc.):

The hooligans from for example England are part of the football system. They are not friends of club officials, the police or politicians. In Argentina it is the other way around. If you have groups who are anti-system that the system wants to get rid of, it can do that. But here in Argentina, the ones that are responsible for the violence are friends of the system, they are an essential part of the system. It is impossible to get rid of them.

So besides the lack of organized fights and the internal power struggles, *barras bravas* differ from hooligans in their economic activity and their relations to politics and the system. Although it may now look like hooligans and *barras bravas* have little in common, there are some similarities between the two.

As the section earlier in this chapter about European hooliganism showed, football hooliganism is basically about masculinity, struggle to control territory and excitement. Masculinity is something that also plays a role with *barras bravas* and therefore La Doce. Masculinity is usually proven or obtained through participating in fights. Although *barras bravas* do not fight as often anymore as they did, it is however something that is part of their identity. Also during internal fights or other forms of violence they have to show their masculinity: ‘The participation in the fights is the legitimized practice that makes the *barras machos*’ (men), demonstrating their *aguante*<sup>6</sup>, for it is the only physical action capable of identifying with the ideal conception of ‘*hombre*’ (being a man)’ (Zucal 2006: 40). In Argentina it is also something that separates them from the *putos*, the homosexuals. This word is used to identify the weak, the scared and the losers. This is something that comes back in a lot of songs you hear in the stadium: ‘*Son los putos de River, los que corren siempre con La 12, los que piden custodia cuando van a jugar a la Boca, corríste en Mar del Plata, por favor me pediste en Mendoza, Gallina yo me pregunto cuándo te vas a plantar en La Boca*’<sup>7</sup> (Canciones 2010).

For both the *barras bravas* and the hooligans masculinity plays an important role, but can the same thing be said about the struggle to control territory? No, because in the case of La Doce there is no territory to control. Their economic activities exceed the neighbourhood of the club so there is no real territory. Also they prefer not to get into fights with opposing *barras* which undermines the whole idea of controlling their territory. Yet when it comes to the power position inside the *barra* of a certain group, there is indeed a constant struggle to control their territory. In this case their sphere of power. Although it is also a struggle to control territory, it is not the same struggle that is meant when it comes to hooliganism.

The struggle to control territory is something they do not have in common, but the excitement is: ‘Being a part of, turning into a member, gives the excitement of being part of an association that has common forms of acting and thinking. The participating in fights, the loyalty to the team no matter what situation they are in and the proven zeal after all the songs and dances are the instruments to identify the members of the *barra*’ (Zucal 2006: 42). It is especially the excitement of being part of a group that shares the same values that both La Doce and hooligans have in common.

---

<sup>6</sup> *Aguante* is the word Argentineans use for the willingness to fight, to endure and to step up.

<sup>7</sup> Song about Boca’s fierce rivals River Plate who are nicknamed Gallinas, the hens. Translation into English: They are the *putos* of River Plate, they always run from La 12, the ones who always ask for protection when they come to La Boca, you ran in Mar del Plata, you asked me please in Mendoza, Gallina I ask myself when you are going to burry yourself in La Boca.

In the section about European hooligans I argued that football hooligans are mostly members of the working class and that they are likely to stand low in the social scale. It appears that the situation regarding members of La Doce is quite similar. The general level of education amongst members of La Doce is primary school and in some cases secondary school, they grew up in poor neighbourhoods under poor circumstances. The leaders may sometimes have enjoyed a little bit more education than general members but none of them holds an academic title. The majority of the members of La Doce are unemployed, considering that they are a full-time *barra brava*. They get paid by the *barra* and it is therefore not necessary for them to be officially employed. Some of the members from the first ring of power hold jobs in government security though. Obviously these jobs are obtained through political contacts. Yet for the vast majority of the members of La Doce it can be said that they stand low on the social scale (Interview Grabia 2010).

When it comes to the dynamics of the relationships between hooligans and groups in the wider society it is stated that groups lower down the social scale (hooligans) are likely 'to be less highly individualised and more likely readily to form intense we-group bonds and identifications which involve an equally intense hostility towards outsiders' (Dunning, Murphy and Waddington 2002: 21). This is typical of a group that is anti-system and that is not accepted by society in any way. Like Grabia stated, La Doce is a group that is incorporated in the system because of their tight relations with politics. And although their behaviour is not accepted by the general public and the media, they have a different status than hooligans. They do also have an intense hostility towards outsiders or in this case the opposing *barra*, but this hostility is nowadays generally only shown through songs and not through violence.

In sum it can be concluded that although La Doce has a lot in common with hooligans regarding the basics, such as social background and behavioral aspects such as masculinity and excitement, they cannot be compared to hooligans when it comes to their actions. Ten years ago there would have been more arguments for a comparison, because La Doce was still having fights with other *barras* on a regular basis. Nowadays these fights are very rare. Another thing that makes the comparison quite difficult is the relation of La Doce with politics. This has always been the case and has made Argentinean 'hooliganism' quite unique. Argentinean 'hooliganism' and European hooliganism are two different phenomena. It might therefore be useful to replace the term Argentinean 'hooliganism' into Argentinean 'football violence' to make the distinction with European hooliganism more clear. Looking at La Doce

as a group, there are things going on that do not fall under the category of football violence. For instance the way they acquire money for their fund and the way they run crime in La Boca. Instead of hooligans, La Doce appears to have more in common with organized crime. But what exactly is organized crime and can La Doce really be compared to such a thing?

### ***1.5 La Doce: Cosa Nostra or common criminals?***

In the above I have argued that La Doce is a highly organized group of people who are involved in criminal activities. One of the first things that comes to mind when these two elements are combined, is organized crime. But what is organized crime and how can it best be understood? According to the Cambridge dictionary, organized crime means ‘criminal organizations which plan and commit crime, or the crimes which are committed by such organizations’ (Cambridge dictionary 2010). This is obviously a very broad definition, but it is useful to get a first impression of what organized crime is. To go deeper into the material, I will use the definition of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). They define organized crime as serious crime that is committed by an organized criminal group and where an organized criminal group means ‘a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences in order to obtain financial or other material benefit’ (Reed 2009: 9). In order to fully understand this definition, two words need to be further clarified. First of all, what exactly does a ‘structured group’ mean? A structured group is a group that is not quickly put together to commit a crime, meaning that it is an existing group that has been and is involved in multiple criminal activities. However it does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, neither does it need to have a developed structure and its members do not need continuity of their membership. Secondly the concept of ‘serious crime’ is not exactly defined in the definition. In this case, serious crime means an offence that is punishable by at least four years or more in prison (Reed 2009: 10). Organized crime is often compared to the mafia. Although mafia families are organized crime groups, not all organized crime groups are mafia. The mafia is however a good example of an organized crime group and the term mafia is often a popularization of organized crime.

Now that we know what organized crime is, we can take a look at the activities in which organized crime is engaged. There are many activities that organized crime can be engaged in and because there is a huge variation in organized crime groups, not every organized crime group is involved in the same activities. The activities that organized crime

groups are engaged in can be described as ‘the extension of normal market activities into areas which are normally proscribed – i.e. beyond existing limits of the law – for the pursuit of profit and in response to latent illicit demand’ (Reed 2009: 10). A difference has to be made between ‘primary activities’, the areas from which profits are made, and ‘enabling activities’, activities that make the primary activities possible. Examples of primary activities are: counterfeiting, drug production and trafficking, extortion and protection rackets, illegal arms dealing, illegal vice: gambling and prostitution, illegal provision of services, labour racketeering, loan sharking, marine piracy, people trafficking, smuggling (e.g. stolen vehicles, art, contraband), theft, robbery, hijacking, kidnapping, murder, fraud and white-collar and corporate crime. Examples of enabling activities are: corruption of officials, violence, threats and intimidation, money laundering and cybercrime.

Now that we have a clear notion of what organized crime is and in what activities organized crime groups are involved in, we can make a comparison between organized crime and La Doce. When we go back to the definition of organized crime and then look at La Doce, we can see some similarities. La Doce is an organized group that commits serious crimes. Their group consists of more than three persons, they exist for a period of time and they have the aim to commit one or more serious crimes or offences in order to obtain financial or other material benefit. Multiple members of La Doce have been sentenced to four or more years in prison, including former leaders José Barrita and Rafael Di Zeo whom were condemned to thirteen years and four years and three months respectively (Grabia 2009). Also they are a structured group because it is not quickly put together, their members are not formally in charge of a certain task, meaning that these tasks are not known to the outside world, and when a member wants to leave the *barra* he is free to do so, meaning that there is no necessity for a continuity of membership. So when we solely look at the definition of organized crime and compare that to La Doce, there are a lot of similarities. But do the activities of La Doce also coincide with organized crime?

La Doce is involved in a lot of activities and most of them can be considered to be not in accordance with the law. The following are some examples of activities that La Doce is engaged in: pop concerts in La Bombonera, taxes on the food that is sold inside and around the stadium, parking around the stadium on match days, percentage of the amount from the sale of players, interests and rights over young talented players, monopoly on club merchandising, extortion of club officials, players and famous fans, working for politicians/political parties, working for unions, selling tickets on the black market, petty

crime in La Boca, drug trafficking in La Boca and they are heavily involved in the tourist activity in La Boca (Nievas 2010; Grabia 2009: 66; Interview Grabia 2010). In table 1.1 the activities of La Doce are set next to the theoretical primary activities of organized crime.

**Table 1.1: Primary activities of organized crime and La Doce**

<i>Primary activities of organized crime</i>	<i>Primary activities of La Doce</i>
Counterfeiting	-
Drug production and trafficking	Control of the drug trafficking in La Boca
Extortion and protection rackets	Extortion of club officials, players, staff members, famous fans, kiosk owners, food sellers in the stadium
Illegal arms dealing	-
Illegal vice: gambling and prostitution	-
Illegal provision of services	Provide politicians and club officials with services that they are hired for. From publicly expressing their support for someone in the stadium to participating in demonstrations to delivering threats
Labour racketeering	-
Loan sharking	-
Marine piracy	-
People trafficking	-
Smuggling (e.g. stolen vehicles, art, contraband)	-
Theft, robbery, hijacking, kidnapping, murder	Theft and robberies in La Boca, as well as other forms of petty crime. Some people say they also kill people and even that they are hit men
Fraud, white-collar and corporate crime	<i>Fundación Jugador Número 12</i>

Source: Reed 2009: 11; Fieldwork data author

Besides the primary activities, La Doce is also involved in enabling activities. The most obvious is the enabling activity of ‘violence, threats and intimidation’. Many examples of violence have yet been given and a clear example of threats and intimidation would be the Riquelme case in box 1.2. Besides that La Doce is also involved in money laundering. Through their *Fundación Jugador Número 12* they launder a lot of dirty money into clean money that was supposedly a donation to their fund (Grabia 2009: 66). In table 1.2 the enabling activities of La Doce are set next to the theoretical enabling activities.



**Table 1.2: Enabling activities of organized crime and La Doce**

<i>Enabling activities of organized crime</i>	<i>Enabling activities of La Doce</i>
Corruption of officials	Closing deals with politicians and club officials. Either for payment or other services.
Violence, threats and intimidation	Threatening and intimidating players, club officials, famous fans and staff members.
Money laundering	<i>Fundación Jugador Número 12</i>
Cybercrime	-

Source: Reed 2009: 11; Fieldwork data author

Besides the theory there are obviously also opinions from within society, from journalists and from people who live in La Boca. The famous Argentinean author Roberto Arlt (1900-1942) was way ahead of his time when he said that (about the *barras*): ‘in some neighbourhoods they have come to constitute a mafia, something like a camorra, with its institutions, its fights with deadly weapons and its monumental bodies that give them name, prestige and honor’ (Grabia 2009: 17-18). Journalists say more or less the same, Grabia (Interview 2010) for example states that: ‘[La Doce]... is a criminal organization. It is an organization that does business that is not covered by the law and has a high component of violence to achieve its goal’. Chiappetta (Interview 2010) talks about the impunity of the *barras* and how the justice department lets them be: ‘they feel they have the liberty to do anything, so they will go out and do it’. Nievas mentions ‘the organization’ when he writes about the incident involving Riquelme (box 1.2): ‘This situation gives them a *carte blanche* because the *barra*, besides everything they control, also voice their opinion about the formation of the team. Not even the idols can play if they are not functional to the “organization”’ (Nievas 2010). When I asked people from La Boca how they viewed La Doce, almost everyone responded by saying that they are a ‘mafia’, an organized group involved in criminal activities.

Setting the theory about organized crime next to the reality of La Doce, one can conclude that La Doce has a lot more in common with organized crime than with hooliganism. Not only does La Doce share a lot of primary activities with organized crime, they also share multiple enabling activities with organized crime and these enabling activities make it possible to engage in the primary activities. Also the opinions of journalists and residents of La Boca seem to indicate that La Doce is more an organized criminal group than a group of hooligans. La Doce is not just a group that consists of common criminals, it is

organized crime. But what does it mean for the neighbourhood of La Boca to have such a group in their midst? What is the influence and the role of La Doce in La Boca?

*“Hice todo lo que fue necesario, trabajar y todo, para poder volver acá en el barrio porque tiene cosas que no las tiene ningún otro barrio en Buenos Aires”*

-Life-long resident of La Boca-

## **Chapter 2 – The Neighbourhood**

The neighbourhood is a very important part of people’s daily lives. People live in a neighbourhood, it is part of their home. Neighbourhoods have reputations and often specific histories. La Boca is a neighbourhood with a lot of history and also a specific reputation. But what exactly is a neighbourhood? How should it be defined and what different types of neighbourhoods are there? In this chapter I will take a look at what kind of neighbourhood La Boca is. Because I have been living in La Boca for the entire time of my fieldwork, I can also shed some light on how it is to live in La Boca. Also to give a good impression of La Boca it is important to tell something about the history of the neighbourhood and the role and history of the Boca Juniors football team. Lastly and most importantly I will take a look at the influence and the role that La Doce plays in La Boca.

First I will take a look at the concept of neighbourhood. What is a neighbourhood exactly? This section will be divided into three parts. The first part looks at the concept of neighbourhood in a spatial way, the second looks at the concept in a sociological way and the third part is about the behavioural responses to neighbourhood reputations. Secondly I will describe the neighbourhood of La Boca, its history and how it is to live in La Boca. Thirdly I will look at the history of Boca Juniors and look at the role they have in the neighbourhood. Fourthly I will compare the theory about neighbourhoods to La Boca, to see what kind of neighbourhood La Boca actually is. Finally I will take a look at the influence and the role that La Doce plays in the neighbourhood.

### ***2.1 The concept of neighbourhood***

There are many definitions of the concept neighbourhood and also there are multiple ways to interpret the concept of neighbourhood. First we will look at the concept of neighbourhood in a more spatial way and secondly in a more sociological way. Finally we will look at behavioural responses to neighbourhood reputations. According to Kearns and Parkinson

(2001: 2103-2104) there are three different scales at which the neighbourhood exists. The neighbourhood can exist as a home area, a locality or an urban district or region.

The scale of the home area can best be understood as a neighbourhood that has psycho-social benefits. It is a place where there is a strong sense of identity and belonging, with mechanisms such as familiarity and community. This is something we see for example in a lot of working class neighbourhoods (Kearns and Parkinson 2001: 2104).

The locality can be seen as a somewhat bigger neighbourhood where the main function is to provide for the higher social classes and where the focus is more on residential activities. When we look at the mechanisms that are used to construct this type of neighbourhood we see that this is mainly achieved through planning, service provision and the housing market (Kearns and Parkinson 2001: 2104). An example of such a neighbourhood is a neighbourhood where for example a lot of young working couples live.

Finally, the scale of urban district or region is the biggest of the three neighbourhood scales. This is a neighbourhood where the more wealthy people reside as it is a landscape of social and economic opportunities. The mechanisms that are used to construct this neighbourhood are employment connections, leisure interests and social networks (Kearns and Parkinson 2001: 2104).

Now that we have determined the scale of the neighbourhood, it is useful to look at some approaches that focus more on the perspective from within the neighbourhood. Kallus and Law-Yone (2000: 815-16) also state that there are three different approaches to the concept of neighbourhood, but they look at it from a different, less spatial angle. There is the humanistic approach which 'sees the neighbourhood neither as an invention nor as a design technique but rather as a universal human phenomenon, a fact of nature' (Kallus and Law-Yone 2000: 819-20). The neighbourhood consists of people who were either born there or choose to live there and they exist wherever people come together. The notion of neighbourhood is thus based on a social framework and is 'defined by the identity of the people inhabiting it' (Kallus and Law-Yone 2000: 820).

Another approach is the instrumental approach which focuses more on how to make a neighbourhood. It looks at the neighbourhood in relation to the city and at the design process. This approach moves away from the notion that the neighbourhood serves as a social framework (Kallus and Law-Yone 2000: 822).

Finally there is the phenomenological approach. This approach focuses on the neighbourhood as a cultural entity and not so much on the social construction. It sees the

neighbourhood as a 'spatial pattern whose meaning originates from profound and continued bonds between place and people' (Kallus and Law-Yone 2000: 823). This approach entails some arguments from the humanistic approach but focuses more on culture than on the social association.

In modern-day urban life a lot of activity takes place outside one's own neighbourhood. People often work somewhere else than where they live and also leave their neighbourhood for all kinds of recreational activities. Yet this does not mean that the place where people live does not influence their daily lives. On the contrary even, the neighbourhood can influence people's lives a great deal. Permentier, van Ham and Bolt (2007: 200) call these influences 'neighbourhood effects'. There are basically three categories of neighbourhood effects: endogenous effects, exogenous effects and correlated effects. One speaks of endogenous effects when the behavior of neighbourhood residents has an effect on other residents. An example of an exogenous effect is for example when an immigrant feels right at home in his new surroundings because of the presence of other immigrants with the same national background. So when the behavior and attitude of an individual is determined by other neighbourhood residents. A correlated neighbourhood effect is when for example individuals in the same neighbourhood behave similarly because of external stigmatization. These effects are more likely to occur in marginalized neighbourhoods where low-income groups and immigrants are residing (Permentier, van Ham and Bolt 2007: 200). An example of such a neighbourhood is La Boca.

Stigmatization usually occurs when someone or something is being viewed in a negative manner. A neighbourhood can for example be stigmatized because it has a bad reputation. Where a stigma is always bad, a reputation can also be good. Reputations are based on perceptions from people, and depending on the majority of the perceptions a reputation can be good or bad. In the case of a neighbourhood, the reputation it has is based on the perception of both residents and non-residents. It is likely that the perception of a resident differs from the perception of a non-resident, but the two perceptions cannot be taken separately because they are likely to influence each other and therefore interconnected (Permentier, van Ham and Bolt 2007: 201-204). In the case of La Boca, we will see that there is a big difference between the perception of the residents and the perception of the non-residents. When a neighbourhood has a very bad reputation, non-residents often do not want to visit these areas and avoid these neighbourhoods as much as possible (Permentier, van Ham and Bolt 2007: 205).

For residents of a neighbourhood with a bad reputation there are different ways to deal with this. There are basically three ways for a resident to respond to the bad reputation that the neighbourhood holds. First there is the option of leaving the neighbourhood. When a resident feels that the bad reputation of the neighbourhood influences his or hers well-being in a negative sense, then he or she might decide to leave. This is easier said than done because moving costs money and there might also be emotional aspects involved that would make it difficult to leave. In short, leaving is not always a possibility (Permentier, van Ham and Bolt 2007: 207-208).

Secondly there is the option of ‘voice’. Residents can express their opinions about the bad reputation of their neighbourhood through participating in neighbourhood groups or through contacting officials. This way there might be found a solution to the problem through residential participation. There is some evidence that, especially in neighbourhoods with a bad reputation, the residents are likely to choose the voice option. Only when the voice option does not have any effect, people might leave (Permentier, van Ham and Bolt 2007: 208).

Finally there is the option of loyalty and neglect. They are complete opposites and therefore they can be filed under one option. Basically what this means is that one can either show its loyalty to the neighbourhood by maintaining social contacts within the neighbourhood, or one can neglect the neighbourhood by not maintaining these contacts and by not doing anything else that might better the reputation of the neighbourhood. Residents who show loyalty towards their residential area hold positive associations about the place where they live and they are likely to choose the voice option when things get too bad. Obviously people who neglect the neighbourhood are more likely to choose the exit option (Permentier, van Ham and Bolt 2007: 209-210).

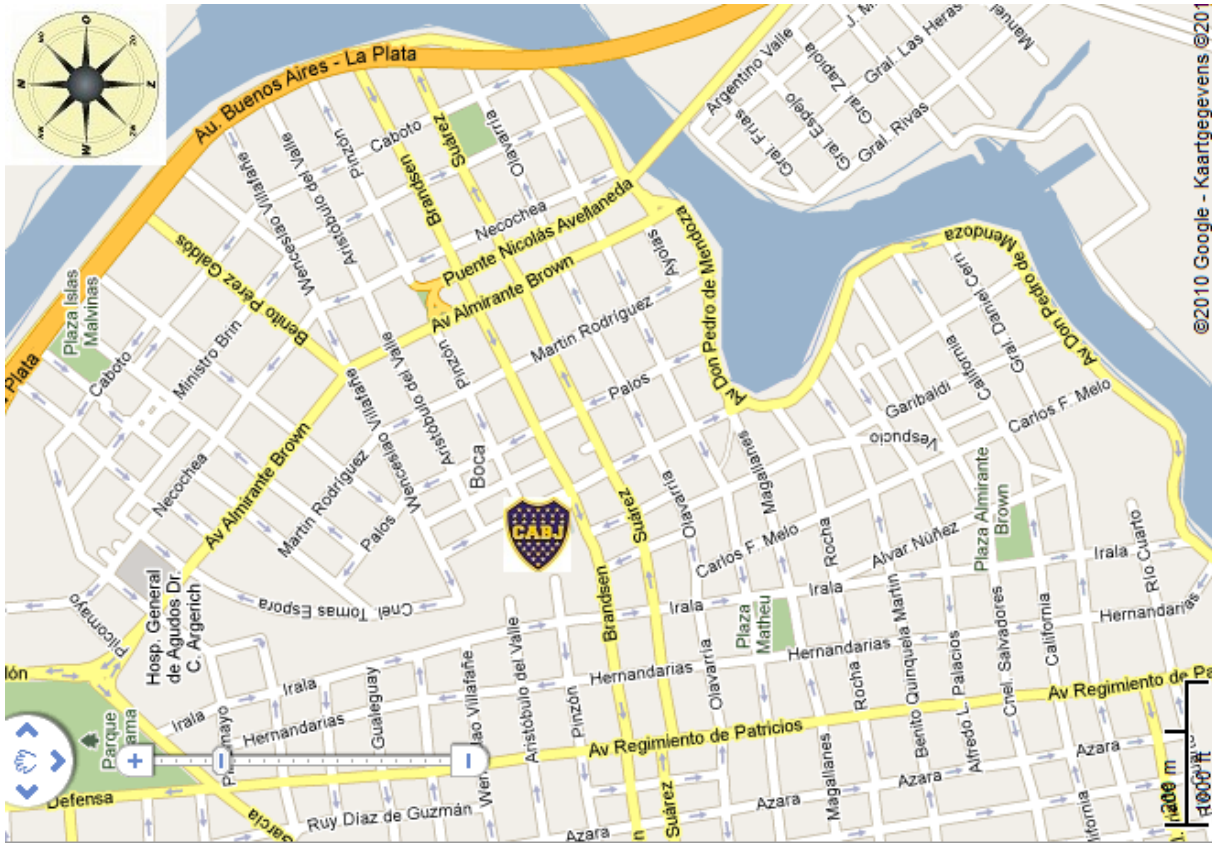
## ***2.2 A short history of La Boca***

La Boca has a very specific history that today still very much defines the neighbourhood. La Boca was called as such because it is the place where the mouths of the Riachuelo empty their waters in the Río de La Plata. It is therefore not surprising that many historians agree that La Boca is the place where the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Mendoza founded the city of Nuestra Señora del Buen Ayre in 1536, since he reached Argentina through sailing up the Río de La Plata. For several years the mouth of the Riachuelo was the natural port of Buenos Aires (picture 2.1 shows a modern day image of the harbor of La Boca). Only later the port

moved more towards the North of the city because of shallow waters, sandbanks and growth (Britannica 2010; La Boca 2010; Nogués 2003: 357).

La Boca officially exists with its own jurisdiction and boundaries since 1870 (figure 2.1). Before that, since 1859, La Boca was an integrated part of the neighbourhood San Telmo, which is North of La Boca. Besides being the year in which La Boca obtained its new boundaries, 1870 was also the year in which Argentina, and especially Buenos Aires, welcomed a lot of European migrant workers mostly from Italy. People from for example Sicily, Naples and Genova helped a great deal in the industrialization and general progress of the country. Many of these Italian immigrants settled in La Boca (Nogués 2003: 357). Before the Italian immigrants settled in La Boca it was a swampy and desolate area that was plagued by periodic floods. But the Italian community gave life to the neighbourhood and over time

Figure 2.1: The neighbourhood La Boca



The Boca Juniors logo (CABJ) signals the position of the stadium. Source: <http://maps.google.com>

they started incorporating other immigrant groups of Spanish, German, Greek, Saxon and French decent. La Boca became a place for passing sailors and many grocery stores were opened, that are still very visible in today's streetscape (La Boca 2010).

In 1882 there was a labour conflict in La Boca that resulted in a strike. The strike ultimately led to the signing of an act by a group of Genovese workers in which they informed the King of Italy that they had formed the Independent Republic of La Boca. The newly formed Republic was not to survive long. Gaucho president General Julio A. Roca (1843-1914) went down to La Boca to remove the Genovese flag. The flag had been risen as a token of independence and after its removal the conflict was over. Wall paintings, like the one in picture 2.2, still remind the people in La Boca of the small Republic (Nogués 2003: 357).

La Boca characterized itself for being a neighbourhood with loud, melancholic and amusing people. They spoke the Genovese dialect known as *Xeneixe*<sup>8</sup> and acted as if they were back in Genova. They were hardworking and solidary people, formed numerous institutions to help the community and they founded newspapers, sport clubs and cultural clubs. Given the neighbourhood's high sensitivity to art, many singers, musicians, poets and artists were born in La Boca and many of them had a significant place in the popular sense.



Picture 2.1: The modern day harbour of La Boca.



Picture 2.2: Reminder of the former Independent Republic of La Boca.



Picture 2.3: Houses in El Caminito, they represent the old La Boca and are now a tourist attraction.

The solidarity of the people of La Boca manifests itself through the volunteer fire department that is in place within the neighbourhood boundaries. The department is well known and appreciated for their hard work, professionalism and community work. Most of the houses in La Boca were, and still are, made of wood and veneer and therefore extremely flammable,

<sup>8</sup> Boca Juniors football team is also known as *Los Xeneizes*, a name referring to their Genovese heritage.



making fire a constant threat. The task of the fireman was and still is fundamental in La Boca (La Boca 2010).

Although vulnerable to fires, the wooden houses do have a particular architecture. They have a somewhat chaotic structure with iron balconies that have been preserved throughout the years. The houses have many different colours (picture 2.3) because the paint was too expensive to paint the whole house in the same colour, so they painted it with the paint the sailors brought home (La Boca 2010). La Boca is also the neighbourhood of Boca Juniors, one of the most famous Latin American football clubs. I will elaborate more on Boca Juniors in section 2.3.

### ***2.3 Inside La Boca***

From its early days of existence La Boca has been a neighbourhood of workers and immigrants and up until today not much has changed. It is still a working-class neighbourhood with approximately 46,694 inhabitants (Dirección General de Estadística y Censos 2010) that consists for a large part of immigrants from other Latin American countries such as Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay. It is considered one of the most marginalized neighbourhoods of Buenos Aires<sup>9</sup> (Nogués 2003: 358). Describing La Boca as a poor neighbourhood would not do the place any justice, impoverished would be a better description, but there are definitely signs of poverty when looking for example at some of the housing (picture 2.4) and certain alleys and streets. Shacks like the one in picture 2.4 are often situated between tenements. These tenements are flats where lower income residents live and are not to be compared with the apartment blocks where the middle class lives.

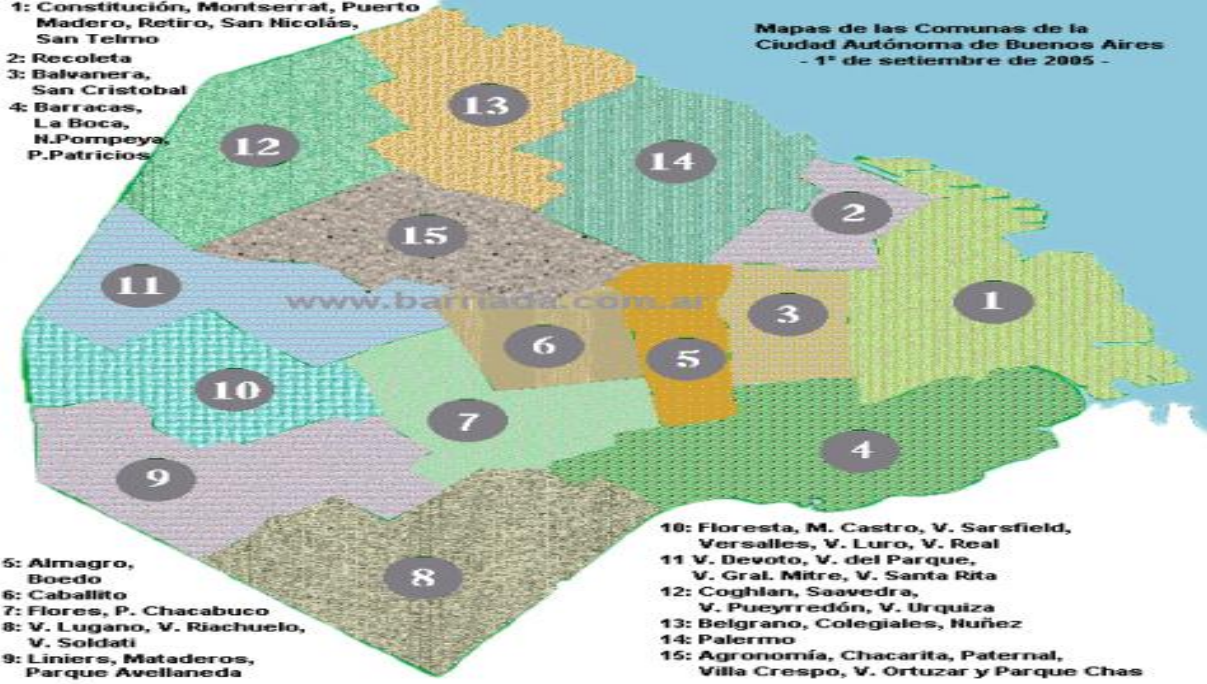
Looking at some statistics we can see that the area to which La Boca is classified to (Comuna 4, figure 2.2) has an unemployment rate of 7,1 percent. This might partly be explained through the fact that of the population that is older than 25 years, 11,6 percent did not finish primary school and 21,4 percent did not finish secondary school. The unemployment may also be partly the reason for the fact that 27,9 percent of the population and 19,2 percent of the households in comuna 4 live in poverty, making the area the second poorest area of Buenos Aires. Also taking into consideration that the difference with the third poorest area is considerable. This existing poverty leads to overcrowding in houses. About 19 percent of the population in comuna 4 suffers from overcrowding (Banco de Datos 2010).

---

<sup>9</sup> By Buenos Aires I mean the city centre and not the outskirts of the city. Also the different shanty towns, in Argentina commonly known as villas, are not taken into consideration.

Although impoverished, there is no chaos and the rule of law seems to be pretty apparent. There is a police station situated in the middle of La Boca, Comisaría 24, and squad cars are regularly seen patrolling the streets. It is a neighbourhood with a lot of activity. There are many grocery shops, supermarkets, family businesses and restaurants, which means that people do not have to leave the neighbourhood to fulfil their primary needs. Also facilities like hospitals and school are present, the hospital even being the best hospital in the city.

**Figure 2.2: The comunas of Buenos Aires**



La Boca is part of comuna 4 together with Barracas, N. Pompeya and P. Patricios. Together they make up for 245.186 residents. Source: <http://www.barriada.com.ar>



**Picture 2.4: Shacks and improvised houses in the heart of La Boca.**

Residents of La Boca, also known as *boquenses*, would describe their neighbourhood as humble or modest. Yet there are also a number of people living in La Boca who are part of the middle class. These middle class residents, who are mostly from European origin, often look down on the lower class residents of the neighbourhood, who are mostly immigrants from other Latin American countries. They regard them as uncivilized and dangerous intruders. During a conversation with an elderly resident of La Boca I asked him if he thought the neighbourhood changed much throughout the years. He told me that although La Boca has always been a modest and marginalized neighbourhood, it used to be a lot safer and there used to be more social control. He used to have a workshop in La Boca and sometimes after work, he and some friends got drunk because they drank too much. They then forgot to lock up the place, leaving it for everyone to enter. They forgot to lock up quite a lot of times but nothing ever happened. Today this would be unthinkable he said. According to him the neighbourhood is deteriorating because of the drugs and because of the poor immigrants. This might be the opinion of an elderly who claims that back in the days everything was better, but Guano (2006: 358), who also did fieldwork in La Boca, seems to be stating the same thing:

In fact, many of them (La Boca middle class) blamed most of their problems on the much poorer population of the tenements, whom they deemed responsible for the physical and moral degradation of the neighbourhood, the erosion of the local European heritage, the lack of sanitation, the neglect by the city government, the failure to attract private investments, the decline in property values, and the agony of local businesses. In sum, the deterioration of La Boca as a whole.

So what are the main factors of this deterioration of La Boca? According to the Juárez family, who have been living in La Boca for almost their whole lives, most problems are caused by drugs: ‘the drugs are terrible, the robberies and all the other crime are because of the drugs, drugs are the heart of the problems in La Boca’ (Interview Juárez family 2010). In box 2.1 an example is given of how drug problems in La Boca can turn to the worst. Because of the problems in La Boca, drugs related or not, the neighbourhood has a reputation of being violent and dangerous. It has a bad reputation so to speak. Some taxi drivers were very hesitant of driving me to La Boca in the early hours of the morning, and some even refused it. When they did bring me home, they were anxious for me to get in my house as quickly as possible. Also some Argentinean friends of mine who live in other parts of the city were not very keen on coming to La Boca after sundown. Often when I told people where I was staying, they looked at me as if I was crazy. Although violent things do happen in La Boca, as

box 2.1 proofs, I myself never experienced any real violence or aggression while living in La Boca.

Residents themselves also do not think that they live in a dangerous or violent neighbourhood. Most residents are aware of the bad reputation of the neighbourhood, but they do not share this outlook:

La Boca is not a violent neighbourhood. In a violent neighbourhood you have robberies and killings every day. Like in every other place there are areas where you should not go, it is the same here. In a touristic place, like El Caminito, you will have more crime because the thieves know what they can get from the tourists. But it is not a place where there is crime by nature, or that is dangerous or violent, not at all (Interview Juárez family 2010).

Pedro, a 21-year old La Boca resident, has more or less the same opinion. He also states that there are places one should not go at night, like Plaza Solís where Boca Juniors was founded, but that the neighbourhood is not as dangerous as people sometimes think. Yet he does understand that the neighbourhood has a bad reputation because of the drug problems and incidents like the one in box 2.1. According to the mother of the Juárez family there exists a lot of solidarity between neighbours in La Boca. This is partly because of the fires that frequently plagued La Boca, a good neighbour could be the difference between life and death. ‘It is a neighbourhood with a spirit of helping each other’ (Interview Juárez family 2010).

### **Box 2.1: War for the paco<sup>10</sup>**

In less than 48 hours four youngsters were shot death in La Boca in a small drugs war. Two young men of 20 and 22 years old were killed, as well as two sisters of 28 and 30 years old. The first killing happened on Sunday during the Boca Juniors – Rosario Central game. A youngster named Pablo Lucas Canteros (22) was shot in the mouth because of an alleged drug debt. The boy was considered a hero amongst his neighbours because of saving some people from a fire a couple of years back. The body was found only a block away from the police station ‘Comisaría 24’.

The police think that the shooting of the two sisters, Natalia (28) and Patricia Moreira (30), was an act of vengeance for the death of Canteros. The Moreira sisters were known drug sellers in the neighbourhood and it is understood that Canteros was indebted with the sisters for paco. The death of 20 year old Javier Rodriguez was not planned, he was just visiting family members and found himself at the wrong place at the wrong time. Javier was shot five times, Natalia eights and Patricia nine times.

*El Clarín - Guerra por el paco: matan a cuatro jóvenes en La Boca – 06/04/2010*

<sup>10</sup> Paco is a drug that is made with the leftovers from the production of cocaine. It is highly addictive and often sold for about 50 cents per dose. It is extremely popular in Argentina with more than 70.000 youngsters (ages 16 to 26) that have tried the drug in greater Buenos Aires (Taylor 2008).

The neighbourhood reactions to the four killings were quite calm, probably because most victims were involved in the drug trafficking and were therefore not innocent bystanders and also because things like this are known to happen in La Boca. Yet my neighbour Patricia<sup>11</sup> (Interview 2010) was convinced that La Doce had something to do with the killings. She argued that since La Doce is involved with the drug trafficking in La Boca, they must have had something to do with this too. According to her the members of La Doce are nothing but *asesinos asueltos*, hired killers. Although the assumptions of Patricia could have been true, there were no leads to confirm this and the media also never mentioned the possible involvement of La Doce.

## **2.4 Club Atlético Boca Juniors**

The pride of the neighbourhood is undoubtedly the Club Atlético Boca Juniors football team. Founded in 1905, the club has always been a big part of the identity of La Boca. The club colours are everywhere to be seen in the neighbourhood and from many places within the neighbourhood you can see the classic football stadium of Boca Juniors, La Bombonera<sup>12</sup> (picture 2.5). Boca Juniors was founded on April 3 1905 by a group of five young Italian immigrants who lived in the neighbourhood and who wanted to formalize their former club Independencia Sud. They chose the name Boca Juniors because they wanted Boca, the name of the neighbourhood, to be also mentioned in the name of the club and they added Juniors because English names were very typical in those days. The first president of the club was one of the founding youngsters, Esteban Miguel Baglietto. It was not until 1907 that they adopted the colours blue and yellow that they still use today. Juan Bricchetto worked at the docks in La Boca and one day saw a ship passing that was sailing under the Swedish flag. They decided the blue and yellow of the Swedish flag would be the colours of Boca Juniors. These two colours are today very dominant in La Boca (Historia 2010).

On 21 of April 1905 Boca Juniors played their first game, but it was not until 1908 that they enlisted themselves in an official league. They started playing in the Second Division of the *Liga Oficial* and had their first game on 3 May against Belgrano which they lost 3 to 1. Their first international game was in 1907 in Buenos Aires against Universal de Montevideo from Uruguay. In 1913 the club achieved promotion to the *Primera Division* and

---

<sup>11</sup> Patricia was my neighbour in La Boca. She is a woman in her fifties and could be considered part of the middle class in La Boca.

<sup>12</sup> La Bombonera means 'The Chocolate Box' because it has the shape of a box of bonbons.

they would never relegate anymore. In 1919 they won their first championship title and many would follow in the 1920s. Professionalism came to La Boca in 1931 and on 31 May 1940 La Bombonera got inaugurated. The club entered the *Copa Libertadores*<sup>13</sup> for the first time in 1963 and they directly reached the final in which the Santos of Pelé got the better of them.

The 1980s were very hard on Boca Juniors and almost brought the club to its knees. Not only the results were poor but the financial situation of the club was a disaster. The club got saved and managed to get back on its feet. Almost the only memorable thing of the 1980s for Boca Juniors was the arrival of Diego Armando Maradona who came to the club in 1981 and immediately won them the title in the same year. Shortly afterwards he got transferred to Europe. After the disastrous 1980s it took quite some time before the successes returned to La Boca. From 1998 onwards Boca Juniors won eleven international trophies and seven domestic titles in ten years. The men behind these successes were former club president and current mayor of Buenos Aires Mauricio Macri and legendary manager Carlos Bianchi. The current president of the club is Jorge Ameal (Historia 2010). Nowadays the only professional club in La Boca is Boca Juniors, but a curious fact is that River Plate is originally also from La Boca. Yet they moved to another neighbourhood a couple of years after the foundation in 1901 (La Boca 2010).

Boca Juniors has an important role in the neighbourhood but it would go a bit far to say that Boca Juniors influences the daily life in La Boca in a direct way, except on match days when residents focus their activities on the game. Yet as Pablo, a passionate Boca Juniors fan puts it: ‘with Boca you are born. It is a feeling. When you are born with Boca you think about them 24 hours a day, 365 days a year’ (Interview Juárez family 2010). I also heard stories of people from La Boca who moved abroad for work or study, but came back because they missed Boca Juniors too much. In the local gym the only discussion topic is Boca Juniors. So the club may not dominate daily life in La Boca, it does dominate the lives and thoughts of a lot of fans and it also has a big influence on the neighbourhood:

The club does a lot of social things for the neighbourhood. They fixed a lot of streets in the backstreets of the neighbourhood and they have put more vigilance in the problematic areas. They also fixed a lot of houses for the most marginalized people, *conventillos* for example. They have a very important social function in the whole neighbourhood. The club is completely integrated in the neighbourhood and the neighbourhood is completely integrated in the club (Interview Juárez family 2010).

---

<sup>13</sup> Latin American equivalent of the UEFA Champions League.

Besides investing in the neighbourhood, the club also employs a considerable amount of people from La Boca, meaning that the majority of the people who work for Boca Juniors are from La Boca.



Picture 2.5: The Boca Juniors stadium 'La Bombonera'    Picture 2.6: *El Superclásico* in La Bombonera

Now that we have an image of La Boca as a neighbourhood and of the club Boca Juniors, it is useful to take a look at what kind of neighbourhood La Boca is from a theoretical perspective. From what kind of neighbourhood does La Doce originate and is La Boca the type of neighbourhood where criminal organizations like La Doce can proceed their activities undisturbed?

### ***2.5 La Boca from a theoretical perspective***

We have taken a look at La Boca from a practical perspective and now we will take a look at La Boca from a theoretical perspective. Like I have stated in the beginning of this chapter, there are three different scales at which the neighbourhood exists: a home area, a locality or an urban district or region. It is not very hard to connect La Boca with one of these scales. La Boca would be a typical home area since, as I have stated in the section above, there is a strong sense of identity and belonging with the neighbourhood and there are also mechanisms such as familiarity and community. Although Guano (2003) states in her article that there exists a struggle between the middle class residents and the lower class immigrants, they all have a strong sense of identity and belonging with La Boca albeit in a different way. The familiarity and community is visible through relationships with neighbours and the way Boca Juniors invests in social projects. La Boca does definitely not qualify for the other two scales



since those are places where higher social classes reside and La Boca is a neighbourhood with mostly lower income residents.

Now that we have established that La Boca is at the scale of a home area, we can determine what kind of neighbourhood La Boca is in a more sociological way. Between the instrumental, humanistic and phenomenological approach, the humanistic approach is the most suited approach for a neighbourhood like La Boca. The humanistic approach sees the neighbourhood as a place that consists of people who were either born there or choose to live there and that a neighbourhood exists wherever people come together. La Boca is a good example of this because obviously people are born here, but also a lot of people choose to live in La Boca, for example many immigrants. People come together in La Boca and the neighbourhood is definitely defined by the people that are inhabiting it. The immigrant neighbourhood La Boca is defined by the Italian immigrants that have been living there for over a century and by the immigrants from other Latin American countries. It may even be a classic example of a neighbourhood that can be seen from a humanistic approach. The other two approaches are not suitable for La Boca. First of all the instrumental approach looks at the neighbourhood in relation to the city and at the design process. A more modern and relatively new neighbourhood like Puerto Madero would be a good example of a neighbourhood with an instrumental approach. Finally the phenomenological approach is more suited for La Boca than the instrumental approach, but the phenomenological approach focuses more on the cultural entity and not so much on the social construction. La Boca is not a cultural entity but more a cultural mix and therefore more a social construction.

When we look at the neighbourhood effects that can be ascribed to a neighbourhood, there are two of the three categories of neighbourhood effects that fit La Boca. In the first place La Boca is a neighbourhood with exogenous effects. It is a neighbourhood where for example new immigrants feel right at home because of the presence of other immigrants that come from the same country or same region. Since La Boca is primarily a neighbourhood consisting of immigrants, this example is very striking. Secondly La Boca is a neighbourhood with correlated effects. Residents form a front or behave similarly because of external stigmatization, they speak for example in terms such as 'the people of La Boca' and they demonstrate together. People from La Boca are proud of being a *boquense*. Also correlated effects are more likely to occur in marginalized neighbourhoods and La Boca is such a place.

A neighbourhood always has a reputation. La Boca is a neighbourhood that has two reputations, an internal reputation (the way residents qualify the neighbourhood) and an



external reputation (the way non-residents qualify the neighbourhood). The external reputation might also be called external stigmatization since in my experience the external reputation of La Boca was never positive. Residents of La Boca such as the Juárez family and Pedro and Patricia feel that it is a neighbourhood with problems, but not that it is a dangerous or violent place. Pedro (21) for example does understand why La Boca has a bad reputation in Buenos Aires, because of the drug problems and incidents like the one in box 2.1, but he does not share the opinion that La Boca is a bad neighbourhood. He has been living in La Boca his whole life and nothing ever happened to him. Yet non-residents stigmatize La Boca to a large extent. Sometimes a taxi would not take me home because they felt it was too dangerous at night, a lot of my friends in Buenos Aires had a bad opinion about La Boca and a lot of people that I told I was living in La Boca asked me if that was not dangerous and if I was not scared. The neighbourhood is being stigmatized and every time a violent incident does take place, this stigmatization is being confirmed and the reputation only grows worse.

As described in the theoretical section, there are basically three ways for residents to deal with the bad reputation of their neighbourhood. The first option would be to leave the neighbourhood, but despite the external stigmatization of the neighbourhood I have not met any residents during my fieldwork that desperately wanted to leave La Boca. What I did encounter were various street protests where people voiced their opinions about certain topics. The option voice is thus an option that is frequently used in La Boca and not only through street protests but also through neighbourhood associations like the 'Asociación de Vecinos La Boca' who primarily focuses on the environmental conditions in La Boca and the Riachuelo. Also the option of loyalty is frequently seen in La Boca. The strong bonds between neighbours and the many grocery shops and restaurants are a good example of that. Also the bond of fanship that a lot of people have with the club Boca Juniors makes them more loyal to the neighbourhood.

So in sum we can conclude that in theory the neighbourhood of La Boca is a home area that can be seen from a humanistic approach, with exogenous and correlated neighbourhood effects. This means that its residents strongly identify with the neighbourhood and that there is a lot of social activity between its loyal residents. If there is any prolonged discontent amongst the residents, most of them will voice this discontent rather than leave the neighbourhood. From the point of view of the resident, La Boca does not have a bad reputation, although residents admit violent things do happen and that there are parts of the neighbourhood where one should not go. For non-residents La Boca has a very bad

reputation and it suffers from stigmatization. These stigmatizations are confirmed by violent incidents that do happen in La Boca. Yet although stigmatized, La Boca residents stay loyal to their neighbourhood and are more inclined to voice their discontents than to leave the neighbourhood.

So how do people who live in a home area view La Doce? Does the stigmatization of La Boca have anything to do with the presence of La Doce in the neighbourhood and do residents of La Boca voice their discontent about the presence of La Doce?

## ***2.6 The role of La Doce in La Boca***

Although La Doce only consists for a small part out of people who are actually from La Boca, they can still play an important role in the neighbourhood. In chapter three I will take a look at the identity that La Doce has formed inside La Boca and in this section I will take a look at what La Doce actually does in La Boca and how they influence people's daily lives if they do so at all. In this section there might be some repetitions of things that have been pointed out before, but I will only do this in order to give a more complete picture of the role of La Doce in La Boca.

The group of La Doce that still lives in La Boca is a group with considerable influence in the *barra*. The leader of the La Boca group, Santiago Lancry, is a very important member of the *barra*. He has been so for many years and has many important political contacts. He also works as a security officer for the legislature of the city of Buenos Aires, a job he got thanks to the Radical party. Under his leadership the group controls many things in La Boca. They are involved in the tourism that takes place in El Caminito, they are involved in the drug trafficking in the neighbourhood, the petty crime and the stationing of cars on match days. It comes down to the understanding that the group under the leadership of Lancry is involved in almost all illicit activities that take place in La Boca. That is for example one of the reasons that Patricia (Interview 2010) thinks that they are also involved in the four drug related killings that were mentioned in box 2.1 The money that is being made with the illicit activities goes for a big part into the pockets of the members of the La Boca group (Interview Grabia 2010).

A group that controls almost all criminal activities in a neighbourhood is usually feared by the residents of that same neighbourhood. In La Boca there are more or less two sides. The ones that fear La Doce and the ones that cannot be bothered by La Doce. Patricia

(Interview 2010) for example admits that she is quite scared of the members of La Doce that live in La Boca. She argues that one should never get involved with them, *no se mete*, and that they are extremely dangerous. She says that people in the neighbourhood are very scared of them and that they have a lot of influence, not only in La Boca, but also in Argentina as a whole. ‘They have a lot of weight’, as she puts it. Patricia’s friend Caecilia adds that ‘they are very annoying’. Patricia’s son, Pedro, does not really share his mother’s opinion and says he is not really bothered by members of La Doce. He says he sees them hanging around on street corners drinking beer during hours that most people are at work, but that they do not display any violent behavior. He even knows a couple of the guys by face since they all live in the same neighbourhood. I asked Pedro if he also thought that La Doce was involved in the four killings. He was rather skeptical about their possible involvement in the killings but admitted that it could be possible.

The Juárez family has a completely different outlook on the situation regarding La Doce. According to them the noticeable role of La Doce in La Boca is not that big:

We know that it is a world apart. It is something that when you do not stick your nose into their business, they will not do you any harm. They take care of their people, so if you do not interrupt their business or something that belongs to them, if you let them be, nothing will happen (Interview Juárez family 2010).

So basically what the Juárez family is saying is that if you are not looking for any trouble, there will be none. It is not as if La Boca has fallen into a reign of terror by La Doce. Like for example some people were saying that they pressure shop owners into paying them protection money. According to the mother of the Juárez family La Doce is into much bigger things and they cannot be bothered with small shop owners. Yet if you would start selling Boca Juniors merchandise for example, they would mind because then you are entering their territory and you would be in trouble.

Besides the negative influences and roles of La Doce in La Boca that so far have been highlighted, there are also some positive sides about the presence of La Doce in the neighbourhood. First of all they sort of protect the neighbourhood from slipping into mayhem. They protect what is theirs. Former leader Rafael Di Zeo once said that he takes care of the stadium the same way he takes care of his house, with respect (Interview Juárez family 2010). Secondly they sometimes help the neighbourhood through their fund as I described in chapter

one. According to Pablo, La Doce might sometimes be compared to Robin Hood, yet a ‘Robin Hood in their own way’ (Interview Juárez family 2010). Finally they sometimes thrill the neighbourhood by practicing their songs and music on a street corner near the stadium. You can hear them from miles away and it gives a nice vibe to the place. I must add that during the time I lived in La Boca I never experienced any direct negative encounters nor influences with or by any members of La Doce. Only during match days their presence is noticeable in La Boca, in particular the men that are in charge of the car parking. Yet I have never experienced their presence as unpleasant, aggressive or intimidating.

We now have a better view on the role that La Doce has in La Boca, but what kind of identity have they created in La Boca? How do people in La Boca really see them? I will answer these questions in chapter three where I will compare some theory on identity with La Doce in the setting of the neighbourhood La Boca.

*“Las barras son un cáncer que está demasiado enquistado en nuestra sociedad”.*

-Passionate Boca Juniors supporter-

## **Chapter 3 – Identity**

Individuals and groups are often characterized by the identity that they have created. In different environments people or groups can create different identities and often the individual identity differs from the identity of a group. In this chapter I will look at the identity that the group La Doce has created in La Boca. How are they being viewed by the residents of La Boca? In order to give this identity creation of La Doce a more multidimensional approach, I will also look at the perspective that non-residents of La Boca have on La Doce. Does the image that residents have of La Doce differ a great deal from the image that non-residents have? Once I have taken a look at the identity of La Doce, it is also useful to look at whether the kind of identity that they have created could be compared to other groups that have created a certain identity in a neighbourhood, like youth gangs. It should be noted that although we have already established that La Doce cannot be considered a group of hooligans when we look at their activities, their collective identity might still be very much aligned to hooliganism, especially because most members of La Doce still see themselves as hooligans (chapter 1, page 16). So basically this chapter combines the identity of La Doce from a hooligan-identity perspective with the outsider perspective on the identity of La Doce from residents and non-residents of La Boca.

I will first take a look at the theoretical clarification on the concept of identity. What exactly is an identity and what different kinds of identity are there? Secondly I will compare the theory on identity with the characteristics of La Doce in order to analyse what kind of identity they have constructed in La Boca. Thirdly I will compare the findings of that analyses with the identity construction of youth gangs. Since both are involved in criminal activities and both are, at least in theory, active in a certain territory a comparison between the two is very interesting

### ***3.1 The concept of identity***

The concept of identity can be divided into different sub-concepts. In this framework I will be looking at the sub-concepts of individual identity and collective identity. Individual identity can best be understood as something that is being constructed from as early as the infantile phase. It is from then on something that is subjected to a lifelong development. Experiences from the present and the past as well as future goals all tribute to the ongoing development of the individual identity. The explanation Freud (as cited in Mann 2006) used to describe individual identity, is the one we still use today. According to Freud (as cited in Mann 2006), individual identity can be understood as the ‘person’s self as a whole’ (Mann 2006: 212). The Aristotelian line of thought basically comes down to the same thing, they conceive identity as ‘one of the fundamental first principles of being and as a logical law of thought: every being is identical with itself and two contradictory propositions cannot be true or false at the same time’ (Larrain 2000: 24). The individual identity concerns a number of things, among which are personal values, ideas, goals, emotions and subjective feelings of continuity and uniqueness (Wade and Brittan-Powel 2000: 326).

Because the individual identity is in a constant state of development, the individual identity thus can be very much influenced by the identity of certain groups that the individual is or becomes aligned to. In order to understand this process better, we will take a look at the concept of collective identity. The concept of collective identity is very much linked to the concept of social identity. According to Wade and Brittan-Powel (2000: 326) social identity ‘concerns the self in relation to others and one’s public image, as in one’s popularity, attractiveness, and reputation’. Because of the social identity of an individual, the individual will be looking for a collective identity that matches his social identity. A very natural development when we understand that collective identity ‘concerns those aspects of the self-concept that relate to social or demographic groups of affiliation, such as one’s race, gender, ethnic background, religion, and feelings of belonging in one’s community’ (Wade and Brittan-Powel 2000: 326). The concept of collective identity is based on the notion of a joint awareness and recognition among members of a group, but also among outsiders, that they share the same social identity. The fact that a group view themselves as a collective has:

important implications for group members as individuals and for the group as a whole. It may influence the nature of the shared social reality that group members construct, the sense of solidarity and unity they experience, the intensity of group members’ involvement, the extent of their mobilization, the conformity expected of them, the

pressure they exert on leaders to proceed in line with shared views, and the direction of actions taken by the group (David and Bar-Tal 2009: 356)

The development of the individual and social identity thus plays a major part in the decision to align oneself to a certain group. In this way the individual becomes part of a collective identity.

The concept of identity in relation to violence and hooliganism can best be explained in the context of an individual who is part of a group of hooligans that is also involved in violent behaviour. According to Spaaij (2008) there are six fundamental features that are universal when it comes to constructing hooligan identities. Hooligan identities can be used as a way to describe the collective identity of a group of hooligans. These features are: (1) excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal, (2) hard masculinity, (3) territorial identifications, (4) individual and collective management of reputation, (5) a sense of solidarity and belonging, and (6) representations of sovereignty and autonomy.

This hooligan identity or collective identity based on hooliganism is being constructed through the concept of 'othering' like all identity construction. This means that there is a perceived difference between the self and the other. I might call it 'identity demarcation', since they clearly draw the line between themselves and the other. The same thing happens with youth gangs who also construct their collective identity through 'othering'. In the case of groups of hooligans, the 'others' would be rival groups and also non-hooligan supporters of a rival team and the authorities, especially the police. In the case of youth gangs the others would be rival gangs, the police and civil society. Groups of hooligans are in the sense of a collective identity very much alike. The main difference between them is the club they support. That is why minor differences between hooligan groups are made to serve as the basis and rationale for the aversion to otherness. So when it comes to football hooliganism, minor differences are very important in the process of constructing a collective identity. The social interaction between these hooligan identities is often through violence (Spaaij 2008: 369-373).

In sum, we can state that the identity of hooligans is very much linked to violence, especially when we look at the six fundamental features that are universal when it comes to constructing hooligan identities. Excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal are being achieved through violence, the same goes for hard masculinity. Defending their territory also is being done through violence. Reputation in the world of hooligans is something you achieve

through violence. The latter two, a sense of solidarity and belonging and representations of sovereignty and autonomy may be not so much directly linked to violence, although violence might sometimes be necessary in the representation of sovereignty and autonomy. The identity of the hooligan is a violent one and is an identity of ‘us’ against ‘them’. The ‘us’ against ‘them’ sentiment can also be connected to a neighbourhood, especially if a group identifies strongly with their neighbourhood.

### ***3.2 La Doce and their hooligan identity***

Like I have stated in the introduction to this chapter and like has been established in chapter one, when we look at the activities of La Doce they cannot be considered a group of hooligans. Yet as a group they still have a lot of features that are used to describe a collective identity of a group of hooligans. Since La Doce can be considered a group, we have to look at the collective identity of La Doce. We will first look at the features discussed above that can be used to describe the collective identity of a group of hooligans and use those features on La Doce. Although La Doce is nowadays not involved in a lot of violent activities, the violence can still occur and therefore has to be reckoned with. Can they be identified as hooligans? Table 3.1 will give a brief overview of the findings at the end of this section.

The first of the six features is excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal. This feature is very visible on members of La Doce when they are inside the stadium. They are very excited and express this excitement through singing and dancing. Yet the excitement is no longer triggered by fights, since these fights do no longer take place very often. The pleasurable emotional arousal can be achieved through singing and dancing together with many other people who share the same goal, namely supporting their team to victory. When I was amongst members of La Doce during the *superclásico* I definitely experienced some pleasurable emotional arousal. Also when an internal fight within the *barra* breaks out or when they on a rare occasion find themselves confronted against another *barra*, they will also experience excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal.

The second feature is hard masculinity. Like I explained in chapter one, hard masculinity is very much part of the identity of La Doce. According to Zucal (2006:55) ‘the one who says he is a man, but who has not proven it, is not a man. The only one who is really a man is the one that has taken part in fights’. Many songs that La Doce still sing today refer to the extremely violent encounters they had with rival *barras*, especially in the 1990s. In these songs members of other *barras bravas* are called *putos* and are laughed at for running



away from fights. So they still use the fights from the past to proof their hard masculinity today:

*Quiero quemar el Gallinero, que se mueran los Cuervos y la Guardia Imperial; vamos Xeneize con huevos vaya al frente, te lo pide la gente, quiere una vuelta más; pasan los años pasan los jugadores, La 12 está presente no para de alentar ...; Por eso hoy, te quiero dar, Boca, mi corazón, yo te sigo a todas partes gracias por salir campeón, vos vas a cobrar; River, sos un cagón, esos no son los borrachos, son los putos del tablón*<sup>14</sup> (Canciones 2010).

This hard masculinity is also proven during internal fights involving even fire arms and during occasional fights with other *barras*. Also in the stand where La Doce is situated, after the game has ended and when they have to wait for the away team to leave the stadium, groups of youngsters randomly choose someone from their middle to punch and kick him for about twenty seconds. When the twenty seconds are over, the beaten youngster receives applause for being tough enough to withstand the beatings.

Territorial identifications is the third feature. Hooligans often have strong territorial identifications with their home stadium and the territory around it. With La Doce the situation is a bit more complicated. On the one hand they identify themselves with La Boca because that is their where the stadium is located and also because an important group inside La Doce is from La Boca. Also a lot of illegal activities that La Doce is involved in take place in La Boca and in songs they identify themselves with the neighbourhood. On the other hand, the majority of the members from La Doce are not from La Boca. During the reign of Quique and the early days of El Abuelo, most members of La Doce were still from La Boca. La Doce was really from La Boca and they had a strong identification with the neighbourhood. Nowadays most members of La Doce have no personal connections with La Boca, it is just the neighbourhood where their club, Boca Juniors, is situated. Their headquarters is therefore not in La Boca, but usually in the homes of one of the leaders outside of La Boca. Only a small group led by Santiago Lancry still comes from La Boca and they also control all criminal activities in the neighbourhood.

---

<sup>14</sup> Translation into English: I want to burn the Gallinero (nickname for River Plate fan), let the Cuervos (nickname for the *barra* of San Lorenzo) and the Guardia Imperial (*barra* of Racing Club) die; come on Xeneize show them what you have got, the people are asking you, they want another round; the years pass and the players go by, La 12 is present and does not stop getting you forward...; That is why today I want to give you, Boca, my heart, I will follow you everywhere, thank you for becoming champion, you will get it; River you are a shithead, they are not the drunkards but the gays of the tablón (the *barra* of River is called Los Borrachos del Tablón – The drunkards of the terrace).

The fourth feature is individual and collective management of reputation. This feature is very important in the construction of an identity because it determines for a big part the strength of a *barra*. Because if you hold a reputation of being extremely violent, ruthless and dangerous, other groups might not be so happy to jump in the ring with you. La Doce has the reputation of being literally unfriendly, they do not make nor hold friendships with other *barras*. They make this very clear through a banner that is always visible in the middle of their stand that says: *nunca hicimos amistades*, we never made friends (picture 3.1). *Barras* can also have the reputation of being *putos* for fleeing from a fight or for not showing up to a fight. Incidents like the McDonalds shoot out in March 2008 (see chapter 1, page 17) are large contributors to the collective management of a reputation. The use of fire arms in a public place with innocent bystanders around obviously gives you a reputation of being extremely violent. The individual reputations are being managed through participations in fights and participating in criminal activities. This participation already starts during recruitment: ‘members are recruited and set a series of trials to test their commitment and strategies’ (Duke and Crolley 2001: 108). Fights can be internal or against other *barras*. Those who do not participate in fights or those who run from a fight lose the respect of their fellow *barras* and they will not receive free tickets to the game, they cannot go on the buses that are rented by the *barra* to visit away games and they will be prevented from going to games of the team (Zucal 2006: 55-56). So taking part in activities of the *barra* is very important in order to manage an individual reputation.

A sense of solidarity and belonging determines for a great deal the homogeneity of a group. This fifth feature seems to be weak within La Doce given the fact that power struggles within the *barra* happen sometimes. Because La Doce consists of groups from different regions and neighbourhoods, groups sometimes dispute each other over the control of the *barra*. So solidarity is not really the first word one would find in La Doce’s dictionary. Neither is belonging because most members are in it for the money and a sense of belonging is more something one would obtain by fighting for non-material things such as honour and prestige. A sense of belonging in La Doce based on the fact that someone is from La Boca is not a strong incentive for aligning oneself with La Doce either because most members of La Doce do not come from La Boca anymore. La Doce is no longer a ‘La Boca only’ group.

The final feature is representations of sovereignty and autonomy. These representations are very common in relation to La Doce. One of the ways to show your sovereignty and autonomy is impunity. If one is never punished for his criminal activities

while it is obvious that one is involved in these activities, one will feel sovereign, untouchable. The impunity of the *barras*, and especially of members of La Doce, is something in which a lot of parties are involved and it is therefore hard to do something about it. Luis (42), a Boca Juniors fan who does not live in La Boca, explains why: ‘they are part of a business in which the police and politics are also included, they protect one another’ (Luis Interview 2010). Román (26), a Boca Juniors fan who lives in Belgrano, agrees with Luis: ‘they all need each other, they do business with each other. The police and the politics coexist with the *barras*, they do not really want to stop them’ (Interview Román 2010). So through their contacts with the police and national politics their sovereignty and autonomy even grows further. La Doce is not the law, but then again they do not need to be the law, they just sometimes need the law not to be applicable to them. A good example of this is the alleged police involvement in the drug trafficking in La Boca. The police knew where the drugs was sold, they knew the dealers and they knew it was happening on a big scale, yet they turned a blind eye. This is off course very peculiar, but then again, the one who controls the drug trade in La Boca is La Doce. The feature representations of sovereignty and autonomy is definitely applicable to La Doce.

In conclusion we can state that a lot of fundamental features in constructing a hooligan identity can be connected to La Doce. So although La Doce is not a group of hooligans, they do have an hooligan identity. They just are involved in a lot more things then hooligans. This also contributes to their self-identification of being hooligans. So if La Doce has a hooligan identity, do they also take part in the process of ‘othering’? Is there a strong ‘us’ against ‘them’ sentiment within La Doce? It appears as if this sentiment is not very strong. They no longer deliberately fight with ‘others’ such as rival *barras* and the police. Because La Doce is involved in so many layers of society, there is no real ‘other’. When there is only an ‘us’ and no ‘them’ there is no ‘othering’ process. But besides the lack of ‘othering’ the self-identification of being a hooligan is still apparent with La Doce. But does this self-identification of being a hooligan, and the theoretical backing of this perspective, not get into conflict with the way outsiders see La Doce? And is it perhaps possible that La Doce could theoretically also be identified as something other than hooligans, such as for example a youth gang? First we will look into the comparison between La Doce and youth gangs and in the section after that we will look at the way residents and non-residents identify La Doce.

**Table 3.1: Hooligan identities and La Doce**

<i>Fundamental features in constructing hooligan identities</i>	<i>Translation in behaviour of these features by La Doce</i>
Excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Singing and dancing in the stands</li> <li>- Sharing the same goal supporting the team, together with thousands of other people</li> <li>- Internal fights and occasional fights with other barras</li> </ul>
Hard masculinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Songs referring to the <i>putos</i> on the one hand and the men on the other</li> <li>- Internal fights and fights with other barras</li> <li>- The ‘friendly beatings’ amongst youngsters in the stand</li> </ul>
Territorial identifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The stadium.</li> <li>- In songs.</li> <li>- Part of La Doce lives in La Boca and some criminal activities of La Doce take place in La Boca</li> </ul>
Individual and collective management of reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Nunca hicimos amistades</i> (collective)</li> <li>- Violent internal incidents (collective)</li> <li>- Fights with other barras (collective)</li> <li>- Taking part in fights and other activities (individual)</li> </ul>
Sense of solidarity and belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not really applicable to La Doce</li> </ul>
Representations of sovereignty and autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impunity</li> <li>- Involvement of police in drug trafficking</li> <li>- Relations with the police and politics</li> </ul>

Source: Spaaij 2008; Fieldwork data author



Picture 3.1: The yellow banner with the black writing spells: *Nunca hicimos amistades*. This banner is shown at every game.

### ***3.3 La Doce and youth gangs: similarities and dissimilarities***

Theoretically, youth gangs and La Doce might have a lot in common. It is therefore useful to take a look at whether La Doce can really be called a youth gang. To compare the two, we will first look at the concept of youth gangs and finally we will compare this analyses to the characteristics of La Doce.

To define the concept of youth gangs I will use the concept as it is understood to describe youth gangs in Latin America. Youth gangs vary significantly in terms of their structure, motivation, dynamics and activities. A youth gang's size can range from between ten to over a hundred members and the age of their members varies from as young as seven to about 30 years old. Despite their variations we can still find some common ground between them. What distinguishes a youth gang from other juvenile peer groups is their recurrent and systematic involvement in violent and illegal activities. Youth gangs are involved in illegal activities such as robbery, theft, and other sorts of petty crime. On the other hand, a youth gang is also a socially constructed phenomenon. Society sees them as essentially violent and criminal groups of young people who represent a social problem and a serious threat to society. Youth gangs are seen as groups of rebellious youngsters, young people who are 'out of control'. This is also why these youth gangs inspire so much fear and seem so closely connected to violent activity. Because of disproportionate media coverage, the image of youth gangs being extremely violent is being shaped out of proportion. Youth gangs used to be known for their identification with a certain territory like a street or a neighbourhood, but they are now increasingly extending their sphere of influence across whole cities, regions and even countries. This extension of their sphere of influence together with the drug trade's grip over Latin America, which made youth gangs increasingly and more systematically involved in drug trafficking, has caused that the division between youth gangs and organized narco-crime is slowly disappearing (Strocka 2006: 134-135).

When we compare the characteristics of youth gangs with the characteristics of La Doce, we will find a lot of similarities between them but also a number of dissimilarities. Youth gangs can vary a great deal in size and the age of their members varies between seven and thirty years old. La Doce has roughly about five hundred members varying in age from eighteen to about thirty-five years old. Youth gangs are recurrent and systematically involved in violent and illegal activities. So is La Doce, as has been clearly showed in chapter one. Whether La Doce is also a socially constructed phenomenon like youth gangs is difficult to say. On the one hand they consider themselves to be hooligans and hooligans are, according

to Spaaij (2006: 4), a socially constructed phenomenon. Yet on the other hand they can be considered an organized crime group, which is more a social scientific concept (meaning it is theoretically detectable and less vulnerable to populist approaches) and thus not socially constructed. So looking at what they theoretically and practically are, an organized crime group, we can state that they are thus not a socially constructed phenomenon. The extending of the youth gangs' sphere of influence over cities, regions and countries is something that is also apparent in the case of La Doce, due to their involvement with politics. Yet La Doce does not have influence over cities, regions and countries in the sense that they control whole areas. Where youth gangs are shifting towards organized narco-crime because of the grip that the drug trade has on Latin America, La Doce can already be considered an organized crime group. Yet they are not specifically involved in drug trafficking. They are only involved in the drug trafficking in La Boca and not in the national or international drug trade.

In conclusion we can state that although La Doce and youth gangs have a lot in common, the *barra brava* of Boca Juniors cannot be called a youth gang. La Doce is not a socially constructed phenomenon and they are also not heavily involved in organized narco-crime. They are similar in the way they are both involved in violent and illegal activities and the both have an extended sphere of influence, albeit in a different way. Table 3.2 gives an overview of the similarities and dissimilarities between youth gangs and La Doce.

**Table 3.2: Youth gangs and La Doce**

<i>Characteristics of youth gangs</i>	<i>Characteristics of La Doce compared with youth gangs</i>
Between 10 to over a 100 members varying in age from 7 to 30 years old	Consist of roughly 500 members varying in age from 18 to 35 years old
Recurrent and systematic involvement in violent and illegal activities	Also recurrent and systematic involvement in violent and illegal activities
Socially constructed phenomenon	Organized crime, thus a social scientific concept
Extending their sphere of influence over cities, regions and countries	Through their political involvement they do have an extended sphere of influence
Shifting towards organized narco-crime	Already organized crime and not specifically organized narco-crime

Source: Strocka 2006: 134-138; Fieldwork data author

### ***3.4 La Doce and the people***

Everywhere I went in Buenos Aires, or in Argentina for that matter, the answer to my question ‘What do you think of La Doce’ was the same: ‘*Es una mafia*’, they are a mafia. This is probably the sentence I have heard most in relation to La Doce during my fieldwork. Yet the explanations as to why they are a mafia and the gravity of the activities that the people ascribe to them differed a great deal. Some people saw them as hired killers who terrorise the neighbourhood and others saw them as a criminal organization that goes about its own business. In order to get a clear notion of how people think about La Doce, I had interviews with residents as well as non-residents of La Boca and also many informal conversations with residents and non-residents.

Many people see La Doce as a mafia and like we have established before, La Doce can be considered a group that is involved in organized crime. In popular terms this would indeed be called a mafia, although theoretically this would not be the correct term to describe La Doce as I indicated in chapter one. According to Patricia, the members of La Doce are hired killers of whom residents are very afraid. She says they are involved in a lot of dirty activities and that they have no honour, codes or anything that could indicate civilised behaviour. They go wherever they are paid and do not care about the results of their actions. An elderly friend of her who also lives in La Boca agrees with her and adds that the people who are affiliated with La Doce are nothing but garbage. He is not afraid of them but does not want anything to do with them either. Patricia and her friend both agree that La Doce is a mafia, with whom one should definitely not get involved. The opinion of Patricia about La Doce might sound a bit hysterical, also considering that she herself never had any run-ins with La Doce, but it is how she sees it after living in La Boca for many years and after seeing some of the consequences of their actions in the neighbourhood (Interview Patricia 2010).

The Juárez family has a more moderate opinion on La Doce. Although they also see them as an organized crime group, they have no fear of La Doce and are more reserved about members of La Doce being hired killers. They are sometimes even proud at La Doce when they support the team during away games for example: ‘the *barra* always has their place in the stadium and that is a pleasure for us. It is like we are all there’ (Interview Juárez family 2010). Yet they know what it is La Doce does: ‘families like us do not affiliate with La Doce, because doing that would mean you have to do things that normally would not even cross your mind. But there is nothing you can do about it because there is no proof’ (Interview Juárez family 2010). They also underline the highly organized structure of the group and the

fact that they control the criminal activities in La Doce. Basically they also see La Doce as a mafia, but in a more moderate way than Patricia for example.

So amongst residents of La Boca, La Doce is viewed as a mafia. But do residents of La Boca also see La Doce as a part of their neighbourhood, do they identify La Doce as being part of La Boca? In order to answer these questions I will use three of the six features that Spaaij (2008) describes to construct hooligan identities, to see if La Doce has constructed an identity in La Boca according to the residents. The three features that I will use are territorial identifications, a sense of solidarity and belonging and representations of sovereignty and autonomy. When it comes to territorial identifications there is a difference between today and roughly thirty years ago. Thirty years ago, the majority of the members of La Doce came from La Boca. They were a group of hooligans representing La Boca. Former La Doce member and resident of La Boca, Alejandro, states that:

La Doce used to consist out of people who were actually inhabitants of La Boca. They had a great connection to the neighbourhood. Now most of the *barras* do not even live in La Boca anymore. The connection to the neighbourhood grew thin. Back in the days La Doce consisted of real inhabitants from La Boca, poor and often unemployed (Interview Alejandro 2010).

Residents of La Boca nowadays identify members of La Doce as people from outside of La Boca. When I asked the father of the Juárez family (Interview 2010) if the presence of La Doce is noticeable in La Boca he said: 'No, because in general La Doce consists of groups from other places. There are some who live here, but that group is relatively small'. Patricia (Interview 2010) basically said the same thing when I asked her if she knew anyone from La Doce: 'I do not think many of them still live here, although I think the fat guy who lives around the corner is a member of La Doce. His whole body is full of tattoos and he always speaks very vulgar'. So residents of La Boca see La Doce as a group of outsiders who come to La Boca when Boca Juniors plays a home game. Yet because a small group of La Doce still lives in La Boca, their connection with the neighbourhood has not completely vanished. Because this small group still runs all the criminal activities in La Boca, their role and influence in the neighbourhood is still big. Also they occasionally support developmental projects in the neighbourhood through their fund which also adds to their influence.



Because most members of La Doce are no longer from La Boca and because La Doce is increasingly involved in criminal and sometimes violent activities, residents of La Boca do no longer feel any solidarity with La Doce. They distance themselves from them and are sometimes even scared of them. La Doce represents the club Boca Juniors and no longer the neighbourhood La Boca. They do no longer belong in La Boca because most members are not from La Boca and have no connection with the neighbourhood besides the fact that the stadium of Boca Juniors is in La Boca.

Although the residents of La Boca no longer feel any solidarity or connection with La Doce and although La Doce's overall connection with the neighbourhood grew thin, they are still a representation of sovereignty and autonomy in La Boca. The small group of La Doce that still lives in La Boca controls all the criminal activity in the neighbourhood. This in itself does not mean that this group is sovereign and autonomous. Yet if they do not get arrested for any criminal offences and when police turns a blind eye to their drug trafficking, they do get impunity. This basically means they can do whatever they want as long as it does not attract too much attention. When it comes to criminal activities in La Boca they display clear representations of sovereignty and autonomy according to residents of La Boca: 'when I have a business and I want to sell the same thing that they (La Doce) are selling, I am going to have a problem if I do not arrange something with them' (Interview Juárez family 2010).

Residents have a clear view on La Doce, they are a mafia who have constructed this identity outside La Boca but who still have representations of sovereignty and autonomy in the neighbourhood. But how do non-residents see them? Luis for example does not want to know anything about them: 'I do not agree with football hooligans in general, not with La Doce or any others. I just think that in the end they only move the public away from the stadium and generate violence' (Interview Luis 2010). Román on the other hand can sometimes be proud at having La Doce when during matches they help the team get forward and because of the vibe they create inside the stadium. But he also feels ashamed of La Doce sometimes because of their dirty business and violent activities. He does not want to be associated with them and makes a clear distinction between regular Boca Juniors fans and La Doce:

Generally at all the *barras bravas* in Argentina, not only La Doce, the *jefes* and their followers are not fans of the club they represent, they are not motivated by passion like a normal fan such as me. They only do what they do for business and for power.

To be honest this does not only make me feel ashamed, it also makes me want to eradicate them from the stadium and the club that I love so dearly (Interview Román 2010).

So regular Boca Juniors fans distance themselves from La Doce, but what is their opinion about La Doce when it comes to the criminal activities that La Doce is involved in? Luis is very clear on this matter: ‘It is an organized group that is only looking to enrich itself, regardless of the rest and the people around them’ (Interview Luis 2010). Román (Interview 2010) feels very much the same way: ‘they are organized in every way. They organize the stand, the songs, the flags, etc. But they also organize crimes that involve drugs, ticket sale and extortion of club officials and players so that they give them money’. So basically non-residents of La Boca feel the same way about La Doce as residents of La Boca: La Doce is involved in organized crime. We have seen that residents of La Boca do not directly associate La Doce with their neighbourhood, but do non-residents see this the same way?

Many times when I took a cab in Buenos Aires I started a conversation with the driver. They soon noticed I was not from around and usually asked me what I was doing in Buenos Aires. I then told them about my research and they would almost always reply in the same way: a smile and a sigh, as if to say: good luck with that one. Most cab drivers told me the same thing: La Doce consists of a bunch of criminals, they are involved in politics and they are poor people coming from the *villas miserias*. Nothing I did not already know. But it became interesting when most cab drivers used this poverty to specifically patronize Boca Juniors and La Doce. Many members of the River Plate *barras bravas* come from the *villas*, but in the case of River Plate this is not an issue. With Boca Juniors and La Doce it is because the club comes from La Boca. I started paying attention to this patronizing in my conversations I had with other people and I noticed that almost every non-resident of La Boca who was no Boca Juniors fan did the same thing: they all identified La Doce with the neighbourhood of La Boca. In my experience, a lot of people who do not live in La Boca stigmatize the neighbourhood as being very bad, violent, dirty, full of immigrants from other Latin American countries and especially poor. So when they think of La Doce they think of immigrants, poor and dirty people and criminals. This view comes back in a lot of songs about La Doce that are sung by rival *barras bravas*: ‘They are the half plus one<sup>15</sup>, they come from Bolivia and Paraguay... I always ask myself dirty negro, if you ever wash yourself.

---

<sup>15</sup> Boca Juniors has the most fans in Argentina and therefore they say that half the country plus one is a Boca Juniors fan.

Boca you disgust me, wash your ass with turpentine!!!’ (Cantitos 2010). These songs are directed at La Doce which the following shows more clearly: ‘There in La Boca there is a gang, there is a gang of Bolivians... who sell garlic and lemons and who are at all the stations’ (Cantitos 2010). Another example is a conversation I had with a cab driver who was a River Plate fan. I told him about my research and he said: ‘Ah, you are doing an investigation about the ones of Boca? It is real easy, they are all negros<sup>16</sup>’. Members of La Doce are associated with dirty, poor and criminal immigrants just because they come from a supposedly dirty, poor and criminal neighbourhood.

So where residents of La Boca do not identify La Doce with the neighbourhood La Boca, non-residents do. This identification of La Doce with La Boca by non-residents is solely based on the prejudice that comes from the stigmatization that La Boca is a poor, dirty and criminal neighbourhood full of immigrants from countries such as Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru. When non-residents think of La Doce they think of La Boca. The two are identified with each other because according to non-residents they have mutual characteristics such as being criminal, consisting of immigrants, being violent and being poor.

---

<sup>16</sup> In Argentina the word negro is often used to insult people who are not black. It is a very racist way of saying that someone acts, looks or thinks backward. Especially immigrants are often called negros.

## Conclusion

In conclusion to this thesis we can state a number of things before we answer the main research question. During my research in the field I discovered a lot of things that I thought were very different when I started my fieldwork. That of course made the fieldwork even more interesting. The most interesting and unexpected discovery was the change La Doce had undergone from regularly fighting other *barras bravas* to becoming an organized crime group.

Up until ten years ago, La Doce would be more comparable to a group of European hooligans. They would still meet up with other *barras bravas* to fight each other and thus have more in common with their European counterparts. Yet today La Doce can no longer be compared to hooliganism as it is known in Europe. Although fights with other *barras* still happen on very rare occasions, they have transformed into an organized crime group that tries to avoid fights as much as possible. As an organized crime group La Doce is involved in many criminal activities including drug trafficking, extortion, providing services for politicians and political parties and all sorts of petty crime. We can conclude that La Doce has more in common with organized crime than with European hooliganism. Besides their transformation to organized crime, La Doce underwent another interesting change. Up until the beginning of the 1980s most members of La Doce were actually from La Boca or living in La Boca. The group had a real connection to the neighbourhood. Nowadays there is only a small group inside La Doce that still lives in La Boca. So how about that neighbourhood La Boca. What kind of neighbourhood is it?

La Boca is a neighbourhood with a lot of history. It is originally an immigrant neighbourhood and it basically still is today. The neighbourhood has a reputation of being very dangerous and violent, but although violent incidents do occur in the neighbourhood, residents do not describe the neighbourhood as being violent or dangerous. From my personal experience of living in the neighbourhood for a couple of months I can say the same thing. From a theoretical perspective La Boca can best be described as a home area that can be seen from a humanistic approach. This means La Boca is a relatively small and marginalized neighbourhood that is defined by the identity of its residents. Furthermore it is a neighbourhood with exogenous and correlated neighbourhood effects, meaning that newcomers feel right at home because of the presence of people who share the same culture, values and morals as they do and that residents behave similarly because of external

stigmatization. The neighbourhood has strong connections with football club Boca Juniors. The club plays an important role in the neighbourhood, not just as a source of passion but also as an employer and benefactor. The role of La Doce in the neighbourhood is a different one. Although only a small group of La Doce still lives in La Boca, they play a considerable role in the neighbourhood. They control all criminal activities in La Doce including the drug trade, petty crime and car parking on match days. With their fund *Fundación Jugador Número 12* they also occasionally help the neighbourhood in developmental projects. Although they play a considerable role in La Boca, their presence is barely noticeable in everyday life. On match days their presence is more visible but only in and around the stadium. Although La Doce share some characteristics with youth gangs, they cannot be called a youth gang because besides sharing some characteristics there are a lot of differences between them.

Now that we have a clear notion of what kind of group La Doce is and of what kind of neighbourhood La Boca is, we can now look at what kind of identity La Doce has in La Boca. We will look at what kind of identity La Doce has constructed in La Boca with the help of the main research question:

*What kind of identity has La Doce constructed in the neighbourhood La Boca according to residents and non-residents and how does this identity relate to La Doce's self-image?*

When we compare La Doce to the theory on hooligan identity, we can conclude that although in practice La Doce cannot be considered a group of hooligans, they do have a lot of features in common with the hooligan identity. This also adds credibility to their self-image of being hooligans.

Yet when we look at the identity La Doce has constructed in La Boca according to residents we see a completely different picture. Residents of La Boca do not see La Doce as a group of hooligans. In all my conversations I had with residents, formal or informal, I have never heard anyone use the word hooligans to describe La Doce. Residents identify La Doce with the mafia, which is in this case a popularization for organized crime. Residents of La Boca are well aware of the criminal activities that La Doce is involved in. Although a lot of criminal activities take place in La Boca and although a small group of La Doce still lives in La Boca, most residents consider La Doce as an outsider. Yet an outsider who still identifies itself a little bit with the neighbourhood through their representations of sovereignty and autonomy, meaning the impunity they have in La Boca and the relative freedom in which they

can conduct their criminal activities, and through their occasional material support to the neighbourhood. So for residents of La Boca, La Doce has constructed a mafia identity in the neighbourhood and at the same time the residents feel they have constructed this identity outside La Boca.

In the view of non-residents we see the same thing, but here La Doce does get identified with La Boca. Non-residents of La Boca also identify La Doce as a mafia, but they do identify La Doce very clearly with La Boca. This identification is predominantly based on prejudices that come from stigmatizations. Non-residents of La Boca associate the neighbourhood with violence, danger, crime and poverty and these are pretty much the same elements that they associate La Doce with. So residents and non-residents of La Boca both identify La Doce as a mafia, yet the difference is that residents feel that La Doce has constructed this identity outside La Boca, while non-residents feel they have constructed this identity inside La Boca.

The mafia identity that La Doce has constructed according to residents and non-residents of La Boca is different from their self-image of being hooligans. Yet these different identifications do not get into conflict with each other and they are even very relatable. They say they are hooligans while everyone knows they are more than that. Yet as long as this cannot or will not be proven, it would not be smart admitting to be involved in organized crime. Admitting to this would bring so much public pressure on politics and the justice department that they would be forced to take action. Besides this, how people see La Doce and with what they are identified is not important to them. Through their involvement in politics and their power base they have reached a certain impunity. Because of this impunity they do not have to worry about reputations or about how they are identified. La Doce only cares about their business and not about identities.

## Bibliography

- Bossio, M. and Chiappetta, J. (2010) *Idolos en Aprietos Clarín* 20/04
- David, O. and Bar-Tal, D. (2009) A Sociopsychological Conception of Collective Identity: The Case of National Identity as an Example *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 13: 354-379
- Duke, V. and Crolley, L. (2001) Fútbol, Politicians and the People: Populism and Politics in Argentina *International Journal of the History of Sport* 18 (3): 93-116
- Dunning, E., Murphy, P. and Waddington, I. (2002) *'Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a World Problem'* University College Dublin Press, Dublin
- Grabia, G. (2009) *'La Doce'* Sudamericana, Buenos Aires
- Guano, E. (2006) A Stroll Through La Boca *Space and Culture* 6(4): 356-376
- Kallus, R. and Law-Yone, H. (2000) What is a Neighbourhood? The Structure and Function of an Idea *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 27 (6): 815 – 826
- Larrain, J. (2000) *'Identity and Modernity in Latin America'* Polity Press, Cambridge
- Mann, M. A. (2006) The Formation and Development of Individual and Ethnic Identity: Insights From Psychiatry and Psychoanalytic Theory *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 66 (3): 211-224
- Miller, R. M. and Crolley, L. (2007) *'Football in the Americas: Fútbol, Futebol, Soccer'* Institute for the Study of the Americas, London
- Mora y Araujo, M. (1997) De Bende van José; Tussen de Supporters van Boca Juniors *Hard Gras* 12: 73-86
- Mora y Araujo, M. (2006) Fear, Fireworks and Violence: Hanging with Boca Juniors' La Doce *The Guardian* 14/11
- Nievas, M. (2010) Si nada cambia, este partido lo pierde Riquelme *Olé* 20/04/2010
- Nogués, G. (2003) *'Buenos Aires; Ciudad Secreta'* Sudamericana, Buenos Aires
- Reed, Q. (2009) Squeezing a Balloon *U4 Issue* (7): 8-38
- Spaaij, R. (2006) Aspects of Hooligan Violence *ASSR Working Paper* 02/06
- Spaaij, R. (2008) Men Like Us, Boys Like Them: Violence, Masculinity, and Collective Identity in Football Hooliganism *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 32 (4): 369-392
- Strocka, C. (2006) Youth Gangs in Latin America *SAIS Review* 26 (2): 133-146
- Wade, J. C. and Brittan-Powel, C. (2000) Male Reference Group Identity Dependence: Support for Construct Validity *Sex Roles* 43 (5/6): 323-340

Zucal, J. G. (2006) Soy macho porque me la aguanto. '*Hinchadas*' Prometeo Libros, Buenos Aires

### Consulted websites

Banco de Datos <<http://www.buenosaires.gov.ar>> (15/07/2010)

Britannica <[www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/374879/Pedro-de-Mendoza](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/374879/Pedro-de-Mendoza)>  
(05/07/2010)

La Boca <[www.buenosaires.gov.ar/areas/barrios/buscador/ficha.php?id=15](http://www.buenosaires.gov.ar/areas/barrios/buscador/ficha.php?id=15)> (05/07/2010)

Cambridge Dictionary <[dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/organized-crime](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/organized-crime)>  
(04/07/2010)

Canciones <[www.bocanecochea.com.ar/canciones](http://www.bocanecochea.com.ar/canciones)> (23/06/2010)

Cantitos <[millonarios.wordpress.com](http://millonarios.wordpress.com)> (30/07/2010)

Combates <[www.la12pte.com.ar/la-hinchada/combates](http://www.la12pte.com.ar/la-hinchada/combates)> (23/06/2010)

Dirección General de Estadística y Censos <<http://www.buenosaires.gov.ar>> (15/07/2010)

Historia <<http://www.bocajuniors.com.ar/el-club/historia>> (18/07/2010)

Taylor, G. (2008) Paco: Drug War Blowback in Argentina *NACLA*  
<<https://nacla.org/node/4641>> (18/07/2010)