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Argentina's Worker-Recovered Factories: Strategies and survival

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Sommaire

Les usines récupérées par les ouvriers en Argentine sont devenues un mouvement social emblématique symbolisant l'un des aspects de la révolte sociale entourant la crise économique de 2001-2002. Les usines récupérées sont des entreprises abandonnées par leurs propriétaires originaux ou déclarées faillite, laissant derrières elles des salaires et des dettes impayés. Par conséquence, les ouvriers ont commencé à récupérer leurs usines; reprenant la production sans leurs anciens patrons, sous, et au profit de la gestion collective des ouvriers. Le mouvement est remarquable pour sa rémunération égalitaire et sa gestion horizontale.

Ce travail examine la continuité des usines récupérées et ceci à travers l'évolution sociale, politique et économique du paysage de l'Argentine. Il évalue également l'impact du mouvement en tant que défi aux modes économiques de production hégémoniques et orientés vers le marché. En supposant que l'avenir du mouvement dépend de deux ensembles de facteurs, le rapport analyse les facteurs internes à travers le prisme de la théorie de mobilisation des ressources, ainsi que les facteurs externes à travers la perspective de la théorie de la structure de l'opportunité politique.

Le travail conclut que la situation actuelle se trouve dans une impasse dans laquelle le mouvement a gagné l'acceptation institutionnelle, mais a échoué d'effectuer le changement structurel favorisant ses pratiques et garantissant la sécurité à long terme. Il argumente que le mouvement doit consolider certains aspects combatifs. Il doit consolider sa nouvelle identité en tant que mouvement social et forger des alliances stratégiques et tactiques tout en préservant son autonomie.

Mots-clés: mouvements sociaux, politique de l'Argentine, usines récupérées, autogestion, « horizontalism », crise Argentine de 2001-2002.

Abstract

The worker-recovered factories of Argentina became an emblematic social movement symbolizing one of the aspects of the social upheaval surrounding the economic crisis of 2001-2002. The recovered factories are enterprises abandoned by their original owners or declared bankrupt, leaving behind unpaid wages and trailing debts. In response, workers began recuperating their factories; resuming production without their former bosses, under, and for the benefit of, a collective worker management. The movement is remarkable for its egalitarian remuneration and its horizontal management.

This paper examines the continuity of the recovered factories through the evolving social, political and economic landscape of Argentina. It also assesses the impact of the movement as a challenge to the hegemonic, market-oriented, economic modes of production. Assuming that the future of the movement depends on two sets of factors, the paper analyses internal factors through the prism of resource mobilization theory and external factors from the perspective of political opportunity structure theory.

The work concludes that the current situation is one of stalemate, in which the movement gained institutional acceptance, but failed to effect structural change favouring its practices and guaranteeing long-term security. It argues that the movement needs to consolidate certain combative aspects. It must consolidate its new identity as a social movement and forge strategic and tactical alliances while preserving its autonomy.

Keywords: social movements, Argentine politics, worker-recovered factories/enterprises, workers' self-management, "horizontalism", Argentine crisis of 2001-2002.

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List of acronyms

CGT	General Confederation of Labour of the Argentine Republic (*Confederación General del Trabajo de la República Argentina*)
CTA	Argentine Workers' Center (*Central de los Trabajadores Argentinos)*
EDI	Economists of the left *(Economistas de Izquierda)*
ERT	Worker Recovered Factories/Enterprises *(Empresas Recuperadas por los Trabajadores en Argentina)*
FENCOOTER	National Federation of Worker Co-operatives of Reconverted Companies *(Federación Nacional de Cooperativas de Trabajo de Empresas Reconvertidas)*
FORA	Argentine Regional Workers' Federation (*Federación Obrera Regional Argentina*)
FPV	Front for Victory (*Frente para la Victoria*)
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
MNER	National Movement of Recuperated Enterprises *(Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas)*
MNFRT	National Movement of Recuperated Factories *(Movimiento Nacional de Fabricas Recuperadas por los Trabajadores)*
MST	Landless Peasants' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra)*
PJ	Justicialist Party (*Partido Justicialista*)
PO	Worker's Party, Argentina (*Partido Obrero)*
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
PT	Worker's Party, Brazil (*Partido dos Trabalhadores)*
PTS	Socialist Worker's Party (*Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas)*
RM	Resource Mobilization
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program

Aux ouvriers des usines récupérés;

leur courage m'a grandement inspiré…

À J. Najjar, un syndicaliste militant

de qui j'ai appris le sens de sacrifices…

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Introduction

Argentina's worker-recovered factories have attracted much attention to the country's experience with self-management. Recovered factories are enterprises that were abandoned by their capitalist owners in the wake of the 2001 economic crisis that hit Argentina, and later put back into production by the workers under the principle of self-management. An estimated 2500 firms were shut down between 2001 and 2002 (Petras 2003a); the number of factories subsequently taken over by the employees varies according to source, ranging from 150 (Ballvé 2006) to 200 (Zibechi 2004). However, the significance of the movement eclipses the number of factories and workers involved in the process to reach a symbolic dimension. The idea of worker control and the demonstrated capacity of workers to reactivate production without bosses or capital "creates the possibility of redefining capital-labour relations and questioning the unconditional supremacy of property rights" (Palomino 2003).

The aim in this essay is to come up with answers to the question of whether the recovered factories movement in Argentina constitutes a serious threat to the prevailing capitalist structures of control over workers, and, beyond that, to trace the potentials and limitations of the movement continuity within the dynamic circumstances of Argentina.

This introduction presents a broad definition of the topic, placing the choice of the subject in the foreground. It describes the relevance of the contribution, and then elaborates the methodology and structures of the study. The introduction provides an overview of the basic concepts and theories that guided the research and of the body of literature that sustained the study.

The symbolic and practical significance of a nascent movement

The impact of the recovered factories movement might surpass Argentina. Already the experience has become a source of inspiration worldwide. A movie by Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis called "The Take"[1] has brought the movement to the attention of various progressive circles; the movie's popularity was not only due to Klein's reputation as an activist and academic, but also to the appeal of the 'utopian' idea of worker self-management. Various cinematographic figures like the Argentinian filmmaker Fernando (Pino) Solanas have examined the experience[2], and a score of articles, papers and books have been written about it. In October 2005, a Latin American gathering of worker-recovered factories was organized in Caracas, in an attempt to build a cross-continental movement. Along with Venezuelan, Brazilian, and Uruguayan workers, Argentinian workers were heavily present and had played an important role in the organization of the event (Martin 2005).

The idea of worker control over the means of production is a centre-piece of the socialist project, dating to its early beginnings. Worker self-management "stands in contrast to the bureaucratic centralism of the former Soviet Union and the hierarchical system of capitalist management" (Petras & Veltmeyer 2002). Building an alternative social project from below that is capable of re-defining capital-labour relations has become an urgent challenge for leftist movements since the fall of the Soviet Union and the ascendency of the neoliberal model. One way to achieve this goal is building alternatives to the dominant model based on

[1] Lewis, A. & Klein, N., *The Take: Occupy, Resist, Produce,* Ottawa/Toronto: National Film Board of Canada, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Klein Lewis Productions (2004).
[2] Solanas, F., *La Dignité du Peuple,* Argentine-Brésil-Suisse: Production Cinesur SA (2005).

egalitarian principles, and worker self-management is a concrete aspect of this egalitarianism.

Worker self-management is a core constituent of direct democracy, which is about building open spaces where citizens can freely debate, express themselves, and vote on issues of concern without intermediaries. When applied to the workplace or any other unit, the result of such a system of governance is an increase of the individual's role in the process, and a decrease in the ability of professionals and representatives to manoeuvre (Mothé 2006, 56-65). Direct democracy in the form of worker self-management is thus a way to empower the working class, which has been historically subjected to the will and directives of bosses and to the elite of professionals and managers they serve.

Mothé traces two historical lines within the proponents of self-management: revolutionary and alternative.

The revolutionary believes that self-management is incompatible with the capitalist system; they see the overthrow of capitalism as a necessary precondition. According to the revolutionaries, when the state abolishes private property, it lays the groundwork for self-management and it then becomes possible to establish worker control and direct democracy assemblies, the latter preventing the state from transforming into an authoritarian bureaucracy. Self-management is usually associated with a revolutionary context, in which actors are passionately animated by a desire for radical change (Mothé 2006). The historical successes of such experiences have been rare and limited in duration.

The alternatives, on the other hand, try to advance the notion of self-management by multiplying concrete examples of direct democracy in time and space. The idea here is to propagate direct democracy and self-management little

by little; both by proving that the model is viable and by demonstrating its ethical and practical superiority over existing alternatives. According to Mothé, over the past 50 years, the fieldwork and ideas of the proponents of self-management have gained in credibility and are becoming increasingly accepted. This is far from the radical change of the revolutionary dream, but nevertheless represents a slow, steady progress.

In this regard, the Argentinian experience with self-management offers promising hope to those aspiring to attain social change. It can become an irrefutable proof of workers' capacity to take matters into their own hands and to create a democratic space in their workplace. The success of this experience creates the potential for a qualitative change in the workers' role in production.

The experience derives further importance from Argentina's particular position at the time of the crisis: an exemplary pupil of the IMF and the World Bank in the 1990s, it was considered a laboratory of neoliberal policies. In this sense, the Argentinian crisis of 2001 was different from the crises that struck Brazil, Asia and Russia in the previous decade. While the latter occurred in state-led, export-oriented economies, Argentina had adopted neoliberal economics and implemented a severe Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) (Teubal 2004).

The economic crisis of 2001 was the worse crisis in Argentinian history; it plunged the country into chaos and witnessed a popular uprising and the emergence (and resurgence) of various social movements, one of which was the worker-recovered factories movement. For many, the crisis projected the failure of neoliberalism and signalled the ascendance of alternatives and resistance movements challenging the neoliberal doctrine. This is seen as part of a general movement of contestation sweeping Latin America (Vanden 2003). Social

movements represent an integral part of this movement of contestation that is questioning the foundations of neoliberal politics and trying to propose an alternative path. The worker-recovered factories movement in particular is an important sign of this symbolic contestation movement.

Parallel to the discourse of globalization and the pressures to open up markets and to implement structural adjustment policies, a globally coordinated response has been articulated. Antonio Negri's work - although contested by some within the movement, like Petras (Petras 2003b, 1-16) - gained enormous influence and is considered to be the manifesto of the alter-globalization movement (Negri & Hardt 2001).

Since the threats posed by neoliberalism are global and affect everyone, opposition should include the widest possible range of alliances. The alter-globalization movement was thus organized under the popular banner of 'another world is possible'. Grasping every available opportunity, the movement has sought to demonstrate that opposition to global injustice is also global. A sense of a transnational unifying movement exists within the opposition to neoliberal globalization. This movement has adopted the task of creating an alternative path. Some call the set of alternative experiences that defy neoliberalism, proposing a more just and egalitarian model, 'globalization from below' (Starr 2000, 83-110). The movement of recovered factories belongs to this tradition.

The experience of worker self-management is not novel to the world in general, nor to Latin America in particular. Worker self-management was the official doctrine of the Yugoslav socialist regime from the 1950's until the break-up of the Yugoslav state. Algeria and Israel had their well-known experiences. A number of countries in the Latin American continent like Chile, Peru and Bolivia

experimented with worker self-management, with little success, for short periods in various instances and under different conditions. The lessons drawn from these experiences can serve to guide Argentinian workers trying to build an alternative model on their own, without effective tools and resources (Petras 2002).

For their part, the recovered enterprises face formidable challenges, including: running a factory or an enterprise under financial strain without capital or credit; putting a plant into production after it has been deserted by managers and professionals; preparing non-specialist workers to assume managerial and financial tasks (previously performed by specialized professionals); learning to build a movement to fight for their daily bread while concurrently defending the right to expropriate factories; and learning how to build alliances within the broader political context while avoiding the traps of petty politics. Drawing lessons from these previous experiences and transmitting them to new experiments can give a practical meaning to the study of social movements.

The introduction has, up to now, presented the context in which the movement formed and outlined its significance. These elements brought the movement to the attention of the author in the first place. Now the work turns to the task of elaborating the analytical framework that guides the rest of this study.

Explanatory conjectures of the birth and continuity of the movement

Various factors have played a role in facilitating the movement of factory recoveries in Argentina. Many theories seem useful in explaining the emergence of this movement.

According to Hirschman, for example, a potential contending group is affected negatively by its members' capacity to exit. What is meant by 'exit' here

is the ability to defect from the group or to be recruited by an alternative (Hirschman 1970). Whenever alternatives to the needs or services benefiting the group's members exist, the opportunity to exit the group becomes a threat to its ability to transform into an effective movement.

In the context of Argentina's economic crisis, the future appeared bleak for workers in the bankrupt factories. The unprecedented rates of unemployment meant the absence of alternatives or exit possibilities. The factory closures meant loss of jobs and unemployment was the quasi-certain outcome. Under such conditions, the workers had no choice but to take up the fight in order to get their jobs back and prevent an imminent catastrophe.

"If we hadn't had our backs against the wall, we wouldn't be here right now," as Gustavo Crisaldo, a machinist and member of the management committee in the worker-recovered factory of Cristal Avellenda, put it (Ballvé 2006).

The recovered factories of Argentina benefited from a rare opportunity in the political history of the country. As noted by various experts who study social movements, the degree of openness and vulnerability displayed by the political system can be instrumental in defining the outcome of a movement of contestation. When the political structure is fragile, the contending group is more likely to benefit from the situation because the opposing party is willing to give concessions to avoid additional threats. This was the case of Argentina post-2001. The crisis was of unprecedented scale and it severely affected the political structure. It took several weeks for the country to regain a minimum of political stability. During this period, five consecutive presidents resigned and the slogan 'que se vayan todos' (let them all leave) was the order of the day.

In this situation, the political elite needed to re-establish order and avoid further confrontation. However, if the 'structure of political opportunities' at a specific conjuncture allowed the factories to be taken over and lent manoeuvrability to the movement, the movement's continuity and future success need to be examined differently.

This study is mainly interested in the question of the movement's continuity. The future of a movement is related to two major factors that are consistently treated in the literature on social movements. One is internal and the other relates to the political environment and surrounding circumstances. In order to sketch the potential outcome of the recovered factories movement, one must examine both factors. Accordingly, in this study, two levels will be examined: the internal dynamics of the movement; and the interaction of the political structure with the movement.

The movement of recovered factories is not homogeneous. There are several organizational groupings within the movement. Each of these has a different dynamic; the course of each and the nature of the relations between them affect the internal dynamics of the movement. Internal dynamics shape the movement's identity and define its goals and strategy.

At the same time, the relative permissiveness of the political system that benefited the recovered factories and other social movements in Argentina is a dynamic factor. To some extent, the future of the recovered factories depends on the direction in which the political situation evolves. The degree of strength and stability of the political structure will affect the relation between the state and the movement of recovered factories.

Oberschall (Oberschall 1973, 102-145) provides a theoretical framework that enables us to evaluate the internal dynamics of the movement and the prospects awaiting it. Oberschall classifies social movements into six groups according to two sets of variables. One set of variables is related to the nature of the ties that bind members of the group together; categorized as communal, un-or-weakly-organized, and associational. A second set of variables refers to the relations the group has with other elements of society; here we have two categories, the integrated and the segmented.

Vertical dimension: links between collectivities	**Horizontal dimension : links within the collectivity**		
	Communal Organization	***Un-or weakly-organized***	***Associational Organization***
Integrated	**A**	**B**	**C**
Segmented	**D**	**E**	**F**

Figure I: Oberschall's Classification of Collectivities *(Oberschall 1973, 120)*

Each of the variables and the six categories will be explained in detail in Chapter Two (Figure I elaborates this classification). The task of this paper will be to categorise the worker-recovered factories movement in accordance with Oberschall's scheme, to assess its potential to move from one category to another within the scheme, and thus try to predict the best strategy for its survival.

Beyond the image of spontaneous uprisings often associated with social movements, it takes a concerted effort on the part of a movement's initiators to construct an effective social movement. Tilly remarks that the scale, durability and effectiveness of a movement of contestation rely heavily on what he calls "political entrepreneurs"; professional political organizers capable of foreseeing

the importance of mounting "campaigns, social movement performances and WUNC [Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment] displays" (Tilly 2004, 13). This is another organizational element that will be interesting to examine in complement with Oberschall's scheme.

Two additional aspects of the movement might prove crucial to its survival and capacity to evolve: the nature of its organization and its ability to forge alliances and 'to bridge' other social groups. Gamson has noted in his extensive research on social movements in the United States that groups characterized by a centralized or bureaucratic organization are more successful in achieving their goals (Gamson 1990). Likewise, strategic choices can prove essential to an aspiring social movement. The ability to *bridge*; that is, to emphasize issues converging with other movements, can be another vital aspect of survival and growth (Snow & Benford 1992).

Kritschelt offers a different typology, one that is more relevant to testing a political system's responsiveness to contestation (Kritschelt 1986, 57-85). This typology allows the study of the political structures from both the angle of what Kritschelt calls 'input', referring to the system's receptiveness, and of 'output', meaning its capacity to implement policy. The current political situation in Argentina, the changes that were introduced in the first term of Nestor Kirchner's presidency and potential scenarios for the country's near future will be examined through this lens.

Kritschelt subscribes to what is known as the "political opportunity structure" approach. Another relevant contribution to this approach comes from Tarrow. Following the inherent assumption of this school that contention is affected by factors external to the movement, Tarrow theorizes that it is

'opportunities for' versus 'constraints upon' collective action that defines the outcome of social movements. Furthermore,

> When institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines, challengers find opportunities to advance their claims. When combined with high levels of perceived costs for inaction, opportunities produce episodes of contentious politics. (Tarrow 1998, 71).

The circumstances surrounding Argentina's movement of recovered factories closely resemble what is described in this analysis. But the analysis goes further: since opportunities are 'external' they are volatile, and the structure of opportunities shifts. Being unstable, they are prone to decline, and such a down-turn might lead to an unfortunate end to social movements (Tarrow 1998, 89).

Documentation and methodical sources for further analysis

This study relies primarily on secondary sources which are based on visits to, and examinations of the experiences of, worker-recovered factories in Argentina. In addition to accounts from journalists and experts who are following or studying the movement, several books and papers have dealt with the subject. Unfortunately, due to a linguistic obstacle, this study will rely on sources available in French or English, omitting a number of Spanish-only references. However, a fair amount of literature on the subject has either been produced in, or translated into, French or English, providing substantial documentation.

Analysis constitutes a considerable part of this study. This thesis is mostly interested in the movement's potential and, specifically, its capacity to mount a viable and successful challenge to current social structures. Determining the degree of success requires an evaluation of the movement's continuity, since the former depends to a large extent on the latter. The literature that boards the subject of the continuity of social movements, their outcomes and viability is

broad; only a few sources were cited in the previous section. Altogether, they constitute a precious arsenal for this study.

Chapter One provides a survey of the recovered factories in Argentina. Drawing on existing sources, the story of the recovered factories, the circumstances leading to the emergence of this movement, along with the most recent developments, are reconstructed. In this part, the development of the movement, the patterns of factory occupations, the peculiarities of the movement, its nature and relations to other actors, are traced. This is accomplished by integrating available accounts. Because the experience is fresh and has attracted much attention, a body of existing narratives allowed crucial information to be double-checked. Because some accounts are highly enthusiastic about the experience and tend to exaggerate certain aspects of the phenomenon, narrative information had to be rigorously examined and suspicious aspects omitted. Whenever possible, facts were cross-referenced to two or more distinct sources.

Having sketched a comprehensive representation of the movement, the paper will then turn to the relevant body of theoretical analysis; mainly, theories of the concept of 'costs and benefits', as elaborated by authors like Oberschall and Tilly, and of 'opportunity structures', as elaborated by authors like Kritschelt and Tarrow.

The rest of the study is dedicated to an analysis based on the resource mobilization (RM) and political opportunity structure (POS) approaches. The framing assumption is that social movements are affected by two principal factors: the first being structural and mainly related to the nature of the movement; the second external and determined by the permeability of the political

system. These two theories will serve to evaluate the experience of the recovered factories, assessing downfalls, high points, and relevance.

Chapter Two is dedicated to the internal dynamics of the movement. It attempts to dissect the strengths and weaknesses of the movement from the perspective of resource mobilization (RM) theories, an approach developed to study social movements.

Chapter Three looks at the effects of political developments on the movement's trajectory. It focuses on the nature of the political system, its responsiveness to social pressures, and the external factors that might facilitate or otherwise complicate the progress of the recovered enterprises. This chapter is approached mainly from the perspective of political opportunity structures (POS) theories.

The Conclusion summarizes the main findings, highlights the major factors which will affect the movement's continuity and indicates possible outcomes in order to open avenues for future studies.

Below is a list of the types of sources used in the study:

Primary sources

- The study does not rely on primary sources; no original data has been produced by the author.

Secondary sources

- Journalistic and periodical articles**:** these are accounts or investigative pieces of journalism that describe the experience of recovered factories of Argentina, cover an aspect of the movement, or, in some cases, cover a relevant parallel or related experience.

They are of a short length that varies between two and eight pages. Most of them are available in electronic form. They provide descriptions of the phenomena, specific cases, and personal experiences. They yield key dates, places, numbers and other data on the factories (their names, particular histories and struggles).

- Pamphlets and militant literature: unorthodox material produced by activists or collectives that endorse a cause. They address the topics of the Argentinian movement, labour issues and self-management. A limited number of such documents are used. Some are of an intermediate length (around 50 pages) while others are closer to book-length. Their specific value lies in their ability to depict workers' struggles and aspirations; they tend to be utopian in their approach they are useful in constructing a portrait of the movement.
- Electronic sources: what is only available online. Websites of specific organizations or factories.
- Academic and specialized publications: material produced in the context of academic research or a specialized publication. These publications have a double value: adding analytic content to empirical research, and documentation. They offer a trustworthy source of information. The standardized scientific nature of these sources means that they can be built upon as part of the analysis for this study. These sources vary in length between 15 and 30 pages.
- Monographs: extensive professional writing touching one of four questions: a- the Argentinian context; b- recovered factories; c-

alter-globalization and the culture of anti-authoritarianism; and d-social movements. On the basis of this body of literature, the research will be deepened, hypotheses formulated and analysis conducted. About thirty books are deemed essential to this case study.

This contribution is aimed at overcoming the transience that characterises most of the literature on the subject. It draws on the theoretical literature about social movements in order to produce an assessment of more lasting value than the immediate and charged nature of existing literature. The continuity of the movement has been a relatively neglected question. Even the more academic and methodical bodies of work that have been produced, such as the works of Almeyra (2006), Fajn (2003), Ranis (2005) and Petras (2003a; 2007), seem to oscillate with the temporal situation. These assessments of outcomes look backwards rather than towards the future. This study is aimed at analyzing the elements that will affect the continuity of the movement in the future and the importance of its outcomes.

The following chapter sets out a background for analysis by establishing an understanding of the movement's development and the shifting social and political circumstances that encompassed its evolution and shaped surrounding events.

Asserting worker-recovered enterprises

Beyond a primitive response to crisis

The transformations in Argentina at the beginning of this century aroused much debate. While some saw an accidental crisis, others talked of nothing less than revolution. The social movements that erupted in unanticipated fashion garnered lots of interest and lead to different interpretations. In order to analyse the phenomenon, it is necessary to dissect the circumstances that lead to the appearance of the recovered enterprises movement. Based on the existing literature, this chapter will provide a history of the movement and examine its nature, its relations to various internal actors and its implications. At the same time, it will cast a critical regard on the various approaches to the subject.

From the *Cordobazo* to the *Argentinazo*

In 2001, Argentina came near to revolution; the country's economy was crumbling and people took to the streets to demand the departure of the political class. United under the slogan 'Que se vayan todos', the middle class joined the urban poor, the unemployed and the workers (Chesnais 2002, 56-63) in what became known as the *argentinazo.*

This kind of popular revolt was not completely novel to the history of Argentinian social struggle. The name *argentinazo* echoes the term *cordobazo*, the latter referring to an early encounter between the Argentinian working class and policies favouring foreign capital and the interests of multinationals (represented at the time by the automobile industry) over the interests of wide sectors of Argentinian society. The *cordobazo* bears the name of the city of Cordoba, which

was the scene of a confrontation between workers and the forces of order on May 29th, 1969. Confrontations between police and workers took place after workers declared a general strike in the automobile and metallurgical sectors, leading to an intervention by the military[3] and sparking a worker- and student-led protest movement that assumed an insurrectional character (Chesnais 2002, 91-96).

Argentina has a history of workers' struggle, rooted syndicalism and mass movement protest. The radical syndicalism, as represented by the well-reputed anarchist union the FORA (Argentinian Regional Workers' Federation), dates back to the end of the nineteenth century (Yerril 1987). Later on, strong unions like the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) emerged, which played a major role on the political scene. The Argentinian masses have taken to the streets at various moments of the country's history. On June 20th, 1973, for example, an estimated three and a half million gathered in Ezeiza to welcome the legendary Juan Peron, paving the way for his return to power.

The *Corralito*

This rich history of struggle, that characterises the country's past, was brutally suppressed by the dictatorship that had Argentina in its grip between 1976 and 1983. The 'dirty war' waged by the military dictatorship against the progressive elements of society had a lasting effect; it took many years before society regained the power of contestation and overcame the fear that was one of the legacies of the military regime. The *piquetero* movement[4] (movement of the unemployed) that emerged in the mid-1990s signaled a resurgence of active

[3] At the time Argentina was under the militarist rule of Juan Carlos Onganía.
[4] A *piquetero* is someone who participates in *piquete* ('picket' in English) which designates road blockades, a tactic widely employed by the movement.

militancy. Nevertheless, the popular revolt of December 19th and 20th, 2001 took place in a context different from the pre-dictatorship era.

With military rule came a set of policies aimed at liberalising the country's economy; political measures known as the *proceso* which led to the flexibilization of financial operations. This was the beginning of an era of economic indebtedness (Teubal 2004).

This policy of economic liberalisation was later pursued by the civilian governments that succeeded the junta in the 1980's and 90's. During the presidency of Carlos Menem (1989-1999), Argentina became an exemplary disciple of the World Bank. Menem introduced the 'convertibility policy', fixing the value of the peso on par with the US dollar. The Menem years witnessed the country's adhesion to a fully fledged program of structural adjustments policies as recommended by the World Bank (Teubal 2004). The results of these policies were catastrophic. By 1998, the economy was in crisis: deprived of its productive sectors as a result of systematic de-industrialization – a direct consequence of economic liberalisation – and burdened by debt, the country had no means of paying its debt accumulations. From 2001 to 2002, Argentina recorded a negative growth of 15% (Petras 2003a), and the once exemplary student of the IMF defaulted on most of its $141 billion debt and devalued its currency (Blustein 2003).

In this situation, the Minister of the Economy, Domingo Cavallo, decided to drastically limit bank withdrawals by freezing cash extractions in US dollars and restricting withdrawals in pesos to 200 per week. These measures became known pejoratively as the *corralito* (Chesnais 2002, 40-41). At this stage, the

impasse became obvious to everybody; seemingly spontaneously[5], people took to the streets, defying a curfew declared by the authorities. Crowds started to converge on the Casa Rosada, the architectural landmark of Buenos Aires that faces the famous Plaza de Mayo. Protesters filled the Plaza and the neighbouring streets, banging pots and asking the political elite to leave; the slogan 'que se vayan todos' became the unifying cry of the Argentinian people (Raimbeau 2006, 20-21; Chesnais 2002, 45-50). The economy was paralysed and, while people were trying to return to their normal life, banks and foreign creditors were panicking, in fear of losing their investments.

Armony rejects Chesnais's 'exaggerated' portrayal of the events as a heroic revolutionary moment; he sees in them a new form of collective action (Armony 2005, 14). What was new about the mobilizations was the identity of the protagonists as 'ordinary people', the nature of their acts of civil disobedience, their determination to withdraw all trust from political actors and to reclaim their role as 'citizens' and, consequently, as exclusive policy-makers, and their disregard for institutions and authority (Armony 2005, 132). In fact, it is the view of this study that what happened in Argentina was, in a sense, a re-conquest of the public sphere; an assertion of the citizens' role and a rupture with the political class.

Nevertheless, the Argentinian mobilizations and subsequent diverse grassroots activities cannot be reduced to the rejection and de-legitimization of the political class. This is the mistake made by Quatrocchi-Woisson, who herself

[5] What is meant by spontaneity is the non-concerted nature of the initial popular reaction. Spontaneity refers to the unanticipated eruption of the movement that was catalyzed during the economic crisis. This use in no way denies the process of movement construction and consolidation nor is it meant to imply that social movements can erupt sporadically in any socio-economic or political conjuncture.

recognizes that the historical approach, of which she is part, overlooks potential societal changes[6] (Quatrocchi-Woisson 2003, 14).

In the literature on post-2001 Argentina, this gap is not unique. Although Armony speaks of new forms of collective action, he fails to mention the movement of recovered factories which is such a striking example of these new forms of collective action; as Ruggeri (2006) calls it, a "social innovation". In the context of a 'political legitimacy crisis', it is hard to understand how the Argentinian people could have 'matured' overnight, deciding to use their electoral rights to radically re-shape their situation while in fact ballots can rarely, if ever, bring about radical change. It is equally difficult to understand how the election of Néstor Krichner in May 2003 could mark the triumph of democracy and a new political era, especially when the traditional parties, including that of President Krichner, appear to remain.[7] Ironically, in spite of the triumphalism that accompanied the 2003 presidential elections, the movement of recovered factories remains one of the brilliant facets of the 2001 "rebellion". What follows is a close look at the phenomenon.

[6] If reduced to a question of political upheaval, the movement loses much of its significance as a genuine and spontaneous response that is part of a global resistance to neoliberalism. As we shall see, the protagonists were not interested in constructing political alternatives; rather, they were constructing alternative networks of 'trade', new social spheres and creative tactics of resistance.

[7] Until June 2009, an alliance of diverse Peronist parties lead by Kirchner's *Frente para la Victoria* (FPV) maintained an absolute majority in both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies (the 2009 elections is discussed in the closing section). Major opposition parties included the historic *Unión Cívica Radical,* the coalition *Alternativa por una República de Iguales* and the new right wing coalition of Maurici Macri and Ricardo López Murphy, *Propuesta Republicana.* The traditional radical left continued to be marginal.

Workplaces lost, workplaces recovered

In the bleak circumstances that brought Argentina to the verge of full-fledged rebellion, businessmen and entrepreneurs frequently resorted to unlawful strategies to maximize profits, abandoning the workers and depriving them of their source of income. To those at the top of the social echelon, the fate of the workers didn't seem to count for much; what counted was safeguarding capital so that it could be re-invested in new opportunities to generate wealth. These strategies included manoeuvres such as creating new debts or increasing existing ones, hiding goods and inventory, and eliminating machinery (Fajn 2003). In their quest for a safe exit from the crisis, the owners frequently disregarded the possibility of seeking solutions through sincere dialogue with the workers, even when the workers seemed prepared to sacrifice their scarce income to save their workplaces[8]. Indeed, in most cases, the crisis severely affected the employees, who endured cuts in salaries, lay offs and other measures taken at their expense. The precarity of their situation was accentuated by the extent of the economic strain on the country.

In 1997, Argentinians had enjoyed the highest average salary in Latin America, close to $9000 per year; by 2002, it had dropped to $3200. Hundreds of thousands of workers lost their jobs in successive waves in a country that offered no social benefits (Guthmann & Tournon 2006, 8). Unemployment reached 30% in 2001, while 10,109 enterprises went bankrupt (Raimbeau 2006, 114). It was in this climate of uncertainty that the idea of factory occupation emerged as a defensive tactic. At first, workers occupied their workplaces in response to owners' decisions to shut down the businesses. They demanded only to regain

[8] A report by the Buenos Aires university classifies the causes of factory occupation as follows: 28% extraction of the machines by the owners, 27% bankruptcy, 21% layoffs, 21% unpaid salaries and 3% other causes (Neuville 2005).

their jobs and recover unpaid salaries. Ranis sees the takeovers of factories and businesses as a direct result of the economic crisis prevalent in Argentina since the late 1990s.

> As the crisis intensified so did the response of a portion of the [Argentinian] working class … worker-occupied enterprises became a clear alternative to rising unemployment and increasing working-class impoverishment, while making a strong argument for keeping alive a critical productive sector of the domestic economy. (Ranis 2005).

The closures meant the workers were abandoned, with little hope of finding a replacement job. Worse, in most cases, they were left with an accumulation of unpaid salary, and had made other sacrifices in the hopes of saving the company. There is substantial evidence[9] that the majority of bankruptcies were fraudulent; used by employers as a pretext to decapitalize their firms, extract government credit and deprive workers of their earnings (Ranis 2005).

The factory takeovers took place in this climate of hopelessness and insecurity. They were spontaneous defensive acts by desperate groups of workers (Fajn 2003). The crisis caused a rift among employees. The majority of managers and professionals left in the wake of the shut down or following the bankruptcy declaration; some of them stayed loyal to the employer, but a few decided to join the workers and fight back. Unlike the managers and the skilled workers, who could market their skills as specialists, the workers had very little, if any, chance of finding new jobs. The only hope for the unskilled employees was to defend

[9] One can examine representative accounts of the personal stories of these takeovers and their circumstances in the works of 'The Lavaca Collective' (2007) and Marina Sitrin (2006). Additional valuable articles are available in the Argentinian sections of the websites of Upside Down World http://upsidedownworld.org/main/content/category/5/14/32/ and RISAL: http://risal.collectifs.net/spip.php?mot70

their workplace, try to bring it back into production and thus save their jobs. In some cases, workers were initially hoping to restart production under the employer's control or place the workplace in the hands of a new capitalist willing to buy their enterprise; in others, they were only demanding that the employer pay their due wages.

Old reality delegitimized, new one legitimized

The movement of factory takeovers was born out of a pragmatic process without ideological predetermination; it was not the result of a developed consciousness within the working class. The radicalization of the workers would come later on. As Neuville suggested, it was the crisis of capital that shifted the axis of struggle. Workers were forced to go beyond the question of wealth distribution and reconsider existing relations of production (Neuville 2004). With their livelihood at stake, workers were confronted with an existential crisis; from that moment they started to question the 'sacred' principle of private property, a foundation of the capitalist system. As the crisis endured and both employers and the state seemed unwilling or incapable of providing a reasonable solution, workers started to take control of their workplaces, following examples set by their fellows[10]. The crisis of capital legitimized these actions and allowed the

[10] Fajn traces back the earliest company recoveries to the 1990s, citing the cases of IMPA (1998), Yaguané (1996) and POLIMEC. These early examples paved the way for the waves of factory takeovers following the crisis of 19-20 December 2001. Some of these, such as IMPA, actively helped other factories in the process of takeovers and showed high degrees of solidarity. In the cases of Brukman, Crometal, Chilavert and others, IMPA workers offered help, advice and actively participated in the defense of the factories (The Lavaca Collective 2007, 73;108;126-127). An overview of the IMPA struggle can be found in the Toronto School of Creativity and Inquiry, "Recovering and Recreating Spaces of Production" (Interview). *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture and Action,* Vol. 1 No. 1, Winter 2007 p.33-48. Neuville claims that antecedents of the movement existed for more than 40 years; he cites IMPA, Lozadur, CITA, CAT and El Progreso.

workers, in their quest for survival, to challenge the very basis of the capitalist system.

The years 2001 and 2002 witnessed the highest intensity in the evolution of the movement. The average number of companies in bankruptcy exceeded a thousand per year; however, in 2002, the number of bankruptcies sharply decreased. The number of companies engaging in recovery processes climaxed in 2001 (Fajn 2003). The ascendance of Néstor Krichner to Argentina's presidency and economic stabilization lead to a decrease in the number of shut-down factories and enterprises and, consequently, the number of takeovers.

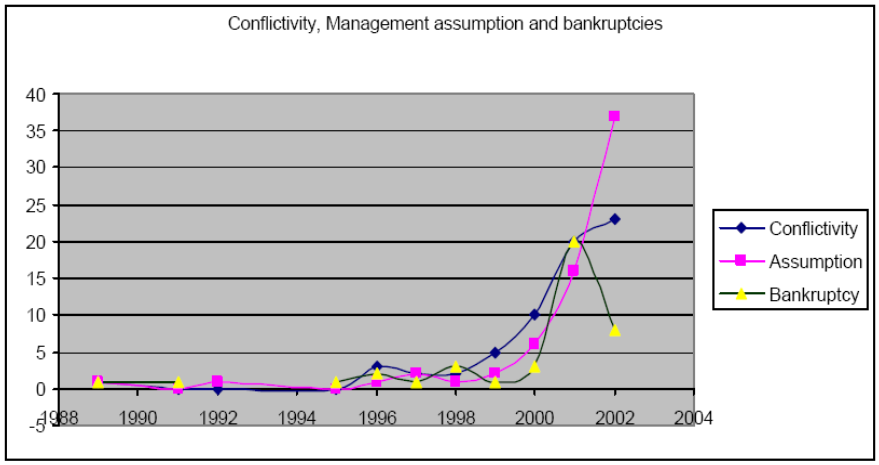

Figure II: Compared Evolution of the Three Action Levels *(Fajn 2003, 9)*

The dynamics of factory recoveries are affected by three levels of action. First comes the company's bankruptcy, the climax of a period of internal crisis in the factory. Second is a period of conflict where the workers start to struggle, demanding to regain their workplace. Third is the establishment of worker control. While examining the phenomenon of worker-recuperated enterprises in the period between 1988 and 2002, Fajn found that the three levels of action were in parallel evolution until 2001. The year of the economic collapse marked a breakdown that lead to a divergence in their development. It was after 2001 that the third started to grow exponentially (Figure II). The majority of factory

recuperations took place in the period between 2001 and 2003; after that date, there was a significant decrease in the number of recoveries, although they did not come to a complete halt (Guthmann & Tournon 2006, 15).

The movement of factory occupations is dispersed geographically over more than 16 Argentinian provinces, with a very high concentration in the province of Buenos Aires and, to a lesser degree, in the capital, Buenos Aires, and the province of Santa Fe[11]. The movement is largely concentrated around the industrial centers of Argentina. The recovered enterprises are engaged in a vast array of economic activities, mainly in the sectors of metallurgy, mechanics, printing and the food industry (Guthmann & Tournon 2006, 16), but also in sectors like health, printing press, gastronomy and education, among others. Before bankruptcy, the companies had between 40 and 100 workers, at an average age of approximately 40. Most factories had endured economic hardship which had lead to massive lay-offs in the previous 20 years (Guthmann & Tournon 2006, 16).

The factory recoveries signalled a revival of militant activism in Argentina. Together with the neighbourhood assemblies, the unemployed workers' movements (*piqueteros*) and the barter (*troc*) networks[12], the movement

[11] The province of Buenos Aires, which is the wealthiest and most populated of the Argentinian provinces (14 million), hosts 55.3% of the recuperated factories; it is followed by the federal capital, with 17.6%, and Santa Fe, with 7%. The provinces of Cordoba and Entre Rios have 6 and 4 recuperated enterprises respectively; the rest of the provinces have no more than 3 per province. These figures are based on the "Guide to Factories and Recovered Companies" available in Lavaca (2007).

[12] "Neighbourhood assemblies" were regular local assemblies that emerged in many districts all over Argentina in the wake of the popular outburst; they were open gatherings where people met, debated and tried to come up with solutions to the problems of daily life. They also played an important role in mobilizations. *Piqueteros* are networks of unemployed workers known for their tactic of disrupting traffic on highways as a way to pressure the authorities. Seen by some as a dynamic social movement, many ordinary Argentinians disdain the *piqueteros* who – it is said - instead of seeking work, prevent others from working with their road blockades. The *trocs* are barter networks that created an informal network of exchange following the *corralito* monetary crisis. All these movements are seen as part of an alternative to the existing order and a manifestation of the spontaneous Argentinian revolt (Raimbeau 2006).

of recovered factories became one of the manifestations of a new era in Argentina. However, what distinguished the movement of recovered factories and earned it the respect of many in the middle class is that the recovered factories,

> "have become a durable social and economic phenomenon that has garnered the adherence of, or at least the comprehension of, a populace that has revalorized the practices of defending the sources of work and the struggle for the recuperation of the productive mechanisms of the country" (Ruggeri 2006).

Conversely, the movement's successes were largely due to the social support they received from the people who legitimized their actions by providing logistic and moral assistance. In many situations, the period of conflict included an intense struggle in three fields (Fajn 2003):

- The judicial, in which workers had to win on the legal battlefield in order to gain legal standing, usually in the form of a workers' cooperative.
- The physical space of the factory; the initial occupation of the factory following the bankruptcy and the attempts to resume production under worker control.
- The neighbourhood; exercising the pressure of the streets to force authorities to take steps to protect workers, essentially by expropriating the factory and placing it under worker control.

This last field of action relies heavily on active local participation by members of the community. In many cases, neighbourhoods took part in actions

to defend the workers, providing logistical help, food provisioning, funding and facilitating the employees' return to the factory[13] (Fajn 2003).

Worker-recuperated factories and enterprises empower workers and set an example for other sectors in Argentinian society aspiring for change[14], but, first and foremost, the movement allowed workers to regain their jobs and restore their shattered lives. "The movement once again situates the social and political struggle at the centre of society's contradictions - that is, the struggle that exists between labour and capital" (Ruggeri 2006)

The pattern of factory recoveries: "Occupy, Resist, Produce"

A pattern for the recovery of factories can be established based on the abundant stories available. There are similarities in the stages that each plant had to go through before achieving worker management. The slogan "occupy, resist, produce" captures the three distinct phases that many worker-occupied factories went through (Vieta 2006).

The workers' actions stemmed from their basic need to work and feed their families. The story of every factory recuperation starts with the owner's decision to halt production in the enterprise, often by declaring bankruptcy. Behind each of the recovered factories there is a fascinating story that runs through the intimate lives of ordinary, struggling workers who are defending, with great courage, their

[13] The return to the factory is a decisive step in the workers' struggle. Usually workers were chased out of their factories following the bankruptcy. The first step in their struggle was thus to occupy the workplace and keep it under guard, in order to protect the factory from dismantling and to acquire a strong bargaining position.

[14] Marina Sitirin's book *Horizontalism* (2006), Raimbeau (2006) and John Jordan & Jennifer Whitney (2003), offer first-hand accounts of the popular rebellions that hit Argentina and the interplay between the various movements. They offer extensive stories by ordinary people and militants who experienced the upheavals of 2001 and 2002.

right to work[15]. A shared element in each of these stories is the workers' sense of betrayal following the owner's decision to declare bankruptcy or cut salaries. For many of the workers, these enterprises are the story of a lifetime, the source of their livelihood.

The feeling of betrayal was often nourished by discoveries of the owner's fraudulent tactics and of money extracted unlawfully, often for the owner's personal indulgence. Many of these discoveries were made in the wake of the initial factory occupation. Eduardo Lucita from the *Economistas de Izquierda*[16] (EDI) estimates the number of fraudulent bankruptcies at 1200 (quoted in Neuville 2004).

Occupy. Before workers resort to occupation, they attempt conventional means of resolving the conflict. Most commonly, they bring their case before labour tribunals, their main concern at this stage being to recuperate outstanding salaries and work benefits. Having experienced the owner's betrayal and the inefficiency or corruption of the labour tribunals, workers then start to question the legitimacy of private property rights. This paves the way for the factory occupation.

After the physical occupation of the workplace, a shift to a more militant terrain occurs. At this stage, workers start to demand that the productive assets[17] of the company be put under worker control and demands for financial compensation become secondary (Palomino 2003). The occupation[18] of the

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[15] The human element in these stories is particularly interesting as Palomino notes, "'struggle,' 'resistance,' and 'solidarity' are terms that have gained a new dimension in workers' vocabulary." Again many stories can be found in Lavaca's work.

[16] This translates to "Economists of the Left".

[17] At this point, legal title to these assets is still held by the owner or the board of trustees in the bankruptcy procedures.

[18] Guthmann and Tournon mention the case of Sasetru, a factory that was occupied on the initiative of the *piqueteros* and leftist parties twenty years after it was shut down. In this case, the issue was not simply protecting existing jobs, but creating new ones!

factory is a catalytic moment, it is the first unifying experience for the workers; it represents an early, fragile victory and paves the way for the workers' radicalization. The occupation is also an escalation that transforms into a tool in the workers' hands to exercise pressure on authorities in negotiating a solution.

In some cases, the workers were unable to occupy the factory; instead, they camped in front of the company and used tactics like picketing (road blockades) to attract public attention, exercise pressure on the owner or the authorities and to guard the plant.

The physical occupation of a factory stops it from being emptied and decapitalized. The workers' presence prevents the owner from smuggling out the machinery, the inventory, or other company assets. Occupation also moves workers toward concrete and direct actions; it is the starting point of a process of radicalization. In the occupied factory, workers meet, debate and start planning for the future. In doing so, they start a process of reflection that affects future decisions and the organization of the factory management.

Since 2003, however, the number of cases in which the workers were able to successfully negotiate a solution with the owner or the judiciary without resorting to occupation increased. This marks a social consensus over the struggle for factory recuperation as well as the experience workers acquired in these situations (Guthmann & Tournon 2006, 18).

Resist. After the occupation, a phase of resistance starts, in which workers face the danger of exhausting their resources in the prolonged conflict. Until they find a way to re-start production, the workers are left without income. This period is fatiguing for many of the employees; those who are not capable of enduring this harsh period lose faith and abandon the struggle. It takes extraordinary will for the

workers to continue the struggle during this period, especially because the future is uncertain and the outcome not guaranteed. For many workers, the possibility of recovering the factory seems highly doubtful during this phase. It is important not to forget that the working class in Argentina has been demoralized by decades of regression, corruption of unions and deindustrialization.

Resistance is another name for survival, which is the essence of the movement of recovered factories and enterprises. Combativeness is an essential characteristic of the movement and the case of the Bauen hotel in Buenos Aires, whose workers are facing an eviction threat for the third time, is exemplary in this respect. The Bauen workers rely on solidarity from the community and on the help of other recuperated factories to defend their workplace. The election of the right-wing mayor Mauricio Macri, who took office in December 2007, was a challenge to the worker cooperative managing the hotel. Macri is avowedly opposed to occupations and promised to evict the workers. Resistance has taken the form of street protests, rock concerts and other shows of communal solidarity for the workers (Trigona 2007).

The links workers establish with their hosting community have turned out to be vital in many instances. By opening up the factories to the community and actively participating in cultural and social activities, the workers strengthen a mutual sense of belonging between them and their neighbourhoods. A worker in the Zanon ceramic factory (now run as a worker cooperative under the name FaSinPat[19]), expressed his conception of this relationship: “we always said the factory isn’t ours. We are using it, but it belongs to the community” (Lavaca 2007, 57). Many of these companies serve as cultural spaces open for use by the

[19] Short for *Fabrica Sin Patron*, meaning “factory without boss”.

general public; this is the case of IMPA, which offers its health centre services to the public (Toronto School of Creativity and Inquiry 2007). Ruggeri calls this concept the "open factory", a practice that is absolutely antagonistic to capitalist notions of business (Ruggeri 2006). Opening the physical space of a business for communal activities is counterproductive from a business perspective; such practices are alien to the logic of profitability and hence at complete odds with the capitalist enterprise[20].

These gestures generate public sympathy; the public then becomes more sensitive to the workers' demands; and this is translated in turn into actions of solidarity, such as the rally of support for the Bauen hotel on August 5th, 2007[21]. The support offered by the community is not merely symbolic; it is often translated into concrete action[22] (Palomino 2003).

***Produce*.** The ultimate challenge for the workers is to put the factory back into production. This is not an easy task for workers who lack training in certain fields, previously populated by skilled workers, managers or engineers, most of whom left the plant shortly after the closure. Moreover, the infrastructure was usually inadequate. And, to the technical difficulties, were added lack of finance and shortage of raw materials. These businesses were burdened by liabilities that were transferred to the workers as the new managers of the plant. Access to credit was extremely limited. Marketing was another problem for the workers, who had to compete in a capitalist economy in which the idea of worker management is not

[20] Ruggeri's originality stems from his notion of "social innovation" as embodied by the recovered enterprises. Ruggeri's "innovative practices" differ from the technological/scientific breakthroughs usually signified by the term innovation. Rather, he points to innovations in practices of collective management and solidarity, but also, and above all, to ruptures in the conceptualization of business practices, such as the open factory. The propagation of these new practices is considered an exemplary value and a remarkable contribution.

[21] Two thousand people gathered in front of the Buenos Aires central court in defence of the hotel.

[22] Apart from signing symbolic letters of endorsement, concrete actions documented by Palomino range from food donations to mass demonstrations to active efforts to prevent the eviction of workers.

seen favourably by businessmen (Palomino 2003; Guthmann & Tournon 2006, 19-20).

The unusual challenges were overcome with help from various quarters. Help came from colleagues in other occupied factories, who were familiar with the workers' struggle and their problems. An important source of assistance came from a number of lawyers who volunteered to defend the workers in the legal field but were also instrumental in providing lessons in management and administration (Palomino 2003). Some help came from academic and professional circles like university students, economists and engineers.

However, the workers were still forced to create new models to meet the necessities of the market. Work to "façon" is one of the solutions workers have commonly employed to solve the problem of financial lacking, especially at the beginning of production (Neuville 2004). Under the "façon" method, the customer provides the raw material and the workers are paid for their labour. However, these conditions often result in income reductions for the workers; they also generate tensions and create a dependency relationship with the client unless workers are capable of accumulating sufficient capital to eventually begin purchasing raw material themselves.

The resilient challenge of worker management

The workers have to adapt to the new reality of worker management. Drawing on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Fajn (2003) analyses the transformations in workers' subjectivities. According to Fajn, the workers went through a process of progressive internalization during the Menemist period.

They produced a new "habitus"; that is, a common perception of reality. The precarious conditions of the working class were "the beginning of [the development of] a knowledge without conscience, of an internality without intention". The deep changes in the social reality of the workers produced a generalized resignation. The actions of the workers grew out of their attitude of resignation towards the precarious economic conditions and the impunity that enveloped the actions of businessmen, trade unions and the government.

Worker subjectivity is a recurrent theme in the literature on the recovered enterprises. Whereas Raimbeau (2006, 119) sees the dawn of "new political subjects", Ruggeri (2006) notes no substantial change in worker subjectivity. Between these two positions, Almeyra (2006, 75) traces the development of a new culture of struggle. As Almeyra suggests, the transformation in worker subjectivity is cultural, and therefore might require a slow maturation. In the treatment of subjectivities, one can sense the influence of Holloway's thesis. In his project for 'radical change' without taking power, Holloway (2005) believes the foundations of change lie reclaiming a subjectivity that ends the separation between the subject and the object created by the subject, thus bringing to an end the objectification of the subject's doing. Power and domination in capitalist societies is constructed through the separation between the 'doing' and the 'done'. It is constructed by stripping the subject of the 'done'[23]; in other words, of the product of one's labour. In this heavily Marxist perspective, asserting subjectivity becomes imperative to restore an individual's power of contestation. The battle is not won merely by successfully occupying a factory. The worker-management

[23] By separating the 'doer' from the 'done' the latter is given an objective existence that is separate from the doer, who is the subject. In his analysis, Holloway demonstrates how the 'done' is transformed into a power that subordinates the doer. While he admits that in fact there are a "multitude" of powers, he believes that these are derivatives of the antagonism between 'power-to-do' and 'power over', which is the power of capital.

challenge proves more difficult, a challenge requiring the transformation of the worker and of the logic of economic production.

Beyond legal imperatives: the ethics of worker management

The theoretical analysis cannot be separated from a set of technical problems that constitute a practical and pressing challenge; namely, legal strategy. This question constitutes an important element of the debate that has a strong impact on the survival of the movement.

In legal terms, recovered factories have gone through two stages before the occupation. The first stage, in which the owner declares his inability to honour his debts, is called *"concurso preventivo"*. The creditors and the employees then have to reach a solution which satisfies all parties. The next stage occurs if no solution is reached: bankruptcy is declared. Workers have benefited from a legal opening in Argentinian bankruptcy law which allows for, under certain conditions, the formation of a worker cooperative. In May 2002, a further reform in the bankruptcy law permitted workers to resume production under a judicial order if a majority are willing to assume the task (Ranis 2005). However, the arrangement is temporary; generally, such temporary expropriations are for periods of two years, after which the factories can be returned to the owner or handed to a third party. The eventual threat of eviction creates an unstable situation for the workers. To remedy this state of uncertainty, workers have adopted various strategies, leading in two directions.

Workers have tended to opt for one of two tactical directions to attain a legal situation that guarantees stability. The first strategy involves demanding a definitive expropriation by the state; the enterprise is then put under the workers'

management. Only 4 or 5 companies have adopted this strategy although it was pioneered by two of the most symbolically powerful enterprises: Zanon-FaSinPat[24] and Brukman. The second route is to obtain the status of a worker cooperative; advocates of this option seek to rent the factory or extract an expropriation order. The cooperatives are grouped into two politically distinct associations, the MNER (National Movement of Recuperated Enterprises) and the MNFRT (National Movement of Factories Recuperated by the Workers) (Ranis 2005). The relationship between MNER and MNFRT is marked by organizational rivalry with a political character

Advocates of these two strategies have engaged in a lively debate. Central to the theoretical debate are two competing models: worker management under state ownership (nationalization) and worker cooperatives.

The proponents of worker management under state control are represented by the leftist parties who played an active role in the struggles of Brukman and Zanon-FaSinPat. Their critiques of worker cooperatives highlight the fact that these enterprises remain subjected to the logic of capitalism. Worker cooperatives certainly bring more equity to the workplace and transform work ethics inside the unit of production; however, the product of the labour remains alienated from the workers. The final product, under a capitalist system of exploitation, has an identity independent of the worker who produce it. Under these conditions, worker cooperatives remain submissive to capital, which defines the rhythms of production, timelines and pay conditions - all part of the final cost, which must

[24] The ceramic factory of Neuquen province in the south of Argentina has become legendary. Since it was taken over by its workers, the factory has achieved many successes. It exceeded previous production levels, hired additional workers and minimized the number of work accidents. FaSinPat workers are characterized by their relatively developed class consciousness and their high sense of solidarity with other workers. They established privileged links with their community and the indigenous Mapuche community who provides them with clay (Zibechi 2006).

compete in the market (Lucita 2002). Nationalization is thus proposed as an exit from capitalist logic and the legal and political uncertainties that threaten the recuperated enterprises; in the view of some, cooperativism is merely a form of auto-exploitation.

The cooperative camp dismisses the idea of nationalization on the grounds of impracticality. While the state is unwilling to commit to such expropriations, yielding but faint hope for the success of these demands, resuming production remains a pressing necessity. The path of nationalization is long and the outcome not guaranteed. Under these conditions, worker cooperatives are a practical solution that can spare workers further delay. At the same time, this option is viewed by many as a more socially acceptable option.

Cooperatives do not only appeal to the mainstream within the movement; some of the most radical elements favour this option. Anarchists and other radical elements are critical of nationalization because they regard the state as essentially bourgeois and capitalist. By their logic, it would be absurd to put the factories in the hands of the very state that lead Argentina into its current situation. In their view, the argument for nationalization is only valid when the state truly represents the workers. From this perspective, cooperatives are accepted as a legal tool allowing workers to maintain production, without adhering to cooperativism as a doctrine (Gutiérrez D 2004). Adopting the legal status of a cooperative is no more than a practical issue. Although it initiates a new dynamic in the workplace and grants autonomy to the workers under a more egalitarian structure it cannot resolve the workers' problems and should not obstruct the pursuit of structural reform.

Far from the dogmas of leftist parties, the choice to adopt a legal form was originally driven by the need to access bank loans, retain relations with suppliers and access the formal economy; this is why many chose the corporate form[25] at the beginning of the movement in the 1990s. It was not until 2001 that public policy began to shift as the phenomenon grew and garnered sympathy. This allowed the cooperative form to prevail[26] (Palomino 2003). The choice of the cooperative form is a practical one, often related to the specifics of each situation, and does not necessarily emanate from the workers' social awareness. Neuville notes that cooperatives provide a legal status for the recovered factory which places the workers at an advantage when facing the previous owners. Since 2003 the nationalization/cooperative debate has been marginal, with most enterprises chose the cooperative form and Brukman joining the MNFRT. Lately FaSinPat has been considering the option, although it has not renounced the demand for nationalization.

How to approach the recovered enterprises?

Despite the lack of real unity, the recuperated enterprises will be treated as a social movement. First, because the members of this movement continue to claim a shared identity, exhibiting pride in their new subjectivity, even though they may not share the same conception of it. Second, because this group of workers fits a pattern of common action, tactics, and claims. Their actions have been contagiously transmitted from one factory to another, with explicit help and guidance from prior recuperations. In this regard, the recovered enterprises have

[25] At the time, workers tended to choose the form of a worker-owned cooperative; as Palomino noted, some agreed to conditions where they became shareholders.

[26] Currently 95% of the recuperated enterprises are cooperatives; other legal forms like "anonymous societies" (Zanello) and "purpose societies" (Brukman and Zanon-FaSinPat) also exist.

often acted as a collective seeking a common goal and employing the same forms of contestation. The question now is to understand how this movement evolved and was transformed into a cradle of rebellion.

Revolt is not the inevitable outcome of economic deprivation and degradation of living conditions; we know that people under various circumstances capitulate to injustice. It would be deceptive to depict the Argentinian revolt as a long awaited rebellion against decades of economic theft. Economics alone cannot explain the birth of movements of social contestation, much less their continuity. Perceived as symptoms of malaise, social movements should vanish as soon as the crisis is resolved or tempered. From the perspective of this paper, it is more interesting to understand the set of factors that triggered this specific manifestation in the Argentinian case; to uncover the relational variables that can affect the movement, and, in turn, grasp how the latter influence workers' subjectivities and attitudes.

The approach to the study of the recovered enterprises is dominated by two currents. One current sees the movement, above all, as a political vehicle; the tendancy here is to emphasize the militant aspect of the movement and regard it as the embodiment of a genuine spirit of rebellion. This approach stresses the aspects of horizontality (Sitirin 2006), direct action and the process of constructing alternatives (Raimbeau 2006; Lavaca 2007). Although these elements are definitely striking and represent a stimulating model for contestation, they should not be seen as the sole or even principal expressions of the movement. These aspects of the struggle represent a mixture of what Tilly (2004, 3-4) calls "social movement repertoire" and "WUNC displays"[27]. They are lapses into revolt,

[27] Tilly defines social movements as an 18th century western development universally characterised by three elements: *campaign, social movement repertoire* and *WUNC displays*.

momentary insurrections that can easily vanish; just as the popular assemblies of Argentina have already disintegrated. Social movements can take the form of an outburst of political activism, as evident in the Argentinian rebellion. However, as Almeyra points out, social change is the result of *the slow construction of subjects*. Slow construction requires continuity of the movement in order for the change in subjectivities to be consciously constructed and solidified.

The second dominant current is mainly preoccupied with the political conditions and external factors that allowed the movement to emerge and that will determine its success; in the main, adherents to this approach subscribe to the tradition of political opportunity structures analysis (Ranis 2006; Fajn 2003). Their interest in internal factors affecting the movement is, for the most part, limited to the technical and legal difficulties the movement encounters (Palomino 2003; Ruggeri 2006; Zibechi 2004; Ballvé 2006). The relative lack of analysis of the interactions between internal factors and their possible outcomes leaves the impression that the movement's outcome will be determined solely by political developments and government initiatives. Beyond the debate between proponents of political opportunity structure approaches and resource mobilization approaches, it seems important to note, from a normative perspective, that the movement is principally guided by internal dynamics, and that this dimension thus requires further scrutiny. It is equally important to revisit the political conditions in the wake of Kirchner's first term and of his wife Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's succession to power in December 2007.

The focus of this paper is the study of the movement's continuity. The fundamental issue here cannot be reduced to legal technicalities, although these

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WUNC stands for Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment. We will explore Tilly in detail, among others, in the next chapter.

are crucial questions that need to be addressed. Taken in a purely managerial sense, such technicalies are not what determine a social movement's success. Beyond technical solutions, a movement's ability to adapt and cope with challenges is defined by its innovative practices.

Likewise, and despite the importance of the aims of the movement, the political agenda adopted by the workers is not central to this inquiry. Indeed, to "brand" the broad aims of a movement is not a success in itself; on the contrary, this might only cripple the movement. As we have seen above, the workers did not begin with a clearly defined agenda, and yet their actions had the most concrete and felt impact within recent Argentinian movements.

A movement's success is determined on one hand by the degree of *acceptance* it garners among its antagonists and, on the other, by the gains or *new advantages* it can achieve (Gamson 1975, 28-37). It is important not to underestimate the symbolic value of the practices advanced by the movement and the principles embedded within these practices. Nevertheless, the persistence of a movement has little to do with its intrinsic value but is mainly determined by the strategies it adopts.

A closing note

From the perspective of this paper and regardless of the theoretical validity of either option, the adoption of a legal form constitutes the basic strategic choice at this stage; it is a choice that will not only have implications for the survival of the recovered enterprise but also, and more interestingly, for the movement's outlook and future relations, as we shall see in the coming chapter. The debate over legal form is very interesting, since it contributes to the radical credentials of

the movement and adds new meaning to the workers' struggle. However, this paper argues that, in order to succeed, the movement must go beyond the factory walls, forming strategic alliances with other groups, fostering demands and pressing for institutional change, and that it must consolidate its standing by revolutionizing the culture of everyday life.

In the literature surveyed for this paper, the originality of the movement is stressed; its capacity to confront the establishment and to challenge traditional structures is highlighted. Much of the existing literature is devoted to the discussion of the obstacles to worker's management both in the legal and technical domains. In the following chapters, a body of social movement theory will be exploited to formulate a set of determining factors that can be adopted organizationally and strategically in the context of the recovered factories as a tool to foster development.

Spontaneity vs. organization

From popular outburst to sustained mobilization

This chapter will try to make sense of the terrain of militancy in Argentina, situating the recovered factories in relation to the various players and examining the prospects for strategic cooperation among them, as well as the scope and nature of this cooperation.

Tilly maintains that social movements should not be considered groups; arguing that social movements are "complex" forms of social interaction, he proposes treating them as "clusters of performances" (Tilly 1993-1994). The social movement invests in various activities such as mobilization, mutual aid, building shared identities and collection of resources, but what distinguishes social movements from other forms of collective action is their "sustained challenges by means of public displays of numbers, commitment, unity, and worthiness" (Tilly 1993-1994, 8). This however does not mean that a movement's 'sustainability' is related to its 'displays'; rather, it depends on a broader set of factors. The displays are the manifestation of the movement; however, what makes this manifestation possible is a number of factors that relate, in part, to its organizational character. This chapter will try to pinpoint those organizational factors and analyse their interactions in the context of Argentina.

An unconscious maturation

Let us first lay the basis for the movement's eruption, which might be called 'the foundational moment'. As described in the previous chapter, the recovered factory movement emerged in an unanticipated fashion. The workers

acted hastily, with improvisation and spontaneity. The movement cannot be separated from the economic conditions that engulfed Argentina in the new millenium, namely structural unemployment aggravated by the difficult economic conditions that left workers with little hope of finding jobs. Hirschman provides a useful explanation for the initial response of the workers. In his analysis, he explains why individual responses turn towards confrontation and mobilization in the absence of what he calls the 'exit' option, or the lack of alternatives (Hirschman 1970). The inability of individuals to exit the group of contenders ensures the absence of defection from the group. Whenever there is a possibility of exit, the group becomes threatened by the loss of members who can opt for alternatives other than confrontation. Prospects for exiting the crisis seemed very dim for workers in bankrupt factories since the crisis was raging all over the country. Unemployment reached 30%, meaning that the only opportunity for workers to maintain a source of revenue was to preserve their workplaces.

In a market metaphor, Hirschman compares 'exit' to competition and the desirable effect of having the option to select among different brands. In times of crisis, 'exit' represents the option of alternative employment that can substitute for the loss of jobs. The situation in Argentina was characterized by a remarkable lack of exit options, with a lack of job opportunities due to the agonizing economic situation highlighted in the previous chapter. The workers were trapped by the absence of alternatives; we have already seen that unemployment and the lack of economic options were key factors in the radicalization of the workers.

Beyond this immediate, defensive reason for choosing the radical and unconventional solution of factory occupations, the actions of the workers may have been triggered at a more subconscious level. Tarrow argues that groups are

likely to mobilize in a situation of general confrontation where many actors are challenging the power structure; that is, a situation similar to the social and political landscape of Argentina in the early 2000s. In such a situation, when elites are faced by multiple threats from various contenders, the climate is encouraging for parties to engage in confrontation. Tarrow argues that those who risk high losses are more likely to engage in contentious politics, since they are the ones who might pay most heavily for their inaction (Tarrow 98, 85-87). Workers in Argentina, who used to earn one of the highest average incomes in Latin America and enjoy stable jobs and salaries, were indeed at risk of being stripped of these privileges due to the shutdowns.

In combination, the lack of exit and the high risks of inaction provide a convincing account of the initial motives of the workers. In order to extend the analysis beyond the causes that sparked the recovered factories movement, to the determining factors affecting its continuity, the next section will examine a set of factors that are internal to the movement.

Organization

The efficiency of a movement can be affected by the type of management it adopts. The art of management has been refined by enterprises; similarly, political parties have devoted much of their energy to determining their organizational lines[28]. In various instances, these choices proved essential to the success of the organizations. A dilemma connected to the question of organization muscled its way into this analysis due to some findings which suggest that

[28] A well-known and powerfully illustrative example is the famous dispute between Lenin's *Bolsheviks* and Martov's *Mensheviks* over the issues of party membership and organization. Lenin had addressed the subject in his pamphlet "What Is to Be Done?" http://marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/index.htm

movements adopting more centralized or bureaucratic structures (or, better, a combination of both) have greater chances of success. One of those who suggested such a correlation is William Gamson in his pioneer research on 'social protest' (Gamson 1975, 89-109).

Gamson's work included a study of the interaction of three organizational types: bureaucracy, centralization and factionalism. His meticulous sampling of movements of contestation in the US, drawn from a wide range of data, allows Gamson to study a representative cluster of familiar social movements of the era. From the historical material in his hands, he was able to construct the profiles of the various samples in his cluster in order to study them. When it came to the question of organization, his research showed that, statistically, the bureaucratic and centralized groups had greater success in achieving their aims and in garnering recognition from opposing parties. Centralized groups came out on top, with the rate of centralized groups achieving 'new advantages' double to that of decentralized groups; 64% as opposed to 32% (Gamson 1975, 94).

In his analysis, Gamson suggested that bureaucracy enables groups to preserve a high degree of combat readiness, which makes it easier to mobilize supporters, mobilization being a crucial factor in the conditions of political conflict that characterise social movements. Centralization, on the other hand, is a remedy to dissent; it prevents factionalism to a great extent, but does not completely eliminate the possibility of schisms, which were still common in 25% of the centralized organizations he surveyed (Gamson 1975, 107-108). Again this analysis was backed by figures showing a 75% success rate for centralized and bureaucratic organizations in contrast to a 15% rate for decentralized and non-bureaucratic cases (Gamson 1975, 95).

One can raise many objections to Gamson's work, its limitations, and its relevance to social movements today. Conway, for instance, argues "that social movements are also sites of practical experimentation and innovation and of the production of new knowledges that respond to the crises they signal and the questions they provoke" (Conway 2004, 21); this vision of contemporary social movements leaves little room for highly centralized and hierarchical structures which are at odds with the essence of such movements. In Conway's view, the popular movements have become more than manifestations of social change; they are in fact "bearers of an alternative, pluralistic, culturally rooted social vision and project/process" (Conway 2004, 12). She notes that the practices of social movements are becoming the foundation of this alternative social vision. This view of social movements collides with the archetype of the highly centralized organization that proliferated in the past century, and that is no longer representative of social change. However, the centralized form of organization is still common (though perhaps less hierarchical than in past years) and is still widely believed to be advantageous in terms of efficiency.

It is difficult to weigh the advantages of centralization and bureaucracy, but a minimum of organization, that enables efficient mobilizing, is always required. From an ethical point of view, this ought not to be achieved at the expense of the democratic relations which characterize grassroots organizations. Nonetheless, an essential lesson can be drawn from Gamson's work: while decentralized and non-bureaucratic organizations still have a chance of success, these chances evaporate when the organization is plagued by factionalism. The key issue is thus to preserve the unity of the movement and ties of solidarity between its members, however loose its power structure may be. A horizontal

movement can still achieve the goals of mobilization and preserve high and genuine voluntary commitment from its members, but the prerequisite for this is avoiding fragmentation; the antidote being solidarity.

The family of worker-recovered enterprises

The reality of the recovered factories of Argentina is not that of a homogeneous movement. As Fajn stresses, the student of the movement should not consider it as an ontological unit. Understanding the diversity within the broad movement is important to avoid generalization. The distinct characters of the movement are reflected in the various directions taken by organizations which have attempted to unify the movement. The first attempt to congregate the workers of recovered enterprises on an organizational platform was the National Movement of Reclaimed Companies (FENCOOTER). This was a short-lived experience, soon followed by the MNER (2002) and the MNFRT (2003) that, between them, currently concentrate most of the recovered factories under their banners. The base of the former is located in the city of Buenos Aires and part of the interior zones; while the latter draws its base from the Province of Buenos Aires (Lavaca 2007, 211; Neuville 2005). The MNER is headed by Eduardo Murua, the MNFRT by lawyer Louis Caro and their relationship is one of rivalry. Observers like Ranis (2005) have noticed a great deal of loyalty to the leadership within each network. Zanon-FaSinPat and a small group of factories in favour of nationalization remain outside these structures and stand for yet another alternative.

In summary, the movement is split into three organizational groupings. A handful of companies, including the emblematic Zanon-FaSinPat, adhere to a

loose decentralized network, but are still among the most supportive and active in providing help to other workers. The other two groups have central leaderships, with Caro playing a particularly controlling role in his organization.

The head of the MNFRT appears to be a problematic figure, according to many who have examined the movement. Andres Ruggeri, a philosophy professor and a proponent of workers' self-management, considers Caro to represent a soft tendency within the movement; he is close to the corporate world, the Catholic Church and the Peronist right (quoted in Raimbeau 2005). Maria Trigona accuses Caro of becoming the new boss of the workers, of taking advantage of threats of eviction[29] or market pressures to co-opt the recovered enterprises, and of de-politicising the workers by drawing them away from the common struggle. Caro ran as candidate for the Christian Democratic Party (Trigona 2006).

Caro's style of personal leadership, along with his emphasis on limiting the commitment of workers to the internal life of the enterprise, is seen as a threat to the unity of the movement. Ruggeri (2006) criticises the attitude of the MNFRT, blaming it for becoming a surrogate managerial body, and for hampering the move to self-management through the poisoned managerial expertise it offers in exchange for legal and political assistance. A more sympathetic account of Caro is given in Lavaca[30].

Despite the rivalry that characterises the relationship between MNER and MNFRT, a sense of larger unity is maintained and at times the two have come together to fight one combat. This was the case in 2004, when they triumphed in a

[29] Trigona and Raimbeau point to the case of the Brukman factory that once was representative of the radical tendency within the movement but was recently co-opted by Caro's MNFRT after police evicted the workers. Brukman was associated with leftist parties and drew the attention of many activists worldwide; its case was highly publicized.

[30] The crucial role Caro played in a judicial settlement involving the newspaper *Comercio Y Justicia* is highlighted (Lavaca 2007, 201-203).

legal battle that lead to the definitive expropriation of thirteen cooperatives now under worker control (Lavaca 2007, 211-212).

Minimal cooperation does not prevent solidarity. The workers of all factories associate with a common cause; the support they provide each other is witness to this fact. However, the legalistic case-by-case approach of the MNFRT endangers the unity of the movement, especially because it is coupled with an avowed apolitical outlook. The major threat of fragmentation seems to arise from this isolationist trend affecting some sectors of the movement which tend to confine their activities to within the gates of the enterprise.

Leaderships instead of leadership

The omnipresence of Caro and, to a lesser degree, Murua in their respective organizations leads to questions about the role of leaders and other distinguished individuals in guiding and orienting the movement. Tilly coined the term "political entrepreneur" to refer to individuals who, thanks to their interpersonal skills and their understanding of the home environment, play a decisive role in "planning, coalition building, and muting of local differences" (Tilly 2004, 13). However, he remarks with irony that much of the energy of social movements is directed at masking this entrepreneurial role in order to present an image of spontaneous arousal. In fact, individuals who play a role analogous to that of Tilly's entrepreneurs do exist in the movement and they are not confined to the central roles of leadership played by Murua and Caro: militants at the factory level catalyze their fellow workers with their sense of commitment. The latter are not typical "political professionals"[31] (another term

[31] Neuville uses the French term 'leader interne' to designate this type of horizontal management, which can be simultaneously individual and collective (Neuville 2006).

coined by Tilly), they rose to their current standing through spontaneous respect for their exemplary conduct and they remain on an equal footing with the rest of the workers.

A perfect example is Raul Godoy from Zanon-FaSinPat (his case is best illustrated in Lavaca 2007, 45-63). Godoy, who gained the trust of his comrades and became a famous symbol of their struggle, remains committed first and foremost to the factory's workers' assembly. For instance, Godoy, who is a member of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (PTS), refrained from using his moral capital or that of the factory for his party's electoral campaign, chosing instead to abide by a decision voted in the factory that prevents workers from running in elections. Godoy is not an isolated case[32] in which a factory representative or spokesperson has remained committed to grassroots democracy despite having attained a privileged status among colleagues. Under this style of collective leadership, workers can capitalize on the charisma and talents of certain individuals without conceding the principle of collective decision-making. This type of 'leadership', that is based on individual initiative but equally imbedded in the cooperative spirit, is very efficient in confronting challenges and cementing unity among workers.

Worker solidarity and community support

An early comprehensive approach to the question of mobilization from the rational choice perspective was provided by Anthony Oberschall in 1973 (Oberschall 1973, Chap 4). The Oberschall approach organized communities along a vertical line based on the nature of the existing links between them. The

[32] Pioneer individual roles are common in the stories of recovered enterprises, yet the supreme will remains embodied in the assemblies. A good collection of these stories is found in Lavaca and Sitrin.

vertical dimension comprised two categories: "integrated", where there is mobility between groups, allowing gifted and ambitious elements to ascend to a higher status, and consequently causing a drain of resources from the community; and "segmented", which does not allow for upward mobility, and hence denies elements capable of energizing the community an exit option (to use Hirschman's model). As we have seen, and for reasons that have more to do with severe unemployment and persistent economic crisis than Oberschall's definition of segmented collectivities[33], Argentina's recovered enterprises resembled the segmented type of community, which is favourable to mobilization.

Horizontally, the scheme is divided into three categories of internal association. Societies move from the "communal organization" model, which characterises underdeveloped societies with traditional social structures, to the "associational organization" type most characteristic of industrialized societies, and, in between, Oberschall places the "un-or weakly-organized" type. The communal model relies on kinship, ethnic, tribal, village, or other forms of community. The associational model relies on special interest associations and is based on dense networks of occupational, religious, economic, civic and other forms of association. However, the transition from the communal to the associational model of organization does not necessarily have to go through a period of disorganization in which the first model is totally decomposed and the latter not yet formed. Oberschall is highly critical of some theories of modernization; he stresses that communal and associational forms are not mutually exclusive. This framework fits the current case; while most recovered factories are organized according to professional associations defined by common

[33] Worker mobility from one group to another was not hampered by structural constraints as suggested by Oberschall but by the economic crisis that imposed a static dynamic of mobility.

status and common interests as labourers, they have also benefited from existing communal ties of solidarity which have provided moral and material support and at times have become actively engaged in the process. These communal ties were best expressed by the "neighbourhood assemblies"[34]. The collaboration is depicted in many accounts, including Sitrin (14-15).

Vertical dimension: links between collectivities	**Horizontal dimension : links within the collectivity**		
	Communal Organization	***Un-Or weakly-organized***	***Associational Organization***
Integrated	**A**	**B**	**C**
Segmented	**D**	**E**	**F**

Figure I: Oberschall's Classification of Collectivities (Oberschall 1973, 120)

Figure I provides an illustration of Oberschall's scheme in a table format with six categories. The recovered factories would be located close to the F category; a segmented society with associational ties. However, still in accordance with Oberschall's theory, this is also a case in which a not fully modernized society preserves viable communal relations. Whereas category F societies, characterized by highly developed, modern, associational ties, are the best equipped for mobilization, "communal relations can be the foundation and breeding ground for the rapid growth of modern associational networks" (Oberschall 1973, 123)[35]. Worker solidarity and communal support offer a

[34] Although these assemblies erupted spontaneously and quickly collapsed, due in part to factionalism practised by a minority of activists from competing leftist parties, they provided a favourable atmosphere for mobilization (Sitrin 2006, 10-11).

[35] The Landless Peasants' Movement (MST), a movement that has been cited both as peer and inspiration for the recovered enterprises, has developed an appealing approach to the question of mobilization well-suited to the context of rural Brazil. Instead of basing adherence to the movement on single workers as individuals, they opened the movement up to peasant families and professionals such as priests, teachers, agronomists and lawyers. This allowed them to rely on a

network of support and basis of mobilization for a group locked into social immobility. Enlarging the network of social support can reinforce workers' bonds of solidarity and give a larger meaning to their struggle by allowing people to identify with their cause. Furthermore, the active support provided by the community is probably the most sustainable and valuable source of reinforcement.

Challenging political stagnation

The Oberschall scheme is useful in explaining the dynamics of mobilization and their organizational foundations but it falls short in its treatment of an aspect important for the recovered enterprises related to identity formation. Conway (2004) and Gamson (1992) departed from Melucci's work in noting the importance of identity formation in social movement processes. The movement of recovered factories has been engaged in a re-definition of meanings and the creation of a new identity for workers, the vast majority of whom were previously de-politicized. Gamson (1992) highlighted the role of 'consciousness' in challenging the influence of institutions such as the state and mass media on society. The dominant 'quiescent' political culture produces a seemingly 'natural order' that is difficult to bring into question, "[I]t is an achievement, then, for a challenger to force the sponsors of a legitimating frame to defend its underlying assumptions" (Gamson 1992, 68). For Gamson, merely throwing into question the hegemony of the dominant and institutionalized discourse is a noteworthy accomplishment and a relevant dimension of a movement. A new worker

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larger and more diversified pool of support and maintain the status of "mass movement" rather than organization (Wright & Wolford 2003, 75).

subjectivity is therefore a way of defying the 'natural order' imposed by neoliberalism[36].

Despite its diverse nature and heterogeneous composition, the movement of recovered factories has largely succeeded in building ties of solidarity within the factory or enterprise based on an associational, horizontal organization and in garnering the support of communities and neighbourhoods. Those ties are precious for the movement and crucial for its future.

The recovered factories have demonstrated their understanding of the importance of these factors through their commitment to collective decision-making, their devotion to serving the larger community[37] and through the concept of 'the open factory'. The movement has produced a new consciousness that captured the imagination of many in the world. The development of this consciousness can be the key to success. As Gamson wrote, "[a]dopting a collective action frame involves incorporating a product of the cultural system-a particular shared understanding of the world-into the political consciousness of individuals" (Gamson 1992, 74).

Framing or the transition from worker into militant

"Movements function as carriers and transmitters of mobilizing beliefs and ideas, to be sure; but they are also actively engaged in production of meanings for participants, antagonists, and observers" (Snow & Benford 1988, 198[38]). Movements are thus constructed through a process of *framing* that entails three

[36] The global interest in the movement and the iconic stature that it acquired among globalization's critics testifies to the movement's powerful symbolism. It is interesting to note the abundant cinemography that takes the movement as its inspirational object; a partial list of this 'militant' cinema can be found at the following link:
http://mujereslibres.blogspot.com/2007/12/new-films-from-grupo-alavo.html

[37] Hence the many cultural, social and service centers that were opened by several of those enterprises and put at the service of the community.

[38] This essay appeared in *International Social Movement Research*, Vol. 1, p. 197-217.

main tasks according to the seminal work of Snow and Benford (1988, 199-204; 1992, 136-141) on the subject. "Diagnosis" is the preliminary task; it consists of identifying the problem and attributing blame for it. The second task is what the authors call "prognostic"*;* it goes beyond suggesting solutions, to identifying strategies, tactics and targets. Although diagnosis and prognosis produce a consensus on the causes of and solutions to the problem, they do not necessarily lead to mobilization. The third task is thus the elaboration of a rationale for action or a frame of "selective incentives"[39] for individuals to participate in mobilization (these include "material, status, solidarity and moral inducements"). For a movement to be effective, it not only has to produce a consensus on the diagnosis but equally the prognosis. An homogeneous perception of the problem and the solutions is the underpinning of a coherent movement; efficient mobilization further requires the *framing* of a *rationale for action* that resonates with the movement's logic and its cultural and social environment.

It is interesting to apply Snow and Benford's framework to the various factions of the recovered enterprise movement, mainly the MNER and MNFRT. The two networks share a critical view of the Argentinian corporate economy and mainstream political parties; they are both in favour of worker cooperatives as an administrative solution[40]. Nevertheless, they are fundamentally divided over strategy. The MNER is more politically and ideologically oriented; it sees the problem of recovered factories as part of a structural economic dysfunction. The

[39] Quoted in the text in reference to Fireman & Gamson, "Utilitarian Logic in the Resource Mobilization Perspective" in Zald, M. & McCarthy, J. *The Dynamics of Social Movements*, Cambridge: Winthrop, 1979.

[40] The transformation of enterprises into worker run cooperatives is a generally accepted solution; even the most radical elements at least perceive that it is the best possible solution in the current circumstances.

MNFRT, under the auspices of Caro, developed a more legalistic and pragmatic approach based on a case-by-case analysis.

The MNER has an avowedly militant outlook. Although it retains full autonomy from political actors, it preserves friendlier ties with leftist parties. The organization opposes the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) initiative, criticises the neoliberal order led by the US, considers itself to be part of a national working class movement demanding far-reaching reform, demands the legitimization of cooperatives and calls for a state-funded program in support of the recuperated factories.

Caro's organization avoids engaging in political issues and taking positions on global issues. The MNFRT seems more reconciled with the capitalist economic order. Its approach is focused on the salvation of each factory independently. Efforts are centered on resuming production, since, once a factory is actively run by its workers, authorities will not dare dismantle a process that provides employment, generates profit and distributes income. Caro regards the workers as having 'not abandoned' the factories rather than having occupied them and stresses the constitutionality of the 'right to work' (Ranis 2005). This reflects a less combative attitude which is attributed to Caro's personality and influence.

The disagreement over prognosis between the two major bodies of recovered enterprises holds a potential for weakening the movement as a whole. This divide contributes to the murkiness of the prognosis and consequently affects the framing of the mobilization rationale. The workers have demonstrated a great deal of solidarity that was nurtured by their common grievances and imminent economic distress. However, to maintain a potent drive for mobilization, workers need to maintain a rationale for mobilization that echoes their basic needs as

individuals, their rights as a social group and their emerging identity. This message has to avoid burdening the workers with political agendas that go beyond their capacity as daily struggling toilers; nevertheless, a sense of larger solidarity and the new meaning and inspiring[41] identity that the workers have acquired can serve as a source of pride and empowerment. The danger of fragmentation and of isolation within the borders of one's factory or enterprise threatens mobilization and the shared identity that the workers have constructed. This needs to be tested in the context of a call for mobilization in a future situation of relative stability, in which workers do not feel the pressing threat of an apocalyptic loss of security that has hitherto been a major incentive for mobilization.

Politics in the factories

It is normal for a protagonist to seek strategic alliances or partnerships. This holds for social movements, who seek to exert pressure on their antagonists and must repulse counter-pressure from those same antagonists. Support from observers and other third parties[42] is invaluable for the cause; it is necessary to legitimize the movement's demands and assertions and to provide a larger coalition which can bring support and strengthen mobilization for specific actions. External allies are a potential source of support at strategic conjunctures; however, such alliances are often bought at the expense of the movement's independence. In the case of the recovered enterprises, for instance, the unions and leftist political parties appear at first glance to be the natural allies of a worker-based

[41] The movement enjoys an overwhelmingly positive publicity as witnessed by the many accounts available on which we were able to base our research. However it is important to measure the impact of international solidarity on the movement itself and the ways in which this solidarity is positively contributing, or could contribute.

[42] That is, individuals or groups who are not directly involved in the movement, although they might share some of its goals.

movement. However, observers have been highly critical of the unions' uncooperative attitude towards the recovered enterprises (Palomino 2003; Neuville 2004; Guthmann & Tournon 2006; Ranis 2005). This critique is mainly directed at the CGT, but the CTA[43], which is perceived as too close to the Kirchners' presidencies, is not immune either. The mutual distrust between the two parties is deep and it is exacerbated by a sense of rivalry and a fear on the unions' side of losing ground to the new, dynamic, and non-bureaucratic organizations that have recently attained symbolic proportions. In these circumstances, alliances are unlikely to happen between the two parties.

The attitude of the MNFRT's head, Luis Caro, does not pull in the direction of a politically engaged and self-conscious movement, belonging to a broader coalition with an avowedly progressive profile. His tendency is to disengage recovered enterprises and to distance workers from political parties. His personal background is not associated with the left, which makes the relation between his organization and the leftist parties[44] somewhat strained.

Caro's role is not the only problem. Much criticism has been directed at those who are supposed to be most supportive of workers' causes. The leftist parties have attracted a large share of the blame, mostly for their sectarianism and their short-sightedness. Naomi Klein ironically remarked, on a visit to Brukman that "all the leftist parties had come and hung their flags with their logos on the factory front, but no one thought to design a new logo to represent a company run

[43] The CTA (Central de Trabajadores Argentinos), which is a splinter of the larger, historical CGT, is perceived as a more radical and combative union than the 'co-opted' CGT. Ranis is also critical of the two most progressive Argentinian unions, the teachers' CTREA (Confederación de Trabajadores de la República Argentina) and the public employees' ATE (Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado).

[44] The parties of the radical left (namely the Trotskyist formations) are hypothetically considered natural allies because of their sympathetic attitude and their political support.

by its workers. That's why there's no sign that reads: Brukman, under worker control." (Lavaca 2007, 66).

Such blame came from leftist figures such as scholar James Petras, who spared neither the anarchists nor the Marxists. The capitalist system was faced by a deep crisis that put the traditional parties in a precarious situation, having been discredited by the events of December 2001. The social movements that emerged were driven by popular resentment. But the established leftist parties who stepped onto the scene failed to catalyze the revolutionary potentials of the moment.

For their part, the "horizontalists" - a term coined by the anarchists to refer to their approach – were fiercely opposed to any form of political organization and electoral activity, dismissing it as hierarchical, while defending the spontaneity of people's actions. This position had the undesirable side-effect of containing the movement and preventing it from transforming into a major actor capable of coordinating a harmonious and strategic approach to the problem.

The leftist parties, mainly Trotskyist formations like the Worker's Party (PO) and the Socialist Worker's Party (PTS), tried to force their own agenda and advance leaders from their ranks[45]. The result was enhanced feuds among workers, many of whom felt alienated by these practices.

Both the anarchist and Marxist approaches were rooted in a belief that the crisis would be sufficient to radicalize workers. They assumed, wrongly, that the radical actions taken by people on the streets, in the neighbourhoods and in the workplace meant that a new kind of awareness had been established among the disadvantaged classes (Petras 2003a, 4-8). Events later proved that these actions

[45] Petras states that "while all the Marxist grouplets were active in some form in all the assemblies, MTDs, and factory occupations, their initial organizational contributions were more than negated by their sectarian tactics, largely dominating discussions, gaining leadership through prolonged meetings (the sectarians' specialty) in which most new militants departed before midnight" (Petras 2003a, 7).

did not reflect a deep-rooted transformation, and the traditional Peronist parties regained the terrain they had lost in the wake of the crisis.

Guitiérrez sums up the impasse with the political actors, beginning with the "horizontalists" who,

> "tried to search for a type of politics quite different to the one of the traditional parties… But remaining with spontaneity, they were unable to develop a political project that could have given coherence in the long term to the whole experience of organization from the bottom up. And on the other hand, most of the leftist parties insisted in assuming the traditional link between political groups and social movement – one in which the social movement assumes a passive role, and the "political" actor is the one that assumes all responsibility" (Guitiérrez D 2004).

Rallying contestation

Despite the difficulties in this relationship, it is still a much-needed one. The recovered factories must mount political pressure and lobbying campaigns in order to effect larger reforms that can provide security in the long-term by institutionalizing the workers' practices. In this effort, the recovered enterprises need the valuable resources that progressive political parties and other social forces and active movements can offer them. At the same time, many latent forces in Argentinian society have been inspired by the movement of recovered enterprises. The political parties seem to have found new hope in the movement and appear eager to cooperate; other social movements shared their fight and have developed a sense of kinship. However, these potentials have not been fully exploited in a positive manner.

In this context, and in a society that has been subjected to systematic de-industrialization and decades of neoliberalism, in which the radical left has conceded its role to Peronism, the movement is qualified to play a *bridging*[46] role (Snow *et al*, 1986, 467-469). Argentina is home to a disjointed mass that is, in Snow's terminology, "ideologically isomorphic"; in addition to the recovered enterprises, this includes the leftist parties and other social movements. The recovered factories movement could serve as a catalytic focal point for these immobilized groups; but, to do so, it must develop strategic alliances on a platform of progressive reforms, while preserving its autonomy and not allowing itself to be manipulated by external parties for aims that are not in accordance with its basic principles.

Valuable lessons can be drawn from the experience of the Landless Peasants' Movement (MST) in neighbouring Brazil. It is instructive to follow the course of this movement and the ways in which it managed to weave close relations with church sectors and political parties while retaining full autonomy. The MST prudently welcomed the election of President Lula in 2002 without succumbing to illusion: fully conscious of the limitations, they saluted his victory with great care. The historic relations between Lula and his Workers' Party (PT), on the one hand, and the MST on the other, did not mean that the MST had to throw its weight behind him. The MST has benefited from the support of the PT and, in turn, did lend a hand in the party's political struggle; however, in this relationship, as in all others, the MST retained its autonomy without

[46] As defined by Snow *et al*, frame bridging is the "linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem" (1986, 467).

shying away from forging strategic alliances (Wright & Wolford 2003, 335-339). Relying first and foremost on its own resources and strategies of mobilization, it is free to choose companions from the sympathetic forces of society.

Petras, who has worked closely with the MST in Brazil and the *piqueteros* in Argentina, is pessimistic about the future of social movements in Argentina. As early as 2003, Petras, who used to advocate for alliances between social movements in Argentina, saw a serious regression in social movement activities, most of which ground to a halt while the recovered enterprises were still struggling to preserve their advances, with limited success. He cites FaSinPat as the only factory that has not been co-opted in any form (Petras 2003a). For Petras, the impasse is related to the resurgence of right-wing politics, the failure of the left and the hybrid politics of Kirchner. The following chapter will examine at length this point of view from the perspective of a political opportunity structure approach.

Pressure and cultural transformations

Despite the negative and pessimistic commentary of some and beyond the rosy and over-optimistic picture drawn by others, the movement resulted in concrete and measurable changes in the conditions and attitudes of workers. Numerically, the recovered factories saved over 10,000 jobs during a period of escalating unemployment; as of 2003, 89% of the recuperated factories were in production (Neuville 2005) at an average of 55% of their capacity (Fajn 2003)[47].

[47] Fajn estimates that a constant increase was maintained after 2003.

Although these gains are symbolically significant, they are not sufficient to claim a drastic transformation in workers' conditions.

To better understand the significance of the transformation wrought by the recovered factories movement, it is necessary to look instead at the psychological conditions of workers who had, for years, been exposed to the dominant idea that neoliberal, corporate capitalism is the sole possible economic form. Schooled in, or at least heavily exposed to, the thoughts of classical business economics as we have all been, the idea of workers controlling their workplace seems almost hallucinatory, even to some of the most illuminated minds. People subjected to the authority of this school of thought under a hierarchic chain of command can suffer a systematic degradation of their confidence and their capacity to put their potentials to use[48]. In this environment, the task of worker management itself becomes an enormous challenge.

For the workers to arrive at a point where they were able to free themselves from the previous model of production, they had to undergo a transformation that deeply reshaped their previous conceptions; a transformation that was capable of breaking through what Fajn refers to as their *structure of feelings*.

> "Inside this *structure of feelings* pride, bitterness, desperation, fear, a sense of solidarity and power of class, conjoin; nucleated around a basically economic need tending to preserve the jobs. In these new factories, the *structures of feeling* express through new nets of solidarity,

[48] A psychologist who examined the Zanon-FaSinPat factory noticed that stress is the major health problem among workers; anxiety is inflated by the factory takeover. The weight of the new responsibilities and the constant threats of eviction heavily burden the new managers. "Some workers were so used to taking orders that their new responsibilities caused them to suffer stress out of fear of failure" (Petras 2003, 11).

companionship, major level of participation and commitment and the resignification of the learnings" (Fajn 2003).

Several authors (Fajn 2003; Vieta & Ruggeri 2007; Zibechi 2004) have established a link between the intensity of the struggle that precedes the factory occupation and the depth of change in the attitudes of the workers. Workers who were forced to fight for longer periods and faced serious threats, often of a muscled nature, were inclined to adopt a higher level of egalitarianism as the basis for their 'new' recovered factories. This is partially due to the fact that, in the factories that underwent an intense level of conflict, no more than 33% of the administrative personnel stayed; the overall average rate being significantly higher, with 44% of the administrative personnel remaining (Fajn 2003). Of the enterprises with low intensity conflicts, only 37% adopted an egalitarian basis of remuneration; while in factories with high levels of conflict, the percentage of enterprises with an egalitarian basis of remuneration rises to 71% (Vieta & Ruggeri 2007).

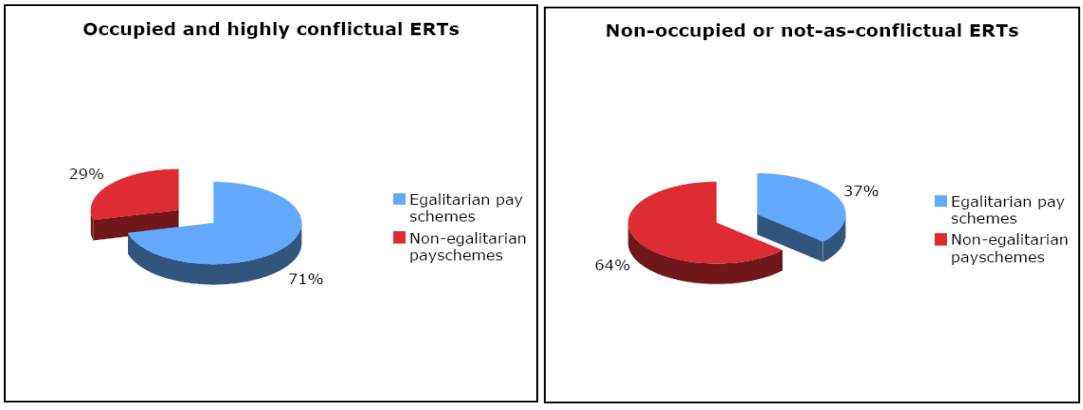

Figure III: Pay Equity Linked to Acts of Occupation or Level of Conflict in the Early Days of the ERT (as of 2005) (Ruggeri, Martinez & Trinchero 2005, 82 as displayed in Vieta & Ruggeri 2007, 40)

Pressure has strengthened horizontal ties and pushed workers towards a radical stance. Workers who went through a period of conflict have in fact cemented their

ties of solidarity; as a result, they tend to value the importance of such bonds, translating them into egalitarian schemes that further consolidate solidarity.

A closing note

To recapitulate the findings of this chapter, the movement seems to have been sparked by economic pressures. Both the lack of *exit* and the high cost of inaction motivated workers to take radical action. The movement is characterized by non-hierarchic bonds and direct democracy. Far from being a singular, centralized unit, the movement is the expression of regional, occupational and ideological diversities loosely grouped into several associations. Despite an isolationist and mounting antagonism between the MNER and MNFRT, the workers have continued to act in solidarity when faced with external threats. Nevertheless, the risk of fragmentation remains a major menace. Workers have skilfully employed the talents of certain individuals; these charismatically endowed individuals rose to prominence, but remained subject to the collective will of the workers, with the factory council remaining the supreme decision-making body. Worker solidarity is the major mobilizing drive in the movement, but the workers also rely on local networks of support. They have become a motivating force for other sectors in society which has put them in a privileged position; benefiting from general support and acceptance, they are able to articulate and energise other movements of contestation. The movement's defiance of neoliberalism - through its challenge to property rights - has made it a symbol; this would allow it to move to a different level of action if it succeeded in coalition-building. The groups of the radical left, although eager to cooperate with the workers on an agenda of broader structural change, have failed to overcome

the ‘sicknesses’ of sectarianism and utopia. This means that the workers have to be prudent in pursuing the much needed cooperation with other parties; a rudimentary condition is to retain their autonomy. The pressure of conflict forced certain workers to come together in a shoulder-to-shoulder fight; this had an effect on their common understanding of their struggle, which was translated into a commitment to egalitarianism.

The many elements of strength enumerated in this conclusion provide an overview of some of the workers’ successes. However, there are major challenges ahead which will determine the future of their movement. Most importantly, to survive, the movement will need to avoid fragmentation by maintaining a minimum of solidarity and a shared identity. The recovered enterprises will have to move to a new stage and learn to cope with different challenges, requiring the skilful building of coalitions and forging of alliances with similar forces (social movements, political parties and so on), while preserving their own autonomy. To achieve this, the movement requires a clear vision and a working agenda.

The Political Trap

Institutionalizing without exiting the arena of militancy

So far this paper has examined the internal characteristics of the movement. This chapter will proceed on the assumption that mobilization is also affected by the nature of the institutional and political environment that governs social relations within a given entity.

The debate between advocates of resource mobilization (RM) and political opportunity structures (POS) theories has often taken on a tone of irreconciliability. Indeed, the conflictual nature of the debate between proponents of the two approaches seems to have overshadowed a clear-headed assessment of what each of these methods of analysis can bring to the study of social movements. Far from rendering judgement on the primacy of one school over the other, this paper deems both to be a valuable source of input for the case study.

This chapter will examine the effects of external factors on the continuity of the movement. The nature of the political system in Argentina, together with the composition of political forces and social actors, create conjunctures that, under specific conditions, can foster or hamper mobilization depending on the play of events, the permeability of the political system and the balance of forces. This chapter is dedicated to the study of the interplay between these factors.

As demonstrated many times, the RM and POS approaches can be complementary. For instance, we have seen in the previous chapter that systemic pressures on the previously vibrant industrial sector and the lack of opportunities for *exit* together pushed workers to resort to unconventional protest and undertake

radical actions at odds with their "docile", apolitical profile. However, this mobilization was facilitated by the division and the moral bankruptcy of the Argentinian political classes. Mobilization was thus not solely a result of subjective conditions. It was also the consequence of rifts within elites and political instability, both of which represented opportunities for the spread of contention (Tarrow 98, 78-79).

The political class of Argentina watched idly as five presidents rotated in and out of office within 10 days, until a previously little-known governor[49] stepped out of the shadows to take matters in hand. This climate of instability, the out-of-control crisis, and the fractures that paralysed the political apparatus, under contradictory pressures from foreign creditors on the one hand and popular masses on the other, allowed the intensification of conflict. The combination of a political opening with a set of subjective conditions offers a larger frame for understanding the sudden rise of the movement, with no need to substitute one element for the other.

Preliminary assessment of the post-crisis period

The outburst of popular protest in Argentina in 2001 paralysed the country and immobilized the political elites; for a time it seemed as though the Argentinians had decided to renounce their heavy political heritage. But, soon after the gradual return to normality, the traditional political class seemed to have regained much of its hold on society. The 2003 elections witnessed a poor performance from the traditional radical left without signalling the emergence of a

[49] President Kirchner was not his party's favourite candidate. When it became clear that both Santa Fe's governor Reutemann and Cordoba's governor De La Sota lacked all popularity, the governor of Santa Cruz was picked as the candidate for the Duhalde wing of the Peronist party. He was elected, with a record low of 23%, only in order to block the return of opponent ex-president Menem, representing another Peronist political tendency (Almeyra 2006b).

new alternative that could offer a political umbrella for the social movements active in the country (Petras 2003a). This is not to say that nothing changed in the political course the country was following. On the contrary, the election of Kirchner as president signalled a rupture with the avowedly neoliberal policies championed by Carlos Menem. Nevertheless there is a debate over the depth of the changes.

Many tend to credit Kirchner with a new political approach that breaks, at least in form, with the Menemist heritage. To be sure he successfully pacified the conflict. He also adopted a policy of holding the military accountable for past crimes associated with the junta rule[50]; a firm stance on human rights abuses that was applauded. He acted against corrupt judges and renegotiated Argentina's foreign debt; succeeding in extracting financial reductions, lower interest rates and more favourable terms of payment. Remarkably, exploiting the absence of a leftist alternative, he succeeded in establishing a progressive profile for himself; winning the support of sectors of the social movements active in Argentina, he symbolically enjoys the benediction of the Association of the Mothers of May Square, including their president, the well-respected activist Hebe de Bonafini. He also gained the allegiance of sectors of the *piquetero* movement and the majority of unions. In foreign policy, he aligned Argentina with the axis of Chavez and Morales and opposed the FTAA (Marra 2007; Almeyra 2006b; Zibechi 2005; Lévêque & Bonfond 2005). By the end of his term, his popularity was unchallenged and he was able to securely hand the presidency to his wife, Cristina

[50] The atrocities committed by the military regime that governed Argentina from 1976-1983 did not lead to criminal proceedings after the transition to democracy due to an amnesty law. By annulling this law and paving the way for trials, Kirchner succeeded in diverting attention away from ongoing conflicts to matters of the past.

Fernandez de Kirchner[51], in order to continue what is perceived by many as 'the Kirchners' second term.

A provisional assessment of post-crisis Kirchnerist Argentina reveals a stalemate; while social forces remained incapable of formulating an alternative to traditional political forces, the right was divided and forced to retreat under pressure of the massive street mobilizations. Kirchner skilfully filled the void, establishing a careful balance by maintaining a populist "progressive" rhetoric coupled with symbolic but unsubstantial policy adjustments. This has left the social movements in torment, saddled with a president they cannot unequivocally oppose, but who is not capable or willing to deliver substantial reform.

The dialectics of social movements

However, in order to effect change, social movements do not rely on gifts delivered on a silver plate: they try to muscle their agenda forward by all means of persuasion. A negative, receptive attitude in social activism is an anaemic approach. Since social movements are naturally born in situations of conflict, they function in relation to three groups: allies, adversaries and third parties. With each of these, they can entertain relations of cooperation, competition or conflict (Rucht 2004). Survival in such a conflictual environment is largely determined by a movement's skilfulness in delimiting the nature of their relations with each of these groups; naturally their capacity in cementing alliances is vital in this regard. Such a task of cooperation with like organizations requires "constant efforts to create and maintain links, to identify and symbolize common ground, and eventually to act together" (Rucht 2004, 203). In the current Argentinian situation,

[51] It is sexist to reduce Cristina Fernandez to a shadow of her husband. However this study was prepared at a time when it was premature to judge the continuities and ruptures of the newly elected president's term withher husband's. Anassessment of her term will be needed in the future.

this kind of cooperation is not only lacking, it is replaced by latent forms of competition. The landscape of social activism is fragmented due to co-optation of some social forces by Kirchner's rhetoric - which echoes the Peronist populism of the 1950s and the 1970s[52] - and by clientelistic and paternalistic[53] political approaches (Petras 2005, 28-59). As Almeyra notes, the marginalized in Argentinian society are divided between employed and unemployed; and the unemployed in turn are divided between those who are dependent on social aid and the *piqueteros*, who are themselves divided into numerous groupings (Almeyra 2006a, 39).

This highly fragmented landscape of social activism reduces the potential for social cooperation with the recovered factories. The working class seems to be divided and greatly paralysed by unemployment, and the *piqueteros* as a social group are rejected by the majority of society, whose views of them are very negative[54]. In these circumstances, the working class is in no position to offer practical support to the tiny, remote and relatively well off segment of the workforce represented by the recovered enterprises. On the other hand, as a combative and creative movement, the recovered factories have earned the support of many in the middle class, who associate the fight for jobs and the recovery of factories with the work ethic they believe to be characteristic of the tax-payer petty bourgeoisie, in contrast to the stigma of "laziness" attached to the unemployed *piqueteros*. Almeyra, in his extensive account of this situation, concluded that the petty bourgeois are too frightened of hope to be capable to lead

[52] Historically, the Peronist tradition has played a contradictory role as a vehicle that galvanized many who aspired for promised change and, at the same time, an obstacle that prevented the effective development of a more radical form of leftist activism.

[53] Kirchner benefited from the clientalistic network of the Peronist party. He then introduced social assistance programs that were not universal and were characterised by a meagre amount; these programs seem to be a cheap but successful means for gaining the support of the beneficiaries.

[54] The *piqueteros* are perceived by some sectors as a social burden. Check in the footnote in Almeyra 2006 page 189.

an alliance with other social forces; they are not willing to change anything for fear of opening Pandora's Box (Almeyra 2006a, 40).

The political opportunity structure appears to hold little promise from the perspective of social classes and the composition of economic groups. What about political parties? Sectarianism on one hand and the anti-institutionalist[55] logic on the other have isolated the different parties and left the door open for a return of the traditional parties, through their connections to the institutional system and their clientelistic networks. The 2001-2002 events made a breach in the wall of political structures. However, this rupture in the traditional political domination exercised by the heritage of the Radical and Judicial parties has not lead to long-term positive consequences.

Historically, Peronism has used the working class as a vehicle to attain and maintain power, its essence lies in the promise of solidifying the national bourgeoisie. However, there is a contradiction in Peronism produced by the opposing interests of its components and it has often sacrificed the working class to satisfy foreign capital (Almeyra 2006a). While the Peronist call for national unity and the nostalgia for early Peronism still resonates powerfully with the popular sectors, the party effectively prevents the development of an alternative working class party. The miserable failure of leftist parties to use the crisis to build a legitimate alternative (Petras 2003a; 2005) compounds this by depriving the social movements of a solid and reliable ally.

[55] The spontaniety approach inspired by direct democracy continues to draw harsh criticism, mainly from Trotskyist rivals (Dives 2007, Sanmartino interview with Keucheyan 2007). Although the lack of pragmatism has allowed a reversal of early achievements, the theoretical validity of direct democracy approaches remains pertinent; the difficult task, however, is achieving a parallel autonomy capable of detaching from existing authority.

The quest for normality or pacification of conflict

Sociologist Maristella Svampa remarked that, following the 2001-2002 rebellion, there was a demand for a return to normality among the general population, mainly the middle class. This was exacerbated by a media campaign and an effort by the government to awaken prejudice and stigma chiefly against *piqueteros* by exploiting some of their tactical errors (interview with Saint-Upéry & Geiger, 2006). This quest for security and stability contributed to Kirchner's popularity and caused a sharp decline in the amount of unconventional protest.

On a theoretical level, in their aggressive critique of resource mobilization (RM) Piven and Cloward (1992) have stressed the difference between "permissible" and "prohibited" collective action. The general failure of RM analysts to recognize this distinction is detrimental to their study of social movements, since normative protest is paradoxical to disruptive, non-normative forms of protest that characterise the activities of social movements. The authors go further in noting that the normalization of protest activity removes such movements from the sphere of collective protest. In their analysis, they attribute the failure to make this distinction to a number of difficulties – mainly related to the nature and accuracy of the available data - in establishing the context in which normative and non-normative responses can be differentiated within the dynamically shifting historical conditions of each study (Piven and Cloward 1992, 301-305).

If one applies such a distinction, the movement seems to have reached an impasse with the halt in factory occupations and sharp decrease in other forms of disruptive tactics. The political normalization of society has thus coincided with the transformation of the recovered factories into a more conventional form of

social activism. In similar terms, Petras provides a pessimistic account of the situation of the recuperated factories in which he considers the movement to have been relatively tamed, apart from a small, isolated sector, the one represented by FaSinPat (Petras 2005, 50-52). The reparation of the breach in the political opportunity structures was the consequence of the "normalization" that followed Kirchner's election. Nevertheless, this should not be interpreted as a fatal blow to the movement; while there seems to have been a regression in protest activity, among other disturbing signs, the movement has also generated recognition by the state. Petras cynically notes that a 'respectable' sector within the movement has become affiliated with Kirchner. True, this is hampering the mobilization capability, but it can also be interpreted as another sign of formal recognition.

Normalization has brought relative stagnation to social movement activism; in parallel, the new regime was successful in neutralising sectors of the social movement, including most of the recovered factories. However, the movement's basic demands haven't been satisfied and workers continue to live in insecurity; the potential for a new outburst of activism thus remains an ever-present possibility in the event of a backslide in economic conditions or a return to past neoliberal measures. Jorge Sanmartino, a radical left activist and member of the EDI, concludes that the current cycle of protest is over for now. According to him, the challenge is to be ready to exploit the upcoming cycle; he notes that Argentina is systematically hit by a crisis every 10 to 15 years (interview with Keucheyan 2007).

Kirchner's popularity rests on a delicate equilibrium between the massive support he enjoys from low income Argentinians and his alliance with a traditional sector of the Peronist *Partido Justicialista* (PJ). So far, he has managed

to protect the interests of foreign investors and preserve the essence of past neoliberal policies while offering assistance to the poor, and introducing anti-corruption reforms to lessen the impact of unrestrained capitalism. The issue of past human rights abuses appears to Kirchner-sceptics as an escape from tackling immediate and difficult issues of structural reform.

Cycles of protest and instability in Argentina

Patricia Hipsher is one of the scholars who have treated the cyclical nature of some forms of protest that can be related to waves of disruption characteristic of periods of transition from one order to another. Under such a scheme, social movements are explained by the advent of political change, for example, transition to democracy. These transformations generate "dramatic shifts in social movement strategies and forms of collective action" (Hipsher 1998, 154). Hipsher's study pertains to Latin America and takes as a focal point the transition to democracy as a continentalcycle of protest. Social movements are the first to mobilise, thereby inaugurating the cycle of protest by demonstrating the possibility for action to other, more hesitant sectors. However, as soon as the situation normalises, social movement activism wanes; in this phase, social movements "institutionalize" and revert to permitted forms of protest (Hipsher 1998).

Cycles of contention produce "master frames" (Tarrow 1998, 145-146). These are alternative 'narratives' (they can be ideologies but also new or transformed symbols and meanings) that are used to legitimize and valorize the actions of protesters within the framework of a fresh perspective. Tarrow offers the example of the concept of rights, which was skilfully exploited by the civil

rights movement in the United States during the 1960s in order to justify their campaign for equality. The recovered factories have had a similar but more limited success building on the notion of the right to work[56]. The movement became symbolically associated with the re-creation of jobs and hard work; in short, it represented an accomplishment and a positive image. The *piqueteros* movement failed dismally to construct a positive symbol in the popular imaginary and it therefore remained incapable of overcoming the handicap of the entrenched negative prejudice that surrounds its image and deprives it of a wider base of solidarity.

With the return to normality, this opportunity to recreate argumentative logic and its symbols will not be as readily available to social movements in Argentina. The possibilities of attracting public attention are limited, since the media has returned to functioning in accordance with corporate interests and the public has once again been drawn into the cycle of daily life routine. Nevertheless, the positive association with constructive activism and with the right to work seems to be a potential strength that needs to be incorporated into the "master frame" of the movement.

In the context of a transition to democracy, the re-emergence of political parties contributes to the institutionalization of social movements. The description Hipsher provides of the role played by political parties in this context offers an accurate portrayal of what happened in Argentina: "the return of parties affects movements by diverting their time and energy from the actual goals of the movements to issues of autonomy and party-movement relations, by accentuating existing divisions within movements, and by weakening movements' capacities to

[56] This was mainly advanced by Caro, as Ranis notes (2005).

wage unified campaigns." (Hipsher 1998, 157) From that point on, the cycle of protest is closed and the fate of social movements will depend highly upon the political opportunity structures. While the action shifts back to the institutional axis, the rules of the game begin to disfavour social movements and political parties try to resume their role as intermediary between civil society and public institutions. Demands now have to be channelled through parties and are subject to their political manipulations.

Institutionalization: sacrificing spontaneity

Normalization brings a new challenge to social movements. With the end of a cycle of protest comes the end of high intensity mobilization. According to Hipsher, social movements have to adapt to the new setting by compensating for the decrease in protest through "institutionalizing". However, what is for Hipsher (1998) or Tarrow (1998, 141-160) a temporal adjustment in an evolutionary process, is for Piven & Cloward (1992) a cessation of disruptive protest, and consequently a passage to a different organizational form that can no longer accurately be described as a social movement. Piven & Cloward's critique touches on the issue of the subtle distinctions between social movements and other forms of contestation including both the more revolutionary and the more reformist variants. In fact, between social movements, revolutions and reformist groups lie large gray areas which complicate the scholars' task of defining the subject.

Social movements usually do not proclaim themselves as such; they do not officially register or announce a delimited platform as political parties do. In their impulsive beginnings, they are often confused about their goals and strategies, which makes it difficult to classify them in orthodox categories. Social

movements are nevertheless a dynamic and evolutionary social force, in most cases born spontaneously out of extraordinary circumstances. They attract admiration by breaking the boundaries of what was not previously permissible or imaginable, but the challenge they face is always one of sustaining their achievements beyond the duration of the initial extraordinary circumstances. To deny social movements the right to an evolutionary process and to demarcate them by excessive, academic boundaries goes against the creative process of maturation that may open new horizons in activism. Social movements are not constant agitators, they are not professional protestors; although they resort to repertoires of action in order to achieve their aims, they employ them within the framework of a strategy and a vision that must adapt to specific conditions. The temporary decrease of protest intensity is not necessarily an end or a transformation of social movements, especially in a country that is chronically hit by cycles of protest. Yet the end of the cycle brings a major and often lethal - threat to social movements.

With the transition to normality, the recovered factories are faced with the dilemma of how to adapt to changes in the political structures that seem to narrow the available potential of opportunities. Institutionalization is often proposed as an alternative. However, this requires sacrificing a degree of spontaneity, a characteristic that initially brought admiration to this group of workers. More importantly, how to preserve what is left of the democratic experience in self-management and direct democracy?

The answer to this dilemma is to nurture a new, self-conscious worker's identity. FaSinPat has been a leader in this respect, but it remains marginal within the larger movement. There is a pressing need for a radical agenda that can bring

the workers together around specific goals. Otherwise, unless coupled with a constant effort to preserve the nascent subjectivity that was born out of the conflict, institutionalization could lead to a shift of the sort Piven and Cloward warned against.

Tilly warns against other possible dangers. One of Tilly's assumptions is that social movements as a form of contestation are a relatively recent historical phenomenon whose early roots lie in the eighteenth century. Contrary to the perception of some that social movements are a fixture on the social scene, Tilly believes they may vanish or mutate into another from of politics in the near future (Tilly 2004, 153). Tilly gambles in predicting a number of possibilities for the future of social movements. In this exercise, he foresees that institutionalization will play a particularly determining role in the prospects of contentious movements. The professionalization of social movements forces a collision between the original, unorthodox expression of protest that characterises social movements' displays and a programme-centered approach, led by professional bureaucrats, that undermines innovation in movement practices. The *entrepreneurs*, crucial for the success of contentious movements in Tilly's view, carry with them the seed of a future threat to the current form of this type of contention. This is especially true if movements continue to draw those entrepreneurs disproportionately from social segments characterized by advanced education, relative well-being and access to key positions (144-158).

Overcoming stagnation

Piven and Cloward are right in at least one respect; in the case of lower-stratum groups who lack the necessary resources for maintaining and developing

an organizational structure, institutionalization is not an available alternative to the decline in protest intensity - they therefore fail in undertaking such a task (315-317). When resources are scarce, continued disruption becomes a more efficient tool for groups incapable of institutionalizing (319). Moreover, the normalization of daily life might deprive movements of propitious conditions for mobilization at sensitive conjunctures, when action is needed to counter concerted attacks aimed at delegitimizing the purposes of the movement – such as the ones mounted against the *piqueteros*. With the return to normality, many in the middle class who had previously taken to the streets alongside the *piqueteros* began to shy away from supporting the movement; and, as the movement became increasingly isolated, the campaign to rally stigmas against it proved fruitful. The *piqueteros* have, through all this, maintained a point of strength; their capacity of mobilization. Unlike the recovered factories, and despite their fragmentation, they are still capable of taking to the streets and disturbing 'business as usual' (Petras 2005). Their case is proof that mobilization can be more crucial than institutionalization.

A problem central to the dilemma posed by stagnation and institutionalization perhaps lies in the general conception of organization as hierarchical and centralized. However, there are democratic alternatives to this outmoded organizational type; alternatives that bring people together in a joint effort on a horizontal basis. This model is exactly what the workers have been trying to apply inside their factories, what is needed is to extend it beyond the factory walls. From this starting point, the fundamental question becomes: What organizational model to advocate? And the answer would be one inspired directly from the workers' experience in self-management, and consequently one that

resonates with the "master frame" of the recovered factories and that empowers the workers' new subjectivity.

It is important not to allow an exaggerated animosity towards all forms of organization while advocating horizontalism. In particular, raising workers' consciousness is a *conditio sine qua non* for horizontalism, otherwise the loose nature of this organizational structure would lead to demobilization. Awareness must serve as an antidote to disintegration and as a means of reinforcing cohesion.

The integration of work and militancy as complementary work organized on the basis of self-management answers the dilemma of institutionalization in many ways. First, it engages the community in the shared task of defending their social rights, allowing responsibilities to be divided and re-allocated to a larger number of individuals. Second, by overcoming the boundary between work and militancy, it cultivates a new subjectivity for workers. At the same time, it eliminates the contradiction between resources allocated for labour and resources allocated for mobilization, since militancy becomes integrated in the profit-engendering effort, as another aspect of daily work.

The Brazilian MST offers many lessons in this regard. It represents a movement of the lower-stratum which demonstrated high efficiency in coordinating its actions and maintained a cohesive but also inclusive base[57]. So far, FaSinPat-Zanon is the only recovered factory inclined toward such a culture of active militancy, considering the factory as a battleground in a continuous fight.

[57] Wright & Wolford 2003 and Harnecker 2003 are two illuminating works on the MST of Brazil.

Clientelism

In the case of the recovered factories, the drop in protest intensity has not been compensated for by a highly efficient bureaucratization. Instead, as we saw, the movement has fragmented into several bodies. Caro reflects the dangerous professionalization that Tilly warns against. As a lawyer, he comes from a different background from that of most of the workers; his connections with Peronist circles and the Catholic Church partly explain his penchant for formalistic solutions. Since the return to normality, Caro's discourse has become more appealing to workers ready to compromise with the establishment on a legalistic solution. Worn out by the length of the conflict, the workers were attracted to the greater flexibility with which the establishment responded to Caro's approach. It is significant that the radical FaSinPat-Zanon remains the only recovered factory deprived of legal recognition (Petras 2005, 51-52). Petras argues that the explanation for this inflexibility towards FaSinPat-Zanon is to be found in the fact that the factory remains immune to state tutelage and paternalistic control.

Kirchner's administration followed the Peronist tradition of firmly controlling the workers through patronage offered to the working class. Kirchner relied on the old clientalistic network that served the Peronist party. The distribution of work plans[58] to groups willing to declare loyalty is one form taken by the assistance programs which, far from providing solutions to the problems, help co-opt parts of the social movements (Petras 2005; Svampa 2006).

Generally clientelism results in cooptation. Nevertheless, in certain cases – such as Brazil's - it can open avenues for movements to advance their demands

[58] A social assistance program designed to help the unemployed.

through negotiations and brokered agreements (Hipsher 1998, 170). The necessary conditions for such a result are the presence of strong political allies who are genuinely committed to grassroots processes of decision-making, and a degree of openness in the political structures allowing for a certain responsiveness to negotiations and flexibility towards temporary alliances.

Argentina does not exhibit either of these conditions. The working class is subordinate to the populist approach of the Peronist party. The complicity between the traditional parties translates into political decisions that are favourable to big national and multinational capital (Almeyra 2006a, 48). The political system in Argentina is, to a great extent, inflexible under popular pressures; despite the state's federalist nature, the president enjoys high degrees of autonomy.

It is absolutely necessary for the success of the social movements to have a reliable political ally which can break the working class free from its subordination to the Peronist party with its clientelistic network, recalling that this is the same party that, under Menem, lead Argentina on the path of extreme neoliberalism.

In Argentina, clientalism has been effectively employed by the government to exploit divisions in the social movements between moderates and hardliners. The former, being more flexible and cooperative, have been more successful in extracting work-plans and other forms of government assistance (Epstein, 2006, 104-107). This exploitation of the divisions within the social movements has been employed to the benefit of the government. The lack of a larger, cross-factional, coordinated front may have deprived the movement of greater leverage it might otherwise have exercised over a vulnerable government.

In the event, the outcome of Kirchner's first term was more fragmentation and the cooption of large sectors of the social movements.

A complex political landscape

One of the keys to success for a movement lies in its capacity for *bridging*; that is, the ability to end isolation by fostering strategic alliances that do not threaten the movement's political autonomy. The potential for such alliances does not rest exclusively with the movement. . The adoption of a strategy of openness by the movement has to coincide with the presence of an appropriate political environment such as an opening in the political opportunity structures allowing a previously inconceivable reconfiguration of alliances (Tarrow 1998, 89). However, Tarrow is fast to remind us that political opportunities are untrustworthy allies since they are external to the movement and therefore beyond its control; they remain volatile and eventually shift back to favour the high stratum.

The extraordinary conditions of Kirchner's ascension to the presidency lead to the reconstitution of political power on a new basis. The newly elected president acted with great autonomy, rapidly undertaking bold measures that reasserted his legitimacy. Coming from a marginal position within his own political formation, and having been voted into power in an election stained by a great deal of scepticism and political apathy, Kirchner appealed to citizens through a series of unexpected popular measures (Cheresky 2006, 206). The affirmative new president gained phenomenal popular approval; his style of leadership seemed to rely increasingly on skilful manipulations that exploited citizen support in order to condition political rivals.

Surprisingly, the recovered factories and most of the social movements did not benefit from such an opportunity to extract structural reforms and long-term guarantees. It is possible to see two reasons for this. In addition to the nature of the Argentinian brand of clientalism, the regime was successful in tempting various groups to accept individual solutions; in this situation, each group ends up bidding for the government's favour and solutions come at the price of political submission. The second reason is the extraordinary support that soon galvanised around the president. This allowed him to draw from a large pool of popular support and thus weakened the bargaining position of each group standing alone.

The regime achieved substantial political gains in recent elections. For instance, in the 2005 parliamentary elections, Kirchner gained control over the legislative body, allowing him greater manoeuvrability[59]. With the comfortable election of Cristina Fernandez in October 2007, the chances for political restructuring might have diminished, as the government's capacity for political initiative seems to be increasing. Under such conditions, the leverage of contending movements could also diminish. However, if economic pressures and social uncertainty continue unchecked, the opportunity for mobilization will increase in the future if the government retreats under these pressures.

Institutional constraints and susceptibility to new demands

Kritschelt (1986) offered a useful paradigm for the framework of political opportunity structures based on a dichotomy between what he classifies as political *input* structures and political *output* structures. *Input* refers to the

[59] The elections witnessed a victory that consecrated *Frente para la Victoria* (Kirchner's faction within the Peronist tradition) as the leading force in parliament and marginalised the traditional Peronist party *Partido Justicialista.* Respectively, they obtained 54% and 9% of the elected deputies.

openness of political systems, meaning the degree of permissiveness for actors and new demands to push for the promotion of their goals within their specific political environment. *Output* means the system's capacity for assimilating new demands and processing them; its ability to effectively implement policies across various political and administrative constraints. Kritschelt designed a table in which he situated four examples according to their classification in his paradigm. The *input* side was divided into *open* and *closed* categories, while the *output* was divided into *strong* and *weak* (Figure IV).

Vertical Dimension: Political output structures	**Horizontal Dimension : political input structures**	
	Open	***Closed***
Strong	**Sweden**	**France**
Weak	**United States**	**West Germany**

Figure IV: Political Opportunity Structures in Kritschelt's Typology *(Kritschelt 1986, 64)*

This paradigm constitutes a conceptual framework allowing a summary combining the effects of the multitude of external factors examined so far. Drawing on the analysis presented in this chapter, a clearer picture of the nature of the political system in Argentina and its dynamics can be sketched.

The recovered enterprises in Argentina were initially faced with a coercive attitude by the state. However, the weak credentials of the bankrupt neoliberal order in the wake of the crisis allowed social movements to mount a coordinated response that was expressed through a generalized sense of rebellion and the establishment of alternative economic and social systems. Kirchner's arrival in power altered this situation. At the beginning of his term, he tended to compensate

for his marginal position within the traditional political elites - including those of his own party - by appealing to popular bases for support. Slowly the Argentinian political system was rehabilitated; its clientalistic networks were reactivated to serve as an effective co-opting tool that succeeded in securing the allegiance of a sizeable part of the social movements. Meanwhile, the hegemony of the Peronist party was re-established through the electoral test and Kirchner advanced to an unchallenged central role within his party.

If this direction is maintained in the future, tensions are eventually likely to arise between the dynamics of party politics on one hand and the dynamics of social contestation on the other. So far Kirchner's genius lies in his ability to reconcile the two. But if traditional party politics regain legitimacy in Argentina, the country will shift towards a closed party system responsive only to those who are well off. In that case, the future of social movements and of the recovered factories in particular would rely on their ability to engage in a campaign of protest. This ability in turn will depend on access to resources for movement organization, the availability of allies and the capacity for "bridging" between various causes. This capacity to bridge is very important given the relatively small number of people involved in the recovered enterprises.

The tilt towards a closed input system is accentuated by the lack of leftist political alternatives capable of challenging the official party or at least of channelling the demands of the recovered enterprises or coalescing with other social or political actors in order to pressure the *input* structure. On the other hand, the right continues to signal its presence through the rise of politicians like Mauricio Macri and Lopez Murphy. While they continue to be eclipsed for the moment, they are still positioned to push the direction of public policy to the right.

The question of relationship with the established left is highly problematic for the social movements. While the leftist competition to Kirchner's populist approach and left-leaning policies is ineffective, association with the ruling party is not likely to yield positive results, especially now that the government's position has been consolidated. At the same time, as Kriesi (1995, 53-81) has shown, a close association with the radical left may result in the marginalization of the movement.

On the other side of the paradigm, Kirchner's policies and economic choices have assigned a greater role to the state. The government hasn't been reluctant in employing the resources at its disposal or introducing special programs like the program *Jefes y Jefas*[60] in order to consolidate its leverage over sectors of the social movements and society in general. This has increased the effectiveness of the state, given the central part played by the presidency in political administration. In these circumstances, the judiciary will play a crucial role. The more the judiciary exhibits an independent and egalitarian attitude, the larger the capacity for manoeuvring.

As the political administration shifts towards the *closed input* and *strong output* combination, the analysis above is born out. The regime is willing to implement a limited reform from above. However, unless there is a breakthrough in the *input* structures forcing some sectors of the political elite to take into the social movements into consideration, change will depend on the will of a comfortable political administration.

[60] *Jefes y jefas* is a social assistance program that is directed at the male and female heads of unemployed families, it was introduced after the crisis of 2001.

A closing note

The election of Nestor Kirchner seemed to open a breach in the political opportunity structures. The rebellion that had destabilized the political establishment paved the way for a new face to become president. Kirchner, who was at first considered by the political elites to be an outsider, turned to leftist populism in order to appeal to the masses. At that moment the presidency was vulnerable to pressures from organized social forces.

However, the recovered enterprises did not push for structural reforms that could guarantee long-term continuity for the nascent movement. The lack of common strategy and the absence of an effective coalition of social forces and political parties led the vast majority of the recovered enterprises to opt for a legalistic compromise in a case-by-case approach.

Kirchner profited from this period to solidify his rule. His leftist rhetoric struck a chorde with the popular masses and soon large sectors of the social movements were neutralised and assimilated by the assistance programs. This pacification of the conflict brought a new challenge to the recovered enterprises. The dangers of normalization are two-fold: on the one hand, the movement may become defenceless and vulnerable; on the other hand, it becomes easy prey for a "pragmatist" type of professional bureaucrat.

With the consolidation of the presidency, the responsiveness of the political system to new demands may become increasingly limited, especially if the political right regains ground. Under such conditions, the recovered enterprises need to maintain - or more accurately, to re-create - a sense of cohesion and emphasize their original subjectivity. The immediate task that lies before the recovered enterprises is to nurture a culture of activism and to try to

raise the workers' sensibility to issues of social concern, increasing their awareness of their rights and the challenges and threats ahead. Unfortunately, the efforts being made in this direction seem confined to FaSinPat-Zanon.

Conclusion

This study focused on assessing the future prospects of the recovered enterprises movement, a movement that played a symbolic role following the Argentinian economic crisis of 2001-2002. In addition, beyond the movement's ability to surmount challenges and survive in a shifting political context, this paper was interested in the transformation of the nature of the movement,; namely, its capacity to maintain its challenge to the dominant forms of production within the capitalist economy.

The study was divided into four chapters. An introductory chapter laid the groundwork for the research and explained the significance of the question; it then elaborated the framework to be used. The study proceeded on the assumption that two sets of variables would affect a movement's continuity: internal factors, that are usually treated within the framework of resource mobilization theory (RM); and external factors, better addressed from the perspective of political opportunity structures (POS). The two bodies of theories were considered complementary, with a chapter consecrated to each.

Chapter One offered a comprehensive analysis of the movement; its history, consequences, internal dynamics and modality. This analysis made it clear that what started as scattered phenomena developed into a manifest and widespread movement with the advent of the economic crisis of 2001-2002. This movement shared a common identity and pattern of action; it exhibited solidarity, but remained loosely organized around multiple orbits and started to develop

organizational rivalries. The movement that blossomed in the aftermath of the crisis was contracted after Nestor Kirchner assumed the presidency of Argentina.

Building on the understanding of the movement developed in Chapter One, Chapters Two and Three turned to the treatment of the issue from the perspectives of resource mobilization theory and political opportunity structures respectively. Those chapters allowed us to identify major elements affecting the continuity of the recovered factories and the scope of their social impact.

On the internal level, the paper argued that, with the withering of the extraordinary conditions of 2001-2002 that favoured the surge in the movement's activity, the recovered enterprises will have to invest in two fields. The movement has to maintain a degree of coherence and unity by strengthening its nascent subjectivity and nurturing its newly acquired identity as a social movement, bearing in mind that fragmentation would cripple the relatively small movement[61]. This subjectivity has had a positive *resonance* within the larger population, and the middle class tends to associate positively with the movement. The egalitarian and combative characters of the movement appear to be a much-valued moral capital. The workers have counted on community-based support actions thus far; their integration into the local fabric is another element that needs continuous investment. This can be a pillar in *bridging* an encompassing movement with broader aims. A prerequisite for this work of bridging is bringing on board other social and political actors and hence adopting a specific structural change agenda; this in turn entails a degree of raised awareness allowing workers to appropriate this agenda. Retaining a high degree of autonomy in any form of coalition or cooperation with other parties is a condition *sine qua non.*

[61] We have noted the threatening tendency of assigning authoritarian roles of leadership to individuals, at times not even members of the movement, which gives way to conflicting methods of action and rivalry.

The debate between proponents of a horizontal approach and those in favour of state nationalization overshadowed the debate over the strategic direction to be pursued in the legal settlement. Eventually the balance tilted in favour of the first option, because nationalization seemed far-fetched and expropriation in favour of the workers proved more legally attainable. The problem with both approaches is that they lack a practical understanding of the situation. On the one hand, the nature of the state remains unfavourable to an interventionist measure such as nationalization. On the other hand, while horizontal worker management is an appealing idea, in practice it might turn workers into managers who will have to operate within the market logic and bear the pressures of a profit-oriented capitalist system, leading to self-exploitation. That is why the movement needs to retain its power of contestation[62]. Holloway's book *Change the World Without Taking Power* has had a sizeable influence on the proponents of horizontalism and spontaneity. The drawback of this approach is that it discourages organization – dismissing it as hierarchical – but associational forms that encourage the development of the new subjectivity are essential.

On the external level, the paper argued that the structures of political opportunity were marked in later years by a complex relationship with a president who adopted a left-wing populist rhetoric favourable to social movements, but in practice undertook very limited measures to alleviate their social burden. The N. Kirchner presidency was successful in normalizing the social conflicts that marked post-crisis Argentina and in co-opting the social movements. The policies of Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner may in fact pave the way for the resurgence of a new right.

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[62] As the recovered factories gain ground within the market, one wonders if this is not partly because they are no longer seen as a threat by the corporate sector.

The relationship between social movements and the presidency is complex, because the presidency has become a refuge for most of the social movements, including the vast majority of recovered enterprises, but the official policy relies heavily on assimilating social forces through a clientelistic deployment of assistance and welfare programs. At the same time, the movement's autonomy was not sufficiently safeguarded, with an unconditional support lent to the "leftist" presidency. The early leadership of Nestor Kirchner presented the recovered enterprises with a valuable opportunity to press for structural changes; the new president lacked political support even within his own Peronist party and had to turn to popular support to solidify his position. Thus the structure of political opportunity eventually played a paradoxical role; it allowed greater *recognition* of the movement, but garnered few new *advantages* (to borrow Gamson's lexicon).

At the time of writing, interesting developments continue. A recent wave of occupations in connection with the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 took place; these included the Arrufat chocolate factory, the Disco de Oro empanada pastry manufacturer, the Indugraf printing press, the Febatex thread factory and the Lidercar meat packing plant. Interestingly (and happily for the workers), the FaSinPat factory won their legal battle in August 2009 and were accorded a final expropriation of the factory (Trigona 2009).

These recent developments indicate that the movement remains lively. However, and despite the fervour that continues to surround the recovered enterprises, they no longer constitute a significant anomaly that threatens the established economic order in a fundamental way. The current situation is one of stalemate, where the movement that acquired both political and legal legitimacy

has become increasingly confined to the walls of the factory; preoccupied with solving legal, administrative and technical problems, it is no longer systematically pursuing an agenda of change.

Prospects

Two events might have important consequences for the movement in the near future. One is the ongoing global financial crisis and the second is the recent legislative elections (28 June 2009).

Although Argentina is not at the center of the global crisis, the economic distress that accompanied it caused a significant loss of jobs. It is not surprising that this stimulated a renewal of occupations. While it is not yet clear how far the crisis will go, nor the magnitude of the current wave of occupations, the economic pressure will affect existing recovered factories.

The latest elections in Argentina were a severe setback for the current and the ex-president, who lost an absolute majority in the legislative house. N. Kirchner, who led the election campaign, had to abandon the leadership of the Justicialist Party, while Cristina Fernandez's hopes for a new term have diminished. The elections were deemed fatal for the Kirchnerist brand of "left" Peronism (Alvarez 2009), but they have also signalled the emergence of new forces. On the right of the political echelon, Mauricio Macri's new coalition *Union-PRO* achieved an important victory in the city of Buenos Aires; on the left, Fernando Solanas' *Proyecto Sur* surprisingly ranked second behind Union-PRO[63].

These events spelled a reconfiguration of the political scene, as it became evident that the Kirchners have alienated a large part of their traditional base of

[63] Despite a strong showing in Buenos Aires, the electoral reach of *Poyecto Sur* is not comparable to that of Macri's alliance. However, with 2.3% of votes and 4 deputies elected, the movement made an important step.

support[64]. This shift has certain implications for the recovered factories. Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, who lost a comfortable lead in parliament, will have to compromise and reach out to internal dissenters within the ranks of the Justicialist party in order to continue to govern with the support of the FPV; however, the risk of dissent remains a distinct possibility. A new face is likely to be put forward by the Justicialist party, Nestor Kirchner having already ceded his place to Daniel Scioli. Parliamentary opposition will become bolder because it gained greater leverage in its recent electoral breakthrough.

In the face of a rising right, the recovered factories may remain passive and focused on their managerial mission, while the center of power shifts towards the right. Such an attitude would endanger the future of the movement, because a market-friendly administration would constrain the movement by its economic policies. However, if the workers act as a social movement, meaning that the essence of their work is political, they will articulate their interests and prepare their defence. Like any other productive force, the recovered factories constitute political entities, since their activity is affected by political and economic choices. But they represent a more volatile and vulnerable entity because they function outside the usually accepted norms of market production. The ascendance of a new, radical leftist formation led by Solanas, who is distinguished by his credibility and a declared sympathy towards the workers' cause, opens the possibility for strategic alliances. At the same time, the weakened Peronist left , which might place a higher value on allies than previously, might be more open to compromise. The movement's ability to manoeuvre efficiently will determine the outcome of such a game.

[64] In addition to the personal style of their politics, a series of mistakes have contributed to these setbacks, an example being the tax on soy exports (Trigona 2008).

Postscript

In preparing this thesis, several domains of research presented themselves as opportune for further exploration. To start with, there is a lack of fieldwork and statistical data on the subject; accurate figures were hard to obtain and there was no consistent collect of comparative data over a prolonged time period. A more recent study in this field is required. This would be of great interest, especially given the interesting changes in the political and economic spheres. It would be of great value for observers to document tendencies in factory occupations: frequency, strategy and tactics of contestation, legal processing of the cases, the development of non-horizontal relations and any cyclical recurrences in the phenomena. This is a vast domain of research that was outside the scope of this study.

There is much need for emphasis on the content and the program that could be put forward by the movement. The discourse of a movement defines its political alignment and best expresses what it stands for. The various tendencies exhibit an interesting dynamic; this is a line of development that should be tracked. What programs and demands should be put forward regarding past debt, availability of credit, training and skills refinement programs, and legislative guarantees? These questions are of a strategic order, but they are also related to the political possibilities that may or may not exist in the current political make-up of Argentina. In other words, this aspect is related to the general political situation. Unfortunately this research could not address this important dimension in a substantial manner.

The movement as a transnational actor is yet another aspect that deserves to be treated. Similar movements are scattered across a number of Latin American countries, their interrelatedness needs to be explored. Interestingly, in Venezuela they enjoy institutionalised support and encouragement from the Chavez government. It would be interesting to contrast these policies and their effects to the case of Argentina.

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