The Movement of the Unemployed in Argentina

Research Report
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1. Background

Whilst the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s were intended to reduce the influence of workers’ interests in Argentine politics, evidence suggests that these expectations were short-lived. By the late 1990s new regional, decentralised and non-institutionalised forms of protest emerged as a pivotal element in the country’s politics, policies, institutions and identities. Roadblocks, organised by the unemployed, community-based organisations, public sector workers and local trade unions, were a response to privatisation, public service reforms and company closures. The roadblocks captured the political imagination of Argentina, allowing unemployed workers to become ‘Piqueteros’ and new organisations to form into a heterogeneous new movement.

The initial scepticism about the ability of the unemployed to organise and influence politics was confirmed by extant research (Garay, 2007). Formidable barriers to mobilization by the ‘sub-proletarians’ (Bourdieu, 1998) were seen as systemic (Piven and Cloward, 1977; Wolff, 2007), stemming from individual experiences of stratification and impoverishment (Daniel, 1981; Ashton, 1986), the impact of these on personal identity and self-worth (Jahoda, 1972), and on family and social life (Beck, 2000). The fact that there seems to be ‘no essential “experience” of unemployment’ (Bagguley, 1991: 164) and ‘no linear connection between the precariousness of living standards and the conflicts carried forward by the groups affected by it’ (Kowarick cited by Slater 1985: 10) reinforced this view. Yet, empirical studies show this group capable of mobilising (Hannington [1936] 1977; Harris 1984; Marsh 1995), highlighting that a crisis provides the unemployed with an opportunity to ‘beg[im] to define their personal hardship not just as their own individual misfortune, but as misfortune shared with many of their own kind’ (Piven and Cloward 1977: 49).

The unemployed and their communities in Argentina challenged assumptions about their inability to ‘construct a new understanding of themselves and of the potential for change’ (McAdam and Sewell, 2001: 120). Unlike other recent movements, the Unemployed Workers’ Organisations (UWOs) have consolidated as key social actors, achieving negotiating capacity with local and national governments, the authority to distribute and manage employment programmes and implement community ventures to tackle unemployment, poverty and deteriorating community life.

Early attempts to study these organisations focused on either (i) their organisation, mobilising capacity, and role in the cycles of resistance (Maceira and Spaltenberg, 2001; Favaro, et al 1997; Klachko, 1999; Dinerstein 2001, 2002, 2003; Cotarelo, 2000; Svampa and Pereyra 2003), or (ii) the significance of their community self-help strategies (Lecaro and Altschuler, 2002; Pereyra, 2003). However, the election of President Kirchner in 2003 repositioned the terms of the debate. The emergence of consensus between the UWOs and the government about the need to place the solution to long-standing social problems at the top of the political agenda changed the movement’s repertoires of action and fostered a different relationship with the state. Yet, no coherent attempt has been made in extant research to address this new relationship beyond dismissing it as unambiguous cooptation or highlighting the continuing relevance of mobilization.

The hypothesis of my research was that the UWOs have had a significant impact on institutional change and policy, which was overshadowed in the extant research by a focus on mobilisation. The guiding question of my research was about the antecedents of the UWOs’ successful articulation of autonomous community undertakings and engagement with the state. Answering this question would allow to assess whether a shift from “negative politics” (i.e. protests coupled with precarious self-help alternatives typical of the 1990s) to “positive politics” (i.e. more constructive engagement with policy...
makers through a set of activities aimed at both their recognition as a political actor and their functional role in the coordination of autonomously engineered, publically funded social and economic ventures) was occurring in Argentina.

The research focus has been on: (i) how these organisations are contributing to the well-being of the unemployed and the vulnerable; (ii) what part they play in producing social change; and (iii) what broader lessons the Piqueteros experience presents for an understanding of the nature and significance of non-governmental public action (in the region and more generally).

2. Objectives

Unemployed Workers Organisations (UWOs) in Argentina

The aim of the research was to generate data and analysis about the non-governmental public action taken by the Unemployed Workers Organisations (UWOs) in Argentina. The study used three case studies, each focussing on the articulation of three areas of collective action: (i) organisation, mobilisation and networking; (ii) autonomous community ventures; and (iii) influence on state institutions and policy.

The specific research objectives were to:

1. Investigate the mobilisation and networking capacity of the UWOs

2. Explore how UWOs articulate demands from the unemployed and disadvantaged into community projects, using state resources towards poverty reduction and job creation.

3. Explore the strategic orientation of the UWOs towards the design and management of social and employment programmes.

4. Contribute to wider theoretical debates about the relationship between unemployment, collective action and welfare policy (in Argentina, Latin America and in general).

5. Assess the implications for the future role and development of UWOs in Argentina.

6. Provide research data and broader knowledge, and integrate these into written outputs to support the initiatives of UWOs, trade unions and policy makers.

7. Provide a new body of empirical knowledge for use in further comparative work on Latin America.

These objectives have all been met. I have been able to explore the differences and similarities in the emerging organisational designs through which the UWOs undertake collective action, including alliances with trade unions, NGOs and political organisations. I explored the variety of autonomous community ventures through which the UWOs articulate individual and community needs as well as encourage civic participation and engagement. In particular, I looked at strategies for job creation, the formation of workers’ cooperatives and innovative forms of reallocation of resources from Federal
programmes to productive projects. I have examined how UWOs relate to the state at local, regional and national level, and how this influences policy-making.

I have also contributed theoretically in three distinct areas. First, by re-evaluating the relationship between unemployment, collective action and welfare, I have augmented the disciplinary terms of the debate in political sociology, social policy, and governance studies. Second, by re-examining the relationship between social movements, the community and autonomous productive ventures, I have shed a new theoretical insight on research dealing with the relationship between civil society and development. Third, by recasting the importance of identity in the cultural framing of political and organisational processes, I have engaged in the latest theoretical extension within the new institutional theory in sociology, specifically within the emerging cross-disciplinary research on social movements and organisation studies.

The research has been value for money. No major difficulties were encountered and I expanded the initial proposal to produce four more case studies from Argentina and Latin America at little cost. Two further lines of research that took shape as a result of the original research, are:

**Factory occupations**

Whilst the overarching objective of my research was to explore institutional and policy changes, questions arose about the institutional impact of factory occupations and recovery by workers in Argentina. This radical form of NGPA emerged in the last decade as a response to economic crises and the absence of social programmes, and has had a profound effect on policy. Having unique access to new data gave me an opportunity to explore the impact of factory takeovers on policy making and institutional change.

**Autonomy in Latin America**

Whilst pursuing the initial research, the emerging themes resonated with similar processes in other Latin American countries. I sought and secured a small amount of extra funding from the Non-Governmental Public Action Programme (COMPfund) to compare practices construed as ‘autonomous’, producing four in-depth case studies of prominent social movements from Argentina (UTD, UWOs), Bolivia (Neighbourhood Councils), Brazil (Landless Workers) and Mexico (Zapatistas). The objectives (conceptually overlapping with the main project) were to investigate and compare:

1. The meanings and values attributed to collective autonomy.
2. The emerging organisational and participatory forms through which autonomous principles are advanced.
3. The community projects in work, education, housing, health and environmental protection.
4. The influence of the relationship with the state on institutional and policy change and emerging forms of governance.
5. The impact and contradictions of the project of autonomy

This supplementary research allowed me to assess the applicability of the findings from Argentina to other Latin American countries, and refine the theoretical framework for
understanding ‘autonomy’ as an emerging cultural-political frame for governance in the region.

3. Methods

My previous research on the transformation of the political subjectivity in Argentina (1919-1999) highlighted how the emergence of the UWOs was deeply rooted in key transformations engendered by neoliberalism. The impact of these transformations constituted the backdrop to the activities of UWOs and informed the research questions of this study (Appendix I).

The research was based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with the leaders and members of UWOs, and public policy officials (N=63), focus groups with members of the UWOs and community members (N=5), and participant observations in UWO meetings and at community ventures (N=17) (Appendix II). In addition, the research used archival materials – press releases, advocacy documents, position papers, programmes, internal memos and other unpublished materials produced by the UWOs, trade unions, national and provincial governments and local authorities. In addition, detailed content analysis of all available published data in local, regional and national newspapers and other publications was collated and organised according to a number of identified variables. To facilitate accurate analysis of the data, the results were coded using both the variables established in the research proposal and emerging from the inductive study.

The brief study on factory occupations in Argentina focused on their institutionalisation and policy impact. In addition to the literature review and archival material, the primary sources of data were in-depth semi-structured interviews with workers within different occupied enterprises, leaders of the Movement of Occupied Enterprises (MORFEA), senior government functionaries and civil servants involved in policy-making (Appendix II).

The comparative study focused on the social, organisational and institutional impact of autonomous practices by social movements in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Mexico, forming four in-depth case studies. Through hypothesis based on the research in Argentina and a review of extant research on Latin American social movements, ‘autonomy’ and ‘autonomous practices’ were identified as key variables. I explored how autonomous practices shape: (i) organisation, mobilisation, forms of participation and representation, alliances and networking; (ii) community work; and (iii) institutional and policy change. This qualitative study was based on archival sources (as above) in addition to semi-structured interviews with leaders, members and participants in the movements, NGOs, government representatives in Bolivia and Mexico (N=18); observation at meetings, and participant observation in seminars, strikes, mobilisations and protests (N=5); and focus groups with women from three women’s co-operatives (N=3) (Appendix II).

4. Results

The research has generated four separate sets of findings: (i) the movement of the unemployed in Argentina, (ii) factory occupations in Argentina; (iii) social Movements and autonomy in Latin America; and (iv) theoretical contributions, refinements, and extension.
4.1. The Movement of the Unemployed in Argentina
The findings from the three case studies undertaken as part of the research show that over a ten-year period, the UWOs went through a three-step transformation.

4.1.1. From improvisation to organisational innovation: NGOs, unions or social movements?
The UWOs transformed from ad hoc and spontaneous protest organisations into flexible but relatively stable organisations deploying a broad repertoire of newly devised and traditional (e.g. trade union, social movement) forms of collective action.

The different organisations differ according to distinct strategic orientations and political projects. The FTV, created in the late 1990s within the Argentine Workers Central (CTA) manages unemployment programs for La Matanza. The FTV matches the institutional logic of the CTA and, together with the CTA, demands income redistribution and job creation as the basis of a political programme of economic development.

In contrast, the Unemployed Workers Union (UTD), created in 1996 in Salta through community struggles against the impact of privatisation and dismantling of company welfare, belongs to the ‘autonomous’ sector of the movement. The UTD has a trade union-like structure, but a strategic orientation resembling NGOs and social movements. It is independent from political parties and unions, and has an ambiguous relationship with local and national governments and businesses. Its activities are driven by the desire to recover work and creativity through solidarity, with the satisfaction of community needs, such as fighting against malnutrition, crime, alcoholism, poverty and disillusionment with neo-liberal capitalism, being an ultimate end.

The Movement of Unemployed Workers (MTD) created in Neuquén in 1997, following a roadblock against the social impact of privatisation in two small Patagonian communities, maintains active participation within its community. It supervises the distribution of employment programmes by the local government, but is not involved in their management. The MTD is involved in local politics and had an active role in the occupation of the ceramics factory Zanón.

A shared feature of all UWOs is the multidimensionality and creativity of their actions, with organisations articulates union-like, political, economic and social functions. Such organisations elude easy categorisation and shed light on the processes of shaping individual and collective identities.

4.1.2. From ‘survival strategies’ to community ventures: Solidarity economy or policy from below?
The UWOs early-day strategies of alleviating the social consequences of neoliberal reforms evolved into sophisticated community ventures with positive consequences for local communities. They can be seen as policy formulation/delivery ‘from below’ and as a conduit for new law enactment.

The community projects range from literacy campaigns, to popular education, school meals, land occupation and housing construction, the creation of work cooperatives and community farms, recycling, the negotiation of temporary jobs for the local unemployed and creation of ad hoc job exchanges. These projects are nodes of within a complex social structure, facilitating social cohesion in local communities by articulating collective needs.
The common features of the ventures are their political dimension, their design to replace the individualism of social policies with innovative forms of sociability, reallocating resources from federal employment and social programmes to community ventures in housing, education, employment and environmental issues. They contest workfare by transforming pitfalls in its design, and turn existing features of employment and social programmes into opportunities to develop autonomous projects. They also supplant the state in addressing significant public concerns (e.g. recycling, environmental protection, street and road cleaning, education and housing), offering ‘dissident meanings’ (Cornwall and Brock 2005) to official discourses on public needs.

4.1.3. From open opposition to negotiation: cooptation or contested institutionalisation?

The UWOs shifted from open opposition to a more structured and complex relationship with the state, leading to a slow but certain process of (contested) institutionalisation of the UWOs as legitimate social and political subjects.

Since 2003, the government implemented four important policy objectives:

(i) **Encouraging the ‘culture of work’ and ‘job creation’ policies.** These match the UWOs’ claims for the creation of ‘genuine’ work and fair income distribution (e.g. the ‘Plan for the Promotion of Employment: More and Better Jobs’ and the ‘Plan against Unregistered Work’)

(ii) **Incorporating the principles and practices advocated by the UWOs into official social policy.** Communitarian and solidarity principles underpinning their ventures have affected the ‘new policy ethos’ which has come to inform much state policy, both rhetorically and practically. The programmes celebrate local state intervention, promote bottom-up decision-making and encourage the ‘social economy’.

(iii) **Supporting (financially/technically) community projects led by UWOS by assimilating them as NGOs.** Financial/technical support from the local and national governments is channelled through NGOs. This forces groups undertaking community work either to legally register as NGOs and be inspected by the government regarding the value of their proposed project, or to negotiate with an existing NGO to be included in their fold to receive state funds. This allows the government to diffuse the political power of Piqueteros equating them with any other voluntary organisation.

(iv) **Creating spaces for collaborative decision-making at the local level.** The 1,873 Local Consultative Councils (CCL) were meant to facilitate local authorities and NGOs to work in partnership to distribute, implement and monitor social programmes. However, the lack of infrastructure and resources, problems of representation and transparency have made CCLs flawed and powerless.

The institutionalisation of the UWOs is not a top-down process. Since 2003 some sections of the movement have been neutralised as they accepted the new policy line, believing that a close relationship with the government might bring more financial and political power to their organisations. The FTV manages substantial projects with high social impact and its leaders have identified politically with the government and occupied political posts. However, a deeper analysis that considered the influence of the UWOS on policy making and institutional reforms speaks more of a tendency towards 'contested
institutionalisation’, whereby the power of the UWOs has been transformed from mobilisational to cultural ‘frame-making’.

4.2. Factory Takeovers in Argentina
The new data on policy making in support of factory takeovers and recovery by their workers in Argentina allowed me to further explore in detail the tendency towards ‘contested institutionalisation’. (Appendix III)

4.3. Social Movements and Autonomous Practices in Latin America
Findings from the comparative research suggest that autonomous practices and their meanings vary significantly with respect to (geographical) location, context, ideology and ethnicity. However, significant commonality can be drawn across all four movements:

(i) Innovation in terms of collective identity and organisational forms through which actors advance the principles of autonomy. These include organisations that combine civil and military elements advancing revolutionary change by rejecting state power (Zapatistas); the organisation of settlements to occupy land and alternative land distribution (MST, Zapatistas); neighbours’ councils as alternative forms of citizen participation and a challenge to undemocratic procedures (Bolivia).

(ii) Fundamental questioning of mainstream notions of civil society as a sphere regulated by or complementary to the state, positing civil society as a sphere of self-empowerment (ranging from revolutionary practices to reformism).

(iii) Successful implementation of community projects and the formation of work cooperatives as the basis of both dealing with social exclusion and attaining political values of ‘dignity’, ‘justice’ and ‘self-governance’.

(iv) Significant challenges to the state and democracy, ranging from radical rejection of power and construction of counter-power, to contentious engagement with the state through policies. This leads to activities deemed ‘illegal’ by the state but legitimate by local communities, and an overlapping of governance structures (i.e. government and autonomous communities).

4.4. Theoretical Contributions
I engaged with four sets of literature which correspond to the three dimensions of the UWOs action: labour and social movement studies; organisation studies; development studies; and political sociology and politics.

(i) I explored extant literature on the implications of the transformation of labour in the neo-liberal era (Munck, 2002; Munck and Waterman, 1999; Moody, 1997). My research suggests that the UWOs and other social movements are the subjective, agentic embodiment of the deep transformation of work. Identity (Evers 1985; Stoecker 1995), the subjectivity of labour (Dinerstein, 2002) and new practice emergence from the contradictions in dominant institutional logics (Seo and Creed 2002) have been central.

Three issues appear to be significant barriers to a fuller appreciation of how UWOs contribute to innovation in agency. First, the subjectivity of labour is usually equated with organised labour. This idea is flawed, both theoretically and empirically. I propose that it must be considered as a plural agency wherein the unemployed constitute one ‘fragment’. Rather than the fragmentation of the subjectivity of labour, it seemed to
me that what structural adjustments have produced is, instead, a ‘collection of integrated fragments’ (Braidotti cited in Slater, 1994: 15), that is a mosaic of diverse forms of agency, each potentially dominant provided certain conditions exist at a particular conjuncture (e.g. the prominence of UWOs in Argentina in the last decade).

(ii) I engaged with literature on the role of civil society in development (Howell and Pearce 2004) and on the mobilisation of the ‘socially excluded’ for alternative socio-economic arrangements as a result of unemployment, deprivation and lack of resources (Wilkes, 2004; Roberts and Portes, 2006). These are usually called ‘community self-help alternatives’ (Stewart and Balchin, 2002) or ‘local development initiatives’ (Scott and Pawson, 1997; Gallacher, Ohri and Roberts, 1983) by non-governmental public actors, particularly in the South. They are frequently motivated by a search for new forms of communality aimed at recovering the community’s social fabric. The term ‘solidarity economy’ has also been used to described these activities (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005: 2044) and considered an indicator of the agents’ intention to ‘meet community needs while reducing dependency on the state and exposure to the market’ (Chatterton 2005: 555). ‘Community economy’ has been also used to describe currents attempts to provide a solution to unemployment (Jancius, 2006: 142). Others use the term ‘social economy’ and treat it as a ‘necessary socioeconomic alternative’ to the market economy (Coraggio, 2004: 169; 1999).

These attempts by non-governmental public actors to ‘(re)introduce[e] social justice into the production and allocation systems’ (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005: 2037) are applicable to the local activities of the UWOs. However, by simply assimilating the contributions of the UWOs to the debate about the role of non-governmental public actors in widening the public space for the design and implementation of policies, would prevent exploring their activities in terms of ‘welfare policy from below’ (Steinert and Pilgram, 2003), which more accurately captures the specificity of their function.

(iii) I engaged with literature on the relationship between social movements and the state. Initially, I was interested in the ways that state policies shape the ‘structure of protest’ (Baguley, 1991; McAdam, et al 1996; Jenkins and Klandermans, 1995) and encourage or inhibit the capacity for the unemployed to organise (Piven and Cloward,1977). While prominent literature on social movements (Tarrow 1995; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Foweraker, 1995; Slater, 1994) captured aspects of my data analysis, as research progressed I realised that whereas episodes of protest and mobilisation led by the UWOs were decreasing (with exception of the ‘hard core’ of the movement) their role in framing the issues in official policies was increasing. This led me to analyse the contentious processes through which the UWOs’ action was institutionalised. Seo and Cred (2002) have elaborated the challenge of the relationship between structure and agency by suggesting that institutional contradictions are at the root of the mobilization of interests and agency, and that praxis is the core mediating mechanism of institutional change. This strand of theorizing more systematically addresses the question of how actors embedded within institutions can change them, the degree to which institutions limit change, and how a wide range of actors draw on the elements of existing institutions to institutionalize new practices (Dinerstein and Schwartz, 2008).

I explored the theoretical integration between social movement theory and institutional analysis (Schneiberg and Lounsbury, 2008; Rao et al, 2000; Davis et al, 2005). The present research characterises the relationship between the social movements and the state as a process of contested institutionalisation. Social programmes, through contention and resulting from a negotiated order, have incorporated the communitarian, solidarity and ‘social economy’ principles and practices underpinning the UWOs’
community ventures into a ‘new policy ethos’ in Argentina and inform new legislation, policies, and negotiations in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Mexico.

(iv) I addressed the fairly undeveloped theoretical problem of autonomy. I developed the idea that autonomous practices by social movements (in Latin America and more widely) are embedded in specific social, economic, political and cultural contexts, which gives rise to the possibilities to contest them with uncertain results. Autonomy creates a ‘fissure’ within an incomplete hegemony, which bears the ‘antagonism between opening up frontiers of resistance and change towards new worlds and the incorporation of their project into state programs which also advocate economic, social, cultural and political change’ (Dinerstein, Spicer and Böhm, 2009) (See Nominated output 2).

5. Activities

5.1. Papers and presentations at professional meetings and programme events


NGPA and Labour Issues (December 2007), NGPA in Latin America and NGPA Theory Workshop, May 7/8 2008, LSE.

‘When workfare becomes work. The collective experience of unemployed workers in Argentina’ NGPA and Labour Issues, 10 December 2007, LSE.


‘Workers’ Factory Takeovers and the Programa de Trabajo Autogestionado in Argentina’ Policy & Politics Conference 6-7 July 2006, Bristol.


5.2. Dissemination of findings to target audiences

- Three local workshops with non-academic users
- One-day Seminar for academic and non academic users at the Centre for Cultural Cooperation, Buenos Aires, August 22, 2007.
5.3. Organisation of symposia

- Convenor for the Symposium on 'The Political, Social and Economic Impact of Non-Governmental Public Action in Latin America' for the V CEISAL Congress of Latin Americanists (European Council for Social Research in Latin America), Brussels, April 11-14 2007. This symposium has allowed me to engage with the activities of European Networks such as the European Portal for Latin America http://www.red-redial.net/presentation.php

- Workshop on NGPA in Latin America (convened with Jean Grugel), University of Bradford, May 2008. This led to the submission of a proposal for an edited collection for the NGPA series, Palgrave Macmillan.

5.4. Further dissemination

Papers will be presented at the
- Latin American Studies Association International Congress (LASA), Rio de Janeiro. (June 2009).
- Latin American Sociology Association XXVII Congress (ALAS) Buenos Aires (September 2009).

6. Outputs

6.1. Forthcoming


‘The (Im)possibilities of Autonomy. Social Movements in and beyond capital, the state and development’ Social Movement Studies.

Creativity at Work. NGPA in Latin America (co-edited with Jean Grugel) Book proposal submitted to Palgrave Macmillan, Non-Governmental Public Action series. Currently under review.

6.2. Published

2009 (with S. Boehm and Spicer, A.) ‘The (Im)possibilities of Autonomy. Social Movements in and beyond capital, the state and development’ - NGPA Working Paper 29, LSE.

2008 ‘Here is the rose, dance here! A Riposte to the Debate on the Argentinean Crisis.’ Historical Materialism 16(1): 101-114.


2007. 'Workers' Factory Takeovers and the 'Institutionalisation' of radical action in Argentina' NGPA Working Paper 8, LSE.

6.3. Unpublished Work

Case Study Reports

2008 The Federation of Neighbours' Councils, El Alto, Bolivia
2008 The Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), Rio Grande Du Sud, Brazil
2008 The Zapatista Movement, Oventic, Chiapas, Mexico.
2007 The Land and Housing Federation (FTV) La Matanza, Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina.
2007 The Unemployed Workers Union (UTD) General Mosconi, Salta, Argentina.
2007 The Unemployed Workers Movement (MTD), Neuquén, Argentina.

Documents


6.4. Website

The project webpage is located at the University of Bath website, link to my personal webpage: http://www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/research/ngpapiqueteros/photos.htm.

6.5. Photo Gallery

I have produced a set of colour photographs during the fieldwork in Argentina, Mexico and Bolivia which were used on the cover of NGPA programme and in the dissemination materials.
6.6. Work in Progress

*Social Movements and the Project of Autonomy in Latin America.* Book proposal to be submitted to *Non Governmental Public Action Series*, Palgrave Macmillan.


‘Acquiescence or Resistance? Does ‘autonomy’ fit into institutional designs celebrating empowerment?’ To be submitted to *Development and Change*.

‘The Politics of Unemployment in Argentina: labour subjectivity and the state’ To be submitted to *Politics and Society*.

‘Resist, Occupy, Produce!: The Movement of Factory Occupations and the Emergence of New Organisational Forms (co-authored with G. Schwartz).’ To be submitted to *American Sociological Review* or *Organisation Studies*.

7. Potential Impact

The academic achievement and further impact of the research is threefold. In theoretical terms, it explains how political transformations can set in motion unintended consequences, facilitating the formation of new movements, organisations and identities that reshape the institutional edifice of society and public policy.

In analytical terms, it underscores how social movements can affect the transformation of the field of public policy and institutional path creation through the introduction of alternative values, logics and practices. While different studies have addressed the activities of social movements in various ways, few have linked such activities to these transformations. Social movements striving for autonomy have either been overestimated as effective alternatives to capitalism or dismissed as functional to the rhetorical strategies in the International Development arena about the decentring of the state. However, since embedding autonomy appears to be achievable by engaging with the institutions of society (invoking the state, usually through the field of policy), the task of this study was to explain the contested nature by which social movements’ autonomous practices become institutionalised and point at the processes of contention underpinning such institutionalisation.

In practical/policy terms, the research suggests that autonomous community ventures and cooperative work as well as direct forms of democracy and participation must be seen as policy formulation and delivery ‘from below’ and as a conduit for new law enactment. But then new forms of governance might be are required to deal with tensions emerging out of autonomous practices, between legality and legitimacy, formal and substantive democracy; and conflicting value systems and systems of political representation.

8. Future Research Priorities

I would like to further study how traditional and non-traditional actors are involved in reshaping the public sphere, the meaning of citizenship, the content of democracy and the mechanisms of governance by comparing Latin American and Europe. The current financial, economic and potential social and political crises affecting the North might
require (i) a careful consideration of potential scenarios that can emerge in UK and Europe and (ii) a systematic review of policy responses implemented at the time of crisis (e.g. Argentina 2001), including both government strategies to incorporate the proposals of the movements into policies, and social movements’ changes in strategic orientations. I would like to engage in empirical and theoretical work on institutional and policy influence of social movements, organisational autonomy of actors, organisational change and extra-institutional entrepreneurship with a view to contributing to a renewed social science research agenda on social movements and the state within the context of both global crisis and the emergence of new forms of sociability at the community level.

Word count: 5194

Acronyms

CCL: Local Consultative Councils (Consejos Consultivos Locales)

CTA: Argentine Workers Central (Central de Trabajadores Argentinos)

FTV: Land and Housing Federation (Federación Tierra y Vivienda)

MORFEA: Movement of Recovered Factories and Enterprises in Argentina (Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas)

MDS: Ministry of Social Development (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social)

MTD: Movement of Unemployed Workers (Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados)

MTSS: Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social)

NGO: Non Governmental Organisation

NGPA: Non Governmental Public Action

PTA: Programme for Self-Managed Work (Programa de Trabajo Autogestionado)

UTD: Unemployed Workers Union

UWO: Unemployed Workers Organisation

Appendices

Appendix I: Key transformations

The UWOs are the creation of three main combined outcomes of the neoliberal agenda.

1. Transformation of the world of work, fragmentation of the working class and crisis of the trade union movement:

The deregulation of labour markets, the privatisation of pensions systems and risks at work schemes, flexibilisation, and casualisation of labour led to a fragmentation of the working class into a variety of categories fostered new forms of opposition to neoliberal...
reforms. Protest evolved from being centralised and institutionalised to being localised and led by new movements with a wider social agenda. The reforms unleashed new social actors and forms of collective action which have sought to make the issue of policy political. Although the crisis of the labour movement is a regional phenomenon (Zapata, 2004) the long tradition of working class organisations and their role as key actors in institutionalisation of industrial conflict and political mobilisation made this highly relevant in the Argentine case.

2. Mass unemployment, worsening of labour conditions and poverty.
The neoliberal reforms were pursued under the constraints of the dollar-peso parity (convertibility) plan. Tight monetary policies stifled inflation but the reforms fostered destructive labour market conditions. By the second half of the 1990s, unemployment became in part structural, increasing from 6 to 18 per cent in only four years (1991-1995) (Beccaria and Lopez 1996; Diaz 1995, Delich 1997, Marshall 1995; Peñalva and Rofman 1996). The double-digit rates were combined with flexibilisation and casualisation of labour (Galin, P. and Novick, M. (1990) and the expansion of poverty, social exclusion and mobilisation. The main problem was an explosive combination of unemployment with underemployment and informality. In 1996, 50.8 per cent of the economically active population was underemployed. Workers in the informal sector had come to constitute a large portion of the Argentina labour force. Participation in the informal sector increased from 47.5 per cent in 1990 to 52.5 per cent in 1994 (Feldman, 1999: 106). Following the devaluation of the peso in January 2002, the rise of 10.4 per cent in the consumer prices index and 19.4 per cent for wholesale prices in April 2002 (MECON, 2002: 2) perpetuated the decline in workers’ incomes and increased poverty. In addition, the rate of unemployment was at 21.8 per cent in February 2002. Seven million people fell under the poverty line between October 2001 and 2002, bringing the total to 21 million (out of a population of 37 million), ten million of these being destitute. Fifty seven per cent of Argentines did not have sufficient income to cover their basic needs (INDEC April 2002).

3. Ineffective social policies to support unemployed and other disadvantaged people.
Since 1945, the worker had been the focus of most social policies in Argentina (with the exception of education). Paid employment was intrinsic to the concept of citizenship, the latter had been subsumed under the former. Social justice was linked with workers’ rights, rather than with universal citizen rights (Barbeito and Lo Vuolo, 1995). As a continuation of a transformation initiated in the late 1970s, the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s undermined the link between labour and welfare as they weakened the institutional capacity to implement social policy. Considering the lack of universal unemployment benefits, the shift from national expansionist policies to focused policies intensified the negative features of public policies in Argentina (fragmentation, dependence on negotiations with corporations and reliance on the mobilisation capacity of disadvantaged sectors, paternalism (Barbeito and Lo Vuolo, 1995) and clientelism (Auyero, 2000).

The crisis of December 2001 was decisive in contributing to the strengthening of the UWOS. In December 2001 the country’s economy collapsed producing the biggest default in world economic history. The financial collapse -triggered by the IMF refusal to give Argentina an informally agreed loan of $1.26 billion- had its root in long term processes which cannot be addressed here. The UWOS played a key role before and during the mass protests of December 19 and 20 which forced the resignation of national authorities and in the further political mobilisation until political recomposition took place in 2003.
The research design aimed at giving an account of how these transformations open a space and shape the UWOs collective action. Each of the three case studies used in this study was constructed by looking at the specific articulation of three aspects of their collective action which corresponds to the above mentioned transformations: organisational, socioeconomic and politico institutional. The following table illustrates this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformation/crisis</th>
<th>Dimensions of collective action/intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Organisational: Transformation of the world of work, fragmentation of the working class and crisis of the trade union movement</td>
<td>Formation of new organisations, organisational innovation, new forms of protest (roadblocks) mobilisation, alliances and strategic orientations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Socioeconomic: Mass unemployment, worsening of labour conditions and poverty</td>
<td>Social intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autonomous Community Ventures Co-operatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Politico/institutional/policy:</td>
<td>Responses to state strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence on state institutions and policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix II. Primary Data Collection

Three case studies of UWOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UTD General Mosconi, Salta</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Members and participants in the organisation</td>
<td>Ad hoc meetings, mobilisation and protest, negotiation ethnographic study. Participant observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTV, La Matanza, Greater Buenos Aires</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 + Ethnographic study. + Participant observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTD, Neuquén</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Union Federations and UWOS national level</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National level</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factory takeovers in Argentina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Workers from Factory occupations</th>
<th>Leaders MORFEA Senior government functionaries and civil servants MTSS and MDS (general)</th>
<th>government functionaries involved in policy in the PTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparative Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 'Federation of Neighbours' Councils (FEJUVE), El Alto, Bolivia</td>
<td>Government, NGPA, leaders and members of the organisation, institutes, state and independent institutes</td>
<td>Members and participants in the organisation</td>
<td>Observation in ad hoc and regular meetings, and participant observation in seminars, strikes and mobilisation processes and protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimiento Zapatista (EZLN), Chiapas, México</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Movement of Rural Landless Workers, Rio Grande du Sud, Brazil</td>
<td>This case used archival data only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix III. Factory takeovers in Argentina - Research Background & Results

Factory takeovers in Argentina began to take place in the late 1990s in response to the unfolding neoliberal policy reforms and changes in political institutions. They were organised by small groups of workers who have been either non-unionised or represented and organised by shop-floor representatives at the enterprise level (comisión interna), usually in opposition to official union structures; an attempt to preserve jobs in small enterprises with obsolete machinery and technology; patchily organised on the basis of practical needs rather than ideological or political strategies. Consequently, workers have had to develop co-operative relations, engender solidarity and seek autonomy as a result of practical needs, rather than ideological or political strategies (Dinerstein, 2007).

As the financial and political crisis in Argentina worsened, the emergent strategy of the earlier period was being shaped to a greater extent and in a more coherent manner by the political mobilizations and framing of issues affecting the wider community. They occupations reached their highest point after the December 2001 crisis when harbingers formed a national movement and expanded (Dinerstein, 2007; Dinerstein and Schwartz 2008) The formation of the movement began in 1997, when the Argentine Metallurgical and Plastic Enterprise (Industrias Metálicas y Plásticas Argentinas, IMPA), was unnoticeably taken by its 136 workers in 1997, when the managers of the cooperative declared bankruptcy and closed its doors without consulting the workers (partners). The National Movement of Recovered Factories (Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas, MNER) was formed in October 2001 when workers from 14 cooperatives met at the IMPA factory to discuss joint strategies. They discussed the bases for the implementation of ‘a shared response to factories closures based on their occupation and further recovering by their workers’ self-management’ The meeting reflected divergent views in terms of organization basically between new and old forms of cooperativism (Minutes of the meeting, 27/10/01 in Rebón 2007: 118).

IMPA and other very few early experiences became the kernel for the making of promoters gathered in several organizations now able to diffuse their repertoire of actions, share experiences and ideas. The majority of factories takeover occurred during
2002 as a collective response to a wave of bankruptcies or abandonment that reached more than 170 factories involving around 10,000 workers by 2005

They are two common models: the workers’ co-operative, and workers self-management accompanied by pressure for ownership by the national or local governments (estatización). The latter was promoted by those who perceived the takeovers more as a tool for the development of workers autonomy within a broader political strategy of liberation. The former was embraced by those who see that workers self-management within the co-operative movement model are ends in themselves.

The research showed that the occupations have had both a defensive character inspired by the need to preserve jobs and an expansive political edge inspired by ideas of autonomy produced by the political crisis in Argentina in 2001. It was found that new state programmes like the programme for Self-Managed Work (Programa de Trabajo Autogestionado, PTA now onwards) launched by the Employment Department in March 2004 stimulates the process of institutionalisation of the takeovers by providing financial and technical support to workers’ co-operatives within the aforementioned broad policy framework. The Programme offers technical and/or financial assistance to (i) workers in the course of resisting ejection and (ii) the productive unit for training; purchases, refurbishment, reparations, expansion and consolidation. Secondly, a major change in existent legislation was passed, allowing magistrates to rule in favour of workers’ co-operatives by expropriating the occupied factories, furniture, machinery and installations (though possible only in cases of fraudulent bankruptcies and asset stripping, see Dinerstein 2007). Thus, similar to UWOs, whilst the takeovers were accepted/habitualised, the more challenging aspects of workers’ actions are discouraged by the state. But the de-politicisation of factory occupations through (contested) institutionalisation occurs simultaneously with the institutional recognition of the workers’ stated (sometimes politically) objectives of self-management. See distribution of occupied and recovered factories and enterprises by geographical location, branch of industry, productive or unproductive and legal form adopted after the takeovers and assets for 2004 and 2005, and the effects of the PTA in Dinerstein 2007, Nominated Output 1.

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