Democracy as a trust-building learning process: Organizational dilemmas in social movements

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Abstract

Combining agonistic pluralism and social movements literature with trust studies, I propose a conceptualization for how the organizational dilemma is tackled in social movements. Defined as a trust-building organizational learning process, I show the role-played by social trust—meaning, the construction of the relational boundaries of a shared goal without diluting the heterogeneity of self-identities and interests—as an organizational prerequisite for democratic organization of a political group. Empirically, I identify four alternative pathways to the (democratic) organizational dilemma: innovation through new organizational models; repetition of past experiences; reformulation of practices; and emulation of previous organizational models.

Introduction

How can a social movement be organized for a shared goal without diluting internal heterogeneity? I analyze the procedural component of organizational practices posed in this question that in social movement studies can be considered as the *(democratic) organizational dilemma.* Studying this dilemma calls for a combination of trust, social movements, and agonistic pluralism perspectives to understand different trajectories within what I will conceptualize as a *trust-building process of organizational learning* in social movements. This process explains the relational construction of social trust (or mistrust) in the collective and individual attempts to join efforts for political purposes.

Studying the role of trust-building in democratic organizational practices is crucial for revealing the bonding element in the constitution and transformation of political actors. The theoretical proposal I will formulate here avoids a common gap in deliberative democracy, trust and social movement studies, that is the shared assumption that (rationalizing) consensus is the essential element

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for democratic organization. Instead, I propose to problematize this assumption, acknowledging for conflicts, differences, diversity and disputes and the organizational dilemma they pose in the shaping of a democratic mode of coordination. With this I do not argue that consensus and trust are mutually exclusive as they can coexist. However, as I will theoretically argue and empirically demonstrate, consensus is *not* the defining element for a democratic organization. It is rather trust that majority-based, hierarchical, or consensual modes of coordination will shape an "us/them" that do not hide human heterogeneity.

My cases are "modes of coordination" (Diani, 2015)[1] that resolve their organizational dilemma differently, but all relying on trust that the relational boundaries of the "us/them" will not dilute self-identities and interests. The first case is the assembly movement of Buenos Aires, an urban movement. The second is the coalition against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Third, a local branch of the transnational alter-globalization organization ATTAC. The final case examined is the *piquetero* or unemployed workers movement. Although these cases might be considered dissimilar in several respects, in analytical terms, they display similar characteristics in their attempts to deal with the (democratic) organizational dilemma, but their divergent perspectives implied that they followed different paths, revealing alternative ways of navigating similar problems of *social trust*—meaning, the construction of the relational boundaries of a shared goal without diluting heterogeneity.

Empirically, the four cases cover Argentina during the same historical period of highly contentious resistance to neoliberalism. This offers an important advantage as a methodological means to hold most context factors constant and, thereby, allowing for zooming in on the differences of the four cases. The cases were selected because they represent the four trajectories in the organizational dilemma: (1) *innovation through new organizational models* is analyzed in the assembly movement; (2) *repetition of past experiences* is observed in ATTAC; (3) *reformulation of practices* is studied in the coalition against the FTAA; and (4) *emulation of previous organizational models* is seen in the *piquetero* movement. For this reason, the cases will be analyzed via three clusters of diachronic paired comparisons, with the aim of pinpointing the organizational dilemma and the four alternative pathways identified.

The article is organized as follows. It begins with a brief review of work on which I have based my analytical proposal for the study of democratic organization in movements in the "Perspectives on the (democratic) organizational dilemma" section. It follows with "The theory" section that presents the argument about the trust-building process of organizational learning in social movements sustained on an original combination of social movements, trust, and agonistic pluralism literatures. Then, the "Data and method" section describes the methodology and sources for this article. The rest of the text deals with the application of my theory. In the empirical sections, I explore in detail the already mentioned cases that illustrate my proposal.

Perspectives on the (democratic) organizational dilemma

The organizational dilemma that social movements need to face has its origins in the issue of how claims that emerge during mobilizations can be sustained over time to further expand on the immediate goals of protesting. Michels' (1969) "iron law of oligarchy" influenced much of the initial literature on movements. Organization and leadership were both considered to be detrimental to the disruptive power of movements, moderating their effects (Piven and Cloward, 1977). Another trend, drawing from organizational sociology, proposed the term "social movement organization" (SMO), which emphasized the importance of formalized organization for social movements (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). According to this position, a hierarchical organizational model would make possible the selection of clear goals and the establishment of the most efficient strategies

(Gamson, 1975). Basing themselves on a definition of movements as segmented, polycentric, and integrated networks (SPIN), Gerlach and Hine (1970) argued for the opposite as the ideal organizational model: the more diffuse the organization of a movement, the less it is formalized, and the more horizontal it is, the more effectively its claims can be placed on the agenda, confronting an adverse context more easily. This proposal later influenced Diani's (1992, 2015) crucial reformulation of the definition of movements as networked entities, introducing network analysis to studies of social movements. Even if this debate is essential for organizational research, in this literature there is no analysis of the preconditions for organizing.

Another important organizational debate among social movement scholars stems from the work of Offe (1985). He argues that movements represent a challenge to the classical ways of "doing politics" in the form of their deep rejection of bureaucratized structures and experimentation with new organizational forms. In other words, movements are meta-political reactions that question the social order in their pursuit of a radical democracy not based on the typical modern, representative democracy. Claims made by movements in relation to "rights" and "citizenship," as well as their political practices, play a crucial role in creating citizenry. As argued by Foweraker (1995: 98), "The struggle for rights has more than a merely rhetorical impact. The insistence on the rights of free speech and assembly is a precondition of the kind of collective (and democratic) decision-making which educates citizens."

These classical debates have until now structured the core of the discussion in social movements' organizational research. The most recent contributions have offered different combinations of these social movement perspectives. Some scholars who have studied how these practices are exercised emphasize the deliberative dimension (della Porta, 2004; Polletta, 2002, among others). In other cases, like Barker et al. (2001), the leadership role is analyzed as central for achieving a relatively stable organization, offering a clarifying classification of different types of leadership, with some of them promoting democracy. Doerr (2018) presents a complementary perspective of a different role that is that of translators, which are not leaders, but a type of broker that helps bonding collective action.

Among social movement scholarship, is the literature on coalition building the one that has further developed the role of trust in democratic organization. For Wood (2005), mutual trust is essential for constructing transnational solidarity. Smith (2002), Dixon et al. (2013), and Van Dyke and Amos (2017) share the recognition of the relevance of trust in the survival of a coalition and the need to combine it with a commitment to a common cause. Trust is also seen as crucial to set a collective agenda (Goodwin et al., 2004) and even to construct a shared identity (Gawerc, 2016). In this literature, the analysis is focused on *interpersonal trust*, so it is studied in the micro-dynamics of interaction among individuals. Even if individuals never perform isolated from collective identities (Mische, 2015), these excellent works have put forward that interpersonal differences should not be hided, but rather acknowledged and solved through organizational practices (Bystydzienski and Schacht, 2001; Cole and Luna, 2010; Gawerc, 2016; among others). In this sense, this scholarship has importantly contributed to insert interpersonal trust in coalition building.

Given that the organizational dilemma can never be resolved—it is a dilemma, in the end—trust between actors that cooperate in a movement is needed to reduce the perceived risk that they will be ignored in their unicity. However, in these crucial organizational debates in social movement studies there is no analytical explanation for how trust (or mistrust) is built. As I will demonstrate, trust-building is a prerequisite for reducing the interpersonal or intergroups uncertainty of doing politics together in the quest for an organizational format that will preserve the heterogeneity of self-identities and interests. I expand and complement these debates in dealing with coalitions and other modes of coordination—such as social movements and

social networks—and introducing the role of *social trust* as a precondition to organization. I do this with a relational and collective understanding of political interaction.

Beyond social movement studies, theories of deliberative and communicative action deal with the organizational dilemma differently. Cohen (1998: 186) argues that ". . . a decision is collective just in case it emerges from arrangements of binding collective choices that establish conditions of free public reasoning among equals who are governed by the decisions." Instead, Habermas (1984–1987) separates the procedural dimension of communicative action from the substantial nature of the content of the deliberation, considering his perspective to be strictly concerned with communicative action. Rawls (1971), alternatively, pursues a contractualist liberal reconciliation of procedures and substance by way of a series of principles of justice based on the divergent parties' capacity to put aside their own interests and particularities. In brief, while the focus of the SMO versus SPIN debate mainly rests on the degree of formalization or networked structure, the deliberative debate focuses on something happening *within* these structures, allowing for a less dichotomized approach.

Habermas and Rawls—like several social movement scholars—are positive about the prospect of transcending the aggregative and instrumental model of democracy. However, they propose unconstrained rational deliberation between equals, ignoring the hegemonic nature of any consensus (i.e. someone is always excluded from it). This view is shared by mainstream trust studies, which assume that consensus is the essential component for trust-building, rationalizing the social dynamics studied (Fukuyama, 1995; MacIntyre, 1981; Putnam, 2007; Sandel, 1996). And, it is echoed by many social movement studies of deliberative democracy that view consensus as essential for such to be achieved (for critical reviews, cf. della Porta and Doerr, 2018; Polletta, 2015). Opposing this perspective of democracy, Mouffe (2000a, 2000b) argues that Habermas and Rawls eliminate the political, conflictive nature of a pluralist and democratic society. Something that Parry (1976) also criticized to foundational trust studies, and Polletta (2002: 9) contended in movement studies: "More important than an orientation to consensus . . . the deliberative aspects of participatory democracy decisionmaking . . . make . . . for a greater acceptance of the differences that coexist with shared purposes."

As an alternative to the consensual rationalizing perspectives of democracy, Mouffe (2000a) proposes what she calls "agonistic pluralism," recognizing the need for political pluralism in democracy. While the political is antagonistic by nature, its definition as "democratic" implies the replacement of an essentialist construction of the relationship between political opponents with one viewing ". . . 'them' in such a way that it is no longer . . . as an enemy to be destroyed, but an 'adversary', somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question" (Mouffe, 2000a: 15). Therefore, the main difference in relation to the positions of Rawls and Habermas is that the intention is not to reach totally inclusive and rational consensus, ". . . since this would imply the eradication of the political. Politics aims at the creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity . . ." (Mouffe, 2000a: 15). Such a definition cannot be detached from the material opportunities for participation, meaning getting the time, energy, resources, information, and instruction necessary for having the possibility of freely deciding the means of involvement in the political realm (Sen, 1985).

Mouffe's main contribution for our purposes is in offering a criterion for distinguishing the "democratic" elements of the organizational dilemma and, consequently, allowing for unfolding how social trust—understood in relational terms as proposed by Tilly (2005)—is built and its essential role for collective action. Thus, as I will show, consensus is not the defining element for a democratic organization, but rather trust that majority-based, hierarchical or consensual modes of coordination will shape an "us/them" without hiding the intrinsic essence of humanity—that it is heterogeneous.
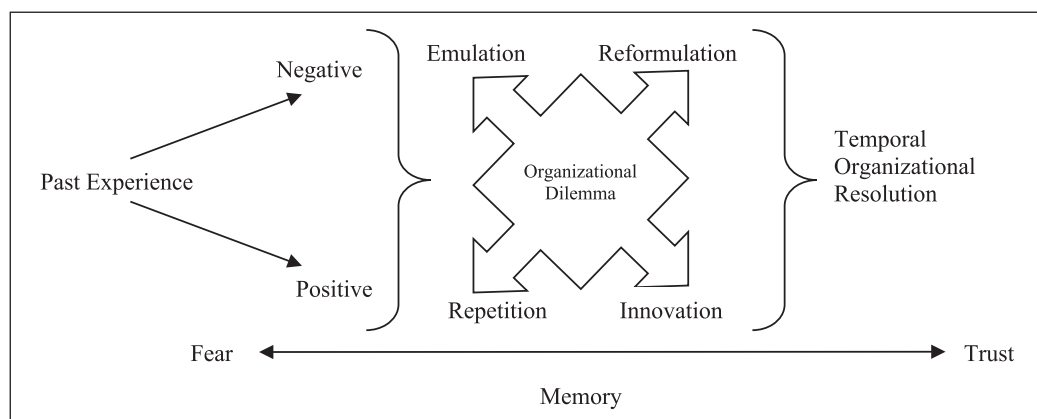
The theory

Combining agonistic pluralism with trust studies and social movements literature, I suggest a theorization for what I call a *trust-building organizational learning process*. The starting point of my argument is that strategic organizational choices are historically proximal to and intertwined with both mainstream and alternative values expressed by activists. The organizational model of a movement is not an exclusively rationalist-utilitarian result and may well express the interest in experimentation with alternative organizational configurations in a sort of ". . . laboratory in which actors test their capacity to challenge the dominant cultural codes" (Melucci, 1989: 74). Moreover, and even in cases where the use of new organizational formats is not the main concern, the decision in favor of one model over another is the result of a collective learning process based on past legacies that are positive (e.g. that could have built long-lasting trust bonds) and negative (e.g. that could have eroded trust or even created mistrust). This process is carried out under "constrained learning" (della Porta, 2004), as it is reinterpreted through the lenses of the pre-existing organizational repertoires and political traditions in a "stock of legacies"—meaning, the accumulation of experience that the concatenation of past struggles produces through sedimentation of what is lived and perceived to be lived as well as what is intentionally learned (Rossi, 2017a: 42).

Therefore, the existence of a deliberative setting cannot be considered to be a given (Elster, 1998). First, no assumption can be made that the participants in the movement share an idiomatic use of a common language (Doerr, 2018). The meanings attributed to key issues must be researched and the proportion of the discussion that is based in a common language and/or knowledge of others' repertoires of discourses. Second, shared goals should not be confused with shared identities. In other words, movements as political collectives both produce and exclude an antagonist. Third, individualist perspectives need to be transcended to observe anything beyond a group of individuals who are each speaking on their own behalf. What we commonly see are conversations between persons speaking on behalf of their multiple group identities and embedded in multiple organizations, networks and collective identities (Mische, 2015). Thus, instead of rational arguments for the sake of mutual transformation, obstacles generally emerge in the form of struggles for the control of the discourses and resources of the organizational space (Baiocchi, 2006).

Moreover, trust and conflict are not mutually exclusive. If we acknowledge for the conflictive nature of humanity, which is a resultant of its heterogeneity, consensual organizational formats might—in certain cases—even repress difference instead of promoting a pluralist context for doing politics together. Is in this sense that consensus hides an authoritarian risk if built negating human heterogeneity, and with such, its agonistic, conflictive nature. It is trust-building, and not rationalization of consensus, the one that plays the social bonding role of reducing the fear of being negated as distinctive (i.e. being symbolically and/or physically repressed) and, instead, opting for joining collective political efforts.

Repression can be symbolic as well as physical and can occur under any kind of political regime. Sometimes it is difficult to recognize because it may be expressed in deeply ingrained "common senses" that can have an oppressive effect on activists, such as patriarchal practices. Building trust in these circumstances is very important for generating an organizational response that is democratic. Even in high-risk situations, which can mean the possibility of being killed, social trust emerges in certain cases and is crucial for redefining past and present traumatic situations. During severe repression and authoritarian regimes, trust in unknown others for solidarity and the creation of clandestine networks occurred in several countries, as shown in the literature (e.g. Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Schock, 2005; Sika, 2023) and the other contributions to this Special Issue. As will be shown, building trust is the most essential prerequisite for developing an organizational path for a social movement.

Graph 1. Trust-building organizational learning process.

Consequently, democracy is an agonistic never-ending learning process of adapting viewpoints, goals, strategies and tactics to heterogeneity, rather than a rationalizing consensus-building process. We cannot assume the existence of the preconditions for consensus, as theories of deliberative and communicative action tend to do. Moreover, a final consensus among diverse individuals or groups is not a desirable end, and it is not possible: absolute unification of the multiplicity of voices can never be achieved thanks to the inherent plurality of humanity, *sine qua non* for democratic agonism. As said by Tilly (2005: 6): "Maintaining the boundary between 'us' and 'them' clearly plays an important part in trust networks' continued operation." In other words, the constitution of a relational "us/them" and the exclusion of the "others" must be recognized as intrinsic to the political in a process that is not lineal neither normative.

Trust-building organizational learning process

The proposed trust-building organizational learning process in social movements—as seen in Graph 1—runs like this. The political organizational process begins according to previous positive and/or negative experiences that intergenerationally connect past struggles with present ones in a stock of legacies. How the quest for an organizational model is mediated by the tension produced by the memory of these experiences will generate a different degree of opportunity for developing a mode of coordination. This tension is produced between the fear of being nullified (i.e. being physically and/or symbolically repressed), and the trust that others sharing the interest for promoting collective action will recognize the diversity of self-identities and interests put together. If total fear dominates, negative past experiences will prevail and the organizational dilemma will not emerge, or it will emerge with very low levels of trust. In this case, unless the building of shared goals and/or common idiomatic languages facilitates it, dialogue between members becomes harder and trust-building may fail. Alternatively, when trust dominates, the resignification of past negative experiences and/or the reinforcing effect of past positive experiences will favor the emergence of a mode of coordination. In most empirical cases, as will be seen later, the concrete situation lies between total fear and total trust.

Once a minimum of social trust is produced to avoid the dissolution of the mode of coordination, the organizational dilemma emerges. This dilemma is the result of the existence of more than one organizational option and—if democratic—could be expressed as: *How can a movement be*

organized for a shared goal without diluting heterogeneity of self-identities and interests? In answering this central question, the organizational dilemma offers four alternative trajectories that analytically cover the full range of the continuity-change dimension of the organizational process. In this sense, the four trajectories are the ways of responding to the organizational dilemma, which can be defined as follows:

1. Innovation through new organizational models means the prefiguration or exploration with not yet done organizational practices and/or understandings within the organizational tradition of a specific political group.
2. Repetition of past experiences means the reproduction of what has already been done and/or known (consciously or obliviously) and forms part of the stock of legacies of a specific political group.
3. Reformulation of practices is the recuperation of what is already known or learned from others into new organizational understandings and/or ways of doing things by a specific political group.
4. Emulation of previous organizational models means imitating what has been done by other groups without applying significant (or any) modification to the understandings and/or ways of performing the organizational format when adopted by a specific group.

These four paths follow the full range of analytically possible alternatives and can work in democratic, autocratic, or mixed ways. Thus, whether the organizational dilemma is democratic is an empirical question that requires situated studies to find out.

Each mode of coordination will face different organizational trade-offs as the empirical analysis of the trajectories will show. However, none represent an optimal path. Moreover, these options are always temporary and incomplete because—as in the essence of politics—any resolution will imply an exclusion of some "other," which in turn will be the subject of contention and subsequent reemergence of the (democratic) organizational dilemma. Therefore, this relational process is not teleological as it flows in an open-ended direction. In other words, to adopt an approach like the one suggested here means to perceive the ever-incomplete "solution" to the (democratic) organizational dilemma as part of the conditions and constrictions surrounding the organizational process.

The process modelized in Graph 1 aims at working in any context, while its specific temporal and spatial dimensions need to be filled in within it to explain concrete cases. This is the exercise I will do in the rest of this piece, applying the theory proposed. The subsequent sections will identify the four trajectories of the (democratic) organizational dilemma and explain how the different ways in which it was tackled have shaped (and been shaped by) trust-building dynamics.

Data and method

This article is the result of synthesizing more than two decades of my own research on social movements. These cases were selected among other modes of coordination I studied because they can illustrate the trajectories of the organizational dilemma better than others. I carefully selected cases that show the divergent trajectories within a single movement, organization, or coalition demonstrating the heuristic utility of a diachronic paired comparisons research strategy for analyzing these organizational dilemmas.

I combine data collected in ethnographic research, direct observation, in-depth interviews, and archive research (commercial and alternative media and movements' documents) in Argentina from 2001 until 2008. Specifically, the assembly movement is the result of a 13-month ethnography in Buenos Aires (2001–2002) (Rossi, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2017b; Mauro and Rossi, 2015).

The study of ATTAC and the Self-Convocation Coalition against the FTAA included the direct observation of their meetings with interviews in Buenos Aires and an ethnography during the Peoples' Summit in Mar del Plata (2003–2005) (Rossi, 2006, 2008; Bidaseca and Rossi, 2008). Finally, I studied the *piquetero* movement through direct observation, interviews, and archive research in several locations of Argentina (2007–2008) (Rossi, 2015; 2017a). Some data of these previous studies are reproduced here, while interpreted in an original fashion. Moreover, the results of decades of study are for the first time compared. This was the product of finding that these specific modes of coordination could disentangle the crucial question posed by this Special Issue. All the materials I collected are publicly available in the Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas (CeDInCI) in Buenos Aires, except for those related to the *piquetero* movement, which will become public when possible in order to avoid risks for some persons.

Innovation: the assembly movement

After a week of lootings in several Argentine cities, the government declared a state of siege on 19 December 2001. The urban middle classes reacted with spontaneous saucepan-banging protests in some major cities. Later that night, thousands in front of the house of government called for the resignation of the president, judges, governors, legislators and union leaders. Considering the political elites wholly responsible for the direness of the situation, they shouted, "All of them out, not a single one must remain!" The government reacted with repression and in 2 days almost 40 people were killed. The following afternoon, the president resigned. As the saucepan-banging protests and public attacks on politicians spread, the assembly movement emerged for the concrete application of the anti-elite motto (Schuster et al., 2002; Rossi, 2005a). The central discussion among those protesting was: "How to organize this discontent?" In the street discussions an organizational dilemma gradually emerged for the constitution of a collective alternative to the collapsing environment.

In the assembly movement, the analytic departing point is its context of emergence as the high mobilization against the consequences of neoliberalism in Argentina permeated its organizational dilemma. This illustrates the *innovation* trajectory within the organizational dilemma that developed two paths: the deliberation for saving the republic from its elites versus the organization for the struggle to achieve a revolution. After reaching a temporary organizational resolution in a coordinating body, the movement gradually split in two sectors that attempted to pursuit alternative paths of innovation to post-representative democracy. The organizational models of the two flanks of the movement are analyzed in detail to show how this innovation worked out. Ultimately, the constitution of a unified deliberative setting failed as mutual trust that pluralism will be kept in the absence of a shared identity was not achieved.

The organizational dilemma: deliberation for the republic versus organization for the struggle

The assembly movement emerged as a combination of two distinctive–but connected–understandings of the crisis, mobilizing very different self-identities and interests. The first viewpoint was a product of the general population's perception of the deep political crisis. According to those who would make up the *neighborhood* sector of the movement, the source of the problem was that the crisis was also partially of the population's own making: the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s and the incompetence of the political elites were a consequence of the citizenry having delegated decision-making power to the authorities without adequate means of control or participation. The intensity of the crisis forced the citizenry to consciously seek management of the situation. For this to be possible, it was first necessary to define what they were striving for and how to go about

achieving it. Thus, for this sector of the movement, the organizational dilemma was tackled by choosing a deliberative model of organization. This option was conceived as a way of resolving the fear of doing politics with strangers in a collective decision-making process through deliberation. Building a deliberative modus operandi was, thus, considered to be imperative to save the "republic" from the political elites that caused the crisis (Rossi, 2005b: 208–212).

The second viewpoint had its origins in the networks of left-wing activists, where the December crisis was perceived as a pre-revolutionary situation. The would-be *popular* sector of the movement went for an assembly model of organization too, but there was a crucial difference in the configuration of the deliberative setting. These activists saw the December crisis as the emergence of "objective" pre-revolutionary conditions. Therefore, for this group a clear and centralized organization was necessary to efficiently channel social unrest. It was imperative that "the struggling sectors" become organized, with the purpose of politically radicalizing social conflict and expanding it geographically. In other words, this sector of the movement interpreted the same crisis as the final bankruptcy and collapse of the economic and political system, entailing the need to construct a new constituent power wholly of "the people." To achieve this goal, organization in the form of assemblies spread across the country was essential for the pursuit of the vanguard-led support for contentious dynamics, in the promotion of a dialogue among social classes. Because the use of persuasive discussion was the only way of achieving non-coercive consensus among strangers for the substantive expression of the intrinsic potential power of "the people," the assembly model also represented the ideal organizational model for this sector (Rossi, 2005b: 206–209).

For some months, the assembly movement could achieve a temporary organizational resolution and worked cohesively, combining this heterogeneity within the movement in a coordination body: the Inter-Neighborhood Assembly of Parque Centenario (Rossi, 2005c). Agonistic pluralism helped to slowly overcome the shared fear of doing politics together caused by the traumatic repressive experiences during the 1976–1983 authoritarian regime. This could be observed in the initial mistrust of being infiltrated by police personnel hiding as fake activists–something usual during authoritarian and democratic regimes. In addition, engaging in a democratic learning process was difficult for left-wing parties as it implied some understanding of how to deal with the "other" and how to organize heterogeneity in social movements. Their frequent vanguardist attitudes and their reproduction of sectarian leadership models produced strong tensions and spurred massive withdrawals. A participant of the Inter-Neighborhood Assembly eloquently synthesizes the tension between the tactics of left-wing parties inside the assembly movement and the vision of the other activists of the movement:

> When we started with the assemblies, two parties were our guides towards the creation of a space of confluence: the inter-neighborhood. Those were times when you had to arrive really early to be able to see the faces of the speakers. There we were taking our first steps of direct democracy. One day the Workers Party [PO] wanted to win a voting, so it had no better idea than to turn off a couple of microphones to achieve it. And they did it. The following Sunday there was no need to arrive so early, as the independent citizens felt let down once again. Then the other enlightened ones, the MST [Socialist Workers Movement party] (its fiercest rivals . . .) stepped in this fall with the famous vote [system] of one assembly, one vote (in which I agree). The following Sunday, some 40 assemblies that were not participating or that had withdrawn were added to the minimal representation of 30 assemblies present . . . In one of all the many marches in which we continued to participate, the assemblies stopped following the ENLIGHTENED, and we achieved OUR VICTORY by going around the [Plaza de Mayo] pyramid. That day we said ENOUGH TO MANIPULATIONS . . . Last Sunday the assemblies represented in the inter-neighborhood were 32 and the new "resistance," the CP [Communist Party], managed to change the way of voting so that the new "devil," the MST, does not do its own manipulation. Corollary: the assemblies were born because no one represented us, and that includes all the old and new ENLIGHTENED, left and right. ALL. That is why I

feel the need to inform you that, in case no one told you, this: PO, MST, CP, etc. TAKE CHARGE THAT IT IS ALSO FOR YOU our cry "THAT ALL MUST GO." An assemblyman from Plaza de Mayo. (*The Inter-Neighborhood Assembly Will Break Apart*, published in Indymedia Argentina: http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2002/07/37892.php, 17 July 2002)

This quote expresses the core tension within the assembly movement that could not be resolved. Vanguardism works in some left-wing parties among activists who are used to this form of organization. In the case of the assembly movement, it did not work well because those groups of activists who did not come from vanguardist experiences and people who were newly involved in politics did not understand it or perceived it as a manipulation of the assemblies' direction. In addition, left-wing parties systematically tried to impose their own organizational understandings without accepting compromises. As a result, the two self-identities and interests were not surmounted through deliberations, deteriorating the incipient trust constructed among movement members.

An agreement on the need to deliberate and to produce participatory and assembly-based decision-making processes were insufficient for strengthening the initial efforts for *building trust*. Knowing how to struggle for control of a political space for collective projects without diluting trust that heterogeneity will be preserved from those who disagree with the result of some deliberations was not successfully achieved in the assemblies. This problem emerged from both factions of the assembly movement in a question that was central in several debates: "Where are the assemblies going to?" After the call for presidential elections, the movement was never able to achieve an immediate or long-term shared goal. This led each sector to attempt to pursuit alternative paths to post-representative democracy. While the popular sector sought to radicalize and expand social conflict through national coordination through the Inter-Neighborhood Assembly, the neighborhood sector began to withdraw from its national-scale project and transformed its goals into localized, small-scale social projects (Rossi, 2017b).

Trying to deliberate: the two assembly models

Even though the need to model a deliberative setting was shared by all those mobilized, the two social movement sectors developed organizational models that stood in opposition to one another in relation to aims and logic, crystallizing in the formation of two homogeneous factions: the moderate "neighborhood assemblies" and the radical "popular assemblies" (Rossi, 2005a). Over the course of the 13 months in which I ethnographically studied weekly sessions in the assemblies, I discerned a pattern in the decision-making process that evidence how the differences in self-identities and interests were expressed in alternative assembly organizational formats.

In the popular assemblies, the decision-making process generally followed a discursive-bargaining logic among political groups. When someone spoke, that person usually transmitted the political position of a party, movement or informal political group, with the intention of dominating the deliberative space. The logic followed by the participants was generally characterized by a presentation of meta-prescriptive enunciations. The constitution of the popular assemblies as a space for dialogue among social classes was based on the possibility of achieving a counter-hegemonic consensus through dialogue. That is why great efforts were made to avoid the need for individual voting, as this would "exteriorize" internal heterogeneity, which everyone wanted to keep hidden in the name of "the unifying struggle." The Reflection Sessions (deliberative meetings held on different days to the official "sovereign" assembly sessions) were created as a way of resolving interpersonal trust difficulties with the goal of producing inclusive consensus to reach unanimity (Rossi, 2005c: 129–133).

In contrast, in the neighborhood assemblies, the process tended to follow the logic of deliberative negotiation through functional differentiation between groups varying along thematic or affinity lines and formalized through commissions. It is because of this that the sessions tended to present more of a pragmatic logic. Priority was given to the concrete proposal of activities, the argumentation of their practical benefits, their technical feasibility and the effort that would be required to persuade others in the quest for support for their implementation by the assembly. In other words, generally this group did not engage in meta-prescriptive debates as expression of higher degrees of acceptance of social heterogeneity. This is not to say that the previously mentioned lengthier deliberative process never occurred, but it was more sporadic and generally concerned conflictive issues that were considered–by some members–to challenge the constitutive trust bonds of the collective. That is why not only was there no intention of avoiding individual voting in the neighborhood group, but also the majoritarian nature of debates was accepted as a legitimate rule. In the neighborhood assemblies, the group was represented through the achievement of exclusive consensus, with no intention of establishing unifying criteria. Each debate was conducted on an individual basis and was resolved through voting for the best functional-operative actions to be taken for the improvement of the neighborhood (Rossi, 2005c: 129–133).

Why did trust that heterogeneity would be preserved failed?

The constitution of these two assembly models was a result of mixing viewpoints from amateur and professional activists, with many of the former not fully grasping the logic of the left-wing militants, and the latter broadly intolerant of the multiplicity of perspectives created by such an open deliberative space. Activists needed to learn how to deal with left-wing adversaries, but also with the center and center-left "average voters," as well as those persons more interested in organizing local solidarity campaigns than discussing political programs. Instead, struggles for the control of the discourses of the organizational space dominated the constitution of a relational "us/them" inside the movement.

Mutual trust that heterogeneity would be preserved was the central feature that failed in the constitution of a unified deliberative setting in the assembly movement. This was the result of the difficulty for crafting a deliberative format that could preserve the agonistic nature of democracy while accepting pluralism in the absence of a shared identity or even a common idiomatic use of language. This complication in working out the organizational dilemma, in combination with the difficulty in sustaining high levels of mobilization for long periods of time, led to the building of a fragile incipient trust among members in this innovative deliberative setting that quickly deteriorated. After the splitting of the movement in two alternative organizational options, some assemblies transformed into different socio-political projects, while the movement almost vanished two years later (Mauro and Rossi, 2015; Pasotti, 2020: 220–232).

Reformulation and repetition: the Self-Convocation and ATTAC

According to social movement theory, an essential element for collective action is the delimitation of some form of identity, allowing groups and individuals to act together with others and to define the content of the relations in conflict (Melucci, 1989). But what happens when differences predominate? Can any form of common organization exist without virtually disintegrating the movement, as happened with the assembly movement in the form of multiple closed, non-communicative groups speaking their own idiomatic languages? If so, what motives might lead such diverse and often ideologically opposed actors to attempt to *build trust* to enable them to co-operate?
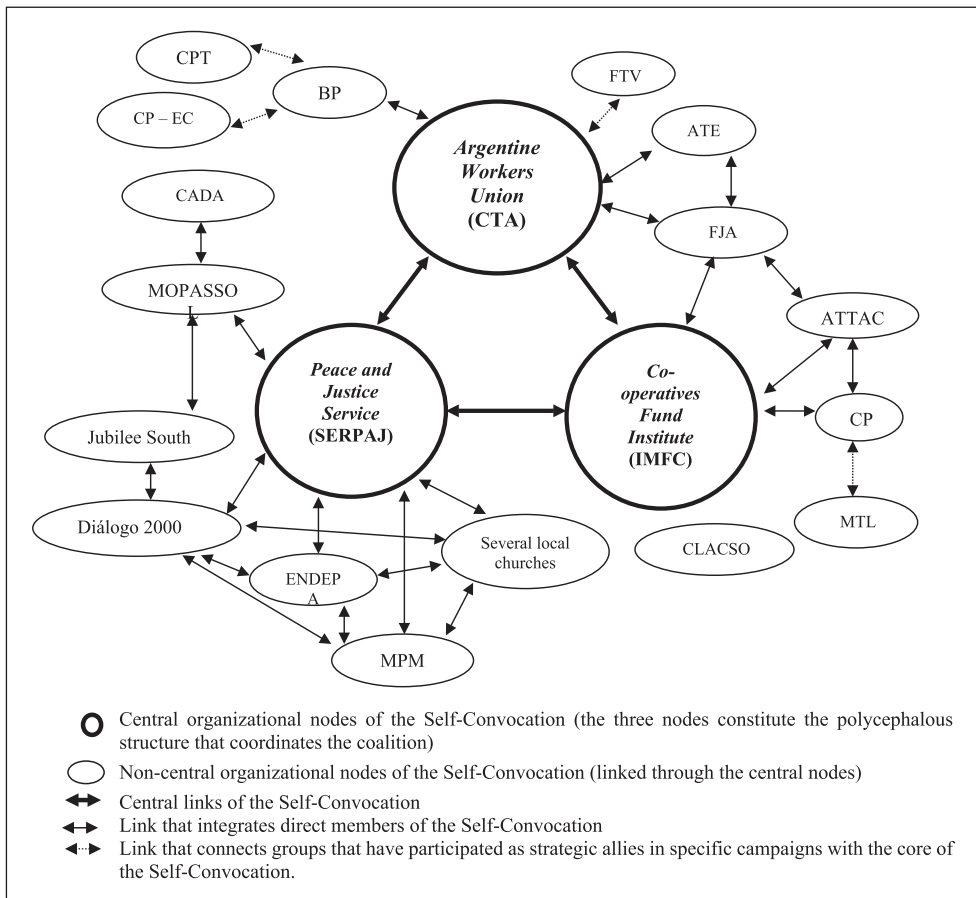
In this section, I will compare the related (but differently channeled) network-shaping processes of the Self-Convocation and ATTAC, as expressions of their organizational dilemma. Both cases initially began as networks with a high degree of organizational and ideological diversity for a single purpose and this is why they are compared in this section. While ATTAC was created for the application of the Tobin Tax, the Self-Convocation was created to oppose the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The organizational dilemma of these two cases can be summarized as: how to develop a democratic mode of coordination among members of a heterogeneous network. Although in both cases this heterogeneity produced tensions, these were resolved in opposing ways that illustrate the two trajectories studied here. Specifically, the *reformulation* of precedent exclusionary organizational practices into an inclusive organizational model is seen in the Self-Convocation against the FTAA. Meaning that, in a process of building trust, the Self-Convocation renamed the coalition to expand its scope to include its main members' other interests. Instead, the *repetition* of past exclusionary experiences is observed in ATTAC. Meaning that, in a process of losing trust, ATTAC downplayed diversity within this mode of coordination to try to achieve a homogeneous and cohesive group working for a new purpose, despite opposition on the part of most of its members.

Negotiating heterogeneity: the Self-Convocation

In 1994 the first-ever Summit of the Americas was organized. The aim of this meeting was to lay the foundations for the negotiation of a continent-wide free trade agreement: the FTAA. However, in reaction to the potential negative impacts on workers and small farmers, a continent-wide coalition of unions was formed to oppose free trade (Korzeniewicz and Smith, 2004). After the failure of states to reach agreement on liberalization at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in 1999, unions made room for movements through the Continental Campaign Against the FTAA (CCF). The CCF gave rise to an expansive continent-wide mobilization against the FTAA. Supported by a series of networks, the CCF participated in protests at the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. Security barricades were erected around the summit zone to deter demonstrations like those that had taken place in Seattle, which protesters tried to cross to disrupt the event (von Bülow, 2010).

As part of this wave of increasing mobilization, the Self-Convocation Against the FTAA was created in Argentina, later becoming the national chapter of the CCF. The Self-Convocation was a national coalition of a heterogeneous group of unions, movements, religious organizations and parties (Graph 2) associated with notable public figures but without formal leadership. The type of deliberation used was horizontal, with discussions and plenary sessions taking place weekly at the local and national levels, and more often during campaigns. The degree of influence of the participants depended on the resources and the time they could dedicate to the collective and its activities. Most members were professional militants who worked for multiple groups and organizations, participating in the Self-Convocation as one of many coalition spaces without giving it an identity of its own. As shown in Graph 2, the organizations that made up the Self-Convocation originated in three different movements: (1) the Catholic sector of the human rights movement, organized around the NGO Peace and Justice Service (SERPAJ); (2) the Marxist–Leninist Communists, organized around the Co-operatives Fund Institute (IMFC), and (3) a broader Peronist and national-populist movement drawn from unions, parties and *piqueteros* organized around the Argentine Workers Union (CTA).

After an initial period of focusing solely on the FTAA, the coalition reformulated its goals and achieved a higher level of tactical and strategic coordination and expansion by integrating the three internal networks. In 2003, the members decided to expand the coalition and integrate the main

Graph 2. Organizational polycephalous network structure of the Self-Convocation (2003–2005).
Sources: Direct observation and interviews (Buenos Aires and Mar del Plata, March–November 2005).
Notes: Distance between nodes is not representative of actual distance in network; this phenomenon is shown by the two types of arrows. Only the direct members of the network and the key indirect allies were schematized. CLACSO was a member but did not have links with any of the three central nodes.
Participant organizations:
ATE: Association of Argentine Workers (trade union).
BP: Neighborhoods Standing Up (*piquetero* SMO).
CADA: Campaign for the Demilitarization of the Americas (network).
CLACSO: Latin American Council for the Social Sciences (academic institution).
CP: Communist Party.
CP-EC: Communist Party—Extraordinary Congress.
CPT: Free Motherland Current (political party).
ENDEPA: National Aboriginal Pastoral Team (Catholic Church organization).
FJA: Argentine Judicial Federation (trade union).
FTV: Workers' Federation for Land, Housing, and Habitat (*piquetero* SMO).
MOPASSOL: Movement for Peace, Sovereignty and Solidarity among Peoples (network).
MPM: Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo—Founding Sector (human rights SMO).
MTL: Territorial Liberation Movement (*piquetero* SMO).

concerns of the SERPAJ networks into its goals, these being external debt and United States militarization in the region (Bidaseca and Rossi, 2008).

In 2004, the process of gradual integration continued. Members agreed to take on the main concern of the CTA networks, which was poverty. This led to the creation of the Self-Convocation Against the FTAA, Against Debt Payment, Against Militarization and Against Poverty. Thanks to this change, the *piqueteros*, unions and other groups mainly concerned with poverty and related issues could feel included within a coalition in which the main goal, the quashing of the FTAA, was now framed as a component of a broader process:

> It is thus necessary for us to organize in every part of the country to say NO to the North American imperialist policies on our continent, which pressure us to sign the FTAA, pay external debts, and accept the militarization of our territories. All in all, these are the policies that condemn our peoples to poverty and exclusion. (Call for the Peoples Summit!, Self-Convocation, 2005)

The Self-Convocation organized the Peoples' Summit in Mar del Plata in 2005. The participating organizations were called upon to activate all their national and regional networks to produce the greatest possible political impact. With an estimated 12,000 people participating in the alternative summit, and around 40,000 in the marches, the event was a political and media success (Rossi, 2006). The result was the abandonment of the FTAA project by the United States, which meant the Self-Convocation had achieved its main goal. This was made possible by the deliberations and *mutual trust* built up over the previous several years, but also the integration of the three networks without their specificities being lost or eliminated. It was through expansion that the collective goals were able to be redefined.

Why did trust that heterogeneity would be preserved succeeded?

Heterogeneity worked in this instance for several reasons. First, because all the participants were professional activists with a common idiomatic use of language, which eased the process of finding a shared goal for the coalition. In this process, there was no imposition of themes by some members onto others; instead, the thematic focuses were expanded so that all the members felt represented by the coalition. Moreover, an integrated discourse was achieved which was able to propose an articulated argument against the FTAA, debt, militarization and poverty as components of the United States imperialist project. All these organizations agreed on the need to organize resistance to what was, according to their reasoning, a United States plan for regional domination. For this purpose, they managed to distribute labor across very different types of organizations (from the CTA, a union with more than two million affiliates, to SERPAJ, an NGO with a few paid members). While the CTA and its networks contributed the capacity for mobilization of the unions and the *piquetero* SMOs attached to it (Neighborhoods Standing Up and the FTV), SERPAJ and its networks contributed the symbolic legitimacy and international contacts of the human rights movement, with the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Finally, the IMFC and its networks contributed capacity for mobilization (the MTL *piqueteros*), technical knowledge (ATTAC) and material resources through its ownership of the Credicoop Bank. This organizational structure reached its peak during the 2003–2005 campaigns and was expressed in a sharing of leadership based on a polycephalous network structure (Graph 2).

The ability to negotiate differences—a *sine qua non* for a pluralist setting—may explain why the Self-Convocation was able to *build trust* and continued to exist for several years. Coalition members were united by a strategic interest in carrying out campaigns and shared a nationalist, anti-imperialist framework for which they needed to respect the heterogeneity of their membership. This obliged

them to a reformulation of historical left-wing exclusionary organizational practices into an inclusive organizational model.
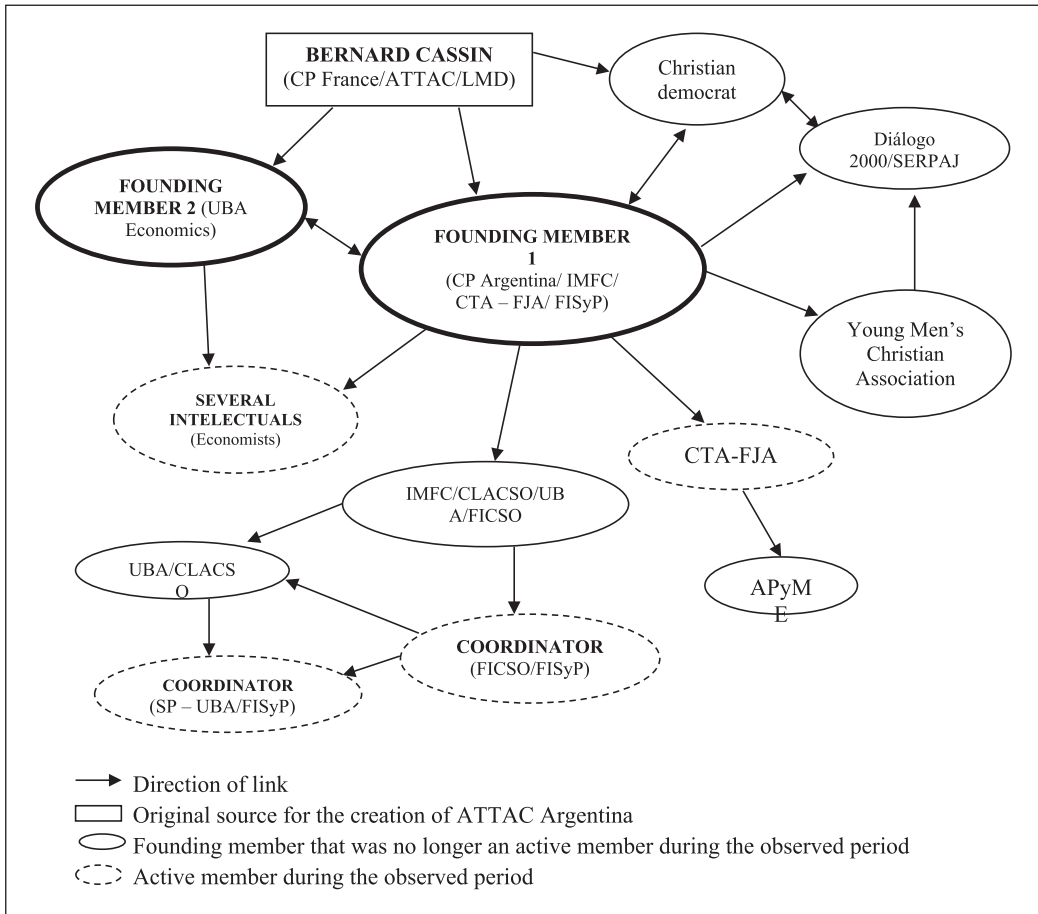
Building homogeneity: ATTAC

The Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions to Aid Citizens (ATTAC) was created in 1998 with the aim of establishing the Tobin Tax—that is, a tax on all international currency transactions—to prevent speculative crises such as the one that arose in Southeast Asia in 1997 and in favor of North-South redistribution. Le Monde Diplomatique (LMD) joined forces with several labor federations, left-wing parties and social organizations to create the first ATTAC in France (Ancelovici, 2002). Due to the political opportunities opened by the Seattle protests, ATTAC spread very quickly, with the creation of more than 30 ATTAC nodes in different parts of the world, including Argentina in 1999 (Rossi, 2008).

Right from ATTAC's beginnings, the Tobin Tax was the element binding together a network of economists, later joined by a broader spectrum of activists and politicians. ATTAC Argentina adopted ATTAC France's organizational model, with an advisory council of academics formed to formulate a proposal for placing the Tobin Tax on the national agenda. Panel discussions and workshops in support of the proposal were also organized for activists and the public. These early efforts were aimed at prompting activists to expand their agendas to include the Tobin Tax.

Despite a negative reaction to the Tobin Tax proposal by potential allies because it was considered too moderate, a second strategy was pursued: establishing a commission to take the idea to parliament. These efforts were rewarded when a bill to apply the Tobin Tax was endorsed by the Economy Commission of the Lower House in 2000. However, although favorable to ATTAC's idea, its anti-neoliberal spirit was not respected, as the IMF was recommended as the organization to administer the proceeds–meaning that the limits that had been sought for neoliberalism and its institutions would not be imposed. The Tobin Tax proposal did not end up having a major national impact and it was ambiguously interpreted in Argentina. This made possible for different sectors to participate, despite disagreeing with some of ATTAC's international positions.

ATTAC having failed its efforts to achieve its objectives in Argentina, in 2002 a group associated with ATTAC Argentina's Founding Member 1 (Graph 3) decided to try to redirect the organization's focus and repertoire of strategies toward the national sphere and reduce its emphasis on ATTAC's international goals and actions. This group's view was that the immediate issues presented by the social turmoil of December 2001 and the ensuing institutional crisis in Argentina required ATTAC's full attention. The campaign for the Tobin Tax was abandoned and replaced by themes of regional integration and continental free trade, leading to ATTAC helping to set up the Self-Convocation.

The arbitrary way in which the leadership decided a new strategic direction for ATTAC Argentina led to the *loss of trust* that diversity among members would be kept. Internal divisions, in-fighting, and gradual loss of membership led to the break-up of an ideologically and organizationally heterogeneous network. Disagreement and internal difficulties led one ATTAC founder to leave the organization, severely criticizing the scarcely democratic way in which, in her opinion, the decisions had been taken. As can be seen in Graph 3, one of the founders had acted as the leader of a hierarchical network with a single prominent actor, little transnational mediation and high levels of national integration (centralization). During the pre-conflict period presented in this graph, Founding Member 1 shared with two other actors a bidirectional relationship with France. However, his dominant position vis-à-vis the other founding members gave him the power to unilaterally control ATTAC's orientation in Argentina. The hierarchical and egocentric nature of the network was accentuated by his capacity to bypass the only two equivalent nodes. In this way, the

Graph 3. Egocentric network structure of ATTAC Argentina (2002–2003).
Sources: Direct observation and interviews (December 2004–May 2005). Adapted from Rossi (2008: 254, Graph 1).
Multi-organizational memberships:
APyME: Association for Small and Medium Enterprises.
FICSO: Independent Front for Social Sciences.
FISyP: Foundation for Social and Political Research.
LMD: Le Monde Diplomatique.
SP: Socialist Party.
UBA: University of Buenos Aires.

network was limited to unidirectional flows from the center toward the periphery. This provoked an internal crisis, but also defined the dominant sector as the one definitively determining the course and leadership of the organization (Rossi, 2008).

ATTAC's extremely low level of institutional formality prevented it from constituting into an organization and its lack of grassroots or mobilizing capacity and scarce national influence disqualified it as a social movement. As such, it is best defined as an "egocentric" or "star/ wheel-shaped" (Diani, 2003) local expression of a transnational network with important intellectual capital. Stated in other terms, ATTAC is a network centered on a prominent actor that established intermediation links with low levels of equivalency (asymmetrical relations). This is because the actor located in a central position dominated both the coordination of network

interchanges and the links to the network's most peripheral points, which were scarcely committed to the new theme. In contrast with that of the Self-Convocation, this organizational format was the result of the repetition of undemocratic practices of the left, imposing an exclusionary approach to navigating the organizational dilemma.

The organizational dilemma: exclusionary versus inclusionary options

While it was necessary in the cases of the Self-Convocation and ATTAC to deal with heterogeneity, the resulting networks represented different solutions. On one hand, ATTAC opted for an "egocentric" network structure, which implied an *exclusionary option*. While this favored the likelihood of consensus, the degree of diversity in the group was reduced by the deliberate dissolution of pluralism and the imposition of centralized control of communications and resources. A vertical and barely democratic organization like ATTAC was also one that produced a consensual model. The structure of the network showed that by concentrating the flow of communication and centralizing the control of resources, the achievement of consensus was made easier precisely because a deliberative setting founded on diversity was avoided. Thus, the conditions under which consensus was achieved show that is not always democratic and can stem from, and even be favored by, power imbalance.

On the other hand, the Self-Convocation demonstrated an alternative trajectory: the *inclusionary option*. In this case meant the creation of a polycephalous network based on three central nodes sustained not by any sense of shared identity, but rather by a commitment to a common goal. Thanks to the existence of a shared idiomatic language among militants, the Self-Convocation favored *trust-building* between professional activists for the constitution of a permanent, horizontal bargaining process based on division of labor and the provision of symbolic and material resources for the achievement of a common goal. In short, the exclusionary and the inclusionary options represented opposite responses to the same organizational dilemma: how to develop a democratic mode of coordination among members of a heterogeneous network.

Emulation: the Classist and Combative Current

The Argentine experience of authoritarianism and political violence in the 1970s–1980s has affected all the cases analyzed here. The establishment of a deliberative setting implies a process of learning to not only deal with heterogeneity but also suppress the fear of expressing political opinions in public. In the same way, because of positive or negative past experiences, the construction of a movement in a democratic manner also implies valuing democracy as necessary. However, as Bermeo (1992) argues, it is important to bear in mind that political learning might discursively emerge without automatically implying a deeper process. The discursive shift and its relevance for organizational, democratic learning, is crucial. I will analyze this change within the left and its organizational implications as illustrated by the case of the *piquetero* organization Classist and Combative Current (CCC). The existence of a democratic ethos cannot be assumed, its emergence is rarer than is generally assumed, being the result of a never-ending learning process. Behaviors such as deliberation, bargaining, tolerance and capacity to compromise must be learned. Organizational practices are adopted, adapted and sometimes improved based on those that are already known, but are not restricted to what is familiar. Therefore, to understand why a particular organizational model was chosen from among the wide range of possibilities it is necessary to understand whether any relationship exists between the actors' understanding of "democracy" and the model chosen. This process will be analyzed through a debate between the two main leaders of the CCC over the best possible organizational model for this *piquetero* organization.

In this case, the organizational dilemma can be put as whether the CCC should follow an organizational format sustained on a leadership guided centralization versus guided decentralization. The CCC illustrates the *emulation* trajectory of the organizational learning process. Meaning, empirically, two different understandings of how should be done the emulation of a grassroots-based neighborhood assembly organizational model that keeps trust-building dynamics alive in this *piquetero* group.

The CCC was created in 1996 as the movement branch of the Maoist Communist Revolutionary Party (PCR). From the early 1960s the PCR politburo consistently refused to organize guerrillas, triggering several divisions that went on to evolve as guerrilla organizations (Hilb and Lutzky, 1984). As an alternative to organizing guerrillas, the PCR adopted the strategy of coaxing factory commissions from the Peronist-dominated General Confederation of Labor (CGT), with some success in Córdoba province (Godio, 2000). The success of the PCR in the 1980s in suburban land occupations helped the PCR displace the classical Marxist pejorative notion of the unemployed as lumpen-proletariat. These transformations were reinforced in the 1990s as a result of privatizations and deindustrialization, which transformed the main industrial areas into virtual factory graveyards. By vindicating the unemployed as "workers without employment," they reframed the excluded as potential revolutionaries–if appropriately guided and their basic needs fulfilled. This allowed for the creation of the CCC (Unemployed Workers Sector) (Rossi, 2017a: 105–109).

These changes in the PCR were a consequence of the traumatic experiences suffered under the last authoritarian regime. Guerrillas were crushed, which considerably weakened the left. This outcome was for many not only a consequence of the huge disparity in military force between the state and leftist groups, but also due to the vanguard-led organizational style, which proved for some activists to be unsatisfactory (Moyano, 1992). According to the PCR politburo, the only way of learning from the past was heading off such vanguardist initiatives and switching to massively participatory organizational models.

In addition, most of the left reformulated the value and meaning of democracy in discourses and actions. The suppression of basic liberties and the thousands killed showed to the left that authoritarianism made even more difficult to promote revolutionary changes (Roberts, 1998). The debates among left-wing organizations since the transition to democracy have been focused on how to go beyond liberal, capitalist and procedural democracy. Three positions predominated in relation to democracy after democratization: (1) democracy as a precursor to socialism that cannot be bypassed; (2) democracy as a regime that would consolidate the reason for abandoning socialism as a goal; and (3) ". . . the importance of democratic practices and institutions for the formation of a broad popular-democratic movement" (Barros, 1986: 51). While some sectors of the left still had an instrumentalist perception of liberal democracy (Castañeda, 1993), the main reformulation that emerged in most was that democracy was no longer considered an expression of one class, but an incomplete process: "Here, democracy, understood as the active praxis of the subaltern classes, emerges as inseparable from the process of self-constitution of historical popular subjects and from socialism conceived as an extension and deepening of democratic control over social existence" (Barros, 1986: 51–52).

The last option has been gradually arisen within the Maoists since the 1990s. The PCR articulated the rejection of electoral participation as insufficient for the revolutionary purposes with the CCC organization of the unemployed based on the vast experience of "basismo"–a neighborhood assembly model very similar to the one developed by the assembly movement (Rossi, 2017a: 52–54). As described by the national coordinator of the CCC, to avoid vanguardism and political isolation from the poor, the CCC has based its decision-making process on the emulation of "basismo" outside of the factory setting:

> Our organization, which corresponds to the unemployed, is organized by territory, by neighborhood. In each neighborhood there are 40, 80, 100 companions. Each neighborhood holds weekly assemblies where issues are discussed. There [the participants] choose their own leaders. The leaders are revocable–in other words, every three or four months, elections are organized in the neighborhoods, and the companions themselves chose their [delegate] companions by secret vote (because before, when we did it using voice voting, there were tensions among the companions [who said things like] "you didn't vote for me, I'll get you later"; that's why now the election is secret) . . . The coordinating group meets once a week for a whole day. Here we meet on Wednesdays . . . (National CCC leader, interviewed August 2007)

How does the rejection of electoral politics relate to the post-representational nature of the CCC? The neighborhood delegates are rotated and revocable. Their role is to transmit "scripts" to the grassroots assemblies. These "scripts" are written by the national leader of the unemployed workers of the CCC, in cooperation with the other CCC leaders (all members–though not necessarily leaders–of the PCR). Thus, this process is deliberative and non-representative, though vertical and closed. The deliberative setting in this case differs in one important way from the one built by the assembly movement: its leaders, through the scripts, guide the CCC centrally. The scripts determine the agenda of the neighborhood debates and, consequently, the political decisions of the whole CCC:

> And there is a script, a political script that every month or every 40 days is released to open the debates. Then that script goes to the whole movement. The whole movement must discuss the text, which addresses the international political situation, the national one, and [links it] with our local reality . . . And for one whole day there is a general assembly. In other words, those that couldn't participate in the neighborhood assemblies . . . [can participate here]. And then the decisions, decisions such as the blockade [of streets and routes], for example, we make them in the general assembly [of the CCC leaders]. But [this decision] comes [to us] having already been discussed in the neighborhoods. (National leader of the CCC, interviewed August 2007)

This organizational outcome flows from the desire of the PCR to control the political agenda of the CCC but is mainly the outcome of an internal struggle for the redefinition of what their leaders call "the great democracy" (*la democracia grande*) in their quest to deepen democracy by politicizing the urban poor (Alderete and Gómez, 1999; Delamata, 2004; Política y Teoría, 2000, 2003).

The organizational dilemma: guided centralization versus guided decentralization

The CCC is relatively independent from the PCR because of division among CCC leaders around how it should be organized and the non-participation of the PCR national politburo in leadership positions in it. While the "basista" neighborhood assembly model is accepted, there is no consensus on the role the PCR should play or how to deal with the heterogeneity of the CCC membership. With the leadership mostly Maoist and PCR-affiliated and the rank-and-file almost all Peronist and/or Evangelist, CCC leaders must find ways of managing with this heterogeneity while avoiding the vanguardist/exclusionary models that would produce a massive withdrawal and at the same time preserving the CCC's ability to produce some form of ideological transformation among Argentina's urban poor.

This heterogeneity is preserved by balancing the power of the scripts and the CCC leaders' charismatic authority against the leaders' oft-mentioned "capacity to listen more than speak." This approach is used to avoid the idea of the enlightened vanguard. It also allows the leaders to guide the construction of a new way of thinking. In his support of this option of *guided decentralization*,

one national CCC leader felt that it deters discretional decision-making on the part of the leadership by ". . . allowing people to have total participation. Allowing people to decide, allowing people to choose and criticize the leaders."

This process of guided decentralization is not straightforward because some leaders disagree with it. The national leader quoted above stated that "The [*piquetero*] Movement is not of the CCC but it accepts being guided by the [Classist and Combative] Current." This means that the use of the scripts is not only a way of helping people with no political experience to be able to debate but also a way of gradually *building trust* around a consensual agenda around PCR goals. However, the other main national leader of the CCC considers that the central guiding organization is the PCR. Though not disagreeing with the organizational model per se, he promotes a more *centralized process*. This difference of opinion is illustrated by this short conversation between the two leaders:

> **Journalist:** "In your experience, is the Party the most important instrument as the vanguard? Does the Party play this role? And how is this role related to the practice of the great democracy and the possibility of creating an alternative form of power?

> **Leader 1:** "This is done with difficulty. It is not straightforward. The Party meets and discusses ideas to bring proposals [to the CCC]. It does not replace the coordination of the Movement.

> **Leader 2:** "I would say that the PCR has an impact. This is mainly the case—and this is due to historical factors—in Elena Neighborhood. We are leaders of the Movement and public leaders of the PCR . . . Thus, not only the issue of the great democracy but also each of the issues that are debated within the Movement are in some way or another driven by the comrades of the Party . . ." (Política y Teoría, 2000: 61, as the previous quotations).

This—yet unresolved—debate about whether "the great democracy" should be a *guided centralized* or a *guided decentralized* process is partially translated into practice by two means. First, while the scripts guide the conversation, they are not binding and can be modified during the discussion. For instance, at one point in 2003, the leaders tried to propose "the PCR as the engine of the CCC," but this was rejected by the local assemblies and was thus eliminated from the scripts. This action preserved trust that leaders would respect the heterogeneity of self-identities within a common interest. Second, to reduce the personal power of the leaders and further sustain trust among members, the CCC politburo created a scoring system for the more transparent distribution of assets obtained through mobilizations. Each person obtains points for her participation in protests, assemblies and cooperatives, and the person with the most points has priority in the allocation of resources, and so forth down a list until the assets have all been given away. In brief, beyond leadership discussions, in the CCC the emulation of "basista" organizational models allowed for an organization in mass-democracy assemblies that keeps trust-building dynamics alive.

Conclusion

The debate between the two main leaders of the CCC expressing the crucial organizational dilemma they face is not merely strategic. The will to learn from the traumatic effects of past experiences is juxtaposed against deeply rooted political practices; therefore, what we tend to find in the CCC— as in the other cases—is a combination of old and new practices. This is due to the constraining nature of the learning process: past experiences are filtered through present ones, resulting in a stock of legacies. While the assembly movement found it difficult to form mutual understandings to construct a deliberative setting, this was not the case with the Self-Convocation, where the trauma of past experiences helped in the formation of inclusive paths to common goals. The key

difference between the assembly movement and the Self-Convocation was that the latter was made up of previously established organizations and movements which joint the coalition deliberately and with no immediate fear about their own survival, whereas the assembly movement was simultaneously building the respective movement and trying to mutually trust each other. As shown, the precondition for the failure or success of agonistic, democratic organizational formats is related to the trust-building process.

Repression is not experienced evenly across social classes or geographical spaces. In rural areas, violence is generally more amplified than in urban areas. Even in urban areas, the suburban lower classes' experience will differ from that of the urban middle classes. Such factors ultimately affect the pace at which negative legacies that build mistrust are overcome and the degree of crystallization of many democratic practices. In this sense, the guided deliberation process promoted by the CCC might seem exclusionary as ATTAC's "egocentric" network. However, while the latter was dealing with middle class professional activists and politicians, the former has the more challenging task of producing organized collective action among the suburban poor, with their multiple immediate material needs, in an environment where state repression is more directly felt.

In brief, the perspective of a trust-building organizational learning process proposed in this article allows for analytically classifying the cases into four *dynamic* trajectories: (1) innovation through new organizational models (attempted for some months by the assembly movement); (2) repetition of past experiences (ATTAC's exclusionary option); (3) reformulation of practices (Self-Convocation's inclusive option); and (4) emulation of previous organizational models (CCC's "basista"-inspired mass-democracy assemblies). It is important to note that none of these paths is intrinsically positive or negative. Movements can create positive versions of past models, produce less inclusive reformulations of previous organizations, emulate vices and virtues or innovate in authoritarianism.

Each paired comparison showed the situated expressions of the organizational dilemma. In the assembly movement, the question was whether organizing the initial protests required thinking about saving the republic from its elites or organizing for the struggle to achieve a revolution. In the cases of the struggle against neoliberal globalization—ATTAC and the Self-Convocation—the discussion was about how to develop a networked structure that could deal with heterogeneity (in an inclusive or exclusionary way). Finally, in the CCC, the leadership debated whether it needed a centralized or decentralized organization. Although historically specific, these are all expressions of the democratic organizational dilemma that may be similar to other cases elsewhere. As such, they demonstrate how my proposal can be empirically applied by filling out the elements of a theorization with general applicability.

The theory I proposed for understanding democratic organization as a trust-building learning process has implications for how we explain the constitution of political collective groups. When modes of coordination develop historically rooted organizational formats for political goals, the relational constitution of collective actors is redefined. With my theory, social trust is inserted as an essential element, challenging the centrality that is generally given to rationalizations. In this way, we reformulate our sociological understanding of what binds actors to political ends.

This proposal can be applied to any form of coordination for political purposes. All collective actors need to find some form of organization to achieve their goals. Thus, the application of this theory goes beyond a democratic organizational dilemma. To define the nature of the organizational dilemma, we need to observe how the articulation of heterogeneity is expressed and enacted by the actors in the relationships established.

Despite the potential applicability of the proposed perspective to any kind of organizational dilemma, a specific question needs to be answered if we wish to map its democratic dimension: we must realize that ". . . taking pluralism seriously requires that we give up the dream of a rational

consensus which entails the fantasy that we could escape from our human form of life" (Mouffe, 2000b: 98). In its application, the analytic quest is to see how actors respond to the question of how to organize the furtherance of their causes superseding the fear of doing politics together throughout building shared goals without diluting heterogeneity in an endless trust-building learning process.

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Note

1. "By 'modes of coordination' we refer here to the relational processes through which resources are allocated within a certain collectivity, decisions are taken, collective representations elaborated, and feelings of solidarity and mutual obligation forged" (Diani, 2015: 13–14).

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