



Non-Governmental Public Action Programme

Final Research Findings Brief

Movement of the Unemployed in Argentina

Project aims, objectives, methods

The aim of this research was to generate empirical knowledge about the non governmental public action taken by unemployed workers organisations (UWOS now onwards) in Argentina, with regards to their organisational innovation, their commitment with autonomous community work and influence on the policy field. The project used mainly qualitative methods. Primary sources were obtained by means of semi-structured interviews, observation and focus groups discussion.

* See comparative research below

Key research findings

Axis 1: Organisational innovation

Research Questions

- What is the organisational structure, resources and forms of affiliation and mobilisation?
- What is their networking capacity with and degree of dependence or autonomy from other social and labour organisations and movements?

Findings

- Flexible and innovative organisation structures (between NGOs, social movements, trade unions and political organisations)
- Organisational autonomy
- Good networking and mobilisation capacity
- Multidimensional and creative NGPA which escapes simplistic sociological categorisations

Axis 2: Commitment with autonomous community work

Research Questions

- What are the projects aiming at poverty reduction and in what ways are they contributing to the recomposition of the social fabric in local communities?
- What is the role of reallocation of the sources provided by the government?
- How do they generate genuine sources to support the unemployed and vulnerable sectors?

Findings

- Positive intervention of UWOS within complex situations of unemployment as well as 'relational fragility', thus preventing the transition from unemployment to 'social disaffiliation.'
- Articulation of needs and demands from the disadvantage sectors of society into autonomous community ventures: from literacy campaigns, to popular education, to school diners, to land occupation and housing construction, to the creation of work cooperatives to community farms (*huertas comunitarias*), recycling activities, negotiations for temporary jobs for the local unemployed and the creation of ad hoc job exchanges
- Creative use and reallocation of resources from federal employment policies and social programmes into community ventures:
 - UWO contest workfare by transforming pitfalls in its design, and turning existing features of employment and social programmes into opportunities to develop their own projects, redirect employment programme (individual) resources to their own (collective and

autonomous) projects, negotiate temporary jobs, salaries and working conditions with local firms, recover the collective aspect of (un)employment.

-Community projects have become the 'hinge' that connects both the development of project of autonomy by the UWO and institutionalisation and the creation of a new policy ethos.

-Use of mobilisation and protest as a tool for negotiation with the government

-Democratic discussion among members of the short- and long-term meaning of their collective action for social change.

-Beyond 'self-help' alternatives: 'public policy from below'.

Axis 3: Strategic orientation towards influencing/having an impact on institutional change and policy innovation.

Research Questions

- In what ways do UWOs mediate between the unemployed and the local/national governments?
- How do they respond to institutional strategies to co-opt, repress or facilitate constructive engagement with them?
- What are the forms of impact, influence on, and participation in policy making?
- Do UWO have a role in the politics of unemployment in present day Argentina? Are they becoming key actors to mediate between unemployed people and local and national governments, by articulating both the creation of autonomous spaces of social interaction and constructive engagement with policy makers?

Findings

- Impact on the policy field
 - New social programmes (2002 onwards) incorporated the communitarian and solidarity principles and social practices that underpin the *proyectos productivos* into a 'new policy ethos' which embraces principles of the 'social economy'
 - Tendency towards the 'institutionalisation' of the UWOs.
 - Differentiated response to state action and policies.
 - UWO offer a 'dissident meaning' to state policies.

Axis 4: Theoretical challenges

Research questions

- How do current theoretical debates on the relationship between unemployment, collective action and welfare policy inform the Argentine case?
- What are the implications that they have for an understanding of other Latin American cases?

Findings

- Work on unemployment looks at
 - individual experience of stratification, impoverishment (Daniel, 1981; Ashton, 1986)
 - the impact of these on personal identity and self-worth (Jahoda, 1982; Kessler, 1996)
 - the political economy of unemployment, i.e. 'underclass' thesis (Morris; 1993; Westergaard, 1992; Gallie, 1994)
 - 'the reserve army of labour' (Marx; 1993; 1990)
 - social disaffiliation (Castells 1997)
- This research contributes to the growing body of work that seeks a closer connection between social movement research and organization theory (Davis et al., 2005), in particular the centrality of institutional politics and the role of the state in helping to narrow the distance between social movement research and organizational analysis (Clemens 2005)
- The Argentine case illustrates that
 1. Politicisation of unemployment = Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) (1990s) were expected to acquiesce and depoliticise labour in Argentina but the opposite has been the case

2. Unemployment: a *form of capitalist work* taking the form of 'social exclusion' or 'social disaffiliation'
3. Unemployment created a problematic subjectivity leading to the emergence of UWO
4. Contradictory nature of the relationship between the movement and the state in the creation of institutional paths and policy field change (Seo and Creed, 2002): the attainment of policies and institutionalisation of UWO's values of autonomy and self-management within the policy field are the result of the diffusion of UWO's action, and, on the other hand, that the 'contested, multilevel process' of institutionalisation (Schneiberg and Soule 2005) changed the movement itself and its relationship with the state.
5. Transformation of the social and employment policy fields and institutional path creation

Policy and practice implications

Transformation of policy fields and institutional path creation

- New social programmes (2002 onwards) incorporated the communitarian and solidarity principles and social practices that underpin the *projectos productivos* into a 'new policy ethos' which embraces principles of the 'social economy'

Organisational change

- Emergence of new interlocutors
- New alliances, mobilisation and negotiation strategies
- Tendency towards the (contested) institutionalisation of the UWO.
- UWO offer a 'dissident meanings' to state policies.

* NEW

A comparative research (February 2008- December 2008) will explore the same three axes as in the Argentinean case but the focus will be placed on organisational innovation and autonomy, and how these shape (i) alliances and mobilisation, (ii) community work and (iii) institutional and policy change.

The comparative research will draw on three case studies:

- The *Coordinadora en Defensa del Agua y de la Vida de Cochabamba*, (Cochabamba's Network in Defense of Water and Life) Bolivia.
- The *Movimiento Zapatista, altos de Chiapas*, Mexico
- The *Movimento dos trabalhadores rurais sem terra* (MST) (The movement of landless rural workers) Brazil.

Key publications and outputs

Published

Dinerstein AC 2007 **'Workers' Factory Takeovers and New State Programmes: Towards the 'Institutionalisation' of Non-Governmental Public Action in Argentina'** *Policy and Politics* 35 (3) Policy Press, pp 527-548.

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/tpp/pap/2007/00000035/00000003>

Forthcoming 2008

Dinerstein, A.C., **'Lessons from a Journey: the Piquetero Movement in Argentina'** in Bonefeld, W. (ed) *Subverting the Present- Imagining the Future: Insurrection, Movement,*

Commons, Autonomedia, New York

Dinerstein, AC, Contartese D. and M Deledicque **¿Reemplazando al municipio, al sindicato, a la ONG y al partido político? Notas de investigación sobre la innovación organizacional en las organizaciones de trabajadores desocupados en Argentina.** *Realidad Económica* (IADE – Buenos Aires)

Dinerstein, A.C. 'Here is the rose, dance here! A riposte to the Debate on the Argentinean Crisis.' *Historical Materialism* 16(1).

Book Proposals

Dinerstein A.C. and J. Grugel (eds.) ***Creativity at Work: Non-Governmental Public Action in Latin America***. Submitted in September 2007 for inclusion in a proposed ESRC NGPA book series. Series editor: Professor Jude Howell.

Dinerstein Ana C. ***Global lessons from a local experience. The Movement of the Unemployed in Argentina***. Submitted in September 2007 for inclusion in a proposed ESRC NGPA book series. Series editor: Professor Jude Howell.

Work in progress

Journal articles

Dinerstein, AC 'The Politics of unemployment: social movements and the policy field change in Argentina.' To be submitted to *Politics and Society* in April 2008

Dinerstein, A.C. 'Contesting workfare, creating work". **Unemployed Workers organisations, self-managed community ventures and policy field change in Argentina**' Paper given at the NGPA Workshop on Labour Issues, December 2007, LSE. Abstract submitted for Journal Special Issue on *NGPA & Labour Issues*. To be submitted as an *NGPA Research Paper*

Working and Conference Papers

Dinerstein, A.C. 'The (im) possibility of Autonomy.' Paper to be given at the NGPA Workshop on NGPA & Theory, May 2008

Dinerstein, A.C. and G. Schwartz 'Resist, Occupy, Produce!: The Effect of the Argentine Movement of Occupied and Recovered Factories on Institutional Path Creation' Paper to be given at the 24th EGOS Colloquium [European Group for organisational Studies], July 10-12, The Netherlands. To be submitted to Organisation Studies

Background Publications

Dinerstein, A.C. (2003) Power or Counter Power? The dilemma of the Piquetero Movement in Argentina post crisis *Capital & Class* 81: 1-7

Dinerstein, A.C. (2002) 'Regaining Materiality: Unemployment and the Invisible Subjectivity of Labour' in Dinerstein, A.C. and M. Neary *The Labour Debate: An Investigation into the Theory and Reality of Capitalist Work*, Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate.

Dinerstein, A.C. (2001) 'Roadblocks in Argentina', *Capital & Class* no 74: 1-7.

Dissemination to target audience

Argentina

Local workshops to discuss disseminate findings with non academic users were organised between August 2006 and July 2007.

One-day Seminar: 'Lessons from a journey: The Unemployed Workers Movement in Argentina 10 years on', 22 August 2008, 6 pm, Cultural Centre for Cooperation, Buenos Aires, Argentina. **Paper:** 'La impronta de las organizaciones de trabajadores desocupados en Argentina. Una evaluación de su innovación organizacional e incidencia en la recomposición del tejido social y el cambio institucional y de políticas' (Ana C. Dinerstein with Daniel Contartese y Melina Deledicque)

Participants colleagues from academia, journalism as well as representatives from the organisations of the unemployed workers, other social organisations and governmental actors. Sponsors: ESRC Non Governmental Public Action Programme and the Centre for Civil Society, LSE (UK), Herramienta <http://www.herramienta.com.ar/>, The Institute for Economic Development (IADE) and the Journal *Realidad Economica* <http://www.iade.org.ar/modules/noticias/>; Department of Political Economy and World System, the Cultural Centre for Cooperation <http://www.centrocultural.coop/modules/wfchannel/>; Interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of Public Policy (Ciepp) <http://www.ciepp.org.ar/>

UK

- Paper presented at the **2007 Work, Employment & Society Conference**. Paper 'Piqueteros', between Resistance and Regulation. The experience of Unemployed Workers in Argentina, September 11-14, Aberdeen
- Paper presented at the **2006 Policy & Politics International Conference** "Reconnecting Policy and Politics" 6-7 July, University of Bristol, UK
- Paper presented at the **2005 Conference of the UK Social Policy Association** 'Well being and Social Justice', University of Bath, 27-29 June.

Europe

- Convenor for the Symposium: 'The Political, Social and Economic Impact of Non-Governmental Public Action in Latin America' **V CEISAL Congress of Latin Americanists** Brussels on April 11-14 **2007**.
- Paper presented at the Symposium: 'The Political, Social and Economic Impact of Non-Governmental Public Action in Latin America' V CEISAL Congress of Latin Americanists Brussels on April 11-14 **2007**. (see symposium and papers: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/research/ngpapiqueteros/publications.htm>)

Photos

For access to photo gallery see project web page: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/research/ngpapiqueteros/photos.htm>

For further information

Ana C Dinerstein (ESRC NGPA grant holder, principal investigator: A.C.Dinerstein@bath.ac.uk)
Project web page: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/research/ngpapiqueteros/>