

From Recognition of the Claim to the Legitimation of the *Piquetero* Movement as a National Actor (1999–2001)

This chapter analyzes the period that led to the national *pueblada* or social explosion of December 2001 that forced president Fernando De la Rúa to step down and legitimized the *piquetero* movement as the reincorporation movement – the interlocutor with the state for the disincorporated popular sectors. This process, though, was not straightforward. A first set of *piquetero* SMOs composed of the FTV, the CCC, and the UTD of Mosconi were legitimated before the rest of the movement did. The first two of these organizations had achieved this by November 2000 and the latter by June 2001 as a result of their increased disruptive power, which put the “*piquetero* social question” on the political agenda. As disruption expanded (Figure 3.1), the *piquetero* movement would grow in its power to mobilize, and new SMOs would be created, increasing the movement’s effectiveness as a coordinated force, although the FTV and the CCC would also suffer from important splits. The movement as a whole was legitimated in December 2001 during the brief interim presidency of Adolfo Rodríguez Saá (PJ), when some of its main leaders met with the president for the first time. In brief, the period between March 1999 and December 2001 represents the stage when the *piqueteros* went from seeing their claim recognized to the legitimation of the entire movement.

In this chapter I will continue with the theoretical enterprise initiated in the previous chapter. The intertwining of *piquetero* contention with the dynamics of institutional politics will be further studied in order to demonstrate the theoretical fruitfulness of bridging approaches for social movement studies. For this purpose I will analyze how a coalition operating within a presidential form of government produced a party distribution of functions that left the *piquetero* policy domain under dispute

among coalition members. I will also examine the emergence of the multi-level game of contentious and institutional politics that led to the collapse of the national government. The territorial alliances between certain mayors and *piquetero* SMOs led to differing outcomes as well as increasing trans-district competition and emulation among mayors. In this way, vertical and horizontal political opportunities will again be dynamically studied. Finally, I will introduce the role of the *political operators*, a crucial informal broker that has generally been overlooked by other studies of Argentine politics. With the inclusion of the political operators I aim to direct scholars' attention to the role of the main state actor that has built informal links of trust between SMOs and the state.

This chapter also offers the possibility of showing, with much more clarity than in the previous chapter, the heuristic power of my proposal of a repertoire of strategies because the *piquetero* movement grew, diversified, and achieved legitimacy as a political actor during this period. A dynamic analysis of the predominant repertoire of strategies of the *piquetero* movement will show how this repertoire changed over time. As will be seen, the repertoire of strategies mutated more rapidly than did the repertoire of contention during the struggle for legitimacy. However, it will be also made evident that the predominant repertoire of strategies preserves a limited range that is not directly related to junctural shifts.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND THE CORRIENTES PUEBLADA OF 1999

As Menem was coming to the end of his decade in government and the new president Fernando De la Rúa was taking power, a *pueblada* in the province of Corrientes was taking place. The *pueblada* in Corrientes was a central contentious event for the new government because this conflict represented a first direct confrontation with some of its coalition members and an indicator of how the national government would abruptly end two years later. However, the Corrientes *pueblada* was just the first of six town revolts the new government would need to confront while they continued to spread across the country.¹

¹ The Corrientes *pueblada* happened at the same time as a second *pueblada* in Tartagal and Mosconi (the first having been in 1997), but due to the magnitude of the Corrientes conflicts, the latter attracted no media coverage and was resolved by the governorship without direct intervention on the part of the national government.

Although inflation was no longer an issue, the economic recession, coupled with de-industrialization and mass privatization, had maintained high levels of unemployment (15.6 percent) and increased the number of those living below the poverty line (27.1 percent) (May 1999). Within this context many provinces – by now immersed in socioeconomic crises – were trying to operate with fiscal restraint.

The *Corrientes pueblada* started in March 1999 when teachers and public sector employees began a strike to obtain payment of their salaries, which had not been paid in three months. This was followed in June by a demonstration of 35,000 people led by the CTA. Then multiple road-blocks emerged across the main provincial highways and bridges, while police started their own protest by refusing to leave their barracks. This series of events led the governor to step down, and a coalition agreement was achieved by the PJ, the UCR, and the main provincial party. In the meantime, protestors set up of tents in front of the governorship to claim their salaries and call for the resignation of the entire provincial political elite.

In October the Argentine presidential elections were held and the UCR-FREPASO Alliance for Work, Justice and Education (Alliance, thereafter) beat the PJ candidate. On December 10, the new president, Fernando De la Rúa, started his mandate, and on the same day the protests in Corrientes were intensified with the hope of inciting the national government to fulfill its promise to solve the crisis in the province by committing US\$120 million and implementing a federal intervention that would lead to the removal of the governing political elite. The main access road to the provincial capital was cut in an attempt to radicalize contention on the part of teachers, judiciary workers, and other public sector employees. After six days, the national government ordered the Gendarmerie to clear the protestors by force in order to reopen transit routes. This action resulted in the death of two civilians and the expansion of contention, the population expressing its anger with the political elites by shouting “All must leave!” Finally, the federal government also intervened at the level of provincial leadership, with De la Rúa installing an interim governor (Sánchez 2000).

THE MULTI-LEVEL GAME FOR MOVEMENT EXPANSION: HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Alliance government (December 1999–December 2001) was defined by a very contentious context – that included several *puebladas* and a

growing *piquetero* movement – and two key divisions: first, an intra-government horizontal division between the UCR and FREPASO coalition members; and, second, a trans-government vertical division between the national, provincial, and local governments in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires.

The electoral success of the UCR-FREPASO Alliance coalition headed by De la Rúa over the PJ candidate Eduardo Duhalde was not total. While nationally Duhalde was defeated, in the crucial province of Buenos Aires the PJ beat the Alliance. This situation created a scenario that introduced a multi-level division between the national and provincial governments in addition to the traditional division between the government and the opposition. Furthermore, as the Alliance was a multi-party coalition, the government was divided between two clusters of ministries that each responded to either the UCR or FREPASO leadership.

These two key divisions provided the main *piquetero* SMOs with allies both inside the national government (FREPASO) and outside it (mainly the PJ mayors of La Matanza and Florencio Varela in suburban Buenos Aires). The mutations in the vertical and horizontal political opportunities from the struggle for recognition to the struggle for legitimation are schematically compared in **Table 4.1**.

The Horizontal Political Opportunities: The Uneven Formation of a National Coalition

The Alliance government was constituted by two very different parties. On the one hand was the UCR, a century-old catchall party that included several governorships and thousands of local governments and was sustained through highly developed internal discipline. On the other hand was the FREPASO coalition of small center-left parties, less than a decade old and with no executive posts. FREPASO was mainly sustained by the Broad Front (FG), a party with a low degree of internal institutionalization, built upon the personalized leadership of the Alliance vice president, Carlos “Chacho” Álvarez, and a few other individuals (Abal Medina 2009). The FG and FREPASO were allied with the CTA, but as they had no territorial networks, their electoral success was dependent on the mass-media presence of their leaders. This huge disparity between the UCR and FG was even evident when the percentage of the electorate that was a member of these parties was taken into account. While the PJ had a national membership of 14 percent of the electorate and the UCR 10

TABLE 4.1 *Schematic Comparison of the Shifts in Political Opportunities in Greater Buenos Aires, 1996–2001*

Political Opportunities	Struggle for Recognition (1996–99)	Struggle for Legitimation (1999–2001)	Moment of Legitimation (December 23–30, 2001)
Horizontal (functional)	Dominance of the Ministry of Labor until the emergence of the dispute over responsibility for the <i>piquetero</i> policy domain with the Secretariat for Social Development.	Division and dispute for influence over the <i>piquetero</i> policy domain among FREPASO and UCR/allies coalition members. Upgrading of the Secretariat for Social Development to ministerial status.	No policy definition, just distribution of subsidies. First ad hoc participation of a <i>piquetero</i> SMO (CCC) in the <i>piquetero</i> policy domain.
Vertical (multi-level)	Territorial agreement of non-intervention between the presidency (<i>menemista</i> PJ) and the governorship (<i>duhaldista</i> PJ). The governor has nearly hegemonic control over peri-urban politics.	End of the territorial agreement and development of a multi-level dispute between the presidency (UCR-Alliance), the governorship (<i>duhaldista</i> PJ) and peri-urban mayors (non- <i>duhaldista</i> PJ).	Total support of the national government by the governorship of Buenos Aires (<i>duhaldista</i> PJ), though not of the rest of the governors.

Note: Political opportunities are dynamic by definition (cf. Chapter 1, Table 1.4). This schematic presentation is intended to capture the most representative synthetic shifts in political opportunities from one stage to the other in the struggle for reincorporation.

percent, the FG only exceeded 1.5 percent in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Mendoza (Abal Medina 2009: 362, table 3 and n. 6).

FREPASO saw the Buenos Aires provincial election as its golden opportunity to build a paired relationship with the UCR. However, Graciela Fernández Meijide's defeat by Duhalde's protégé Federico Ruckauf (PJ) for the post of governor of Buenos Aires left FREPASO with no governorships. The unequal power relationship between FREPASO and UCR became more evident as the UCR went on to win or retain seven provinces.² With FREPASO's poor showing in the crucial elections for the governorship of Buenos Aires, the executive cabinet was almost completely made up of UCR members. Of the ten ministries, only the Ministry of Labor and the newly created Ministry of Social Development were given to FREPASO members as well as only eight secretariats (out of a total of 42) and four sub-secretariats (out of a total of 58) (Ollier 2001: 159).

For the *piquetero* movement, FREPASO represented the only actor allied to any CTA and FTV claims. It was strategically in charge of the Ministry of Labor and also controlled the Secretariat of Employment, which was responsible for unemployment subsidies. FREPASO was also in charge of the Ministry of Social Development, which was created to expand and develop social policies. FREPASO's entry into these ministries, crucial for the *piqueteros'* claims, and its weakness vis-à-vis the UCR gave the movement – and particularly the FTV, the CCC and the UTD of Mosconi – a very limited ally.

In the case of the FTV, its national leader, Luis D'Elía, was elected as a city councilor for La Matanza under the FG umbrella. Despite this, when asked about his priorities, D'Elía cited his own organization – the FTV – and not the Alliance with which he was allied. As a part of the sedimentation of union legacies onto the *piquetero* movement, the FTV's prioritization of its own SMO over the FG/Alliance reproduces the traditional centrality given to social organizations over party structures within the Peronist movement.³

² In the 1999 elections the UCR won the following governorships (under a nominal alliance with FREPASO in all cases except the first): Catamarca, San Juan, Río Negro, Chaco, Chubut, Entre Ríos, and Mendoza. In 2000 FREPASO achieved its only electoral success in the city of Buenos Aires (Ollier 2001: 128–29).

³ Historically, this has happened before with the CGT's relationship vis-à-vis the PJ – something that was particularly evident during the conflict between CGT leader Augusto Vandor and Juan Domingo Perón in the 1960s (Collier and Collier 1991: 493–96; McGuire 1997). As shown by Levitsky (2003b), during the Peronist Renovation

In the case of the CCC, the relationship with the FG was a result of the alliance between the FTV and the CCC since 1998. The MTA-CTA-CCC collaboration that allowed for the organization of the two Federal Marches during the Menem government ended over the different electoral positions of these organizations. However, the FTV and the unemployed workers' sector of the CCC maintained an alliance in La Matanza based on a shared grievance, though with different strategies in mind. This alliance would produce several coordinated contentious events and exploit informal and non-disruptive links with the government. For instance, in 1999, immediately after De la Rúa had won the elections, a secret meeting to define the cabinet was organized. As the FG was going to receive very few posts and because the FTV could not directly promote a protest against a newly elected government in which it was involved, a FTV member told a CCC leader where this meeting was to take place so the CCC could protest there and encourage the formation of a cabinet that was more "socially minded." This protest did not actually alter power relationships within the cabinet, but it is an example of the type of links the CCC produced as an outsider with the Alliance parties during this period.

In the case of the UTD of Mosconi, the relationship emerged in November 2000, but a political approach to this SMO was only adopted at the very end of the government's tenure in 2001 when Juan Pablo Cafiero became Minister of Social Development. He legitimized the UTD of Mosconi and facilitated some meetings for them with the few remaining FREPASO members in government.

The Vertical Political Opportunities: The End of the Territorial Agreement

Duhalde's defeat at the national level but success with Ruckauf at the provincial level put an end to the territorial agreement that had sustained most social policy through the Menem years. The end of this agreement also had several important effects on the reconfiguration of the political arena that allowed for the *piqueteros'* legitimation. The new scenario produced a vertical division between the national Alliance government and the PJ governorship of Buenos Aires. The vertical political opportunities, in addition to the horizontal ones, favored the movement's capacity

reforms and the Menem governments, this same strategy was sustained by the CGT as part of its strategy for survival.

to strategically manipulate these elite divisions through short- and medium-term alliances.

In addition, Duhalde's partial defeat did not allow him to take up the PJ presidency and replace Menem as party chair, and this led to the division of the PJ into two contested camps disputing control over the party. The PJ's lack of national cohesiveness produced an increased territorialization of politics where "[p]rovincial bosses are not linked together horizontally or vertically integrated into a central hierarchy, but rather tend to remain entrenched in their own fiefdoms" (Levitsky 2001: 49). Thus, the PJ governors were subsequently divided in their negotiations with the national government for resources in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Santa Fe as well as in the smaller provinces that had worked in coalition (Novaro 2009: 571–72). Additionally, in Buenos Aires a series of non-*duhaldista* PJ mayors began to challenge Duhalde's iron grip over the province.

Finally, the UCR's weaker territorial penetration compared with the PJ pushed the De la Rúa government to actively dispute the PJ networks in peri-urban Buenos Aires. This was done by bypassing the PJ mayors in the implementation of social policies in the province. The Work Program III, launched near the end of Menem's tenure, constituted the main unemployment policy under De la Rúa's mandate. Though this program, designed and financed by the World Bank, had already been implemented in its first and second versions in cooperation with governorships and municipalities, this third version included NGOs as possible beneficiaries (World Bank 2000). This modification to the Work Program was not implemented during Menem's tenure but rather under De la Rúa. This policy was first implemented in the allied municipality of Rosario (Santa Fe), with relative success, and then was expanded to Greater Buenos Aires. In the first months of De la Rúa's government, *piquetero* SMOs that had created or recycled already registered NGOs began requesting subsidies from the Ministry of Labor without municipal mediation, while PJ-governed municipalities received a lower percentage of these resources (Gómez 2006).

The decision to enforce the application of the NGO requirement for the Work Program III, however, produced some unintended consequences. For the *piquetero* movement, those SMOs that did not depend on unions or party alliances, such as the MTR, could survive and even grow (Svampa and Pereyra 2003: 96), while the FTV and the CCC could become national actors and increase their disruptive capacity. For the state, the Buenos Aires municipalities with PJ mayors were affected by the lack of resources and the increased deterioration of social conditions, which promoted increased *piquetero* protests. Therefore, the logic that dominated the

distribution of unemployment subsidies under Menem was inverted: through the year 2000 local governments were granted fewer subsidies even though the number of pickets grew (Gómez 2006: 99, graph 1).⁴

Taken together, these vertical disputes turned municipalities into crucial areas of conflict. In the few cases where mayors were allied with the *piqueteros*, conflicts included direct confrontation with the national and provincial governments. In theoretical terms, the Work Program III set into motion a “feedback effect” where “once a set of institutions is in place, actors adapt their strategies in ways that reflect but also reinforce the ‘logic’ of the system” (Thelen 1999: 392).⁵ In other words, the unintended consequence of De la Rúa’s decision was that, rather than reducing levels of *piquetero* contention and PJ power, it did exactly the opposite. De la Rúa’s decision put the *piqueteros* in the situation where they would need to become allied with mayors against the national government to then share the spoils of their gains. As contentious dynamics developed, a pattern of exchange was set into motion that was based on the threat of disruption on the part of *piqueteros*/mayors and the provision of resources to secure informal agreements of governability that the national government was later powerless to stop from reproducing.

In brief, within a context of increased social unrest and movement growth, the combined horizontal and vertical political opportunities defined the struggle for reincorporation as a relational multi-level process. As I will show in the rest of this chapter, this process moved from the appearance of the “*piquetero* social question” to the ultimate recognition of the *piquetero* movement and its legitimation.

THE EMERGENCE OF A MULTI-LEVEL GAME (DECEMBER 1999–NOVEMBER 2000)

The multi-level game materialized as a consequence of a combination of contentious events and disputes among the UCR and FREPASO members

⁴ Another difference from the Menem government, but in the opposite sense, was that while Menem had given increased subsidies to provinces allied with his government, De la Rúa did not do this. According to Lodola (2005), Weitz-Shapiro (2006), and Giraudy (2007), this differing logic of provincial distribution of unemployment subsidies can be inferred to be a result of the lack of a majority in the Senate and the need to secure support to pass austerity laws to deal with the recession combined with the huge number of protests across the country.

⁵ It is important to note that the concept of “feedback effect” does not imply a deterministic analysis. The Work Program III pushed forward a logic of interaction but did not determine this logic, nor is it the only – and, even less so, the main – relevant element in the pattern of interaction.

of the government. The main division was generated by a lack of agreement on how to respond to the growing number of *puebladas* and the claims for reincorporation by the *piqueteros*.

The Corrientes, Mosconi, and Tartagal *puebladas* of 1999 were not the last. A third *pueblada* was organized by the UTD of Mosconi, in cooperation with the whole community, which lasted more than ten days in May 2000, ending in a strong crackdown by the authorities (*Clarín* 05/12-13/2000).⁶ Parallel with this conflict, on May 5 the Dissident CGT (ex-MTA)⁷ called for the first national strike against De la Rúa to resist the approval of a new labor law that would bring in more flexible working conditions. Despite social unrest and union resistance, on May 29 the government decided on a 13 percent decrease in pensions and the salaries of public sector employees. On June 9 the unions responded with another general strike, but this time the Dissident CGT was also joined by the Alliance-allied sector of the CTA. A 300-kilometer march from Rosario to Buenos Aires, which took place between July 16 and August 10, was organized by the CTA in cooperation with the Dissident CGT and many other organizations to demand a universal unemployment subsidy and a monthly allowance for any poor family with dependents under the age of eighteen. The march culminated in the presentation to the president of a petition containing 450,000 signatures. De la Rúa claimed that he supported the idea but that it simply was not feasible (*El Cronista Comercial* 08/10/2000). Although it did not produce any governmental policy change, this march had the same effect as the Federal Marches against Menem in that it led to increased coordination and cooperation between various groups. This march would later evolve into the National Front against Poverty (FRENAPPO), a popular front strategy campaigning for a universal citizenship right to an income.

⁶ This repressive strategy was followed by the continued judicialization of protest, which was particularly effective for those who applied the witness strategy. In addition to Castells of the MIJP, who was already in jail in Buenos Aires, Emilio Ali was added to this list in June 2000. A Mar del Plata CTA activist, he organized the claim for food at a Tía Supermarket and was, like Castells, convicted of extortion. Ali and Castells would remain in jail until 2002 despite the efforts of the *piqueteros*, the CTA, the Dissident CGT (ex-MTA), and human rights organizations (cf. Paid-for Announcement “Freedom for Emilio Ali and Raúl Castells Who Struggle against Hunger,” *Página/12* 11/27/2000).

⁷ After 1996 the MTA increased its power within the CGT, but as it could not achieve an internal agreement to expel the *menemista* Secretary-General Rodolfo Daer, it continued to work independently, and in 2000 was renamed the Dissident CGT while struggling for control of the Official CGT (Godio 2000: 1212–13).

The Same Protest in Five Provinces

REPORT. Correspondents

The roadblocks due to social protests in the interior are as follows:

Neuquén. A group of unemployed people has been claiming for subsidies since Monday and has blocked national route 22 in Plottier, 20 kilometers from the capital of Neuquén. The demonstrators – among whom are women who are heads of families – receive 150 pesos per month through the municipal employment plan and are demanding an increase of 50 pesos in subsidies, as well as food.

Salta. Around 300 policemen departed yesterday afternoon for Tartagal, where 200 unemployed people from the national communal vegetable garden program and Work Programs blocked route 34, stopping vehicles from crossing the Bolivian border. The protest started on Monday with more than 100 people picketing in Cuña Muerta. Yesterday, the number of people doubled as another picket was set up, this time over the Bailey bridge in Zanja Honda.

Jujuy. Using roadblocks and the occupation of the local ministerial offices on the border [with Bolivia], school teachers in the interior protested yesterday over a delay in their pay and expressed their dissatisfaction with governor Eduardo Fellner – who they accused of discriminating against them with the pay schedule. Teachers and professors in La Quiaca occupied the Region I branch of the Ministry of Education, threatening to block the traffic on route 9 and the international bridge, while their colleagues from Libertador General San Martín blocked national route 34. The protests were triggered when it was discovered that – besides the delay in the teachers' September pay – teachers in the provincial capital had already been paid.

Catamarca. Around 80 unemployed people in western Catamarca – mainly from Belén – blocked national route 40 in protest at the delay in the payment of Work Programs.

In Chaco, 500 unemployed people cut national route 11 in the morning at the entrance to Resistencia demanding the reinstatement of 170 Work Programs and the distribution of 500 more. Additionally, they requested a 20-kilogram bag of food for each family. The protest was cancelled in the afternoon due to a storm.

FIGURE 4.1 *Clarín* Newspaper Article: “The Same Protest in Five Provinces” (11/02/2000)

The year 2000 was marked by the systematic use of pickets, by far the most commonly used form of protest (Schuster et al. 2006: 49, table 15). Due to the enormous quantity of pickets (Figure 3.1), newspapers adopted a new way of presenting them in the form of a list of routine disruptive events across the country, as illustrated in a *Clarín* article (Figure 4.1).

The De Facto End of the Alliance Coalition

To the already difficult relationship between the UCR and FREPASO was added in 2000 a corruption scandal that severely affected the UCR ministries and legislators involved in approving a controversial new labor law. Once more, the response of the Alliance members to the situation was divided, making of the horizontal divisions an insurmountable problem. While FREPASO leader and vice president Álvarez pushed for an investigation, president De la Rúa was against this. At the same time, increased social unrest and the inability and unwillingness to divert from the neoliberal path also affected CTA-sector relationships within the Alliance. This unsustainable situation forced De la Rúa into a major cabinet reshuffle on September 29, without consulting Álvarez. This further weakened FREPASO's already marginal position in the government and resulted in Álvarez's resignation one week later. As a result, a major crisis erupted within the Alliance, and almost all the FREPASO members in government ended up resigning, signaling the de facto end of the coalition. The ones who remained in office were in the areas that were most relevant to the *piqueteros*' claims: the Secretariat of Employment and the Ministry of Social Development.

The vice president's stance touched off FREPASO's quick dissolution and increased the autonomy of the party members within government (Abal Medina 2009). De la Rúa would later continue to pursue a governmental path that would even divide his own party. According to De Luca (2008: 208–9), De la Rúa's decisions are "explained by a combination of circumstances: the fractious and conflictive rather than homogeneous coalition he led, his lack of leadership skills, and the severe economic and political crisis over which he presided that eroded his initial support." For the *piquetero* movement, and part of the PJ, this represented a moment of particular governmental weakness that rendered self-evident the need to push for further change.

The Multi-level Interaction in Buenos Aires: The Locus of National *Piquetero* Contention

While the horizontal divisions inside the Alliance government were diluting the government's internal cohesion, a policy decision of De la Rúa increased the vertical divisions with subnational governments. The national government's decision to bypass PJ mayors for the distribution of Work Programs and promote NGOs in order to demobilize the *piquetero* movement had the unintended consequence of creating alliances between PJ mayors and *piquetero* leaders in some districts. In addition, some governors, such as Duhalde's protégé Ruckauf, reduced the provision of provincial subsidies to a minimum in the hope of pushing the conflict in the direction of the national government and relieving pressure on the collapsed provincial economy. This strategy also came with the expectation of even further deterioration of the weak Alliance government. The goal was to pave the way for Duhalde at the next presidential election. However, some mayors – such as those of La Matanza, Florencio Varela, Almirante Brown and Avellaneda – did not share this goal, and thus did not support efforts to coordinate the distribution of provincial subsidies.

Some mayors, such as Alberto Balestrini (La Matanza, PJ) and Julio Pereyra (Florencio Varela, PJ), supported *piquetero* protests, with varying degrees of success. While for both mayors the goal was to increase the resources transferred to their districts, for Balestrini it was also a way of disputing Duhalde's hegemony in the province. At the same time, Pereyra represented the most successful emulation of Balestrini in the intra-PJ dispute for power among mayors.

The *piqueteros'* quest for subsidies only partially responded to the urgent need for some source of subsistence for their constituency, the unemployed urban poor. For the FTV, the claim for subsidies was part of a strategy for building a multi-class popular front in the hope of pushing the government to abandon its neoliberal policies. For the CCC, the claim was part of a strategy for the insurrectional collapse of the government that would lead toward a whole new system. While for the MTR, the subsidies were tools for feeding their members as well as representing the diffusion of insurrectional *focos* in a beehive tactic toward revolution. These strategies coexisted until increased levels of movement coordination in 2001 led to a series of confrontations over how to exit from De la Rúa's government and avoid socioeconomic collapse. To achieve their goals, the *piqueteros* exploited the political opportunities presented by the

horizontal divisions within the coalition between UCR and FREPASO officials and the vertical conflicts between state levels that were produced by the situation.

The centralization of the *piquetero* dynamic at the political core of the country and the combination of the strategies of *piqueteros*, mayors, and governors resulted in a multi-level, non-staggered process of interaction based on the disruptive effect of pickets, embedded within the logic of electoral accumulation. This process was mostly focused on the districts of La Matanza and Florencio Varela, each representing opposite paths due to movement and governmental differences.

LOCAL CORPORATIST INCORPORATION AND THE
ROLE OF POLITICAL OPERATORS: LA MATANZA
AND FLORENCIO VARELA

The experiences of the districts of La Matanza and Florencio Varela present two crucial relational features that would later become a model for the reincorporation of the *piquetero* movement at the national level. The first aspect was the local corporatist incorporation through multi-sectoral councils, developed with more success in La Matanza than Florencio Varela.⁸ These councils were emulated by the national government after the *Matanzazo* picket, reproducing them as national policy in other municipalities (*Página/12* 11/08/2000), although this would never be applied at the provincial level.

The second aspect is that there were always public officials placed in charge of informal negotiations and agreements with the *piqueteros*, even though this did not fall within their formal functions. This increased personalization of the state's links with the *piquetero* movement would be carried out by individuals in charge of dissimilar areas. While in La Matanza it was the secretary of employment, in Florencio Varela it was the secretary of government. These areas of the *piquetero* policy domain that were not strictly defined would mean that the links were sustained by the figures of political operators, informal brokers in charge of the daily negotiations with the movement.

⁸ In 2001 the local council of La Matanza would administer 120,000 Work Programs obtained from the national government as a result of pickets during 2001, while nothing equivalent to this happened in Florencio Varela.

The Crucial Role of Informal State Brokers: Political Operators

There is a crucial brokerage role played by a semi-public actor in the establishing of the pattern of interaction between the *piqueteros* and state institutions: political operators. In more general terms, what I propose by including the role played by the political operator is to understand how processes and institutions work in a way that transcends merely contention-focused and institutionally focused perspectives to political dynamics. For this, what we need to see is the way “[i]nformal rules shape how democratic institutions work” (Helmke and Levitsky 2006: 2). The sedimentation of ad hoc practices that constitutes the second wave of incorporation is a relational dynamic sustained by informal trust ties between political operators and SMO leaders. The accumulation of precedents as to what can be obtained, how, and through which channel/person carves out a routine that increasingly formalizes this process. Before these practices were formalized at the national level after reincorporation (more about this in Chapter 6), the pattern was overwhelmingly sustained by the figure of the political operator. A *piquetero* leader defined “[t]he political operator [as] someone that works somewhere, and he works as a consultant in whatever secretariat, or maybe he could be the vice-minister of another ministry, but he actually works as the person that enacts a series of political informal actions everywhere (not only with us) and he is the one the state sends you to for an initial softening of positions” (interview 2007).

In other words, a political operator can be defined as a person who works for a party within the state structure whose duties are not regulated by any formalized code. The political operator works following orders in a discretionary fashion for various brokerage objectives and disruptive or anti-disruptive actions, specializing in a particular type of actor or conflict. The actions carried out could be patronage; clientelism; distribution of resources for disruption control or promotion; gate-keeping of mayors, governors, or ministries; and electoral mobilization or demobilization, among others. What political operators are not usually responsible for are repressive and espionage activities. Generally they are middle-range politicians with a very low or non-existent public profile but are well known by those routinely involved with these types of conflict. The political operators have no technical knowledge about the area in which they are formally inserted within the state structure.

Political operators are a result of the personalization of political relationships in Argentina due to the increased territorialization of politics

caused by the weakening of corporatist arrangements and the Peronist informal way of working. In addition, they are a symptom of a dispute over who is to be responsible for the “*piquetero* question,” a dispute that could only be resolved with time, since – as with any historical process – practices in institutions and state functions need time to become formalized and structured. While on the *piquetero* side this process encouraged the personalization of power within the movement, on the state side there were a large number of political operators, and who they were was constantly evolving. Hence, in order to grasp the informality intrinsic to the pattern of interaction, the role of political operators is a determinant element in the modeling of a personalized relationship that became increasingly routinized.

The FTV-CCC Territorial Agreement with the Mayor of La Matanza

Since democratization La Matanza has been governed by the PJ, but the district was never under the total control of any sector. Until 1991, mayor Federico Russo governed in an alliance with the CGT and a right-wing faction of the PJ. In 1991 Russo was defeated in the local internal party elections by Alberto Pierri, an outsider who built a relationship first with Duhalde and later Menem. Pierri’s success allowed him to impose Héctor Cozzi as mayor. Under Cozzi, the influence of the CGT in local government was severely diminished, and the clientelistic network of territorial brokers was expanded, financing 480 base units (Levitsky 2003b: 127–28). With the support of the diocese of San Justo, Cozzi’s government was also characterized by a highly conflictual relationship with SMOs and progressive priests. For instance, dialogue was blocked to such an extent that the CCC once entered the municipal building with Molotov cocktails to try to force the secretary of employment to distribute resources such as food outside of the mayor’s clientelistic networks.

Cozzi governed from 1991 to 1999, when a major corruption scandal around vote-rigging for his re-election led to his impeachment. This scandal was discovered by the president of the city council, an FG member from an *agrupación* that included D’Elía and had the support of the national deputy Alberto Balestrini. The 1999 local elections were won by Balestrini, a non-aligned PJ candidate. La Matanza district remained under a PJ government, but as of then, it was under neither Duhalde’s nor Menem’s leadership. Due to this, an electorally crucial district became a highly disputed space in the 1999–2001 period, which allowed the *piquetero* SMOs to exploit these factional divisions within the PJ through informal agreements.

Balestrini had two main limitations that affected his tenure. First, he emerged as a result of a political crisis and was governing the largest local district during its worst ever economic crisis. Second, he was not allied to Menem or Duhalde and hoped to weaken the influence of the latter in La Matanza and – if possible – in the province as a whole. The political conflict with the province was such that the provincial Secretariat of Labor stopped sending Plan for Buenos Aires Neighborhoods unemployment subsidies to La Matanza. To this was added the national government's policy of bypassing certain municipalities in the distribution of subsidies. These two limitations rendered ineffective the efforts made by Daniel Barrera, the local secretary of employment (1999–2003), to promote a collegial administration of the resources provided to the district under municipal responsibility.

As a result, it was crucial for mayor Balestrini to find some allies. Even though, since Cozzi, unions were no longer crucial allies for governing, Balestrini needed to build a territorial base to dismantle that of his rivals and secure minimum levels of governability. In addition to these problems, since the 1990s the CBC and left-wing parties had been going through the most disruptive process of their recent local history by organizing the *piquetero* movement. In short, it was Balestrini's quest to rebuild a territorial base and secure the support of the movement for his mandate that led the mayor to offer the FTV and the CCC a role in municipal government. Although the CCC did not accept the offer and the FTV already had its main leader serving as a city councilor for another party, both SMOs participated actively in the informal definition of local social policies.

In May 2000 the municipality declared a local economic and social emergency in La Matanza. To face this critical situation, the first trial of reincorporation through a corporatist format was modeled with the creation of the Council for Social Emergency (CES) – which came out of D'Elía's proposal as city councilor (*Página/12* 05/13/2000). The CES was inspired by two legacies: first, the councils that had organized at the local level during the 1989–91 hyperinflationary crisis to stop lootings and secure food provision, and second – with the goal of stimulating citizen participation at the municipal level – the example of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Even though the CES never came near the participatory budget model, it was, as it had been in 1989, a very effective tool for the distribution of resources and coordination of the main local actors through a corporatist logic. The CES was under the responsibility of the municipal Secretariat of Employment, and it involved the city

council, the bishop of San Justo, local Rotary Clubs, the local CGT, the FTV, the CCC, and other organizations in La Matanza. The structure was decentralized into fifteen grassroots offices for the administration of 7,000 Plan for Buenos Aires Neighborhoods that the provincial government agreed to deliver after much bargaining.

It was in 2000, as social unrest grew, that the FTV and CCC initiated the so-called “*Matanzazo*.” The *Matanzazo* was the inaugural contentious action of the FTV-CCC alliance, and it was truly national in its scope. The *Matanzazo*, the first massive picket carried out in Greater Buenos Aires, consisted of a roadblock set up by 3,000 members of the FTV and the CCC. It lasted from October 31 to November 4. Their claim was for the national government’s participation in an agreement between the provincial and local governments.⁹ It had the support of the CTA, the Dissident CGT, part of FREPASO, the mayor, and the governorship. In a clear supportive gesture, mayor Balestrini went to the picket and declared to the media: “These requests are entirely just. If anyone even thinks about sending in the police, both the vice-governor and I will act as human shields to prevent this from happening” (quoted by *Página/12* 11/01/2000). This declaration closed the door to any form of repression while for the first time aligning the mayor and part of the governorship against the presidency.¹⁰ This reshuffling of vertical political opportunities was particularly unfortunate for the reluctant new national minister of labor, Patricia Bullrich (Alliance-allied party). Eventually, the CTA and the Dissident CGT threatened to call for a new national strike if the agreement with the *piqueteros* was not signed. Evidently there was no other way out for the national government than to finally provide the FTV and CCC with legitimacy as national political actors, something that was done by the rest of the political spectrum during the *Matanzazo* protest. However, although the national government did participate in the negotiations that led to this first agreement, in the end, the presidency did not sign it (Svampa and Pereyra 2003: 98; Calvo 2006: 122–23).

As one national leader of the FTV later recognized, the crucial difference with La Matanza’s mayor compared to others was that: “This guy

⁹ The *Matanzazo* was carried out to request the provision of 4,500 subsidies, an increased allowance of twenty tons of food per month, the improvement of local public health services, the rebuilding of five public schools, and the provision of US\$5 million to the municipal government for social spending, among many other demands (*Página/12* 11/01/2000).

¹⁰ The day after the mayor’s declaration of support, governor Ruckauf said he would not send in provincial police to repress the roadblock (*Página/12* 11/02/2000).

was crafty enough to make those running the conflict his allies instead of his enemies,” and the presence of such an ally was crucial because: “We expanded the pickets because the guy supported us” (interview 2007). In other words, Balestrini was able to convert the municipal government into the key articulator between social conflict and the provincial and national governments in this crucial electoral district. This allowed him to push for the resolution of the municipal crisis by the provincial and national governments. In exchange, for the FTV and the CCC this represented a turning point that allowed for the legitimization of these two SMOs.

The MTR’s Failed Emulation of the Territorial Agreement with the Mayor of Florencio Varela

Some other mayors followed Balestrini’s lead. The most relevant case was in Florencio Varela due to the importance of the *piquetero* movement in the district and the electoral relevance of this municipality. Unlike in La Matanza, though, the results of this experience were less than satisfactory.

In January 2000 the first government-led march against unemployment was organized by the mayor of Florencio Varela. The reason for this was the cancellation of 2,500 unemployment subsidies without prior notice. According to a territorialized logic of control of governability/disruption, this march was explained by the mayor as follows: “The social pressure was so strong, so tough, that I myself decided to lead the mobilization. I led it for two reasons. One, so that there was a political containment [of the mobilization] and there would be no damage [of property]. And another reason was because the claim was valid ... [and thus,] ... I expelled the protest from the municipality and took it to the federal capital” (Julio Pereyra, interview 2008). This march to Buenos Aires, organized in cooperation with Mariano West (PJ mayor of Moreno) but not with *piquetero* SMOs, led to a meeting with the minister of labor and then with vice president Álvarez.

The relationship between mayors and *piqueteros* was never coordinated across districts but rather was the result of individual decisions in each municipality. Balestrini in La Matanza never promoted or coordinated his decisions with Julio Pereyra (PJ) in Florencio Varela and only made specific requests to mayors West and Hugo Curto (Tres de Febrero, PJ) at the behest of the CCC to help reduce local persecution by these mayors’ clientelistic networks. At the same time, the relationship with Quilmes mayor Fernando Geronés (Alliance) was of competition for resources and spaces to mobilize and with Manuel Quindimil (PJ) in

Lanús oscillating between a paternalistic and a repressive relationship (Cerrutti and Grimson 2004). In most of the suburbs relations were highly conflictual, such as those with Merlo mayor Raúl Othacehé (PJ) and San Vicente mayor Antonio Arcuri (PJ), among many others.

Within this context Pereyra was an exception. Although originally part of the *dubaldista* group while interim mayor (1991–93), after his initial election in 1993 he developed a non-aligned position that led him to a quest for needs fulfillment similar to Balestrini's. On the one hand, in a very poor district with a strong legacy of land occupations, he needed to secure local governability by controlling disruption or directing it outside his district, as shown at the beginning of this section. On the other hand, Pereyra saw the example of the *piquetero*-mayor alliance that elevated Balestrini to national prominence as a very attractive strategy for promoting himself and not losing political space within the landscape of horizontal competition among PJ mayors in Buenos Aires.

As far as the *piquetero* movement was concerned, the situation was less favorable for the MTR than it was for the FTV and the CCC in La Matanza. In terms of the movement's evolution, the type of relationship enjoyed with the local government was crucial. Even though the MTR was quite strong in Florencio Varela and Quilmes, the latter district was less favorable to alliances than the former because its mayor was from the president's party and was totally aligned with his policies. It must also be noted that Quilmes is a highly disputed district, in close proximity to the core *dubaldista* territories, and in which the provincial secretary of labor Aníbal Fernández built his own political career as mayor. This situation also very much affected the evolution of the FTV of San Francisco Solano (Quilmes), maintaining it in a secondary role.

Emulating the actions of the CCC in La Matanza, in 1998 the MTR occupied the municipal building in an attempt to modify the closed distribution of resources, confined to the mayor's own network. This situation led to intervention on the part of a person who would become the political operator of the relationship at the local level with the *piquetero* SMOs – Carlos Kunkel, the municipal secretary of government (1991–2003) of Florencio Varela, who had been a Montoneros deputy in the 1970s.

In Florencio Varela a CES was also created, emulating the one in La Matanza and involving the same type of actors: the Catholic Church, the CGT, and *piqueteros*, among others. The CES also included the MTR, which was less predisposed to negotiation than the FTV and the CCC. The MTR developed an intransigent position of confrontation with the

municipality as a means of achieving an autonomous position vis-à-vis the state institutions. In addition to this, the MTR introduced global claims that were irrelevant to the local context, such as political declarations about not paying the national external debt – areas in which the CES and municipal government had no jurisdiction. The MTR's position regarding the municipal government was mostly sustained by one of its leaders in particular. In 2000, after the MTR saw itself excluded from subsidy distribution, other sectors began promoting a more conciliatory position.

Even though, like in La Matanza, the local government had a person in charge of the relationship with the *piqueteros*, the MTR was less predisposed to dialogue than the FTV and the CCC. This opened up opportunities for other groups that took more pragmatic approaches toward the municipal government. The main division was produced by a strategic cleavage of the Guevarist Movement (MG), which, under the leadership of Juan Cruz Daffunchio, organized a picket with the participation of the mayor in 2000. This picket represented a double emulation dynamic, with the mayor going in with the hope of performing a mediating role like Balestrini and the MTR of Florencio Varela emulating the FTV and CCC strategy of using the mayor's support to force the hand of the governorship or national government to distribute subsidies in an agreement for the sharing of the spoils.

The results were as expected, and the provincial secretary of employment and political operator for *piquetero* issues Héctor Metón went to the municipality to negotiate, helping the MTR receive unemployment subsidies in Florencio Varela, Quilmes, and Lanús. But, unlike what happened in La Matanza, where initial success led to increased coordination among *piquetero* SMOs, in Florencio Varela the MTR of Solano rejected this approach toward the municipality. The conflict between the sectors that made up the MTR was the result of disagreement over a repertoire of strategies that was not shared by all concerned. While the MTR sector of Florencio Varela was mostly in favor of a vanguardist moderate *foquismo* approach, the MTR of Solano was evolving toward an autonomist–introspective strategy that rejected any type of embedded relationship with the state. Finally, differences emerged within the MTR of Florencio Varela regarding the intensity of confrontation that ought to be used at the local and provincial levels, although all shared the idea that confrontation on a national scale was necessary. The end result was that the MTR did not obtain the same public exposure, resources and legitimation that were achieved by the FTV and CCC, and the mayor failed to generate an SMO ally to propel his political career to the national level as he had desired.

FROM MULTI-LEVEL DISPUTE TO CRISIS
(NOVEMBER 2000–SEPTEMBER 2001)

The sustained conflicts placed the strategy for resolving the “*piquetero* question” high on the agenda of governmental priorities. The Alliance government dispute revolved around the struggle to define the political or social character of the *piqueteros*’ policy domain and for control of this policy domain. These conflicts implied the continuation, within a new context, of the struggle for this policy domain that had taken place during the end of the Menem presidency. Throughout De la Rúa’s period in office, as under Menem, resolution of the *piqueteros*’ claims would continue to fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labor, with a secondary role for the Ministry of Social Development. Under De la Rúa, the latter ministry would become a more active contender in the drive to achieve a level of participation in the *piquetero* policy domain.

Contention increased also outside Greater Buenos Aires. In Mosconi and Tartagal a fourth *pueblada* was happening while in La Matanza the FTV and the CCC achieved legitimacy, and in Florencio Varela the MTR failed to emulate them. This *pueblada* ended on November 14, 2000, after fifteen days of pickets thanks to mediation on the part of the Catholic Church and strong repression on the part of the Gendarmerie (Svampa and Pereyra 2003: 130–31). As was the case in La Matanza, it was the first time national officials were sent to negotiate with the *piquetero* SMO in Mosconi (*Clarín* 10/07/2000 and 10/12-14/2000).¹¹ In order to calm social unrest the authorities had to enter into semi-public negotiations with the UTD of Mosconi leaders, José “Pepino” Fernández and Juan Carlos “Jipi” Fernández. Each and every agreement achieved in the private negotiations was presented to the SMO members demonstrating on the road, who deliberated over them in an assembly format to reach a final decision (*Clarín* 10/15/2000). Another result was increased coordination, although short-lived, between the UTD of Mosconi, the CCC, and the Workers Party of Salta, with the organization in December 2000 of the first Unemployed Workers’ Congress for northern Salta, although it failed

¹¹ Some of the main national political operators for *piquetero* conflicts were sent to Mosconi: Lautaro García Batallán (formally the secretary of institutional issues for the Ministry of the Interior), the secretary of employment Horacio Viqueira (FREPASO), and a few low-ranking government officials, such as César Mastucci (subsecretary of the interior), Walter Ceballos (secretary for the relationship with the provinces), and Eduardo Bustelo (secretary of social policy) (Svampa and Pereyra 2003: 131, n. 45).

due to disputes over leadership and was never organized again (Oviedo 2004: 171–74 and 222).

In addition to increased *piquetero* contention, the first year in government for the Alliance ended with another national strike on November 23 and 24. Coordinated by the CTA and Dissident CGT, it included, for the first time, the active participation of the FTV, the CCC, and the MIJP (*Clarín* 11/24/2000). In reaction, in December the government issued an unsuccessful call for a “social dialogue” toward building a multi-sectoral agreement (*Clarín* 04/12/2000).

The Alliance’s Strategic Division Regarding How to Approach the *Piqueteros* in La Matanza

Weakened by the *Matanzazo*, Fernández Meijide resigned as minister of social development and another FREPASO leader was nominated as her replacement. The arrival of Juan Pablo Cafiero to the ministry marked the beginning of a direct dispute with Bullrich, the minister of labor, regarding how to deal with the *piquetero* movement. Cafiero’s confrontation with Bullrich was not part of a coordinated FREPASO policy but rather his personal decision. This was possible because the near dissolution of FREPASO left the few FREPASO members in government with high levels of independence.¹²

The division between the minister of labor and the minister of social development was made public in *Clarín* (05/21/2001) during a seventeen-day picket coordinated by the FTV and CCC (May 7–23, 2001) in La Matanza. This publicized debate was the synthesis of two disparate positions that were dominating the government. One stance, represented by the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of the Interior, was in favor of a policy of political exhaustion of the movement by not responding to any claim and the simultaneous judicialization of the conflict by legally persecuting the *piquetero* SMOs, who were accused of the clientelistic use of subsidies and the employment of extortion for mobilization (*Clarín* 03/12/2001; Svampa and Pereyra 2003: 77). This position was countered by another stance, represented by the Ministry of Social Development as well as the secretary of the presidency, Leonardo Aiello, in favor of solving

¹² As a result of Bullrich’s position of pursuing the *piqueteros*, a couple of months later the FREPASO Secretary of Employment resigned from this key area related to the *piqueteros* policy domain (*Página/12* 08/20/2001). This left Cafiero as the last relevant figure from FREPASO in the government.

each situation through dialogue and recognizing social unrest as legitimate due to the critical economic situation of the mobilized people (Federico Storani interviewed by Germano 2005: 264). Acting somewhere in between, De la Rúa proved either unwilling or incapable of imposing a unified position on the cabinet. As one minister said: “De la Rúa left everything to flow ... flow, flow, that was his thesis, flow. Everybody float, float!” (interview 2008).¹³

At the same time, in the province of Buenos Aires the governor and vice governor were also divided as to how they should approach this second massive picket. While governor Ruckauf favored a passive attitude in the hope of destabilizing the Alliance government, vice-governor Felipe Solá favored active intervention in order to resolve it in a manner similar to what Cafiero had achieved with his approach (*Clarín* 05/20/2001).

In the end, with the continued support of mayor Balestrini, the provincial secretary of labor, the national minister of labor, and the secretary of the presidency went to La Matanza to negotiate directly with the *piqueteros*. Just as in Mosconi, the authorities were obliged to negotiate in a semi-public context. Each agreement reached in private negotiations would be taken to the picket for the demonstrators to deliberate over and come to a decision. This negotiation strategy was employed by several *piquetero* SMOs as part of the *basista* strategy that predominated in the movement. However, it disgusted the provincial Secretary of Labor Aníbal Fernández so much that he pulled out of the negotiations.

The *basista* decision-making strategy and the practice of rotating the *piquetero* interlocutor applied by some autonomist SMOs were recalled by *piqueteros* and government officials as permanent sources of conflict. The reason is that these practices alter the personalized relational logic that political operators require in order to sustain informal agreements through valid interlocutors that can offer the state the capacity to easily determine who they need to deal with to control disruption provoked by the *piqueteros*.

Finally, as a result of this second round of pickets, in 2001 a private meeting between Balestrini, Bullrich, D’Elía (FTV), and Juan Carlos Alderete (CCC) was organized to move forward with the delivery of the promised resources. At the same time, but uncoordinated with these events, in Florencio Varela a twelve-day protest was organized with partial mayoral support (Pereyra did not intervene personally like

¹³ The president’s passivity was also recognized by Federico Storani, UCR-Alliance minister of the interior (interviewed by Germano 2005: 264).

Balestrini, but the protest was allowed to proceed with no police crack-down). Unlike with the FTV and the CCC, this MTR protest failed in its goal to obtain increased subsidies and media attention (Gabriel interviewed by Germano 2005: 165).

Innovation in the Policing of Protest and the Legitimation of the UTD of Mosconi

In June 2001 a fifth *pueblada* was organized in Mosconi. This contentious action had important consequences for the movement and the government. On the *piquetero* side it meant the legitimation of the UTD of Mosconi as a political actor and the consolidation of autonomy from any party. On the government side it meant crucial changes in the policing of protest and the ratcheting up of the dispute among sectors of the Alliance over how to resolve the “*piquetero* question.”

The UTD of Mosconi – like the *piqueteros* in Buenos Aires – reflects resilience of the left in the face of repression during the 1970s. It was founded in 1996 by Juan Nieves (PCR) and José Barraza (Workers Party), later joined by José “Pepino” Fernández and some ex-YPF workers, along with other political groups (Benclowicz 2013). In 1999 a feud for the control of the SMO emerged among these groups. The dispute was finally won by Fernández, who proceeded to expel political parties from the UTD in 2000. Through this “filtering” of its membership, the UTD defined a communal non-partisan approach toward “recreating a scenario of working life that had been lost since the privatization of YPF through the transformation of unemployment subsidies into productive projects” (Svampa 2006: 153). These projects were developed for the first time by the UTD in cooperation with the national secretary for small and medium-sized businesses thanks to contacts made with technocrats of De la Rúa’s government.

Juan Carlos Romero (PJ Menem-allied governor of Salta from 1995 until 2007) had such firm control over his province that the national government could not easily intervene. This type of zealous territorial control over the province was equivalent to that exercised by Duhalde in Buenos Aires and is practiced by many other governors. Romero was committed to cracking down heavily on the *piqueteros* once the federal judge for Salta had declared the *pueblada* in Mosconi an act of “sedition.” Two demonstrators were killed and another 200 were seriously injured as a result of repressive actions carried out by the Gendarmerie. To try to curb this escalation of violence, several personalities traveled to the site of

contention, including Hebe de Bonafini of the Mothers, Roberto Martino of the MTR, and laborers from the worker-managed factory Zanón (Neuquén). From the national government, Minister Cafiero, without informing the president or governor, also traveled to Mosconi to negotiate a solution, and once there he declared: “There are more delinquents in the House of Government than in this square of humble workers.”

The fifth *pueblada* of Mosconi was characterized by a particular innovation in the way state repression is carried out. It was the first disruptive event in which the Gendarmerie intervened within the framework of the recently reformed Procedural Penal Code. In 2001, Law 24,434 revised articles 184 and 186 and added article 230bis to the Procedural Penal Code, increasing the responsibilities of the federal police, the Naval Prefecture, and the Gendarmerie. In practice, this law expanded the responsibilities of the Gendarmerie to include social conflicts. Showing the recursive logic of incorporation dynamics, the redefinition of repressive institutions during the *piqueteros*' struggle for legitimation reproduced part of the tactics applied by the elite against the struggles of anarchists, syndicalists, and socialists for the first legitimation of workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chapter 1; Isuani 1985; Suriano 1988, 2000).

These changes to the policing of protest were applied for the first time on June 20, 2001, in Mosconi by the federal judge for Salta, Abel Cornejo (*Página/12* 06/21/2001). Even though the Gendarmerie had been involved in *piquetero* conflicts in rural and enclave areas since the first *puebladas* in Cutral-Có and Plaza Huincul, in those cases this military police had intervened within a different legal framework. The Gendarmerie's role from redemocratization to the emergence of the *puebladas* and *piqueteros* was as a border and national highways guard. Thus, when the *piqueteros* blocked a national route, it was the Gendarmerie that was in charge of applying the right to free transit. However, after 2001, the Gendarmerie turned into an anti-riot force, mainly operating in peripheral, enclave, and rural areas. Condemned by human rights organizations as an abuse of state power (*Página/12* 06/21/2001; CELS 2003b), this innovation in the policing of protest rested on the increasing role played by judges in the resolution of socio-political conflicts strengthening the judicialization of contentious politics (Artese 2009).

Another result of this *pueblada* was that the mayor of Mosconi was dismissed. As part of the second incorporation process, and after repression was again proved to be ineffective, the national government proposed that the UTD present one of its leaders as a mayoral candidate for the

municipality of Mosconi (*Clarín* 07/01/2001). This would imply a possible “political solution” to the conflict, as claimed by Cafiero after visiting the town. Although this offer was rejected by part of the UTD, the offer saw the SMO as a whole gain legitimacy as a political actor. For the national government, this conflict revealed De la Rúa’s total lack of authority and the insurmountable divisions within the national government.

MOVEMENT GROWTH, INCREASED
COORDINATION, AND DIVISIONS

The period of multi-level disputes opened by the multiplication of *puebladas* and the *piqueteros*’ increased disruption would eventually lead to the legitimation of the whole movement. But first, the movement went through a process of growth and diversification (synthesized in Table 4.2).

New SMOs were created and unprecedented levels of coordination within the movement were achieved since the pioneering experience of the CTA in Neuquén in 1996 and the brief period of cooperation in Salta in 2000. In 2001 the first and second National Piquetero Assemblies involved almost all the SMOs and led to the coordination of the main *piquetero* campaign against the national government. Each Assembly would be characterized by strategic confrontations among the social movement sectors. After this experience, several other coordinating bodies were created (the main ones are presented in Table 4.3). Finally, the internal disputes of some of the SMOs and long-lasting strategic disputes produced splits within the MTR, FTV, and CCC, the movement’s older SMOs (Table 4.2).

TABLE 4.2 *Diversification of the Piquetero Movement: Main SMO Divisions, 1996–2001*

From 1996–99 ● →	To 1999–2001
FTV	MTL, CUBa, Neighborhoods Standing Up, FTV
CCC	MIJD, CCC
MTDs-MTR	CTD “Aníbal Verón” (MTDs and CTD “Trabajo y Dignidad”), MTR
UTD of Mosconi	UTD of Mosconi
None	PO, MST “Teresa Vive,” and other smaller SMOs

TABLE 4.3 *Most Stable or Relevant Coordinating Bodies of the Piquetero Movement, 1996–2009*

Period	Coordinating Body	Main Participants
1994–97	Federal Marches I and II	SEOM of Jujuy (pre-CCC), CTA, MTA
1996	Congress of the Unemployed of Neuquén (one meeting)	CTA and allied organizations
1996–97	Informal group linked by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Hebe de Bonafini sector)	MG (pre-MTR of Florencio Varela and Mar del Plata), ex-YPF workers of Salta (José “Pepino” Fernández), Héctor “Toty” Flores of La Matanza
1998–2005	FTV-CCC alliance	FTV of La Matanza, CCC of La Matanza
2000	Congress of the Unemployed of northern Salta (one meeting)	UTD of Mosconi, CTD of Tartagal, PO, CCC
2001	South Coordinator	MTR, CTD of La Plata, CTD of Almirante Brown, CTD of Lanús, MTD of Solano
2001	I and II National Piquetero Assemblies	FTV, CCC, UTD of Mosconi, Neighborhoods Standing Up, South Coordinator
2001–3	Coordinator of Unemployed Workers’ (CTD) “Aníbal Verón”	MTD of Solano, MTD of Lanús, MTD of Almirante Brown, MTD of Guernica, MTD of Allen (Río Negro), CTD “Trabajo y Dignidad”
2002–7	National Piquetero Block	PO, MST “Teresa Vive,” Neighborhoods Standing Up, MTL, CUBa, FOL
2002–5	National Assembly of Employed and Unemployed Workers	MTR, PO, MTL, MST “Teresa Vive,” CUBa
2004–5	Popular Organizations Front	FTV, Neighborhoods Standing Up, “Evita” Movement, National and Popular Transversal Front
2004–8	Piquetero Unity	MST, MIJD, FOL, PO, CCC, MTD “Aníbal Verón,” CTD “Aníbal Verón,” CUBa
2008–	Popular Movements Union	FTV, Octobers, MTD “Aníbal Verón,” “October 8” Movement, “July 26” Movement, “July 9” Popular Patriotic Movement, Second Centenary

Note: Figures A and B (Appendix) show the coordinating bodies in the context of the movement’s general development.

Sources: Several interviews (2007–13); Ferrer (2005); Oviedo (2000, 2004); Svampa and Pereyra (2003); Poli (2007).

The Origins of the Workers' Pole (1999–2001) and the Trotskyist Party-Family Emulation

Even though the Workers' Pole emerged in late 1999, we need to go back to the mid-1990s to trace the origins of the main Trotskyist *piquetero* SMO. The Trotskyist Workers Party participated in the 1995 soup kitchen protest of unemployed people organized by the PCR in La Matanza. However, due to the ideological rigidity of the Argentine Trotskyist party-family, the Workers Party got involved in the *piquetero* movement much later than did the Maoist PCR or the FTV (inspired by Liberation Theology). Trotskyist participation was highly debated. On the one hand, the Workers Party in 1999 and the Socialist Workers' Movement party in 2001 redefined their understanding of the unemployed and stopped considering them as part of the lumpenproletariat. On the other hand, the PTS and the MAS totally opposed the organization of the *piquetero* SMOs (Natalucci 2008b: 208).¹⁴ This process toward expanding their repertoire of strategies allowed the Workers Party to be the first Trotskyist group to create a *piquetero* SMO.

In 1999 the Workers Party created the Workers' Pole (PO), a *piquetero* SMO with the aim of mobilizing unemployed people, mainly in Greater Buenos Aires and Salta. There is a subsidiary relationship between the Workers Party and the PO, with the latter the territorial branch of the party, as explained by its national coordinator: "the Workers' Pole is the territorial and neighborhood organization through which the Workers Party program is expressed" (interview 2007). In other words, the party guides the movement through its programmatic definitions, which are then translated to the unemployed grassroots in a "pedagogical link" for the building of political consciousness (Delamata 2004: 78–79; Natalucci 2008b: 213). The first public action of the PO was its participation in the first National Piquetero Assembly (July 2001), after which the organization grew exponentially.

The PO combines three predominant strategies in its repertoire: trade unionism, Morenist entryism, and presentialism (Chapter 2). Regarding the trade unionist strategy, on several occasions the PO presented to parliament, the Supreme Court, and the national Ministry of Labor claims for the establishment of a law mandating for corporatist-fashioned negotiations for the unemployed.

¹⁴ The PTS started organizing unemployed people in 2003 and in 2004 had some sporadic contact with the MIJD.

Concerning Morenist entryism, the PO has increased its participation in Salta through the UTD of Mosconi and the Coordinator of Unemployed Workers' (CTD) of Tartagal. While in Mosconi Fernández's non-partisan group expelled them, as it did with the PCR, in Tartagal the PO achieved control of the CTD of Tartagal (Oviedo 2004: 134). This strategy led to the Workers Party's first important electoral success in its history in Salta's legislative and local elections, managing to get a few provincial deputies and city councilors elected since 2001 (Oviedo 2004: 217). This strategy has also been used in the promotion and control of coordinating bodies, such as the National Piquetero Block (Table 4.3).

While the presentalist strategy is not exclusive to the PO, its members have exploited it heavily in their desire to present themselves as intransigent revolutionaries that never surrender their principles to the government. Though such a discourse did not characterize their actual approach toward state institutions, it arose from the novelty of a historically small, middle-class, and university-based party controlling a massive territorial grassroots organization of poor people.

The PO was emulated by two Trotskyist parties, the Socialist Workers' Movement and the MAS. Respectively, these parties created in 2002 the Jobless Movement "Teresa Is Alive" (MST "Teresa Vive") and the Combative Workers' Front (2002–3).¹⁵ Both are very small SMOs with no relevant national presence and with some limited mobilization capacity restricted to the city of Buenos Aires.

In the case of the MST "Teresa Vive" the relationship between party and SMO was reproduced by emulating the PO. This did not mean that the whole party was linked to the MST "Teresa Vive": indeed, the party was composed of two main factions before it split in 2006. Only the majoritarian faction under the leadership of legislator Vilma Ibarra was the one related to Gustavo Giménez, the coordinator for the MST "Teresa Vive."¹⁶ Finally, as in the PO, the Morenist entryism and presentalist strategies are predominant in the MST "Teresa Vive." This is a permanent source of rupture and dispute with the PO and FOL as a result of the parties competing in elections for the same small Trotskyist constituency.

¹⁵ As of 2006, the MAS would organize the very small Front for Organizations Engaged in Struggle (FOL).

¹⁶ The other faction was led by Rubén Sobrero, a middle-range union leader of La Fraternidad (the train workers' union, CGT) who in 2006 became the main figure of the new Trotskyist party Socialist Left.

The Origins of the Coordinator of Unemployed Workers' "Work and Dignity" (1994–2000)

The creation in 2000 of one of the main *piquetero* SMOs in the southern part of Greater Buenos Aires, the Coordinator of Unemployed Workers' "Work and Dignity" (CTD "Trabajo y Dignidad"), arose out of three processes that can be traced back to the early 1990s. The first was the student movement in La Plata's cooperation with former PRT-ERP, Montoneros, and the Intransigent Party groups reorganized in the post-democratization context. The second was the decision by leftist Peronists to embrace a "collectivist alternative" to the clientelistic transformation of the PJ machine party (Levitsky 2003b: 213–15). The third was the Dissident CGT's (ex-MTA) failed attempt at territorialization to emulate the CTA (Chapter 3).

In 1994 the student organization Popular Unity Movement (MPU) "Quebracho" engaged in its first public political action at the 100th demonstration of pensioners and retirees. Following this protest, the MPU "Quebracho" went on to develop a relationship with the MTA and the pensioners' group. In 1996, the MPU joined a collection of Peronist, Intransigent Party, and PRT-ERP groups to form the national-populist anti-imperialist group Patriotic Revolutionary Movement (MPR) "Quebracho."

This process of reorganization of left-wing networks in the post-democratization context was related to the former PRT-ERP reducing its repertoire of strategies by eliminating armed struggle as an available strategy in the short and medium term.¹⁷ It also involved the reaction of left-wing Peronists to the PJ's metamorphosis into a patronage machine party. Some *agrupaciones* left the PJ and participated in the creation of the FG-FREPASO, others got involved in the CTA-FTV process, and a small number of them created the MPR "Quebracho." The participation of some Peronist *agrupaciones* from within and outside of the PJ and the reorganization of former guerrillas to suit a democratic context were very relevant for the resistance to disincorporation and the constitution of the *piquetero* movement.

In 1996 the MPR "Quebracho," in a short-lived effort, got involved in the territorial organization of unemployed workers in La Plata, and the

¹⁷ Since the 1980s the Popular Group "July 9" and the All for the Motherland Movement (MTP) were involved in the San Francisco Solano land occupations. The MTP (a division of the PRT-ERP) did not participate in the creation of the MPR "Quebracho" because it opted for the preservation of the PRT-ERP repertoire of strategies (Chapter 2).

same year in Alta Gracia (in the province of Córdoba) it participated in a picket. After these initiatives, in 1998 the MPR “Quebracho” created a *piquetero* SMO in Buenos Aires, located in La Matanza (based on a small land occupation), the La Plata suburbs, Monte Chingolo (Lanús), and the borders between Quilmes, Lanús, and Avellaneda (Torres 2006: 71–72).

In 2000 the MPR “Quebracho” requested the support of the MTA for the growth of the *piquetero* SMO. The MTA agreed to support the establishment of the CTD “Trabajo y Dignidad” emulating the CTA’s territorial strategy (Chapter 3). However, the MTA could not use the CTD “Trabajo y Dignidad” as its territorial SMO in the same fashion as the FTV was for the CTA. Nevertheless, from 1996 to 2001 a tactical agreement was preserved between the MPR “Quebracho”/CTD “Trabajo y Dignidad” and the MTA/Dissident CGT (Hugo Moyano interviewed by Germano 2005: 249; Rubio and Del Grossi 2005: 167–68). In addition to this, the relationship between the political organization MPR “Quebracho” and the *piquetero* SMO CTD “Trabajo y Dignidad” was different from the one adopted by the Trotskyist social movement sector. While the CTD and the MPR “Quebracho” were very much interrelated, they had a relationship of what could be described as “functional autonomy” – both organizations’ tactical decisions were in sync, though this was not determined by the MPR “Quebracho” (Delamata 2004: 73).

In 2001 the CTD “Trabajo y Dignidad” joined a coalition with the MTR of Florencio Varela and the MTDs in order to counterbalance the FTV-CCC alliance. The aim was to coordinate a protest in support of the UTD of Mosconi’s fifth *pueblada* and then to ensure a common strategy for the first Coordinator of Unemployed Workers (Burkart and Vázquez 2007: 7). This coalition, called South Coordinator, was short-lived but was an important first step toward the subsequent establishment of the Coordinator of Unemployed Workers’ (CTD) “Aníbal Verón” (Table 4.3).

The First National Piquetero Assembly: Disputes over the Extent and Goals of the *Piquetero* Struggle

The Alliance government was faced with a *piquetero* movement that achieved an unprecedented degree of coordination with the two National Piquetero Assemblies. In the church of El Sagrado Corazón in San Justo (La Matanza), around 2,000 *piqueteros* participated in the first National Piquetero Assembly (July 24, 2001), convened and organized by the FTV and the CCC (Pacheco 2004: 55).

The Assembly engaged in two main strategic debates. The first discussion was about the extent of the *piquetero* struggle: for the MTR the conflict was both national and provincial, while for the FTV and CCC it was only national. This first dispute located the territorialization of Argentine politics at the heart of the *piquetero* struggle.

The second debate was related to the coalition's goals. This discussion was expressed in a threefold fashion. First, the degree to which the coalition should extend beyond the *piquetero* movement was discussed. The MTDs, MTR, and PO wanted the coalition restricted to the *piqueteros*, some left-wing parties, and the CTA. For the FTV and the CCC, it should include the Dissident CGT and as many political actors as possible, reproducing what had been achieved during the Federal Marches under Menem. This issue came to the fore when Dissident CGT secretary general Hugo Moyano and some of the PJ legislators tried to participate and were booed by the PO and MTR members. This dispute placed under intense scrutiny the relationship of the movement to actors that were useful for the movement's immediate goals but did not share its ideology.

The second point of contention in relation to the coalition's goals was whether an alliance with other actors would mean having to moderate some of their methods, such as agreeing to carry out only partial roadblocks, no longer covering their faces, and abandoning the use of self-defense strategies (Burkart and Vázquez 2007: 8).

There was also a third issue that was not agreed upon. The CTA and FTV had been attempting to build a coalition to call for an unofficial national referendum to force the government to apply the right to a universal income. They hoped to consolidate this coalition, but the referendum proposal was not considered relevant by the other *piquetero* SMOs and was dismissed, thus failing to make it onto the *piquetero* agenda (Svampa and Pereyra 2003: 81).

The movement finally agreed on a protest plan that would escalate levels of disruption. There would be a partial national roadblock that would progress in stages: a first protest on July 31 for 24 hours, another one week later for 48 hours, and another for 72 hours in the last week. The protests went according to plan and even led government officials to publicly recognize that this was a controlled disruptive action carried out by an actor that is the "representative of a sector – the unemployed – that till now had no voice" (a public official quoted by *Página/12* 08/01/2001).

The only event that diverted from the plan was organized by the MTR. During the South Coordinator picket in Florencio Varela, the MTR entered the local branch of the state-owned provincial bank with the

goal of forcing a confrontation at the Buenos Aires level, albeit without the agreement of the FTV and the CCC – nor, indeed, the rest of the South Coordinator members. This vanguardist style of action taken by the MTR was rejected by the groups that, like the MTD of Solano, were looking for a grassroots assembly organization influenced by autonomist ideas (MTD de Solano and Colectivo Situaciones 2002: 63).

In addition to this, and as a clear sign of disagreement with the decision made by Martino (MTR), Alderete (CCC) urged “the comrades to return to the picket at [Florencio] Varela and leave those who want to occupy the bank isolated.” At the same time, D’Elía (FTV) discredited the MTR by saying: “I wouldn’t like to think that Martino was possibly acting in conjunction with the SIDE [State Intelligence Service] or some other government agency” (both phrases quoted by *Crónica* 08/01/2001).

This dispute within the *piquetero* movement represented not just an internal division but also the expression of informal agreements between elites and SMOs for territorialized governability. The issue was that the MTR was intentionally violating an informal agreement between the FTV and CCC and the Buenos Aires government to focus contention on the De la Rúa government only. This multi-level political game opened up vertical divisions at the state levels and allowed the FTV and the CCC to ally themselves with La Matanza’s mayor and garner the support of the vice governor against the national government.

The MTR continued insisting on the expansion of contention to the provincial level with no support from the rest of the movement. Five days later it coordinated the occupation of the provincial Secretariat of Labor to demand the reinstatement of 200 unemployment subsidies and the introduction of 180 new ones (Pacheco 2004: 58). The plan was to secretly wait inside the ministry’s building in order to put more immediate pressure on the authorities. The action was effective because there were no police waiting for them, and after the minister was caught by surprise, he was compelled to agree to the payment of the 380 subsidies. The MTR had apparently won. Shortly after Martino’s declaration affirming the minister’s goodwill, the police arrived and 55 MTR members were thrown into jail. The majority of the South Coordinator, on the street to support this action, left soon after the occupation to avoid conflict. Only the MTD of Solano and the human rights organization H.I.J.O.S. remained to support the MTR.¹⁸

¹⁸ The MTR also suffered due to the judicialization of social conflict, with Martino accused of extortion by Secretary Fernández after this protest (*La Nación* 08/07/2001).

The Origins of the Coordinator of Unemployed Workers' (CTD) "Aníbal Verón" (2001–2)

In 2001 all the South Coordinator SMOs joined the CTD "Aníbal Verón," with the exception of the MTR of Florencio Varela.¹⁹ The creation of the CTD "Aníbal Verón" launched a process of atomization and demobilization of the MTR. The marginalization of the MTR of Florencio Varela (the core of the MG) arose from conflicts that were internal to this social movement sector and dynamics that were external to it. Regarding the internal factors, the MTDs that built the MTR and later the South Coordinator did not have a stock of legacies in common that could produce, as in the case of the FTV and the CCC, a common repertoire of strategies rising above ideological differences. The adoption of a moderate *foquismo* vanguardist strategy by the MTR produced constant tensions within this social movement sector. Things finally boiled over after the MTR organized the two disruptive actions mentioned previously without discussing it with the rest of the *piquetero* movement.

In theoretical terms, the MTR had applied an "exclusivist leadership" strategy, one that is based upon a small group of committed activists who seek to lead by heroic example (Barker et al. 2001: 21). This was an important point of difference for the MPR "Quebracho," an SMO very similar to the MTR. The MPR "Quebracho" is a vanguardist and vertical organization, like the MG. However, the former developed a less exclusivist type of leadership than the latter, allowing it to participate in the CTD "Aníbal Verón" (Delamata 2004: 58–59).

In terms of the external dynamics, the territory within which the MTDs and CTDs had emerged and expanded was much less favorable than that of La Matanza. This was due to the fact that it was situated within the core of the *dubaldista* group of municipalities, which even included Quilmes – the provincial secretary of labor's original territorial power base. Thus, for the MTR and MTDs, the confrontation with the governor was as relevant as the national dispute.

The clash for territorial penetration between the *dubaldista* sector of the PJ and the MTR and MTDs was not equally relevant for the FTV-CCC alliance. This explains why the two strongest SMOs never supported

¹⁹ The SMOs were: CTDs "Trabajo y Dignidad" (La Plata and Lanús), MTD of Solano, MTD of Florencio Varela, MTD of Lanús, and the smaller SMOs: MTD of Almirante Brown, MTD of Quilmes, MTD of Esteban Echeverría, MTD of José C. Paz, MTD of Guernica, MTD of Lugano, and the only one not located in Buenos Aires: the MTD of Allen, Río Negro (Torres 2006: 73).

including the provincial level in the conflict. It was the internal disputes within the CTD “Aníbal Verón,” together with the lack of support from the FTV-CCC, that left the MTR isolated, making it much easier for the governorship to repress and atomize the MTR.

The provincial secretary of labor Aníbal Fernández played two roles in the isolation of the MTR. First, after the occupation of the secretary, the MTR came under heavy pressure and several members were put in jail, including its main leader, Martino. He was behind bars for more than twenty days until the liberation of the MTR members was negotiated in exchange for information about unemployment subsidies. Second, Héctor Metón, the political operator of the Ministry of Labor, acted disloyally as a broker by encouraging internal divisions in the South Coordinator. He did this through the personalized distribution of unemployment subsidies in uneven quantities to each MTD of the South Coordinator, a move designed to foster internal tensions and the loss of mutual trust.

In short, as one of its main leaders recalls, the CTD “Aníbal Verón” “emerges as a desperate attempt to coordinate diverse districts that had territorial difficulties, or that had – as in the case of [Florencio] Varela – more or less managed to resolve things at the territorial level, but we needed to bring together several districts to reach the provincial or national governments” (interview 2007). Detachment from the MTR reduced internal diversity within this social movement sector, but dispute over how to define a common repertoire of strategies persisted and would produce further division in 2002.

The “Filtering” of Members by the CCC: The Expulsion of the Independent Movement of Retired and Pensioners

The CCC continued to expel dissidents from the SMO’s leadership for strategic and internal reasons. First, at the CCC’s 2001 national congress, it was decided to pursue an insurreccional clash with the De la Rúa government (*Página/12* 07/09/2001). This decision was not supported by the CCC’s employed workers’ and national coordinator Carlos “Perro” Santillán. As a result of this, Santillán was not as involved in the first National Piquetero Assembly as he had been in the Federal Marches of the 1990s. Eventually, Santillán was replaced by Amancay Ardura as general coordinator of the CCC.

Second, there was a conflict between the Independent Movement of Retired and Pensioners (MIJP) and the CCC’s unemployed sector over the dominance of the CCC. Since 2000, retired sector leader Raúl Castells and

unemployed sector leader Alderete were competing for control of the unemployed group. While Castells was in jail, the CCC leadership tried to dismantle the MIJP in order to effectively turn it into a division of the CCC, focusing its work on the retired and transferring the support of all the unemployed members to the CCC sector under Alderete's leadership. The tripartite composition of the CCC encompassing the employed, unemployed and retired worker sectors was in place between 1996 and 2000 in an alliance with the MIJP, an SMO with its own autonomous history (cf. Chapter 3). This issue generated a heated dispute that ended with the expulsion of the MIJP from the CCC in 2001 and its re-founding as the Independent Movement of the Retired and Unemployed (MIJD). The CCC's sector for retirees and pensioners was then created, and Mariano Sánchez was nominated as its leader.

From then the MIJD quickly grew from Villa Albertina (Lomas de Zamora) to Berazategui, La Matanza, and José C. Paz in Buenos Aires and to the provinces of Salta, Chaco, and Tucumán. The source of the MIJD's rapid development was the charismatic leaderships of Castells and Pelozo, the use of a witness strategy, and the provision of social services. Emulating the social security logic employed by unions and adopting a territorial logic, the MIJD reported having 1,500 soup kitchens, basic health services, and cooperative enterprises for its members. Everything was sustained by a monthly membership fee and access to state resources through state social programs and political agreements.

The End of the FTV as a Federation: The Splitting Off of the Territorial Liberation Movement and Neighborhoods Standing Up

In parallel with the CCC process, the FTV would also experience two important splits²⁰ as a result of its redefinition as an organization instead of a federation of organizations. The FTV was created as an umbrella organization for the unemployed in the CTA union. As a federation, it included the Network of Neighborhoods, CBC-related land occupation cooperatives, and other SMOs as well as several parties, such as Free

²⁰ There was a third split, though it was not particularly relevant in light of the magnitude of this SMO. In 2000 the Liberation Revolutionary Party left the FTV and created the Neighborhood Unity Coordinator (CUBa) in La Matanza. Later it participated in several coordinating bodies, merging in 2004 with the MTR (Oscar Kuperman, interviewed by Germano 2005: 117–30).

Homeland and the PCA. However, the de facto organizational structure of the FTV has been absolutely top-down and personalized, consisting of a small group of leaders around Luis D'Elía in a loosely structured network across the country. This produced several internal conflicts within the FTV as even minimal levels of internal democracy were not present, and with the FTV controlled by D'Elía's group, the PCA and Free Homeland could not achieve leadership posts within the organization (Armelino 2008; Burkart et al. 2008).

The PCA participated in the foundation of the FG and its trade union branch, the Politico-Syndical Liberation Movement (MPSL), which was one of the first members of the CTA. At the very beginning of the FG, the PCA was expelled from the party, and the MPSL then created an unemployed workers' SMO, the Territorial Liberation Movement (MTL), which joined the FTV in 1998 (Alcañiz and Scheier 2007). The MTL left the FTV in June 2001²¹ and participated as an independent organization in the first National Piquetero Assembly. Detached from the FTV, at the CTA's 2002 national congress the MTL lost its affiliation to this union as a SMO, deciding to exit the CTA as a result of this (Poli 2007: 57–58).²²

The MTL is self-defined as a territorial organization that struggles for employment and housing. It focuses on the city of Buenos Aires.²³ Like the FTV, the issue of housing is central for the MTL. In the case of the MTL, the issue is approached through the organization of occupations of abandoned buildings to force the city government into expropriating them (Poli 2007: 65–66). This predominant strategy owes much to a CBC legacy adapted to a district with no rural or semi-urban areas.

The restriction of the MTL to the city of Buenos Aires only was due to contextual factors. The MTL shares with the FTV the same perspective, goals, repertoires of contention, and strategies and applied these to the city of Buenos Aires because, according to its national leader, there was “a vacant niche” (Alberto Ibarra, quoted by Poli 2007: 87). On the one hand, the majority of the *piquetero* SMOs and the stronger PJ networks are located outside the city – in Greater Buenos Aires, an area with too much competition for a latecomer. On the other hand, the city of Buenos Aires offered a context very favorable for the PCA to build a *piquetero* SMO

²¹ The MTD of La Juanita participated in the MTL's founding meeting, but the MTD leadership decided not to become part of the MTL.

²² The MTL would return to the CTA due to new changes in 2006 regarding the FTV-CTA relationship, analyzed in Chapter 6.

²³ The MTL also developed a mining cooperative in Jujuy with the support of the Credicoop bank (Alcañiz and Scheier 2007).

due to the weakness of the PJ networks²⁴ and the support available from city mayor Aníbal Ibarra (FREPASO, 2000–6), a former member of the PCA's student movement. This strategy permitted the MTL to start a very successful housing project that was supported by credit given to the SMO by the PCA-related bank Credicoop and the local government state-owned bank (Epstein 2009).

The relationship between party and SMO in the case of the PCA-MTL is not a subsidiary one, as envisioned by the Trotskyist party-family. Rather, the model is that established by the PCR-CCC relationship. This means that while the MTL leadership is affiliated with, and intimately related to, the party elite, it has greater room for maneuver in the definition of its policies on topics that do not imply a confrontation with the PCA's electoral goals.

The case of Neighborhoods Standing Up, the second main division of the FTV, is different. The party behind this SMO, Free Homeland, was sustained by former PRT-ERP leaders from Córdoba province. Though its origins are in the geographic center of the country, the leaders made the strategic decision of pursuing a beehive tactic from the mid-1980s by systematically moving all of their key leaders to Greater Buenos Aires. This beehive tactic, along with a multi-class popular front strategy, led them to participate within the FTV from 1999 onward with their first *piquetero* SMO, CTA of the Neighborhoods. In 2001 CTA of the Neighborhoods was renamed Neighborhoods Standing Up, and in December it was expelled from the FTV because it did not recognize the validity of the internal elections for the FTV leadership that re-elected D'Elía and his sector (Svampa and Pereyra 2003: 66–67; Jorge Ceballos interviewed by Germano 2005: 213).

Neighborhoods Standing Up had no long-standing relationships with any government because in the 1990s the Free Homeland party had applied a direct-action insurrectional repertoire very similar to the one of the MPR "Quebracho" (without the latter's use of a witness strategy). At the same time, Free Homeland had transferred key party figures to La Matanza while still working in Alta Gracia and Cruz del Eje in Córdoba province (Antonello 2004). Unlike the MTL, Neighborhoods Standing Up

²⁴ The PJ was very strong in the city of Buenos Aires during the Carlos Grosso, Saúl Bouer, and Jorge Domínguez governments (1992–96), all *menemista* PJ politicians. They built up a patronage system that collapsed in 1996 after the PJ was defeated by the UCR in the local election (Levitsky 2003b). Since then, this district has become the one with the weakest Peronist electoral clout.

directly competed with the FTV for constituency and territory, although it shared some of its goals and ideological perspectives.

The Free Homeland-Neighborhoods Standing Up relationship resembles that of the Trotskyist party-family due to Free Homeland's middle-class composition as well as the sedimentation of *basismo* legacies within a model of democratic centralism. As is the case with the PO and MST "Teresa Vive," Neighborhoods Standing Up is based on a party that was built on the student movement.

The Second National Piquetero Assembly: The Dispute about the Radicalization of the Process

The second National Piquetero Assembly (September 4, 2001) represented the crystallization of the *piquetero* movement's diversification during the period of struggle for the movement's legitimation (Table 4.2). The FTV and the CCC called for the continuation of this coordinating body, but actual participation was much different. First, it involved the CTA, MTL, CUBa, UTD of Mosconi, "July 17" MTD (Chaco), PO, and MST "Teresa Vive" but also the Mothers and the Dissident CGT (*Página/12* 09/05/2001; Pacheco 2004: 64–65). Second, the CTD "Anibal Verón" did not participate because it rejected the FTV-CCC leadership, instead organizing a smaller parallel meeting (Pacheco 2004: 65–66). Third, although the MTR was not invited, it managed to participate all the same.

The main dispute at the second Assembly revolved around the type of confrontational strategy needed to force an exit from the political and socioeconomic crises. There were two main positions on this: an electoral multi-class popular front (FTV and CTA) and an insurreccional, vanguardist (MTR) or multi-class front (CCC). A third position that was not represented at the second Assembly implied a combination of moderate *foquismo* and autonomist strategies, a position that would coalesce within the CTD "Anibal Verón" from 2002.²⁵

The FTV and the CTA insisted on supporting FRENAPO, a proposal that was dismissed at the first Assembly but approved at the second. FRENAPO was part of a multi-sectoral popular front strategy to influence the government with the aim of channeling social unrest toward an

²⁵ Although this position was a weaker one and did not influence the core debates at the second Assembly, it was also the electoral solution to the crisis promoted by the PO, a newly created and still very small SMO. The MST "Teresa Vive" was still in the process of being set up.

electoral resolution of the crisis. One sector represented by the CTA had not defined how to approach the Alliance, which it had previously supported. Another sector, which included the FTV, FREPASO groups, CBC-related sectors, and the Dissident CGT, promoted an electoral coalition called Social Pole for the October legislative polls. This election led to D'Elía being chosen as a provincial deputy, thereby becoming the first *piquetero* legislator.

The CCC and the MTR represented two different types of insurrectional strategies to defeat the government. Though the MTR, in coalition with the MTL, PO, CUBa, UTD of Mosconi, and “July 17” MTD, managed to participate in the second Assembly, all its proposals were rejected (Svampa and Pereyra 2003: 82–83). The CCC opted to preserve the FTV alliance during the second Assembly and avoided confrontation, but this did not mean lending support to the FTV proposals. The CCC would not participate in the Social Pole and FRENAPPO.

During the first Assembly in July, a journalist asked the CCC leader Alderete, “What are you proposing the De la Rúa government should do?” He replied: “We don’t want them to do anything, not even quit. What we want is to expel them – it is that clear? [We want to] Expel them, [we do] not want them to just leave the National Congress, and then for Duhalde and Alfonsín to agree on common government solution and install another guy that is the same [as the actual president]. We want people to take to the streets and expel them once and for all” (quoted by *Crónica* 07/22/2001). This statement came out of a strategic resolution taken in July at the CCC’s national congress, when it decided to call for an insurrectional end to De la Rúa’s government by proposing a national *pueblada* or “*Argentinazo* that would lead to a national unity government” (*Página/12* 07/09/2001). This strategy implied enriching the repertoire of strategies by reviving the insurrectional alliance with the right that had been in place prior to the 1976–83 authoritarian regime (Chapter 2). To achieve its insurrectional goal, the CCC sought the support of the right-wing sector of the PJ and middle-sized rural producers. The CCC called for a picket and a march on December 20, which the PO, FTV, and MTR accepted.

Even though many *piquetero* SMOs were willing to come together at a third Assembly, it was not organized because the CTA and the FTV wished to quell disruptive escalation on the part of the other SMOs to avoid what they perceived as the risk of helping a right-wing coup (Oviedo 2004: 222–23).

THE MOUNTING OF THE CRISIS AND THE
LEGITIMATION OF THE PIQUETERO MOVEMENT
(OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2001)

The multi-level game of disputes grew at the pace of five *puebladas*, two national strikes, a diversified but tactically unified *piquetero* movement, and a totally divided government. In addition, October was a very bad month for the government in political and economic terms. Economically, unemployment reached 19 percent (plus 16.2 percent underemployment), and levels of poverty were at 35.4 percent in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires. This was the consequence of an annual decrease of 4.4 percent of the GDP and an accumulated rate of deflation of 20.5 percent since 1995 (Novaro 2009: 595).

Politically, the government lost the legislative mid-term elections and thus the majority in both chambers. This eliminated any possibility for De la Rúa to propose policies without PJ agreement. As a result, part of the PJ stuck to a stance of “semi-loyal opposition”²⁶ that was favorable to the president’s early resignation (*Página/12* 12/07/2001). What the PJ could not foresee with its semi-loyal opposition was that the PJ could not be seen as the clear winner in this election (19.3 percent). The only majority was that of abstention and blank votes. In a country that never had less than 75 percent electoral turnout, this election saw, for the first time, more non-voters (27.2 percent) and negative voters (15.7 percent) than votes for any single party (Calvo and Escolar 2005: 213). The effect of this election was the deterioration of the legitimacy of the entire political elite and not only that of the government.

To make things even worse, on November 29 there was a run on the banks. The government tried to control the situation by imposing the *corralito* (“little farmyard”), a measure severely limiting the amount of cash allowed to be withdrawn weekly from bank accounts. The *corralito* drove desperate clients into systematic protests in front of central bank offices.

**The National *Pueblada*: Lootings, *Cacerolazos*, the Semi-loyal
PJ, and *Piquetero* Demobilization**

The process of diffusion of *puebladas* that started in 1993 went from the periphery in Santiago del Estero to the core of Argentina in the federal

²⁶ The term “semi-loyal opposition” is used following Linz’s (1978: 32–33) classic definition.

TABLE 4.4 *Comparison of Strategies Pre-crisis and during the National Pueblada, by Piquetero SMO, 1999–2001*

<i>Piquetero SMO</i>	Pre-crisis Strategy (December 1999–December 2001)	National Pueblada Strategy (December 14–22, 2001)
CCC	Multi-class insurreccional front	Pre-coup demobilization
CTD “Aníbal Verón”	Internal dispute between moderate <i>foquismo</i> and autonomist-introspective strategies	Pre-coup demobilization and continued internal disputes
FTV	Multi-class electoral popular front	FRENAPO and pre-coup demobilization
MIJD	Witness strategy	None (main leader in jail)
MST “Teresa Vive”	SMO emergence process	None (not yet consolidated as an SMO)
MTL	Multi-class electoral front	FRENAPO and pre-coup demobilization
MTR	Vanguard insurreccional	Pre-coup demobilization
PO	Classist electoral front	Support of the <i>cacerolazo</i> mobilization
Neighborhoods Standing Up	SMO emergence process	FRENAPO
UTD of Mosconi	Enclave syndicalism	None

Source: Several interviews (2007–13).

capital in 2001. From December 14 to 22, PJ territorial brokers organized 261 lootings in Buenos Aires, Rosario, Neuquén, Tucumán, and several other cities (Auyero 2007: 78, map 3). The mobilized middle classes, the semi-loyal PJ factions – but not the *piquetero* movement – were the key figures in the sixth (and national) *pueblada* against De la Rúa. As can be seen in the comparison in Table 4.4, the *piquetero* movement had different strategies before and after the national *pueblada* started. However, in most cases, after lootings began most *piquetero* SMOs decided to demobilize.

Governor Ruckauf is mentioned most often as a promoter of the de-stabilization of the De la Rúa government through the coordinated lootings in Greater Buenos Aires (Bonasso 2002; Auyero 2007; Novaro 2009: 612, n. 48).²⁷ While a coup was not the governor’s aim, what the

²⁷ According to provincial secretary Aníbal Fernández, the provincial government tried to quell the situation without repression by proposing an agreement with large supermarkets

duhaldista PJ factions wanted was to provoke early elections through the use of disruption. Auyero (2007) shows with particular skill how the police and PJ territorial brokers encouraged and controlled lootings during this period. His analysis presents evidence supporting my own arguments about increased territorialism in Argentine politics. For instance, while Greater Buenos Aires as a whole saw many lootings, in Florencio Varela there were none (Auyero 2007: 75). This is explained by the role played by mayor Pereyra and the territorial brokers' capacity to control disruption as well as the *piqueteros'* relationship with the mayor during that period.

The sector of the *piquetero* movement that agreed to promote the FRENAP0 was very busy with this activity during the crisis and later decided to demobilize. From December 14 to 17, the CTA, FTV, MTL, Neighborhoods Standing Up, and other organizations were organizing the FRENAP0 referendum. Though it only had the support of the governor of Santa Cruz, Néstor Kirchner (PJ), FRENAP0 collected 3,083,191 votes in favor of a universal right to income for citizens.

To prevent lootings from multiplying, president De la Rúa declared a state of siege on December 19. The general populace's initial reaction to his speech was massive defiance. The urban middle classes spontaneously initiated a *cacerolazo* (saucepan banging) in the main squares of the city of Buenos Aires and in some other big cities. Later that night thousands went to the Plaza de Mayo (in front of the House of Government) to demand the resignation of the government but also all the judges of the Supreme Court as well as each and every one of the governors, deputies, senators, and union leaders. The people in the square shouted – as in Corrientes in 1999 – “All of them out, not a single one must remain!,” considering all the political elites responsible for the critical situation.²⁸

Within this context, the CTA's national secretariat, perceiving the risk of an imminent coup, called on its members to demobilize and wait inside the CTA branches. As D'Elía had said a few months earlier in a TV interview, the goal was an electoral solution to the crisis:

for food distribution, which the supermarkets refused, and later by organizing a mobilization in Buenos Aires with the mayors of Moreno and Quilmes, which was later canceled (Fernández interviewed by Germano 2005: 278–80).

²⁸ The use of *cacerolazos* had been part of the repertoire of contention of the middle classes in Buenos Aires since at least 1997, when FREPASO organized this type of protest against Menem (Rossi 2005b).

This can only be changed with people on the streets, with people voting on the streets, because the financial district gambles our vote away every day . . . Our only chance of voting is to be out on the streets . . . And I sincerely hope that once a critical point has been reached, it is resolved in a democratic fashion. In other words, that we go to the Argentine people and ask them what they want (documentary film “¿Piqueteros? Sí . . . Piqueteros” directed by Pablo Navarro Espejo: FTV and Adoquín Videos, 2001. 38.09 to 38.47 minutes).

For some of the SMOs that were in favor of an insurreccional solution during the second Assembly, territorial agreements and the perception of the crisis as a pre-coup led to their demobilization. Even though the second Assembly had decided to organize pickets for December 20, the CCC also decided to demobilize. According to the interviewees, the CCC’s decision to avoid mobilization was in reaction to a phone call they received from a Buenos Aires political operator informing them that police would crack down on them strongly and this might lead to potential fatalities. This led the CCC to opt for a local mobilization in La Matanza. The CCC’s strategy of forming an alliance with the right-wing sector of the PJ for an insurreccional solution weakened its commitment to increasing disruption, fearing that it would violate the territorial agreement with the municipal and provincial governments, which could also lead to the resignations of mayors and governors. In the few cases where *piquetero* SMOs encouraged mobilizations during this period, they were for organized claims for food from large supermarket chains, which represented just twenty-eight events out of 289 (Auyero and Moran 2007: 1346). This was the case of the CTD “Aníbal Verón,” among others (MTD de Solano and Colectivo Situaciones 2002: 142–43; Pacheco 2004: 78–80).

As a result of the looting and *cacerolazos*, on December 20 the national cabinet resigned as a means of facilitating the formation of a government of national unity with the PJ. Protests and looting continued for the rest of the day and led to the resignation of the president as well as the deaths of twenty-five people, with 400 more seriously injured. The following day, Senate vice president Rodolfo Puerta (PJ) was named as provisional president. There was no agreement among the elites as to whether the best option was to immediately call for new elections or to wait until the official end of De la Rúa’s mandate in December 2003 (Rossi 2005a). Finally, on December 23 the governor of San Luis, Adolfo Rodríguez Saá (PJ), was named as interim president for 90 days.

It is intriguing that even though the *piquetero* movement was a key actor in the weakening of the national government and the construction of

the crisis, it was not a relevant actor during the social explosion of looting, *cacerolazos*, massive protests, and the presidential resignation. The explanation for this can be discerned by understanding what had led some to perceive this national *pueblada* as a pre-coup scenario. In other words, while the crisis unfolded as a democratizing demonstration of popular defiance against elite incapacity or refusal to solve the crisis (Rossi 2005a), several *piquetero* leaders perceived it as a right-wing pre-coup (Table 4.4). This interpretation of the overall contentious dynamics can be traced back to the trauma produced by the left's experience of repression during the last authoritarian regime. This dramatic period led to the elimination of armed insurrections and coups from their repertoire of strategies. While this favored the revalorization of democracy in the short and medium term, it also highlighted the need for promoting self-retrained strategies. In other words, the *piqueteros* detached themselves from the national *pueblada* of December 14 to 22 because they perceived the risk of a coup, and this led them to adopt demobilization as a tactic to avoid repeating historical mistakes.²⁹

Even though the idea came to be commonly accepted, it is erroneous to claim that the PJ and the *piqueteros* had coordinated their actions in order to cause the collapse of the national government. As I showed in this chapter, the government's end was the result of a multi-level, non-staggered game generated as an unintended consequence of the presidential inability to divide *piquetero* and PJ claims by selectively promoting demands. The feedback effect of this multi-level game set into motion a dynamic that favored, in some districts, alliances between mayors and *piqueteros*. This series of specific pacts coalesced haphazardly for the end of the Alliance government.

The Moment of Legitimation: The Meetings with the President

During his inaugural ceremony on December 23, the new president Adolfo Rodríguez Saá declared that the country had defaulted on the national external debt and promised to create a new currency and one million jobs during his ninety-day mandate. In spite of these declarations,

²⁹ The redefinition of the value of democracy among left-wing political actors is a process that started in the 1980s in Argentina, as it did in almost all of Latin America (Barros 1986; Castañeda 1993; Roberts 1998; Ollier 2009). The *piquetero* movement's strategy during the December 2001 *pueblada* put into action this change in the Argentine left's repertoire of strategies.

during the Rodríguez Saá government no substantial public policy decisions were made in the *piquetero* policy domain. Nevertheless, this period represents the moment of legitimation at the national scale for the whole movement. From December 23 to 27 the president met with the main social actors that had resisted disincorporation: the CTA, the CGT, the pensioner and retiree groups, the human rights movement, and the *piquetero* movement.

The CCC was the *piquetero* movement's link with the government. A few months before the crisis exploded, the PJ governors took part in secret meetings to negotiate possible solutions to the crisis. These meetings included representatives of the CCC and the FTV on at least one occasion. During that meeting the CCC developed a relationship with the San Luis governor Rodríguez Saá and the FTV with the Santa Cruz governor Kirchner. The FTV, CCC, and PO were able to meet with Rodríguez Saá on December 26 and 27. Other meetings were planned with the rest of the movement and the FRENAPO committee, but the abrupt end of the government prevented these from taking place. These meetings culminated in 3,000 subsidies being distributed among the FTV, CCC, and PO (*Prensa Obrera* 21/27/2001).³⁰

The process of legitimation of the *piqueteros* as the reincorporation movement took a non-staggered path from the early-riser SMOs to the rest of the movement. The FTV and the CCC gained national legitimacy in November 2000 and the UTD of Mosconi in June 2001 when they got to divide the elites, receiving the support of some authorities, but the movement as a whole was only legitimized during the Rodríguez Saá presidency. This is because it was the first time the *piquetero* leaders met with a president. The consequences of this meeting were manifold: first, it meant an enlargement in the number of legitimate actors in unemployment policies by including the *piquetero* movement as a core actor in this policy domain, and, second, since that moment, meeting with the president became a common practice for the movement, beginning a process of increased state incorporation.

In the attempt to compensate for his lack of electoral legitimacy, Rodríguez Saá received in just a few days the support of the CCC, CGT (Dissident and Official), former president Menem, and some of the governors, such as Ruckauf and Ángel Rozas (Chaco, UCR). On December 27 government officials declared their interest in continuing beyond the

³⁰ Rodríguez Saá distributed 116,060 subsidies to provincial and municipal governments, except for the 3,000 of them that went to the FTV, CCC, and PO (*Clarín* 12/26/2001).

agreed ninety-day mandate. In the meantime, politicians could not circulate publicly in the streets because when recognized they were attacked by non-organized citizens. On December 28, a new protest for the renewal of the Supreme Court was coordinated by the Labor-Law Lawyers Association of the CTA (Kohan 2002: 101). That night, a third spontaneous *cacerolazo* in the Plaza de Mayo emerged. “We got through Christmas Eve, we got through Christmas Day, we expelled De la Rúa, and now we will expel all the rest!” was one of the major new chants that emerged that night expressing the claim for a total democratic renewal of the political elite. That night, repressive actions were initiated. After a few people failed in their attempts to enter the House of Government, some others entered the National Congress, the door having been opened from the inside, and set alight some of the furniture – with no police presence to stop the continued *pueblada*. On December 30 a weakened president summoned governors to a meeting in support of his mandate, but just five out of twenty-four governors attended. The same day Rodríguez Saá resigned. The causes were the violation of the agreement with the governors and sustained contention on the streets (Rossi 2005a). Again, the *piquetero* movement was not a relevant actor in this contentious dynamic.

CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to provide a relational answer to the problem of the building of the national *pueblada* of 2001 and the concurrent legitimation of the *piquetero* movement as the main political interlocutor for the disincorporated popular sectors.

During this period, due to Argentina’s centralized federal regime, the territorialized nature of the struggle for legitimation preserved its locus in Greater Buenos Aires. The consequences of the end of the territorial agreement revitalized the vertical political opportunities, producing a multi-level routine and contentious political game crucial to an understanding of the struggle for legitimation. The vertical disputes were by and large between the UCR-FREPASO Alliance national government, the PJ *duhaldista* Buenos Aires governorship, and the most relevant municipalities under non-*duhaldista* PJ control.

In conjunction, the presidential form of government emerged as a relevant feature in the institutional politics explanation for the legitimation of the *piquetero* movement. The dispute between the FREPASO and the UCR and the former’s control over the main state areas within the

piquetero policy domain were crucial elements in the *piquetero* movement's capacity to manipulate the horizontal divisions within the elite. Simultaneously, the role of the political operators for *piquetero* issues saw them emerge as relevant informal actors in the building of the state institutions' day-to-day relationship with the movement. The role of the political operators would also prove to be quite relevant during the ensuing stage of reincorporation.

The national *pueblada* of December 2001 poses a historical puzzle that I also intended to answer in this chapter. While the *piquetero* movement was the main contentious actor that pushed for the national *pueblada*, at the peak of social explosion the movement was in fact an irrelevant political actor. The emergence of new SMOs and the increasing divisions enriched the repertoire of strategies by adding strategies that were novel to the movement. However, this enrichment produced difficulties in terms of adopting a common strategy that could transcend short-lived tactical agreements. As the movement grew and diversified, the difficulties of sharing a common repertoire intensified.

In the cases where territorial agreements did not lead to demobilization, it was the perception of an imminent right-wing coup what led part of the *piquetero* movement to demobilize. In other words, the *piqueteros'* crucial mobilization prior to, and demobilization during the national *pueblada* were a result of an enriched repertoire of strategies produced by the movement's diversification along with a self-restrained approach due to a positive valorization of democracy. The *piquetero* movement shows that a predominant repertoire of strategies changes dynamically over time more quickly than the repertoire of contention, with these being related parallel processes. However, the 2001 national *pueblada* shows that even though the repertoire of strategies is fluid, this is not directly related to junctural shifts.

The moment of legitimation ended with Rodríguez Saá's resignation. Two days later, the year 2002 started with a new interim president. Duhalde, the main PJ leader, was chosen by parliament to finish De la Rúa's presidential mandate. Duhalde started the partial reincorporation of the popular sectors, a process that was continued by Kirchner after 2003. The following chapter takes us from movement legitimation to the first (failed) attempt for incorporation: state territorial reincorporation. Chapter 5 will also show the beginning of the redefinition of the *piquetero* policy domain as well as some of the movement's new main political divisions and predominant strategies.