

Worlding contemporaneity in Argentina: alternative ways of building the world from the popular sphere

María Llorens- University of Pittsburgh

June 10, 2020

In this essay I reflect on the experiences of popular organization in Argentina that emerged in the late nineteen-nineties, when urban and rural workers, intellectuals, and artists, resisting the neoliberal globalization impact on the country and the region, created new forms of making community based on the principle of *autogestión* (self-management or self-government). In this regard, I propose a different concept of *worlding* from that of Gayatri Spivak. While Spivak defines worlding as an imperialist practice of consolidating the self of Europe (as the colonizer) by imposing to the colonized (subaltern) the experience of their world as an imperial space, I employ the concept to analyze alternative ways, created in the periphery, in the margins of the capitalist system, of *dwelling* and *building* the world by rebelling (not necessarily, from the beginning, in a programmatic way) against the dynamics and effects of the neoliberal globalization in the local field. I am bringing here Heidegger's famous essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking." (1951), where the philosopher proposes what seems to me an urgent question for us today: "what is the state of dwelling in our precarious age?" (1971, 339). Heidegger understands *dwelling* as "the basic character of Being", and, at the same time, as the condition for *building* (1971, 338): "Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build" (1971, 338). For Heidegger, we only accomplish "to bring dwelling to the fulness of its essence" if we "build out of dwelling, and think for the sake of dwelling" (1971, 339). There are, possibly, different ways of interpreting Heidegger's suggestion. I think we are able to take its critical potential to problematize how in "our precarious age" the modern and capitalist logics of productivity and consumerism are increasingly dominating our lives in different ways (even by exclusion and marginalization), converting our capacity *to build* in an erratic form of production (and/or destruction) for consumption, losing the essence of building, which is *to dwell*. At the same time, to "think for the sake of dwelling" is, for me, the only possibility of approaching critically to contemporaneity. That is, to be capable of *questioning the world*. In this sense, Terry Smith proposes to think "the contemporary condition" by critically elaborating *world questions*. He asks: "How can we shape our differences into the constructive connections that the world requires?" In opposition to the commodified and commodifying connectivities that the neoliberal worlding favors (while increasing inequality and individualism), social movements such as the Empresas Recuperadas por sus Trabajadores (ERT) and the Bachilleratos Populares (BP) built *constructive connections* to preserve what was being destroyed (the concrete means of production and subsistence, the right to education) and, at the same time, to transform it by new communitarian forms of *dwelling, building, and thinking* the world.

In 1955, a military coup d'état deposed Juan Domingo Perón, initiating a long period of political persecutions, interventions of the labor unions, and proscription of Peronism (1955-1973). A series of dictatorships (1955-1958, 1966-1973, 1976-1983) attempted to undermine the social and political power that the workers had gained during the Peronist decade (1946-1955). The dictatorship of 1976-1983, in line with the Operation Condor (USA support for dictatorships in Latin America in the context of the Cold War, and Cuban Revolution), not only tortured and assassinated thousands of people, but it also introduced neoliberal policies that provoked a process of des-industrialization and indebtedment of the country. This process was deepened during the presidencies of Carlos Saúl Menem (1989-1999). The consequences were the almost complete destruction of the national companies and enterprises, a massive precarization of labor, and an unprecedented rise of unemployment. In this

context, new social movements were articulated in different regions and sectors of the country. The Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina (CTA), for instances, was created as an alternative to the bureaucratized labor unions of the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT). The CTA incorporated the unemployed and retired workers as active members of a new form of syndicalism. This form implied a critique towards the vertical leaderships of the traditional labor unions, a praxis of democratization of the organizations of the working-class, and new connections of solidarity between urban and rural, employed and unemployed, active and retired workers across the country. In Northern (Jujuy and Salta) and Southern (Neuquén and Chubut) provinces of the country, when YPF (the national company of oil and gas) was privatized and thousands of workers lost their jobs, a new form of protest was born: the *piquete*. YPF workers and their families blocked the national roads to manifest the conflict, receiving the support of their communities. “Ollas populares” (people organizing meals for the protesters and their families) were multiplied during the nineteen-nineties in different processes of social mobilization. These practices of solidarity generated, at the same time, new opportunities for social transversality, creating a counter-tendency to neoliberal individualism. In the process of mobilization and occupation of the public space, an alternative *building* of the world took place. Communitarian forms of social life, that are not just an instance of resistance against the neoliberal policies -that diminish the possibilities of *preserving* not only national sovereignty, but most radically life itself-, are still being built in the popular sphere. I argue that these alternative ways of building the world are constituted by an active pedagogy that is developed in the same practices and experiences of social organization. This active pedagogy is what makes of these processes of social mobilization more than actions of resistance.

Among the diverse social movements that conform the popular counter-tendency to neoliberalism in Argentina, there are the Empresas Recuperadas por sus Trabajadores (ERT). Factories that were being closed down because of the economic crisis, or because fraudulent bankruptcy, were occupied and defended by the workers, with the active support of their communities. The first one was a metallurgic factory, IMPA (Industrias Metalúrgicas y Plásticas Argentinas), in the city of Buenos Aires [Fig. 1]. The workers decided, in 1998, to occupy the factory, after a year of progressive reduction of salaries and increasing layoffs, facing an imminent close down. The neighbors supported the workers while they were staying at the factory to avoid eviction and closure. As in the *piquetes*, “ollas populares” were organized by the neighbors on the street or at the factory. The independent media gave visibility to IMPA’s fight. This allowed the workers to gain support from other groups of society. The “método IMPA”, “ocupar, resistir, producir”,¹ inspired other industrial workers in Buenos Aires and the rest of the country. Many of them after 2001, in the context of one of the worst crises in Argentina’s history.

During the presidency of Fernando de la Rúa, in continuity with the Menemist policies (Domingo Cavallo was, again, the Ministry of Economy), the social and economic situation of the country worsened. By December 2001, 18,3 % of the population was unemployed. Almost 55 % of the population was poor. More than the 20 % was indigent (Vinocur and Halperin, United Nations-CEPAL). A financial crisis, due to the unsustainable indebtedness of the country and Cavallo’s administration of national economy, triggered a bank run at the end of November 2001. The government froze all bank accounts for twelve months, allowing low sums of cash to be withdrawn per week. Afterwards, Cavallo established that fixed term deposits held in banks by private pension funds will be transformed into treasury bonds or private guaranteed loans. Protests spread in the cities. The government presented the budget for 2002, which included spending cuts of nearly 20% (*The*

¹ Translation from Spanish: “IMPA’s method: to occupy, to resist, to produce”.

Guardian, December 20, 2001). On December 13, a general strike shook the country. Social movements articulated protests in different provinces. New *piquetes* emerged across the country. Middle class people manifested their anger against the government in the *cacerolazos* (banging pots, pans, and other utensils). On December 19, the government declared state of siege giving it special powers to repress protests. Short after the announcement, thousands of people converged in the Plaza de Mayo, protesting in front of the Casa Rosada (the governmental house). There were protests in different cities of the country. The repression was brutal. Between December 19 and 20, 39 people were killed on the streets by police officers (*Perfil*, July 9, 2019). Finally, De la Rúa resigned. The political and economic crisis, still, was not solved.

According to Julián Rebón, we must contextualize the phenomenon of the ERT in this “disobedience climate”. Workers were organizing themselves to defend their jobs, in a context where governmental policies and capitalist administration failed. Their actions defied the principle of private property, as well as the idea that workers are not able to run a factory. In Neuquén, the workers of the ceramist Zanón occupied the factory and created a cooperative, preserving 380 job positions [Fig. 2]. Similar processes took place in many other cities and provinces: Chubut, La Pampa, Santa Fe, Córdoba, Río Negro, Chaco, Mendoza, Misiones, San Luis, Entre Ríos, Corrientes, La Rioja, Jujuy, San Juan, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero, Tierra del Fuego. A network of cooperatives was born. The ERT reunited in the Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas (MNER)² to support each other in the processes of occupation and resistance, in the struggle for a law of expropriation of the factories (declared as properties of public utility), in forming cooperatives, in managing production and commercialization, in socializing political and economic strategies to develop.

The experiences of the ERT implied many challenges. In the first place, the take of the factory. Workers had to face eviction menaces, the repression of the police, and serious economic difficulties to sustain long periods of illegal occupation [Fig. 3]. Many workers that had been laid off by the former owners were invited by their colleagues to form part of the efforts to recuperate their jobs. In the film directed by Avi Lewis and written by Naomi Klein, *The Take* (2004), a worker from FORJA, a metallurgic factory in San Martín, says: “hace tres años que me echaron de acá y no consigo nada”.³ The spouse of another worker says, after three months of struggle, “es larga la lucha”.⁴ Sustaining the families’ economies was one of the main challenges of the first stages of these processes. In this regard, the support of more extended communities, including different social organizations, was crucial [Fig. 4]. When the graphic enterprise Chilavert closed, in 2002 (after the fraudulent bankruptcy of Ediciones Arte Gaglione), and the workers decided to recover it, the police controlled the place during eight months to impede its functioning. However, with the help of the neighbors, the workers were able to print the book *Qué son las asambleas populares*.⁵ This anecdote is famous: a hole on the wall that separates the workshop from a neighbor’s house made possible the production and the commercialization of the book. Julio, the neighbor, helped to distribute it, circumventing the police guard (*Fecootra*, February 7, 2019).

² Later, in 2003, another organization was created: the Movimiento Nacional de Fábricas Recuperadas (MNFR). There were differences between both organizations, mainly that the MNFR, conducted by a lawyer, Luis Caro, rejected MNER’s strategy of occupy, resist, produce. The MNFR argued that occupation is illegal and thus illegitimate. The MNER argued that it was also illegal to attempt against the right to work, and that occupation was the main tool that the workers had to defend their jobs when the factories were closing and the owners were not owing them several salaries. (Faulk, 192).

³ Translation from Spanish: “Three years ago they fired me and I still can’t get any job”.

⁴ Translation from Spanish: “It’s long the struggle”.

⁵ Translation from Spanish: “What are the popular assemblies?”

But even when the legal situation of the factory is at least temporally normalized (when the premises are expropriated from the former owners and declared as public utility, and the workers are recognized as members of a legal cooperative) the conditions to start the productive activity may vary substantially, sometimes being very adverse. It depends on the legal and economic situation of the former company (the debts that the former owner left), the infrastructural conditions of the working place, the conditions of the machines and tools (many times former owners tried to sell them in a process known as *vaciamiento*),⁶ if the workers had the means to buy the materials they need or if there is enough material left to start producing, if they are able to pay for utilities or to obtain an exemption. According to Andrés Ruggeri, director of the program Facultad Abierta,⁷ in the majority of the cases the new cooperatives are able to keep or recover clients and providers, which is crucial for the feasibility of the enterprise. However, as Ruggeri explains, in every case the solidarity between the ERT is fundamental to sustain the process. Often, they help the new cooperatives to finance the start of their productive activity (Ruggeri, 71), they complement their activities producing for and buying from each other, and they search together for support from the INAES (Instituto Nacional de Asociativismo y Economía Social), the Ministry of Labor or the Ministry of Production.

The cooperatives face the challenge of sustaining their economic activity, organized by the principle of *autogestión*, in a context in which they have to compete with capitalist companies. One of the main problems that the workers highlight is the difficulties for acquiring new technology. Since 2003, when Néstor Kirchner assumed the presidency, the ERT demanded support from the State to improve their conditions of production and commercialization. And in times of economic crises, such as 2008-2009, they also had to learn to survive by reconverting their activity to sustain their income. César González, a worker in the automotive parts manufacturer Cooperative 19 de Diciembre, says: “Somos una autopartista, pero hemos hecho escaleras mecánicas, extractores, pies de ventiladores, pinzas magnéticas”.⁸ It’s not easy, workers explain, to keep the cooperative united during the “bad times”. Not all members show the same level of engagement. Sometimes is difficult to explain or to understand that the incomes may vary depending on the demand or the capacity for buying materials to produce. In the cooperatives there are no salaries as in the capitalist factories, but *retiros* (withdrawals), that is, what the associated workers gain from what they produced (separating what is needed to pay the costs of production, to buy materials, to save for improvements, etc.). A worker from Chilavert says: “El problema es que los compañeros entiendan que hay buenos tiempos y malos tiempos, ese es el problema, porque cuando baja el trabajo, al no producir, el retiro va a ser menor, los compañeros tienen que entender eso, que no por culpa del tesorero, el presidente o el secretario pierden trabajo” (Díaz Ruiz, 483).⁹

Even if the ERT (that today are 411) are born from the imperious necessity of preserving the means of living, they also transform the organization of production by introducing a democratic system of governance. Amado Lugo, a worker from the Cooperativa 19 de diciembre, defines it: “es

⁶ This means that the former owner partially “emptied” the place to sell it. This was done secretly when the company was broken and the premises, machines, and materials were compromised.

⁷ A research program of the University of Buenos Aires dedicated to the study of the Empresas Recuperadas por sus Trabajadores.

⁸ Translation from Spanish: “We are an automotive parts manufacturer, but we are doing metallic ladders, extractor fans, parts of fans, magnetic tweezers” (César González, worker from Cooperativa 19 de Diciembre). “Villa Ballester: Cooperativa 19 de Diciembre”, *Centro cultural de la cooperación*, 2014.

⁹ “The problem is to make the colleagues to understand that there are good times and bad times, that is the problem, because when there is less work to do, and we don’t produce, the *retiro* (withdrawal) is going to be lower, the colleagues have to understand this, that it is not the fault of the treasurer, the president, or the secretary”.

una organización horizontal, sin patronos ni jefes, todos tenemos voz y voto”.¹⁰ This signifies a formative experience of building a new form of social organization, even if it implies, as the workers explain, some difficulties. Enrique Iriarte, worker and president of the Cooperativa 19 de Diciembre, explains: “Los compañeros saben que acá la única manera de ganarse el peso es trabajando. Lo más difícil es ser responsable”.¹¹ The *autogestión* demands from each member a new responsibility: it depends on the work, the active participation, and the decisions of everyone that the cooperative functions [Fig. 5]. The worker is not anymore an employee who simply accomplishes his or her job each day and earns a salary from that, he or she has to think and decide with his or her colleagues how to re-organize production and commercialization, how to defend the factory when there is a menace of eviction, how to help other cooperatives that are struggling to survive, what do they want to be as a cooperative, how do they want to work within their neighborhood, what do they want to offer to their community. A popular pedagogy is created in these factories in the experience of taking the decisions as a collective, of being responsible for the success of the cooperative. Oracio Campos, from IMPA, affirms: “todos tenemos la responsabilidad de trabajar, la empresa recuperada demuestra que se puede seguir”.¹² And Julia Taborda concludes that IMPA and all the other cooperatives show that “los trabajadores podemos llevar una fábrica adelante”.¹³ According to Pablo Peláez and Emiliano Balaguer, members of the program Facultad Abierta, “las empresas recuperadas por sus trabajadores no son islas de socialismo, pero anticipan aspectos de la sociedad futura. En esa prefiguración, se reactualizan elementos fundamentales de la experiencia y la memoria de los trabajadores de este país: la toma, las asambleas, la disputa desde el lugar del trabajo” (in Ruggeri, Polti, and Antivero, 23).¹⁴ In this sense, instead of starting by defining a *world picture*¹⁵ for the future, the ERT create in the present, in their here-and-now, an alternative praxis of building a different world, based on relations of co-responsibility and solidarity.

The fact that the processes of occupation involved the participation of the neighbors, indicate that these experiences of *autogestión* are not limited to the reproduction and recreation of labor. There is a transformation not just of the order of production (instead of bosses, there are colleagues that are co-responsible for production, management, and distribution), but of the factory as a merely (re) productive space. The workers of the ERT opened the factories to create autonomous spaces of alternative cultural production and popular education¹⁶ addressed to their communities, and organized

¹⁰ Translation from Spanish: “It is a horizontal organization, without bosses, we all have a voice and a vote” (Amado Lugo, worker from Cooperativa 19 de Diciembre). “Cooperativa 19 de diciembre, empresa recuperada”, documentary by Colectivo Documental Semillas.

¹¹ Translation from Spanish: “The colleagues know that here the only way of earning our income is working. The most difficult thing is to be responsible”.

¹² Translation from Spanish: “We all have the responsibility to work, the cooperative (empresa recuperada) demonstrate that we can go on” (Oracio Campos, worker at IMPA). *El método IMPA: ocupar, resistir, producir*, documentary by Barricada TV.

¹³ Translation from Spanish: “The workers are able to manage a factory” (Julia Taborda, worker at IMPA). “El método IMPA: ocupar, resistir, producir”, documentary by Barricada TV)

¹⁴ Translation from Spanish: “The ERT are not islands of socialism, but they anticipate aspects of a future society. In this prefiguration, fundamental elements of the experience and memory of the working class of this country are actualized: the occupation, the assemblies, the dispute from the place of work”.

¹⁵ In the essay “The Age of the World Picture” (1938), Martin Heidegger reflects on the modern phenomenon of “man” becoming subject, “the relational center of that which is as such” (1977, 128). This change (a rupture, according to Heidegger, between Medieval and Ancient times, and the Modern age), implies the representation of the world *as a picture*: “what is, in its entirety [the world], is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that is set up by man, who represents and sets forth” (1977, 129-130).

¹⁶ IMPA created a Museum with machines, products, photographs, and documents from its history (IMPA was funded in 1918, and during the Peronist decade it was a national industry). In 2017, IMPA participated in the “Noche de los Museos”

with the active participation of intellectuals and artists, “trabajadores de la cultura y la educación”.¹⁷ Enrique Iriarte explains: “acá nosotros tenemos el orgullo de decir que tenemos una escuela”.¹⁸ Iriarte affirms that the cooperative created a school to give the neighborhood something of social value in return for the support that they received during the occupation and resistance. A pedagogic project emerged from the articulation between the associated workers of the ERT, and professors and students from public universities. Popular, public, and free schools for adults were created at the factories, based on the same political principle as the cooperatives: the *autogestión*. Workers and neighbors of the factories enrolled themselves as students. The pedagogy of popular organization, generated in the process of occupation of the factories, and sustained by new relations of solidarity between different social groups, gave birth, in 2004, to the *Bachilleratos Populares* (today they are 98 in the country) [Fig. 6]. The first one was opened in IMPA, organized by the Cooperativa de Educadores e Investigadores Populares (CEIP). Thus, a spontaneous pedagogy generated in the experience of resistance, organization, and work, converged, in the BP, with the pedagogy proposed by Paulo Freire, the Brazilian pedagogue who wrote, in 1968, the *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (Pedagogy of the Oppressed).

The teachers of the BP base their activity on Freire’s conception of the *educação dialógica* (dialogic education), a democratic and revolutionary alternative to the *educação bancária* (a verticalized education) (17). This dialogic approach to education implies the recognition of different forms of knowledge: besides what is learned at schools and universities, there is also what is learned from the experience of life and work, from the experience of other generations,¹⁹ and from collective experiences of social organization (in assemblies, manifestations, occupations, strikes, cooperativism). From this point of view, the *educador* (educator), is necessarily an *educando* (a subject being educated); at the same time that the *educando* is an *educador*, because he or she offers the educator the opportunity to open his or her cultural horizon to different life experiences, denaturalizing what we may call, using Heidegger’s concept, his or her *world-picture*. In the process of dialogic education, according to Freire, both *educador-educando* and *educando-educador*, contribute to the possibility of mutual emancipation, through a critical praxis of *questioning the world* as it is ideologically represented. In Freire’s approach to

(the Night of the Museums), in Buenos Aires. The factory was opened to the public, and workers showed and explained to the visitors the histories of the exhibited objects. See “Museo IMPA: Un recorrido por la historia de la clase trabajadora”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3W5AH2KFCX4>

¹⁷ Cultural and educational workers. This is the way in which artists, intellectuals, filmmakers, and educators that work at IMPA, 19 de Diciembre, Maderera Córdoba, Gráfica Chilavert, and many other ERT identify themselves. Industrial workers assume a creative role, and intellectuals and artists assume a social one.

¹⁸ Translation from Spanish: “We are proud to say that we have a school here” (Enrique Iriarte, Cooperativa 19 de diciembre). “Cooperativa 19 de diciembre, empresa recuperada” (documentary by Colectivo Documental Semillas).

¹⁹ Following Walter Benjamin, this would be the communitarian experience of narration and transmission of experience. In the essay “The Storyteller” (1936), Benjamin reflects on the crisis of experience, and, particularly, on the crisis of narration as a collective experience that connects different generations. The first text in which Benjamin examines the decay of the value of experience (and the difficulty of communicating experiences) is “Experience and Poverty” (1933). The Great War establishes an abysmal distance between generations. How to communicate what has impoverished experience? How to communicate what has been a radical disruption in the social existence? Later, in 1939, Benjamin writes “On some motifs in Baudelaire”, an essay in which the author expands the concept of *erfahrung*, distinguishing it from *erlebnis*. This distinction is also present in Martin Heidegger’s essay *The Age of the World Picture* (1938). Heidegger notices, as Benjamin did, that modernity implies certain declination of *erfahrung*, and that what is mostly current is *erlebnis*. I think, based on the readings of Benjamin and Heidegger, but thinking at the same time in our own historical time, and bringing thus the reading of a contemporary philosopher, Bernard Stiegler, that the experience that enables subjectivation (both individual and communitarian), the exercise of dwelling the here-and-now in connection with the past (active memory), with the capacity to imagine a future (historical consciousness), is menaced by modernity, by the homogenization of time (Benjamin), by the subordination of “the world” to the centrality of an impersonal and globalized *One* (heterodoxically bringing together Heidegger and Stiegler).

popular education, “pronunciar a palabra é pronunciar o mundo, e pronunciar o mundo é modificá-lo” (44).²⁰ In this sense, the BP elaborated their own *pedagogy of the oppressed*, “aquela que tem de ser forjada com ele e não para ele”²¹, a “pedagogia que faça da opressão e da suas causas objeto da reflexão dos oprimidos”²² (Freire, 17).

The BP were not only created in the ERT, but also in other social organizations of the popular sphere. It is characteristic of this popular and public schools to have been born, each of them, from the particular social and territorial experience of autonomous and horizontal organizations. Each BP, in this sense, organized its curriculum taking into account the conditions, perspectives, and needs of their community. In 2012, the first *bachillerato popular trans* was opened: Mocha Celis [Fig. 7].²³ Marianne, one of the teachers and coordinators of the school, and a trans person herself, explains: “La propuesta surgió a partir de la demanda que había de lo que es el sector bastante vulnerado, el sector trans, que abarca a travestis, transexuales y transgéneros”²⁴. She says that, after a few months, they learnt that the Mocha Celis was also a place where other excluded sectors found their opportunity to have access to formal education. Marianne affirms that: “esta demanda no la tiene solo Argentina, sino todos los países, porque todos los países nos tienen a nosotras”.²⁵ The Frente Popular Darío Santillán, an organization formed in 2004 from the experience of the *movimiento piquetero* in the late nineties, opened a BP in Lanús. Alberto, a student from the BP Roca Negra (FPDS), explains the particularity of this education: “Cada uno pienso que tiene que aprender a pensar por sí mismo. No estamos muy preparados para eso -sobre todo los de las generaciones anteriores- a pensar por cuenta de uno. Siempre fuimos dirigidos, no estamos acostumbrados (...). Lo he planteado eso yo también, esa virtud que tiene este nuevo sistema de decidir qué es lo que vamos a hacer, tanto como a quién vamos a votar, cómo vamos a cumplir el rol que le corresponde a cada uno” (Aguiló and Wahren, 110).²⁶ As in the ERT, is vital for the project of *autogestión* to take the personal and collective responsibility to think critically, to sustain and recreate the common work and study places. As Alberto suggests, the BP offer an opportunity to defy passiveness. Ricardo, graduated from the BP Simón Rodríguez (Organización Popular Fogoneros), defines the difference between the BP and the regular schools: “El BP es un centro que te educa para la transformación, o sería el ideal, no sé. (...) Creo

²⁰ Translation from Portuguese: “To pronounce the word is to pronounce the world, and to pronounce the world is to transform it” (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia do Oprimido*).

²¹ Translation from Portuguese: “The pedagogy of the oppressed is a pedagogy that must be forged *with* the oppressed and not *for* the oppressed”. In this sense, it is very significant what Paulo Freire said to Amílcar Cabral (the president of the independent Guinea Bissau) when he asked him, in 1975, to design an educative program for his country, a program to “re-africanize” Guinea Bissau. Freire said that he wanted to go to Guinea Bissau, to live with the people, and to learn with them how to create a new education. It was clear for him that the educative program, in order to be revolutionary, needed to be dialogic in its very genesis. For Freire, dialogic education is not only a method of teaching and learning, but a political conception of education as a praxis of freedom. For that reason, it must be the expression of a collective and democratic process of reflection on the local needs of the community.

²² Translation from Portuguese: “A pedagogy that makes of oppression and its causes an object of reflection for the oppressed” (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia do Oprimido*).

²³ Mocha Celis learnt in prison, with the help of a colleague, to read and write. She was killed by a police officer for being a trans person. The BP takes her name to claim for the rights of trans people.

²⁴ Translation from Spanish: “The project was born from the demand of a vulnerable sector, which is the sector *trans*, that includes travesties, transsexuals, and transgender” (Marianne, interviewed by *Travelqueers* in 2016).

²⁵ Translation from Spanish: “This demand does not exist only in Argentina, but in every country, because every countries has us”.

²⁶ Translation from Spanish: “Each of us, I think, needs to learn to think for ourselves. We are not used to that -especially those who are from older generations-, to think for ourselves. We have been always led, directed, we are not used to that. I have said that too, that the virtue of this new system is that we have to decide what we are going to do, so much as what are we going to vote, how are we doing to comply the role that corresponds to each of us”.

que, al estudiante, al educando que va al bachillerato lo queremos hacer consciente y crítico, que critique a la sociedad, que sea consciente de la sociedad que tiene, que sea consciente del Estado que nos gobierna, que sea consciente de que lo están cagando. Que sea consciente de que en la fábrica en la que trabaja doce, ocho, nueve horas que lo están explotando, le pagan miseria, que sea consciente de que la sociedad no está tan bien como queremos que esté, que sé yo (...). Creo que ese es el objetivo del Bachillerato Popular. En cambio, el objetivo de otras escuelas es otro, en una escuela técnica es educarte en algo técnico que aprendas a usar máquinas, que uses tu cabeza en la computadora, en sacar números, en hacer planillas a fin de mes para liquidar sueldos”²⁷ (Aguiló and Wahren, 109-110). The praxis of the BP questions instrumental education, and attempts to create an experience of integral formation. They also criticize governmental educational projects oriented to facilitate the completion of primary and secondary education for adults that couldn't finish their studies, in modalities based on reduced curriculums, shorten periods of learning, and semi-presential teaching. In 2014, Juan Wahren and Victoria Aguiló explained the challenge of the BP in front of the expansion of the Plan FINES (Plan de Finalización de Estudios Primarios y Secundarios), designed in 2008 by the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner: “En el contexto político actual los bachilleratos populares deben afrontar una nueva complejidad, la de un Estado que se presenta en los territorios para dar respuesta a las demandas educativas desde una lógica bancaria y de precarización educativa para los estudiantes y laboral para los docentes llamada FINES” (108).²⁸ The CEIP, in 2016, during the government of Mauricio Macri, questioned the precarity of the education offered by focalized policies that tend to perpetuate inequality, and affirmed: “Apostamos por la conformación de un espacio productor de conocimiento crítico en torno a la realidad social y por la generación de relaciones sociales emancipadoras. En este sentido, nuestra propuesta se orienta entre las prácticas y saberes cooperativos, pensando en nuevas formas posibles del trabajo. Buscamos promover una formación integral que sintetice los saberes académicos, sociales, del trabajo y de lucha con los valores del cooperativismo y la autogestión” (24).²⁹

Both BP and ERT base their praxis in the principle of *autogestión*, but this does not mean that they disregard the State as the guarantor of the social rights that they are claiming: the right to work, the right to education. Thus, they critically address the State and its institutions (the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Production, the Ministry of Education) to obtain legal and economic support to sustain their self-managed and self-governed working places and schools. They inscribe themselves in a Latin American tradition of social movements of the popular sphere taking in their hands the organization of production and education of their communities, at the same time that they claim the State to

²⁷ Translation from Spanish: “The BP is a center that educates you for the transformation, or that would be the ideal, I don't know. (...) I think that this, for the student, for the *educando* that goes to the *bachillerato*, we want to make him or her a conscious and critical subject, we want him or her to critique this society, to be conscious of the society that he or her has, to be conscious of the State that govern us, to be conscious that he or she is being screwed. To be conscious that in the factory in which he or she works twelve, eight, nine hours, is being exploited, they pay him or her miserably, to be conscious that this society is not as good as we want it to be. I think this is the goal of the BP. Instead, the objective of other schools is another, in a technique school is to teach you something technical, they teach you to use machines, to use your head in the computer, to make numbers, to fill forms at the end of the month to pay salaries”.

²⁸ Translation from Spanish: “In the current political context [meaning the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner] the BP must face a new complexity: that of a State that presents itself in the territories to respond to educational needs from a vertical perspective and a practice of *precarization* of education for the students and of labor conditions for the teachers. This is called FINES”.

²⁹ Translation from Spanish: “We go for the conformation of a space to produce critical knowledge regarding our social reality, and to generate emancipatory social relationships. In this sense, our proposal is oriented by cooperative practices and knowledges, thinking in new possible forms of working. We aim to promote an integral formation that synthesizes academic, social, working, and struggle knowledges, with the values of cooperativism and *autogestión*”.

guarantee the social rights they are collectively exercising. The most important antecedent, in this sense, is the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), from Brazil. These social movements, one hand, do not give in the neoliberal discourse that aims to minimize the State responsibilities, nor, on the other hand, surrender to the policies of patronage, co-optation, and fragmentation of the social organizations of the popular sphere, that menace their social and political independence, their capacity to sustain alternative ways of production and education from below, their capability of questioning and criticizing the shortcomings of the governmental policies, their potential to propose -from the everyday life realities of different regions of the country- new policies that could change the persistent -even during the Kirchnerist governments that were supposed to promote a “national and popular model”- extractionist and socially exclusionary matrix.

Now, the ERT seem to be facing a new political situation. Eduardo Murúa, one of the leaders of the MNER, assumed, in December 2019, the Dirección de Empresas Recuperadas, an organism dedicated to the ERT that the Kirchnerist government of Alberto Fernández created. This institution pertains to the Secretaría de Economía Popular, that forms part of the Ministerio de Desarrollo Social (Ministry of Social Development). In an interview this year, in January 6, Murúa explains that it still is a problem, in today’s Argentina, that new jobs are not being generated, that the situation is similar to that of 1998, when the workers occupied IMPA. Murúa highlights that, nevertheless, the ERT were able, during the most difficult times (2001/2002, 2008/2009, and 2016-2019), to maintain their factories and workshops functioning, something that was not possible for many other small businesses. This social strength of the ERT needs to be supported by State policies, and that is why he is proposing a program for infrastructural and technological improvements, capacitation, and generation of new productive projects. Murúa does not overlook what may seem a contradiction: a leader of the ERT, a social movement that is based on the principle of the *autogestión*, that was implacably critic with previous Kirchnerist governments (2003-2015), now is a functionary of Fernández’ government. He affirms that he had his doubts in accepting the nomination for this Ministry (which is, moreover, dedicated to social assistance, and not to production and labor), and that he would not stop encouraging his colleagues and members of other social organizations to continue protesting on the streets and addressing critically to the State. Finally he promises: “Si las cosas no resultan damos un paso al costado y volvemos a la trinchera” (*Canal abierto*, January 6, 2020).³⁰ Would it be possible for the ERT to keep their political and social independence, and their productive activity based on the *autogestión*, and, at the same time, be able to empower their organizations through this new position within the State? How this new position could not be one of subordination or limitation to governmental agendas, and, instead, to be one of democratization of state institutionality?

Since 1998, the occupied factories and work places were transformed into spaces of communitarian and horizontal *dwelling, building, and thinking* the world in alternative ways from those that were hegemonic in the neoliberal age. The ERT, the popular schools, and the cultural centers that were also opened for the community (the most important one is in IMPA, where there are performances, exhibitions, and multiple workshops), can be thought as examples of what Terry Smith conceives as new forms of *place making*, “seeking to modify a given world, to make a place for ourselves within it” (199).³¹ The workers, that were being excluded from the world’s neoliberal system (which

³⁰ Translation from Spanish: “If things do not turn out positive for us [the ERT], then we will step aside and come back to the trench”.

³¹ These processes, full of “constructive capacity”, are developed in the context of a world marked by an “accelerated complexity, ubiquitous connectedness, deepening differences, intense proximities, layered multiplicity, pervasive transitionally, and vast violence” (Smith, 198).

implied in Argentina, and in many other countries, the des-industrialization and closure of factories), commenced making new places, different from those that were disappearing (the factories that were being closed), and radically different from those that were being increasingly imposed (the places for consumption). The places that the workers built, together with their communities, and with intellectuals and artists from public universities and cultural institutions or popular organizations, are places for experience, *erfahrung*. These places, independent from the government, and from the market and its dynamics of commodification of life experience, enable the exercise of dwelling the here-and-now in connection with the past (actualizing the memories and knowledges of the working-class), and activating the capacity to imagine a different future (expressing historical consciousness and critical thinking).

Together with Heidegger's concepts of dwelling, building, and thinking the world, and with Terry Smith's considerations about place making, I find stimulating the reflections of Bernard Stiegler, a contemporaneous French philosopher, to think the alternative worlding that is forged in the popular sphere of Argentina. Stiegler argues that the *malaise* of our contemporary world is the impoverishment of the human capacity of *individuation* (Georges Simondon's concept), not only in the sphere of production (what he calls *proletarianization*: alienation, exteriorization of skills in the process of work) but also in the sphere of consumption (a new way of *proletarianization* of life) (2010, 11-41).³² Stiegler, thus, manifests that our contemporary *malaise* implies a new *desindividuation* (Simondon), based on the dissolution of the *I* and the *We* into an impersonal and globalized *One* (2011, 211). He, then, advocates for a counter-tendency: a resistance to the commodification of life by recreating long circuits of desire and solidarity. He refers to a *territorial solidarity* (working in the local sphere to create alternative forms of social organization), and an *inter-generational solidarity* (between different generations) (2010, 100). Stiegler's critical considerations about our contemporary world ("our precarious world", as Heidegger said in "The Age of World Picture"), converge with Smith's idea of the necessity to enhance, by the means of critical practices, *world questions* and *constructive connections*. I think that these practices, that involve *place making*, are being created in the popular spheres of the world, in local, national, and international scales. Through the reconstruction of solidarities, an *alternative worlding* is generated in the experience of place making, of questioning the world, while building a new one. The ERT and other experiences of social organization in Argentina, create a powerful counter-tendency: they sustain an alternative way of *worlding contemporaneity*, in which territorial, inter-generational, and socially transversal solidarities, through a popular pedagogy born in the process of place making, enable the communitarian experience (*erfahrung*) of world questioning and world building.

Bibliography:

- Agustín Salvia, Ianina Tuñón, Bianca Musante, "La Inseguridad Alimentaria en la Argentina. Hogares Urbanos" in *Observatorio de la Deuda Social Argentina*, Universidad Católica Argentina, 2012
- Andrés Ruggeri, "Reflexiones sobre la autogestión en las empresas recuperadas argentinas" in *Estudios*, núm. 1, 2011. Pp. 60-79
- Andrés Ruggeri, Natalia Polti, Javier Antivero (Comp.), *Autogestión y luchas obreras: del 2001 al nuevo neoliberalismo*. Callao Cooperativa Cultural, 2017

³² A compulsive gesture of consumption (analogue to the automatic gesture of the *proletarianized* worker) replaces *desire*. *Short circuits* of ephemeral satisfaction of the compulsion for consumption, shaped by the commodification of life (radicalized by digital forms of mercantile exhibition and publicity) in late capitalism, replace the *long circuits* of *desire* (which implies long-term subjective/psychological processes) and *solidarity* (which implies experiencing our own lives in deep and meaningful connections with others, in opposition to neoliberal individualism) (Stiegler 2010, 43).

- Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy*. Polity Press, 2010
- Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, 3. Stanford Press, 2011
- Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Key concepts in Post-colonial Studies*. Routledge, 2001
- David Forgacs (ed.), *The Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*. New York University Press, 2000
- Juan Bruno Ferenaz, *Bachilleratos populares y FinEs: luchas por la inclusión, acción estatal y educación popular. Alternativas en un barrio popular*. Universidad Nacional de Villa María, 2016
- Julián Rebón, *Desobedeciendo al desempleo. La experiencia de las empresas recuperadas*. Ediciones Rosa Blindada, 2004
- Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking". in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Harper & Row, 1971
- Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Garland, 1977
- Pablo Vinocur and Leopoldo Halperin, "Pobreza y políticas sociales en Argentina de los años noventa". Naciones Unidas, División de Desarrollo Social, CEPAL, 2004.
- Paulo Freire, *Cartas a Guinea Bissau. Apuntes de una experiencia en proceso*. Editorial Siglo XXI, 2004
- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia do Oprimido*. Paz e Terra, 1987
- Rita Segato, *La colonialidad del poder en ocho ensayos*. Prometeo, 2015
- Shirley Said, "Jóvenes en Bachilleratos Populares: entre la individuación y la subjetivación política" in *Universitas. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas*, Universidad Politécnica del Ecuador. Año XVI, núm. 28, 2018. Pp. 141-157
- Susana Díaz Ruiz, "Significaciones y prioridades en la autogestión de las ERT argentinas. El caso de Chilavert" in *Cuadernos de Relaciones Laborales*, vol. 32, núm. 2, 2014. Pp. 469-490
- Terry Smith, *Art to Come. Histories of Contemporary Art*. Duke University Press, 2019
- Karen Ann Faulk, *In the wake of neoliberalism. Citizenship and Human Rights in Argentina*. Stanford University Press, 2013.
- Victoria Aguiló and Juan Wahren, "Los bachilleratos populares de Argentina como campos de experimentación social" in *Argumentos*, Universidad Autónoma de México, año 27, núm. 74, enero-abril 2014. Pp. 97-114
- Walter Benjamin, "Experiencia y pobreza", "El narrador", and "Sobre algunos motivos en Baudelaire" in *Illuminaciones*. Taurus, 2018
- Other sources:
- "The Contemporary Condition", Terry Smith at the European Graduate School (2016):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=durNqyZPx-g>
- CTA (Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina):
<https://www.cta.org.ar/>
- "Fábricas recuperadas: la lucha en defensa del trabajo", *Visión 7* (May 1, 2015):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tK0mRfsRWo>
- "Cooperativa 19 de diciembre, empresa recuperada" (December 10, 2010):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=27&v=M7pGskXsGCc&feature=emb_logo
- "El método IMPA: Ocupar, resistir, producir", *Barricada TV*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a398LD0geX0>
- "Tres historias de fábricas y espacios recuperados por sus trabajadores", *Perfil* (May 1, 2019):
<https://www.perfil.com/noticias/sociedad/tres-historias-de-fabricas-y-espacios-recuperados-por-sus-trabajadores.phtml>
- Observatorio Social sobre Empresas Recuperadas y Autogestionadas, Universidad de Buenos Aires:
<http://empresasrecuperadas.org/mapa.php>
<http://empresasrecuperadas.org/vidioteca.php>
- "Grissinopoli, la nueva esperanza", *Ojo Obrero*:
<https://vimeo.com/6217359>

“Centro Cultural IMPA La Fábrica: arte, lucha y autogestión”:

<https://www.recursosculturales.com/centro-cultural-imp-la-fabrica-arte-autogestion/>

“Al menos veinte heridos en los incidentes frente a la fábrica Brukman”, *La nación* (April 26, 2003):

<https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/al-menos-20-heridos-en-los-incidentes-frente-a-la-fabrica-brukman-nid490486/>

“El gobierno de Kirchner y las empresas recuperadas”, *Anred* (December 11, 2007):

<https://www.anred.org/2007/12/11/el-gobierno-de-kirchner-y-las-empresas-recuperadas-balance-de-una-ambivalencia/>

“Empresas recuperadas llevaron propuestas a Kirchner”, *Infobae* (December 12, 2004):

<https://www.infobae.com/2004/10/12/145395-empresas-recuperadas-llevaron-propuestas-kirchner/>

“The Take”, directed by Avi Lewis and written by Naomi Klein (2004):

<https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/the-take-occupy-resist-produce/>

“El círculo mágico”, by Luciana Peker, *Página 12* (October 27, 2006):

<https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/las12/13-2966-2006-10-27.html>

“El saber, otra empresa recuperada”, by Irina Hauser, *Página 12* (March 23, 2004):

<https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/1-33145-2004-03-23.html>

Museo IMPA:

<https://museoimpa.com/category/publicaciones/>

“Con riesgo de desalojo”, *Página 12* (October 21, 2013):

<https://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/sociedad/3-231703-2013-10-21.html>

Cooperativa 19 de diciembre:

<http://www.coop19dediciembre.com.ar/index.php>

“Villa Ballester: Cooperativa 19 de diciembre”, *Centro cultural de la cooperación* (January 8, 2014):

<https://www.centrocultural.coop/blogs/cooperativismo/2017/07/09/villa-ballester-cooperativa-19-de-diciembre>

“La UNSAM compró equipamiento producido por una empresa recuperada”, *Noticias UNSAM* (December, 28, 2015):

<http://noticias.unsam.edu.ar/2015/12/22/la-unsam-compra-equipamiento-a-una-fabrica-recuperada/>

“Tres historias de fábricas y espacios recuperados por sus trabajadores”, *Perfil* (May 1, 2019):

<https://www.perfil.com/noticias/sociedad/tres-historias-de-fabricas-y-espacios-recuperados-por-sus-trabajadores.phtml>

“Entrevista a Eduardo Murúa”, *Global rights* (January 22, 2012):

<https://www.globalrights.info/2012/01/entrevista-a-eduardo-vasco-murua-de-la-fabrica-recuperada-imp/>

Entrevista con Eduardo Murúa, *Canal abierto* (January 6, 2020):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZANfc5NSmNQ>

“Retrato de una época”, *La vaca* (July 19, 2016):

<https://www.lavaca.org/mu101/retrato-de-una-epoca/>

“Panorama general de las empresas recuperadas y cooperativas autogestionadas”, *Anred* (January 20, 2020):

<https://www.anred.org/2020/01/20/panorama-general-de-las-empresas-recuperadas-y-cooperativas-autogestionadas/>

Praxis. Revista de educación y movimientos sociales, CEIP-Histórica (Cooperativa de Educadores e Investigadores Populares). Año 1, núm. 1, julio 2016.

INDEC (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. República Argentina):

<https://www.indec.gob.ar/indec/web/Nivel3-Tema-4-46>

“Realities and challenges of recuperated workplaces in Argentina” Interview with Andrés Ruggeri, by Ricardo Vaz. *Monthly Review on-line* (November 9, 2018):

<https://mronline.org/2018/11/09/realities-and-challenges-of-recuperated-workplaces-in-argentina/#gsc.tab=0>

“El Bachillerato trans Mocha Celis no puede empezar las clases por falta de fondos”, *Agencia Presentes* (March 2, 2020):

<https://agenciapresentes.org/2020/03/02/el-bachillerato-trans-mocha-celis-no-puede-empezar-las-clases-por-falta-de-fondos/>

“Mocha Celis. Primer Bachillerato Popular Trans (Buenos Aires)”, *Travelqueers* (July 16, 2016):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LAne6jeFFQ>

“Cómo evolucionó la tasa de desempleo en los últimos 35 años en la Argentina”, *Infobae* (July 19, 2018):

<https://www.infobae.com/economia/2018/07/19/como-evoluciono-la-tasa-de-desempleo-en-los-ultimos-35-anos-en-la-argentina/>

“Timeline: Argentina’s economic crisis”, *The Guardian* (December 20, 2001):

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/dec/20/argentina1>

“Diciembre feroz: las protestas que terminaron con el Gobierno de Fernando De la Rúa”, *Perfil* (July 9, 2019):

<https://www.perfil.com/noticias/politica/como-fueron-las-protestas-que-terminaron-con-el-gobierno-de-de-la-rua.phtml>

“Chilavert Artes Gráficas: una empresa comprometida con el barrio, la educación y la cultura”, *Fecootra* (Federación de Cooperativas de Trabajo de la República Argentina) (February 7, 2019):

https://www.fecootra.coop/articulo/0001679/chilavert_artes_graficas_una_empresa_comprometida_con_el_barrio_la_educacion_y_la_cultura.php

Movimiento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST):

<https://mst.org.br>