

**AN ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL APPROACH TO  
THE PHENOMENON OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:  
THE *ARGENTINAZO* MOVEMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

In the last decade, the social movements have been critical agents of the social change. The rise of the anti-globalisation movements remarks the onset of a new era for the social movements. Although the anti-globalisation movements commonly emerge at the trans-national level, there is a unique case in Argentina which illustrates that the anti-globalisation movements are also feasible at the national level. The *Argentinazo* movement is a remarkable example for the new social movements at the national level. With demonstrations and pan-banging following the financial collapse of Argentina in 2001, the masses were out on the streets and crying out against the corrupted state, and the inhumane face of neo-liberal globalisation. Then, this study elaborates on the factors leading to the failure of the *Argentinazo* in changing politics and economy. To find an answer for the failure of the movement, this study formulates a theory-based explanation within the historicity of the *Argentinazo* movement.

### **Keywords:**

Argentinazo, neo-liberalism, social movements, Argentina

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 19 December 2001, Argentina witnessed a massive social uprising which targeted all politicians, economic elites, neo-liberalism, and state violence. This social uprising on December 19<sup>th</sup> and the subsequent organisation of the social movement were defined as the *Argentinazo* movement. The *Argentinazo* epitomises a unique case, because it was one of the first anti-globalisation movements at the national/local level. For that, I chose it as the major interest to this study. In the December uprising, people of different social backgrounds, classes, and occupations gathered on the streets and started to bang the pans with the goal to make noise in order to make the political leaders and social elites cognisant of their worsening situation by poverty, unemployment, powerlessness and etc.

In the upcoming days of the *Argentinazo*, some demonstrators of the December uprising began to get organised and politicised in a variety of organisations (action repertoire). There are four types of action repertoire in the *Argentinazo*: Neighbourhood assemblies, recovered factories, *piquetes*, and barter clubs. These organisations were functioning to meet the needs and demands of their people. Some of them (neighbourhood assemblies and the assemblies of the *piquetes*) function as places where people can get together and discuss their problems. Some of them, such as recovered factories and barter clubs, are mainly involved in the basic concerns of people, such as jobs and food. In addition to differences regarding their functions, there are particular differences among these organisations in regard to the people who participate in these organisations, their driving motives to participate, their ideas regarding social change. It is clear that the action repertoire and various interpretations of the December uprising led to the changing course of the *Argentinazo* when it evolved from a simple protest of 19<sup>th</sup> December to a more organised and politicised social movement.

In this study, the research question is as follows: Why did the *Argentinazo* movement fail to change the Argentine politics and economy? By asking this question, I aim to analyse the underlying factors which led the *Argentinazo* to failure. The research goal is to formulate a theoretical dialogue between hegemony and the public sphere to answer the research question within the historicity of the *Argentinazo*. In line with the research question and goal, the methodological approach will be the critical approach. In other words, I can see the underlying reasons behind the failure of the *Argentinazo* through a critical approach by asking critical questions regarding the established modes of thought about the social movements. As

a research technique, I chose the single-case study since it provides in-depth knowledge related to the phenomenon at question.

As aforesaid, the research goal of this study is to formulate a theoretical dialogue by which the research question will be answered. In this study, there will be two well-known theories: Public sphere of Habermas and hegemony of Gramsci. In the selection of these theories, I should note, the new social movement theories are influential, because of their priority on the culture and historicity. For that, I chose public sphere and hegemony which are also elaborating on the role of culture and historicity in the analysis of the social reality. The theoretical dialogue is that the creation of the public sphere is necessary for the subaltern groups to develop a counter-hegemonic discourse. Yet, such a theoretical dialogue must be contextualised within the historicity of the *Argentinazo*. Diversity and detachment among the different organisations of the *Argentinazo* prevents the unemployed, working class, and middle class to formulate counter-hegemonic discourse through which they could form a historical bloc for the social change. However, there is this underlying factor; it is the lack of the public sphere among these different organisations as an impediment for the formation of counter-hegemony. In other words, a democratic public space could provide a place in which people from different organisations of the *Argentinazo* could gather, freely discuss about their ideas, and reach consensus on the future direction of the *Argentinazo*, counter-hegemony. However, the lack of the democratic public sphere within the movement can be understood by referring to the historicity of *Argentinazo*. Earlier policies of populism, patronage, military interludes did not allow for a democratic public space to develop in the Argentine society. However, such a legacy was also preventing the organisations of the *Argentinazo* to form a public space where they could have consensus over a counter-hegemonic discourse. Then, the answer to the research question posed above is the lack of a democratic public space which prevented the creation of counter-hegemony, therefore the *Argentinazo* failed to change the course of Argentine politics and economy.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **I. Overview: The *Argentinazo* Movement**

After the financial crisis in 2001, the social uprising in different forms had lasted for nearly two years. Argentina witnessed mass demonstrations against the current course of politics and economy. In particular, most incidents of the social uprising occurred in Buenos Aires. *Argentinazo*<sup>1</sup> refers to the popular (or social) uprising owing to the outburst of financial crisis in December 2001 and the subsequent development of social movement organisations (hereafter action repertoire or organisations) in the following days. The masses were out on the streets when the police killed 36 of the demonstrators on 19<sup>th</sup> of December and they were shouting as “*Que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo!*” (out with them all, not a single one must remain) (North & Huber, 2004:964). Indeed, the motto of the *Argentinazo* is prologue to new developments in Argentina; the politics without politicians and society without the elites (Feinberg, 2008:27). In addition, demonstrators developed a series of action repertoire, such as neighbourhood assemblies, recovered factories by workers, pickets and barter clubs. Different organisations of the *Argentinazo* affected the process of the social movement by their various actions, members, and world-views.

#### **II. The Goal of the Study: Research Motives**

The primary goal in this study is to seek for a theoretical explanation of the *Argentinazo* movement. In other words, a theoretical dialogue will be developed to understand the historicity and dynamics of the *Argentinazo*. In addition, there are some motives for the author to do such a study. Of them, the most crucial is my personal experience of the financial crisis of 2001 in Turkey. Interestingly enough, both Turkey and Argentina as emerging markets went through their ever-worst financial crisis at the same time. My own reading of the media coverage and academic studies about the financial crises in Argentina and Turkey is that Turkey was a success story in comparison to Argentina in terms of recovery from the financial crisis and in terms of political stability and social order. Both the media and

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<sup>1</sup> For further detail, please read the article “Alternative Space of the *Argentinazo*” by Peter North and Ulli Huber (2004).

academia pointed out that Turkey had not been through the same social dislocation or uprising as Argentina had. Most of these studies endeavoured to demonstrate that the strong relations between the state and society prevented the social uprising in Turkey. For them, this was a “success” of Turkey. In this study, I aim at disproving such a misjudged belief and particularly lay theories on the Media. For that, this study will contribute a fruitful analysis of alternative theoretical approaches to social movements following economic crises other than mainstream social movement theories.

### **III. Formulating Research Question:**

Why did the *Argentinazo* fail to change Argentine politics and economy? This is the research question to which the study is addressing. In fact, I should give some credits to the earlier studies contributed by other authors on the *Argentinazo* movement. When formulating the research question above, I was deeply inspired by the studies of Peter North and Ulli Huber (2004). In the end of their article, they posed the following question: “How effectively did the three elements (neighbourhood assemblies, recovered factories, and pickets) of action repertoire of the *Argentinazo* provide spaces for the construction of alternative materials and discursive forms of engagement?” (North & Ulli, 2004: 979). Another study that was influential on my thesis is Holloway’s “Change the world without taking power” (2002). Holloway posed the following question: “Did *Argentinazo* develop a coherent alternative to Neo-liberalism or was this a negative, repudiation a shout against Neo-liberalism? (Holloway, 2002 cited in North & Huber, 2004:965). The former question explicitly refers to the idea of public space which is similar to the public sphere of Jurgen Habermas central to the theory in this study. On the other hand, the latter underlines whether the *Argentinazo* becomes an alternative (discourse) to Neo-liberalism and this idea is rather similar to Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and counter-hegemonic discourse. In this study, I was inspired from these crucial questions to formulate the research question and analyse theoretical approaches on the *Argentinazo*. Referring again to the research question above, it is an explanatory question and asking a “why” type of question. In that sense, it looks for theoretical explanation/analysis of the phenomenon, the *Argentinazo*. For that, two alternative theories will be used in this study: Theory of public sphere and theory of hegemony.

### **IV. Theoretical Background:**

Theories of social movements are mainly classified into two broad schools, collective behaviour theory based in North America and New social movements theory based in Europe

(Crossley, 2002:12). The former consists of two main premises: rational actor and resource mobilisation. Rational actor theory means that individual agents rationally analyse a course of action (collective action or social movement) to maximise their desires and opportunities; minimise risks and constraints (Crossley, 2002:58-9). On the other hand, the second strain of collective behaviour theory, resource mobilisation, refers to the idea that social movements are formed when the elites or powerful groups exchange some of both material and non-material resources to mobilise people (Crossley, 2002:78-79). With both premises, collective behaviour theory is promising in some respects. However, this study will elaborate on the second school, theories of New social movements. The reason is that collective behaviour theories are reductionist in regard to the role of culture and society in social movements.

What makes the theories of New social movements ‘new’ is the fact that they analyse the social movements of the 1960s from a socio-cultural perspective (Crossley, 2002:150-151). In other words, New social movement theories connect the social movement with the society and culture of their origin. As one of the preeminent scholar of these theories, Alain Touraine provided a significant concept to the new school: “Historicity”. In other words, the social movements are generally carrying particular commonalities, however differing on essential points owing to their own unique culture and society (Crossley, 2002:151). Then, New social movement theories are breakthrough in understanding the social movement within the historical context of the culture and society. New social movements are rather influential in explaining the new social movements of 1960s (students, the Blacks, and feminist movements), the main concern of this paper, the *Argentinazo* movement, cannot be explained purely by New social movement theories’ emphasis on historicity of culture and society in which social movement arise and fade away. For that reason, in this study, there should be some new theoretical approaches in line with New social movement theories. They are the theory of public sphere by Jurgen Habermas and theory of hegemony by Antonio Gramsci. Both theories are sharing the idea of historicity of culture and society with New social movement theories. However, they are different on certain respects, namely the role of public sphere and hegemony.

*Argentinazo* has two characteristics illustrating that theories of public sphere and hegemony are efficient theoretical tools to analyse the social movement in Argentina. First of all, in neighbourhood assemblies; demonstrators, namely residents, formed a kind of space where they could bring about any issue or problem to public debate (North & Huber, 2004:971). Indeed, such a public debate in the neighbourhood assemblies is complying with the public sphere theory of Habermas. Second of all, recovered factories and barter clubs

endeavoured to form a kind of solidarity economy as an alternative to dominant ideology of capitalist market; neo-liberalism (North & Huber, 2004:973). Obviously, the idea of solidarity economy is an example for Gramscian counter-hegemony. Accordingly, the study is mainly concerned with what role, if ever, public sphere or hegemony performs in the course of the *Argentinazo* movement.

#### **a. Public Sphere Theory:**

Jurgen Habermas developed the theory of public sphere to explicate the complex relation between rationality and participation in modern democracies and societies (Avritzer, 2002). Public sphere may be defined as a space for free interaction of groups, associations, and movements (Habermas, 1989:136; Schumpeter, 1942; Downs, 1956; Sartori, 1987 cited in Avritzer, 2002:40). In other words, when groups or agents come together to bring normative arrangements into question, they form a public sphere (Crossley, 2002:155). Along with public sphere, Habermas' theory of communicative action is also critical in understanding the significance of "linguistic interaction for mutual understanding between agents" (Crossley, 2002:155-156). Indeed, such a linguistic action takes place in the space which Habermas (1989:136-137) called as the public sphere. In these public spaces, the action of language takes into two forms. One is the norm-confirmative action in which agents are linguistically conforming to particular norms and rules in the public space. The other is discourse in which agents are reflexively evaluating their linguistic action and; exchange ideas and reason through public debates (Crossley, 2002:155-156). For free interaction of and communication between people and groups, the public sphere must be autonomous from both the state and market (Avritzer, 2002:40). There is an essential critique of Habermas' theory of the public sphere; it is criticised due to its overemphasis on a bourgeoisie, white-male public sphere excluding women and blacks (Avritzer, 2002:42-3). This critique forms the basis for those who defend the social movements are forming a public sphere other than the media and civil society. For that, the public sphere theory is also explanatory for the social movements apart from modern societies and democracies.

#### **b. Theory of Hegemony:**

The fundamental question for the followers of Marxist tradition is whether the economic crises (or changes in economy) would lead to political transformation (Forgacs, 2000:208). According to Gramsci, "economic changes do not of themselves produce political changes, but they only set the conditions in which such changes become possible" (Forgacs,

2000:190). By the concept of the historical bloc, Gramsci illustrates that structures (mainly social relations of production, economy) and superstructures (politics, ideology and culture) are reciprocally influenced by one another (Forgacs, 2000:193). Another concept introduced by Gramsci is the relations of force (three different relations; social, political, and military forces). Of them, the relations of political is crucial in understanding the theory of hegemony, because it forms the relations of political forces where hegemony is created and used by the dominant social groups over the subaltern social groups (Forgacs, 2000:205). In other words, there are three different levels where structures and superstructures are related to one another; they are respectively economic-corporate level, political level, and ethico-political level where ideological hegemony control the rise of subaltern groups from structures (economic) to superstructures (political and ideological) (Forgacs, 2000:205). Then, the social movements (radical movements or revolution) can be explained as a struggle with dominant groups at the ethico-political level by the theory of hegemony.

#### **V. How to use Public Sphere and Hegemony in the Theoretical Analysis of the *Argentinazo* Movement**

As aforesaid, both theories of the public sphere and hegemony are sharing a commonality with New social movement theories and it is the role of the culture and society in social movements. In theoretical explanation of social movements, both give priority to the role of socio-cultural elements in formation of social movements. However, their emphasis on culture and society differs from one another on certain aspects. In other words, their point of analysis on culture and society are essentially different. Public sphere theory primarily emphasises the role of public sphere as the place where communicative action is taking place in the cultural or societal level independent from the levels of state and market. In this public sphere, social movements emerge and develop further. On the other hand, the theory of hegemony underpins that the creation of hegemony at political, particularly cultural, and ideological levels in which the subaltern groups either develop their own self-consciousness or taken over by hegemonic discourse of dominant social groups. Then, they are theoretically analysing social movements from different perspectives of public sphere or ideological hegemony. In particular, any social movement needs to be analysed in terms of whether it creates or has a public sphere or (mostly alternative) hegemonic discourse. For that, this study aims to create a theoretical dialogue between the public sphere and hegemony.

## **VI. Methodology and Data Analysis**

It is a single-case study on the *Argentinazo* movement taking place in Argentina subsequent to the financial crisis in 2001. The choice of a single-case is rather useful to collect in-depth knowledge regarding the social movement at issue. It provides empirical evidence necessary for comparing explanatory power of aforementioned theories on the social movements. However, it should be noted that the single-case study is not useful to make theoretical generalisations from a particular phenomenon. Yet, this study is not a theory-generating, but theory-driven/testing type; therefore, a single case would be sufficient to test analytical power of theories on that case. As data, secondary resources on the *Argentinazo* would be evaluated.

## **VII. Plan of the Thesis:**

In the thesis, there will be three major chapters in addition to introduction and conclusion. Firstly, there will be held a theoretical argument in which the theories of the public sphere and hegemony are closely analysed with their explanatory power. Secondly, methodological approach will be evaluated. In this part, the relation of the chosen methodology with the theoretical argument and empirical data will be clarified. Last but not least, the case of the *Argentinazo* will be given and the study will elaborate on what kind of a theoretical dialogue could explain the failure of the *Argentinazo* in changing politics and economy. In the concluding remarks, there will be a brief summary of the whole discussion held in this study.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

In this part of the study, there will be an analysis of theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of social movements. In particular, the theories of Hegemony by Antonio Gramsci and Public Sphere by Jürgen Habermas are elaborated. Then, as the theoretical aim of the study, a dialogue between those is established to illuminate how both theories in tandem can explain better the social movements and their impact on a variety of political and socio-economic aspects.

#### **I. Gramscian Theory Of Hegemony: Counter-Hegemony By Subaltern Groups**

In the interwar era, the most challenging question for Marxist school of thought was whether economic crises were directly leading to historical crises entailing political transformation or revolution? (Forgacs, 2000:189). According to Gramsci, social and economic changes or turmoil are not creating the historical crises leading to the rise of revolutionary movement, albeit creating necessary conditions for such political transformations (Forgacs, 2000:190). Economic tensions are creating “a more favourable terrain for the dissemination of certain modes of thought and ways of posing and resolving questions” (Forgacs, 2000:208). For that, Gramsci was rather cynic of earlier schools of Marxism based on the principles of economism and scientism. Economism and scientism are basically endeavouring to analyze structural changes as the basis of revolutionary movement excluding the role of politics, ideology, and culture. Gramsci ardently opposed to the non-political character of economism and scientism prevailing in the Orthodox Marxism and their apathy to the political role of consciousness and ideologies (Boggs, 1976:11,20,36; and Forgacs, 2000:191). For Gramsci, politics is not a simple reflection of economic crisis or economy (hereafter named as structure) (Forgacs, 2000:191). Rejecting the economic or positivist reductionism of the earlier Marxist studies, Gramsci did a critique of Orthodox Marxism and revised it under the title of lately known Gramscian theory.

Rather than a simplification of politics as a reflection of structure, Gramsci defends the idea of a constantly changing and reciprocal relationship between structure and superstructure

which are decisive on the political transformation and revolution (Boggs, 1976:36; Forgacs, 2000:193). Structure refers to the economic base or social relations of production and superstructure means cultural and symbolic meanings and values (politics, ideology, and culture) (Boggs, 1976:17,18; Forgacs, 2000:195). Both structure and superstructure form the Historical Bloc in which forces of relations (political, social, and military forces) between structure and superstructure are taking place and affecting one another (Forgacs, 2000:193). In his analysis of structure-superstructure relation, Gramsci came up with the idea of hegemony. There are different ways of defining Gramscian view of hegemony; it is commonly known as the political and moral leadership of the dominant classes over the subaltern groups via popular consensus reached by ideological hegemony of dominant classes (Boggs, 1976:17; Forgacs, 2000:195; and Sholar, 1994:86). In addition, hegemony can be defined as “the capacity to articulate different visions of the world in such a way that political antagonism is neutralised” (Laclau, 1979 cited in Sholar, 1994:86). Another different reading of Gramsci’s hegemony is as follows: “hegemony is the harnessing of public life to the interests of one particular group i.e. a social bloc ordered around the dominant classes” (Eley, 1992:326 cited in Sholar 1994:86). The former indicates that hegemony, by opting out the alternatives, is representing one particular type of worldview as common sense or organising principle for class domination (Boggs, 1976: 39). The latter refers to how politics is subordinated to the bourgeoisie class interests in the public area, as aforesaid politics means just a reflection of structure for the previous Marxist intellectuals.

Referring again to his idea of hegemony necessary for class domination, Gramsci underpins that dominant classes are using ideological hegemony rather than force or coercion to control and dominate subaltern groups through an art of persuasion (Boggs, 1976:38). Accordingly, Gramsci (1988) disproved the fallacy of earlier Marxist overreliance on use of force and coercion for class domination. Instead, he defends that dominant classes control the subaltern classes by providing moral and intellectual leadership and subordinating everyday life of subaltern groups to the ideals (or interests) of the bourgeoisie capitalist society (Gramsci, 1988; Boggs, 1976:17,39; Forgacs, 2000:195; Sholar, 1994:86). At this point, it should be noted that Gramsci was heavily influenced by Croce’s ideas regarding Praxis and Ethico-political. The former is rather influential on Gramsci’s theory of hegemony; the idea of Praxis led Gramsci to consider both theory and action in tandem. In regard to idea of praxis, subaltern groups need to get independent of intellectual and political leadership of dominant classes (Forgacs, 2000:196). The reason is that pure economic independence does not guarantee the emancipation of subaltern groups from class domination as long as intellectual

and political leadership are provided by ideological hegemony of dominant class (Gramsci, 1988; Forgacs, 2000:196). In another aspect, Croce affects Gramsci by his idea of Ethico-political simply defined as a particular stage of history; however, the meaning of Ethico-political transformed from being a particular stage to class domination (Boggs, 1976:38). In other words, the ethico-political can be read as Enlightenment values (scientism or rationality) dominated by bourgeoisie interests. At this Ethico-political stage, everyday life of subaltern groups is subordinated to the bourgeoisie capitalist society established on the ideas of the Enlightenment (Boggs, 1976:39).

Based upon the Crocean ideas of Praxis and Ethico-political, Gramsci argues that the subaltern groups must develop counter-hegemony to get its own intellectual and moral leadership necessary (namely in the level of civil society) for their own emancipation from domination. As aforesaid, an economic crisis or any crisis at the level of structure needs to be followed by an ideological crisis; in other words, structure crisis can reduce the consensus among different groups at the ethico-political level to corporate-economic consciousness of dominant classes (Boggs, 1976:40-41). At this point, Gramsci underlined that subaltern groups must get “conscious of structural changes and come up with a new morality or new world of instrumental values of thought necessary for revolutionary movement” (Forgacs, 2000:195). Accordingly, the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between structure and superstructure is best understood as the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces of relations between dominant and subaltern classes.

## **II. Habermas’ Theory Of Public Sphere: Legitimation Crisis**

Upon the rise of the student movements in the late 1960s, the Critical (Frankfurt) school had been through crisis. The reason is that radical negativity embraced by the earlier representatives of the Critical school did not work to explain the rise of new social movements; in other words, the negative conditions of neither the proletariat in advanced industrial societies nor the poor in the Third world did not ignite the new social movements or radical social change, but the students who were living in an affluent society with middle class background (Calhoun, 1999:27). The young member of the school, Jürgen Habermas, overcame the incapability of the Critical school to explain the student movements by excluding such a radical negativity (Calhoun, 1999:28). Though being the distinguished scholar of the Critical school in the time of student movements, Habermas had been no doubt influenced by his predecessors, Horkheimer and Adorno. In addition, Marx was rather influential on Habermas’ ways of thinking; particularly Marx’s idea of alienation affected his

ideas when he discussed human capacities repressed by social rules and institutions going beyond them (Calhoun, 1999:29).

Habermas' reading of radical social change along with those of rationality and participation is based on some fundamental ideas developed by the Critical school. Two of them are inter-subjectivity (basically defined as between-world) or relation between different subjects, and communication (Crossley, 2005:168). Indeed, Habermas notified that the Critical school itself was an enterprise of its own society and culture; therefore, it needed to perform a function to help the social and cultural emancipation by the way of freer communication without domination (Calhoun, 1999:29). From this point on, he came up with two theories of public sphere and communicative action. Indeed, they both are interdependent and this study will use communication action as an auxiliary to elaborate on the theory of public sphere.

Habermas developed the theory of public sphere to explicate how the complex relation between rationality and participation in modern democracies and societies is understood (Avritzer, 2002). Public sphere may be defined as a space for free interaction of groups, associations, and movements (Habermas, 1989:136; Schumpeter, 1942; Downs, 1956; Sartori, 1987 cited in Avritzer, 2002:40). In other words, when groups or agents come together to bring normative arrangements into question, they form a public sphere (Crossley, 2002:155). There are alternative ways of underlining certain aspects of the public sphere. It is a domain open to all people and wherein public opinion is shaped by citizens' free conversation about and critique of the public authority's actions without any threat of domination (Habermas, 1989: 136,137; Sholar, 1994:79; Seidman, 1989:231). The origins of the public sphere dates back to the rise of bourgeoisie capitalist society with Enlightenment and is defined "as a third estate between the public authority and market to mediate Bourgeoisie's needs and convert public authority into a rational one by public debates" (Seidman, 1989:234).

Along with public sphere, Habermas' theory of communicative action is also critical in understanding the significance of "linguistic interaction for mutual understanding between agents" (Crossley, 2002:155-156; Habermas, 1979; Habermas 1991). Indeed, such a linguistic action takes place in space which Habermas called as public sphere. This is a form of action where it is possible to achieve mutual understanding between agents through language (Avritzer, 2003:42; Habermas, 1979; Habermas 1991) and arrive at a non-coercive agreement over the claims of validity on the basis of reason open to inter-subjective assessment (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994:39). For free interaction of and communication between people and groups, the public sphere must be autonomous from both the state and market (Avritzer, 2002:40,42;

Habermas, 1991). In these public spaces, the action of language takes into two forms. One is the norm-confirmative action in which agents are linguistically conforming to particular norms and rules in public space (Crossley, 2002:155,156). The other is discourse in which agents are reflexively evaluating their linguistic action and exchange ideas and reason through public debates (Crossley, 2002:155,156). Particularly by the latter form of linguistic action, all participant agents are sharing a world of common values and norms; and acting in line with them at the communicative/public space (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994:39). Accordingly, Habermas defends that in spite of the historical and contextual particularity of social conditions, such communicative action in the public sphere results in transcendental/universal characteristics crucial for human/social emancipation from domination (Calhoun, 1999:32). Communicative action in public sphere is a way to share truth without manipulation of it as transcendental characteristics. Accordingly, this leads Habermas to develop the communicative reason against the instrumental reason in which reason is used or manipulated for political benefits (Calhoun, 1994:32). Abandoning the communicative reason, particularly normative debates regarding common norms and values in public sphere, essentially gives rise to social disasters, like alienation of human capacities (Calhoun, 1994:32).

To understand the outbreak of the social crises, it is necessary to evaluate Habermas' units of analysis regarding society; namely Lifeworld and System. Both terms are critical in analysing theories of public sphere and communicative action. Lifeworld refers to symbolic interactions between agents through mutual understanding and a common orientation towards shared norms and values in the communicative space (Crossley, 2002:154). On the other hand, System means the impersonal force of balance between inputs and outputs achieved through supply and demand at the macro-level (Crossley, 2002:154). In other words, Lifeworld is the cultural and linguistic aspects while system refers to economy and politics. Lifeworld is where the communicative action takes place among agents (Crossley, 2002:154-155). Cultural-symbolic values, dispositions and resources like language, are created at the level of Lifeworld by communicative action.

Economic or political crises or class antagonisms can shake the interactions taking place in Lifeworld and system. In particular, Lifeworld has crisis tendencies (Crossley, 2002:157). There are two types of crises in Lifeworld; motivation and legitimation crises. The former refers to the crises regarding the problems of agencies' basic dispositions in lifeworlds, such as work ethic (Crossley, 2002:157). On the other hand, the latter means the crises regarding the values and norms regulating communicative action and public space (Crossley, 2002:157). At this point, Habermas introduces the concept of "Colonisation of

Lifeworld” by System. This refers to the penetration of Lifeworld by System and cultural impoverishment (Crossley, 2002:158-59; 2005:37). In other words, economy and state are intervening and regulating the daily life by means of respectively financial measures and bureaucratic regulations (Crossley, 2002:159). Colonisation of Lifeworld and legitimacy crisis underlines Habermas’ concerns regarding the weakening public sphere in advanced societies. Habermas noted that deterioration of the public sphere is resulting from the mass participation into the public space and; ambiguous divide between state and society as a result of increasing state intervention through welfare state (Calhoun, 1999:31). Penetration of state and market into Lifeworld illustrates that sectarian and special interests are introduced into the public sphere without any rational-critical argumentation in public sphere (Calhoun, 1999:31).

### **III. Dialogue Between Theories Of Gramsci And Habermas**

“We cannot expect theoretical cumulation to result in the development of the single, completely adequate theory. The field of sociological theory necessarily –and indeed happily– will remain a field of dialogue among multiple theories, each offering aspects of truth and none of them commanding truth entirely. This means also that theory needs to be seen crucially through its role in the process of interpretation, and that its empirical content is often best deployed not as universal truths or law-like generalisations, but as analogies, contrasts, and comparisons (Calhoun, 1999:8).”

As clearly noted in the quote above, the Critical school has based on the ideal of building up a dialogue with all theories as much as possible, but remaining critical of their pre-given universe of ideas and pre-suppositions. In this study, the theoretical goal is to find a dialogue between Gramscian hegemony and Habermas’ public sphere in the analysis of social movements. Though having some competing arguments, both theories are ontologically and epistemologically sharing some commonalities as follows:

- 1) Both of them are influenced by the theory of Praxis developed by Croce in the Marxist school. Praxis means that it is a must to evaluate all aspects of human existence together (Boggs, 1976:17). In that sense, Gramsci rejected economism and scientism in Marxist tradition, because they only elaborated on one aspect of the whole phenomena, namely economic determinants and objective conditions necessary for revolutionary social change. On the other hand, Habermas as a contemporary member of Critical school is rather

sceptical of Enlightenment and traditional school, because of their one-sided explanation of social reality.

- 2) As a result of being influenced by the theory of Praxis, both Habermas and Gramsci are rather critical of the pre-given world of ideas and theories. However, their theories are open to new theories, ideas and even innovations from the bourgeoisie capitalist society.
- 3) For the theory of Praxis underlines the interconnectedness between theory and action (politics), both theorists aim to illustrate that the final goal of their theoretical projects is human emancipation or full actualisation of human capacities.
- 4) As a central theme to both theories of Hegemony and Public sphere, Gramsci and Habermas start their theoretical debates by discussing whether or how economic crises are leading to ideological or legitimisation crises respectively in Hegemony and Public sphere theories.

Particularly above the last commonality between Hegemony and Public sphere, both theorists have a different reading of transformation of economic crises into an ideological or legitimisation crises at the end. Firstly, Gramsci in his theory of Hegemony underpinned the significant role of the politics in such an economic crisis followed up by an ideological one. However, Habermas in the theory of Public sphere touched upon cultural and linguistic aspects of life rather than political one. Secondly, such a transformation of economic crisis into an ideological one, according to Gramsci, is necessary for the emancipation of the subaltern groups from class domination. However, the rise of legitimisation crisis following an economic one is leading to the loss of rational-critical discourse in the public sphere owing to politicisation and domination of public debates by private interests. Accordingly, Gramsci and Habermas have a different reading of system crises and their impacts on their ideas of hegemony and public sphere.

In spite of such a disagreement between them regarding the role of politics in system crises, this study will elaborate a dialogue between theories of Hegemony and Public sphere. Between theories of Hegemony and Public sphere, such a dialogue should be built around their common focus on the role of “Third estate” visa-via the state and market. In addition, another way of finding dialogue between them, both of the theories approached the phenomenon of civil society as the third estate from a praxis perspective by combining their theoretical ambitions with practical concerns. This study will take their dialogue regarding

the analysis of civil society from a perspective of praxis further. When discussing the civil society, Gramsci overemphasised the role of the class antagonism (particularly the proletariat) in the third estate. On the other hand, Habermas overemphasised the role of bourgeoisie class in the formation of civil society as public sphere. To escape the fallacy of both Hegemony and Public sphere in underlining certain sectors, this study will elaborate on the social movements as third estate instead of civil society. At the end, this study combines both the public sphere and hegemony in this theoretical dialogue in which it theoretically defends that a democratic public sphere is necessary for the creation of counter-hegemony by the subaltern groups.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

#### **I. Introduction:**

In this part of the thesis, there will be an analysis of methodological approach toward the theoretical framework. Methodological part is rather critical in understanding the relations between the theoretical claims done and empirical evidence presented by this study. Firstly, theoretical framework discussed in the previous part will be extended in that it will be reevaluated in reference to methodological considerations. Secondly, methodological approach will be elaborated further with an emphasis on the case of Argentinazo social movement.

#### **II. Theoretical Framework: A Critical Theory of Social Movements:**

Social theory is defined “as a system of interconnected abstractions and ideas about the (social) world” (Neuman, 2000:40). Beyond such a simple definition, theory in general refers to how social scientists analyze a particular (or it may be general) phenomenon on the basis of essential assumptions by raising critical questions and offering new ways to collect data regarding such phenomenon (Neuman, 2000:60). From these definitions, it can be concluded that theoretical studies mainly consists of a scientific zeal to combine all these relevant assumptions, questions and data for explaining the phenomenon at issue. It is also clear that ordinary people have certain theoretical approaches to their daily problems. Although these kinds of lay theories may have explanatory power to some extent, they must be separated from scientific theories (Neuman, 2000:40). Nevertheless, such lay theories should not be completely underestimated, because they may be partly based on scientific grand theories. They can also be a starting point for the scientific theories to develop. None the less, the scientific theories should be differentiated from such lay theories and ideologies.

The main difference between the scientific theories and the rest is that the former is supported by applying the principle of falsification. In other words, researchers test the relevant theories to be false or true by using particular empirical research (Neuman, 2000:41). Falsifying a theory is related to the debate over facts and theories. In this sense, there are two

extreme points of view. The former is the empiricist position in which researchers believe that there is nothing like theories or ideas other than raw empirical data or evidence; therefore, all scientific theories must be tested in the light of empirical data (Neuman, 2000:48). The latter is the relativist view and it underpins that reality or factual evidence is shaped and influenced by human ideas, beliefs, and values; a researcher cannot find a separate “fact out there” without considering any influence of cultural values and individual ideas; and characteristics (Neuman, 2000: 48). In spite of these two extreme views, there is a third approach towards the distinction between facts and theories. This approach is in between empiricist and relativist views. The main idea regarding this approach is that “theories and our modes of thought shape what we take as facts or reality, but also there is a separate fact or reality (out there)” (Neuman, 2000:48). In line with this third approach, it is true that researchers got a distorted sense of fact, but as many as researchers study on a particular phenomenon, they get closer to truth and fact in regard to their issue of interest thorough reducing and controlling the distortion (Neuman, 2000:48). Indeed, it was underlined in the theoretical part that different theories are illustrative of different aspects of truth and it is necessary for a dialogue to develop between two different theories discussed in the study various research reveal different aspects of truth. Accordingly, a theoretical dialogue can be built up only if different researches empirically enlighten different aspects of truth or facts.

As aforesaid, the theoretical goal is to find a dialogue between Gramscian Hegemony and Habermas’ Public sphere in the analysis of social movements in this study. The theoretical framework in this study is developed in that the theoretical goal of the study, finding a dialogue between two different theories, will be realized. Theoretical framework refers to the idea that a variety of orientations and ways are chosen to analyse the social reality and test particular aspects of the phenomenon at issue (Neuman, 2000:59). Accordingly, the theoretical framework in this study will be of a critical type. In this critical theoretical framework; particular aspects, questions, and data regarding both Gramsci’ theory of Hegemony and Habermas’ theory of Public sphere are highlighted and discussed. In other words, such a critical theoretical framework would be helpful to build up a dialogue with these two theories as much as possible, but remaining critical of their pre-given universe of ideas and pre-suppositions.

To elaborate more on the critical theoretical framework of this study, it is necessary to point out certain parallels between aforesaid two theories. In both hegemony and public sphere, the debate of praxis is critical in understanding their theoretical premises. As noted in the earlier part, both emphasise that theoretical studies should be endorsed by active action in

the field or politics. In addition, they both underlined the significance of structures and systems in their analysis of social reality. In other words, Gramsci elaborated on the structure/superstructure relation to illustrate the role of cultural hegemony; Habermas emphasised the system-life world dichotomy in explaining the role of public sphere in social change. For that, both theories' emphasis on the role of structure in social change is influential on this study to opt for a critical framework in which all these structural explanations are questioned and analysed in order to understand the basis of social movements.

### **III. Methodological Justification: Critical Approach**

In order to form a critical theoretical framework, this study should take a critical approach in asking critical questions and analysing the relevant data. Methodologically, the critical approach can be defined as “ a critical process of inquiry going beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves” (Neuman, 2000:76). It is obvious that such a methodological inquiry underpins the importance of understanding the underlying structures of power and its role in the illusionary cause-effect relations at the surface. Other than that, such a method is directed to people's emancipation from prevailing structures of power and domination. These observations remark that such a critical approach can only mitigate the requisites of a critical theoretical framework as an interest to this study.

Critical approach is methodologically binding to neither determinism in the positivist school nor relativism prevailing in hermeneutics, but somewhere in between these two. This approach is cognizant that material conditions, cultural context, and historical conditions are restricting people's (researchers) beliefs, values, and ideas; however, it recognizes that these people have particular potential to change and affect such structural conditions (Neuman, 2000:79). In other words, researchers can develop novel ways of understanding and analysing such seemingly (unchanged) social reality. As a central idea to this study, the theory of praxis (which is influential on both Gramsci and Habermas' works) constitutes a significant part of critical approach. In methodological sense, researches belonging to critical approach can raise critical questions beyond the existing discourse of dominant ideology, class or groups. Furthermore, they can make a difference in understanding the social phenomenon and by raising heterodox questions and collecting new data on the underlying structures and conditions which are leading the seeming causal mechanisms praised much by positivist school. On the other hand, they also underline the individual reflections of the social reality which are central to interpretive approach (hermeneutical tradition). It means that individual

researches have a potential to have a new reading of all existing social reality. Hence, critical approach opens the way to combine both endeavours to analyse evolving social world and to recognize human part in that world.

#### **IV. Single Case Study: Narrating Individual Stories**

In a critical approach, historical and structural factors should be explained by a best-fitting research technique. Case study is one of those which are providing necessary data and research tools for the critical researcher to analyse the social phenomenon. Case study is a type of method which is rather rich and illustrative in the history and conditions of the relevant phenomenon. In fact, case study is rather well-known owing to its comprehensive and intensive approach to the social reality at issue (Jocher, 2006:42). For it is a comprehensive method paying special attention to historical and structural conditions of the phenomenon, case study is the best available option for this study which claims to be a critical one.

Case study is in a narrative form; in other words, it has a logical sequence of events and facts in a consistent way (Elliott, 2005). For that, the narrative stories regarding a social event are rather useful to uncover the facts and structures of that social reality. Indeed, this study will elaborate on a single case by contributing particular individual narratives. It is a single-case study on the *Argentinazo* movement taking place in Argentina subsequent to the financial crisis in 2001. The choice of a single-case is rather useful to collect in-depth knowledge regarding the *Argentinazo*. It provides empirical evidence necessary for comparing explanatory power of aforementioned theories on the social movements. However, it should be noted that the single-case study is not useful to make generalisations from a particular phenomenon. Yet, this study is not a theory-generating, but theory-driven/testing type; therefore, a single case would be sufficient to test analytical power of theories on that case. As data, secondary resources on the *Argentinazo* would be evaluated. In addition, there are particular sources providing individual stories and narratives provided through interviews given by a documentary and secondary resources. Accordingly, the single case of the *Argentinazo* movement will be enriched by the narrative stories of those individuals who had gone through the economic crisis and socio-political turmoil. Then, it would be possible to have an analysis of structural factors leading to and individual reflections gained from the *Argentinazo* movement. Both historical-structural factors uncovered by single case study and individual reflections from interviews are endorsing the claim of this study to be critical or belong to critical school of theory and methodology.

## CHAPTER IV

### CASE STUDY

#### **I. Political Economic Developments Preceding to the *Argentinazo* Movement:**

In this part, the single-case of the *Argentinazo* social movement (hereafter *Argentinazo*) will be elaborated. *Argentinazo*<sup>2</sup> refers to the popular (or social) uprising owing to the outburst of financial crisis in December 2001 and the subsequent development of social movement organisations in the following days. It is a unique case, because it is the first national and popular uprising against the idea of Neo-liberalism and the state power in tandem. There will be three parts elaborating on the *Argentinazo* in this study. Firstly, there will be a discussion about the political and economic roots of the financial crisis and the subsequent social movement from a historical angle. Secondly, the motto and repertoire of action used in the course of the social movement will be evaluated with an emphasis on motivations driving people to participate in *Argentinazo*. Last but not least, there will be a theoretical analysis of *Argentinazo* in the context of before and after financial crisis.

#### **i. The Peronist Party: Rise of Peronism and Workers' Movement:**

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Argentina had been one of the most prosperous countries in Latin America. Its dynamic economy was mainly based on foreign investment and the agricultural exports to Europe and all different parts of the world (Whitaker, 1964: 49,50). The Argentine economy was a great example of *laissez faire laissez passé* economy (classical liberalism). In this type of liberal-economic mindset, the role of the (capitalist) state is to create and guarantee necessary conditions for the accumulation of capital without intervening in or regulating the market (Flichman, 1990:2,3). *Laissez faire* economy and minimal state was based on the social coalition of big agricultural-land owners, political elites, and exporters (Flichman, 1990:3,4).

The Great Depression of 1929 transformed both political and economic landscape in Latin America. Argentina followed the same path with the rest of the world by increasing the role of the state as a regulator and investor in economy after the 1930s (Flichman, 1990:5).

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<sup>2</sup> See the note 1 above

However, the role of the state changed from a laissez faire to an interventionist/entrepreneur role when General Juan Peron was elected as the President in 1946 after the three years of the military rule taking power in 1943 (Whitaker, 1964:121; McSherry, 1997:41). Peron initiated a process of nationalisation of key sectors in the economy, such as railways, telephone, and oil companies (Flichman, 1990:8; McSheery, 1997:42). Import Substitution model of Industrialization (Peron's well-known project of creating a national bourgeoisie and national industry) required a new social bloc. In his years of incumbency, he built a social coalition of national bourgeoisie, agricultural producer and most significantly the working class (McSherry, 1997:42). Some claim that the capitalist economy resulted from such a broad electoral coalition supported by a strong political leadership (Porta et. al, 2006:11). Obviously, Peron succeeded to create such a wider electoral coalition under his leadership and formed the one of the main Argentine political parties. *Partido Justicialista* (hereafter the Peronist Party) was a mass-party with its large electoral base.

Electoral success of Peron and his party is based on the combination of authoritarianism with democracy and capitalist economy with the working class, namely Peronism. For he got into the office after the military rule and followed an economic policy of ISI and nationalisation, Peron's years are authoritarian. On the other hand, he was an elected President after the military coup and he designed a democratic strategy to include large segments of the society into the system. While he endeavoured to create a national bourgeoisie, he formed close relations between his party and the working class (Flichman, 1990:6; Romero, 1963:248). Patron-client relations between Peron and working class were rather useful tool to gain the workers' votes and practice a kind of social discipline on the working poor (Cochran & Reina, 1962:264). Clientelism or paternalism worked as the Peronist policy of welfare for the working class (Flichman, 1990:8).

In the following decades, Peronism and its clientelist relations with the working class profoundly affected the course of capital-labour relations in Argentina. The opposing party, the Radicals, tried to break the patron-client relations between Peronism and working class (or labour unions) by offering the idea that the workers needed to collectively bargain for their wages and rights in workplace by their autonomous unions (Cochran & Reina, 1962:264). In addition to patron-client relations, the rights of social security and welfare were deemed as workers' rights, not citizens'. In fact, the role of Peronism is undeniable on this course of developing welfare and social security in Argentina owing to its patronage and corruption. This nature of rights based on workers, not citizens, would leave an open door for the political

and economic elites to discipline labour by selectively distributing welfare and unemployment benefits (Dinerstein, 2002:16).

Even though Peron came to power by the elections following the military coup, he was enforced to leave the country by another military coup in 1955. Peron's economic policy of import-substitution and clientelist relations with the labour had been remarkable on the future of capital-labour relations and party politics. Before he left the office, the Peronist Party's relations with the working class and the mass got strained (McSherry, 1997:44). Nevertheless, Peron formed long-standing, but complicated ties with the working class and urban poor by the help of his populist policies.

## **ii. State Violence: Military Coup (1976-1983) and Massive Human Rights Violations**

In 1976, the military came to power once again in Argentina. However, it would stay at power longer than the earlier ones –it came to an end in 1983– and its practices would be more brutal and bloody than any of the previous military rules in Argentina. In Argentine history, the repression and violence of the military rule against working class and other subaltern groups are known as “Dirty war” (Gutierrez, 1992:21). In this war, thousands of people were either killed or disappeared (Dinerstein, 2002:9). Interestingly enough, this authoritarian rule came to power when all economies around the world came to a stalemate and national elites endeavoured to restructure the economy in line with the requisites of the emerging international economic system (or Neo-liberalism).

By opening up the Argentine economy to foreign investment, the authoritarian rule considered to solve the problem of hyper-inflation and economic crisis (Flichman, 1990:14). However, balance of payments (hereafter BOP) surplus in 1960s turned into BOP deficit in 1970s as a result of liberalisation of the economy (Flichman, 1990:26). In other words, external debt reached an unbearable point along with hyperinflation in Argentina. Guillermo Filichman (1990:12-13) underpins the idea that the military embarked on another role of the state in Argentina upon the outbreak of economic crisis and social dislocation; this role is to normalise the social relations of capitalist production by repressing the subaltern groups. In response to the changing role of the state from entrepreneurship in Peronist era to “normaliser” (repression), the social coalition also changed from a national-industrial bourgeoisie with working class to foreign capital (investors) and local bourgeoisie without the working class. Urban poor and the working class were forming two main groups of Peron's social base (Smith, 1972:56), but they were disregarded by the military rule and new

economic coalition. On the other hand, the financial groups and foreign investors were the chief winners of opening up the economy by the military (Flichman, 1990:20).

In addition to the repression of the labour, there are thousands of people who had been disappeared under the military rule (Bosco, 2006; Dinerstein, 2002:9). The issue of the “disappeared” is the most illustrative action of the military rule for how the state’s role had changed. Indeed, the repressive nature of the military worked to silence the worker’s movement. However, the civil movement for the disappeared emerged and mobilized those who lost their relatives under the military rule. *The Movimiento de Madres and Abuelos de Plaza de Maya* (hereafter the Movement of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Maya) was started by the middle-aged women to ask for the authoritarian rule to look after their disappeared relatives in 1977 (Bosco 2006:342; Dinerstein, 12:2002; Gutierrez, 1992:11). Since then, mothers and grandmothers have been the “voice of the disappeared” and they symbolised the will and mobilisation of Argentine people against the coercive rule of the military (Dinerstein, 2002:11:12).

While the Movement of Mothers and Grandmothers was mobilising people for the disappeared, the Catholic Church in the country was silent on the violations of human rights all the years under the military rule; in other words, the Church failed to take the role of “the defender of the oppressed” (Gutierrez, 1992:11). Though siding with the oppressed in the past, the Church as a conservative institution supported or at least turned a blind eye to the military rule. In addition, the authoritarian rule used the Church to legitimise its anti-democratic policies and practices (Gutierrez, 1992: 7-8). Accordingly, the military rule would ensure the obedience of the subaltern groups in case of a counter-movement (Gutierrez, 1992:10). For that, the role of the Catholic Church in the society was harmed by its alliance with the military rule.

After the first couple of years at power, the military rule faced serious economic challenges owing to the unbearable foreign debt and hyperinflation. Along with the economic crisis, the Maldives (the Falklands) War against Britain ended the authoritarian rule by the free elections in 1983 (McSherry, 1997:86). In spite of the transition to democracy, the legacy of the military rule and its economic policies has been present in Argentine politics, society, and economy. In particular, the repression of the labour and massive violations of Human rights are still controversial. However, the rise of the movement of Mothers and Grandmothers is rather remarkable to illustrate the rise of public space in which the military/authoritarian rule was questioned. On the other hand, the repression of the workers’

movement silenced the working class and caused them to lose their voice and self-confidence for a long time.

### **iii. Transition to Democracy: Neo-liberal Hegemony**

#### **a) The Radicals: The Administration of Raul Alfonsin**

In the first elections after the military rule, Raul Alfonsin and the Radical Party came to power in 1983. There were great expectations of Argentine people from Alfonsin's government in regard to the issues of judging the military officers involved in the violations of human rights and creating a stable economy which would care about social and economic rights of the ordinary people. When he got into the office, President Alfonsin was cognizant about these public concerns. In one of his public speeches, He states them as follows:

“We have the huge responsibility of guaranteeing democracy and respect for the human dignity in Argentina” and he continues saying, “As we said this means that the State cannot bow to international financial groups or to the privileged local groups<sup>3</sup>.”

As indicated in the quote above, he claimed to take care of people's concerns regarding human rights and economy in his early days at office. However, words and deeds are not the same at all times. The subsequent years of Alfonsin in office would illustrate how he failed to fulfil his promise. In the midst of 1980s, the Argentine economy had been through another crisis owing to its foreign debt and financial flows. Alfonsin agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reschedule the current loans, but he must put a plan of anti-inflationary measures in practice, namely the *Plan Austral* in 1984 (Flichman, 1990:27-28). This plan introduced the new currency, *Austral*, in Argentina and its value was a slightly higher than the US dollar. Interestingly enough, the plan did not change the positive image of President Alfonsin even though he did freeze all increases in the wages besides inflation (Flichman, 1990:27). It can be concluded that Alfonsin's popularity was still high due to the disastrous memories of the military rule. However, when the plan could not achieve its goal to decrease inflation rates in the second year after its initiation, public opinion regarding the Alfonsin administration changed negatively (Flichman, 1990:27). In addition to the worsening economic crisis, Alfonsin's reluctance to abolish the impunity of the earlier

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<sup>3</sup> Solanas, Fernando (2003). *Memoria del Saque (A Social Genocide)*. Cinesur S.A. (Argentina)

military officers played a great role in his negative public image<sup>4</sup>. Accordingly, his supporters became disappointed and Alfonsín was enforced to make the decision for the early elections in 1989 (Schaumberg, 2008:370).

### **b) Carlos Menem: Neo-liberal Hegemony, Neo-liberal Populism**

After defeating Alfonsín, Peronist Carlos Menem came to power with a promising campaign about dealing with poverty and inequality in the elections. Once he got into office, he deviated from his discourse of his elections campaign. He started one of the biggest and full-scale privatisation process in the country and the Argentine Peso was pegged to the US dollar by signing the Convertibility Plan in 1991 (Motta, 2009:92). Indeed, Menem achieved to have a coalition with financial groups and the political technocrats as in the years of the military rule in 1970s (Motta, 2009:91). In forming this coalition and carrying out all these market reforms, Menem used the prevailing discourse “single-way of thinking, namely the market sovereignty” (Porta et. al, 2006:16).

In the labour policy, Menem followed the same market ideology. He proposed policies to make the labour market more flexible and labour unions weaker, but flexibility in the labour market also rendered the economy more informal (Motta, 2009:92). Indeed, flexibility of the labour market caused the increasing feeling of insecurity among the workers and they felt disappointed with the neo-liberal policies followed by the Menem Administration. It is not only the working class which got discontent with the market reforms, but the middle class also started questioning the overall policies which were leading them to get imprisoned into poverty, such as high inflation (Motta, 2009:92). After these policies of privatisation, de-segmentation of labour unions, flexibility in the labour market, Menem used the unemployment benefits for his political gains. In other words, the Peronist *punteros* (political brokers) intervened in the distribution of unemployment benefits to get the votes of the unemployed and poor (Motta, 2009:93). It meant that Menem tried to split the working class and unemployed by selectively distributing the social benefits through his political brokers.

Popular classes, namely the working class, middle class and unemployed poor, did not have any alternative choice to Peronist Menem. For that reason, he got elected again in 1995 elections. However, it does not mean that Argentine people in general were happy with Menem’s neo-liberal policies which threatened their lives, jobs, and future. Heike Schaumberg (2008:370) claims that the repressive rule of the military in 1970s and neo-

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<sup>4</sup> See the note 3 above

liberal policies caused the workers and unemployed (and even the middle class) to feel powerless and insecure. However, several developments during the Menem incumbency are promising for the future of the popular classes and they should be highlighted.

Firstly, the workers started to raise their voice against the neo-liberal policies and government's efforts to tackle down their wages and rights in work place. In 1993, the Menem administration decided to privatize the YFP oil company (hereafter YFP) in the town of Masconi at Salta Province; however, Menem already promised the local voters in the area not to privatise the oil company in the elections campaign (Schaumberg, 2008:377). In addition, YFP is rather symbolic place for all workers and the nation, because it was one of the first national industries which were established in the 1900s and signified the nation's pride in industrialisation and self-sufficiency<sup>5</sup>. After privatisation of YFP against all the opposition, the former workers of the company took the decision to organise for a collective action (Schaumberg, 2008:377). The former workers occupied the building of municipality for nearly 20 days and demanded unemployment subsidies and social service from the provincial government (Schaumberg, 2008:377). They achieved their goal and got the state assistance and most significantly they formed the organisation of UTD as a "parallel municipality" in the province and this organization carried out almost every municipal task and survived for a long time (Schaumberg, 2008:377-378).

Along with the occupation of the government buildings, they also engaged in activities known as roadblocks to get the unemployment subsidies from the state in 1997. For they did not have any stable job and did not work anywhere, the best way to protest is to block the roads. In Buenos Aires, there are some other unemployed organizations getting several main roads blocked in 1996 and 1997 to put pressure on national and local governments owing to the mismanagement of the unemployment benefits (Motta, 2009:93). Roadblocks by the unemployed are defined as "*piquetes*" and the unemployed organizations which are carrying out the roadblocks are *piqueteros* organisations<sup>6</sup>. *Piquetes* are rather critical in understanding the changing nature and identity of the subaltern groups since the military rule.

Accordingly, the working class and unemployed did not accept Menem's use of unemployment benefits for his political gains. Indeed, they got disillusioned with the promise of democracy and better life: Democratic disenchantment. For that reason, they felt insecure and powerless for a decade, but they came up with new ways of expressing themselves; in other words, they started to protest neo-liberalism, (representative) democracy and the

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<sup>5</sup> See the note 3 above

<sup>6</sup> See the next part below to find detailed definition and explanation of *piquetes* and *piqueteros*.

political machine (corruption and patronage). More significantly, these people were “hungry and angry crowds” (Auyero, 2003:119). As neo-liberal policies and oppression were seen as the chief reason for poverty and unemployment, these people directed their aggression at the representatives of these policies and repression, namely the government and economic conglomerates.

## **II. Financial Crisis of December 2001: Popular Uprising, Social Dislocation, and Change in Political Culture**

### **i. Remember, Remember 19<sup>th</sup> of December<sup>7</sup>: From Siesta to Fiesta**

When analysing the novelty of global social movements, French sociologist Alain Touraine (2001:47) underpins the fact that the neo-liberal form of globalisation undermines and subordinates the social life by decreasing wages, dismantling social welfare and security; and threatening social and individual security. What Touraine notices in his analysis of global social movements is also valid in the contemporary social movements at the national/local level. The *Argentinazo* movement with its anti-neoliberal character epitomises such anti/alter-globalization (or neo-liberalism) movements at the local level.

During the mid-elections held in October 2001, 4 million voters, nearly 40% of the electorate, used blank votes to protest the ongoing economic crisis and political corruption (North & Huber, 2004:963; Schaumberg, 2008:372). Such a low turn-out in the elections illustrate the popular discontent regarding the economic suffering and political patronage of decades. In December of the same year, President De la Rúa attempted to stop the capital outflows increased by financial speculation in the under-regulated financial market of Argentina. Once people rushed to withdraw their money from the banks, De la Rúa declared the policy of “*corralito*”; this policy means that the government put certain restrictions on the withdrawals of cash and transferring money abroad (Dinerstein, 2002:2; North & Huber, 2004:963). Restrictions on cash withdraws affected negatively the middle class and impoverished the working class poor owing to lack of circulating cash (Dinerstein, 2002:2). However, the *corralito* turned out to be an ineffective tool for preventing capital outflows, because most of the foreigners already got their investments abroad. Such a policy worsened the living conditions of the unemployed and working poor; and it impoverished mainly the middle class. For that, the incidents of lootings and demonstrations in December 2001

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<sup>7</sup> I inspired the title's name from the movie “V for Vendetta” directed by James McTeigue, 2005

skyrocketed with increasing popular antagonism against the government and foreign capital, particularly foreign banks.

The 19<sup>th</sup> of December is the tipping point for the popular discontent. During the demonstrations and lootings, 36 demonstrators were killed by police (North & Hubert, 2004:964; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:28). On the same day, President De la Rúa decided to put the decree law in effect throughout the country; “*Estado de Sitio*”; in other words the state of siege (North & Hubert, 2004:964; Schaumberg, 2008:372). After the police violence against the demonstrators and Rúa’s declaration of the state of siege, the crowds, who got already annoyed with recent government policies and economic recession, went out on the streets and started banging the pans to protest state violence, political corruption, and economic deprivation. The pan-banging phase of the *Argentinazo* is called as “*los cacerolazos*” (North & Huber, 2004:964; Galafassi, 2005:2). Demonstrations were in an atmosphere of the festival; “now it is time for the oppressed to celebrate” says Heike Schaumberg (2008:372). Although demonstrations looked like a festival, real feelings of the demonstrators were really complicated. A woman as one of the pan-bangers states her feelings as follows:

“...Why did not the banks treat us like their foreign customers? I chose private banks, I did not trust ours. I already got swindled in 1989 (the economic crisis in the last days of President Alfonsín). But I must be stupid. What do they want? A bomb? That is not my style. I am banging my pan. I used to cook with it for my kids. Every time, I look at it, I will be reminded of these scoundrels, but I will know I fought for my rights<sup>8</sup>.”

There were thousands of people on the streets and sharing the feelings of disappointment and anger with this woman. The demonstrators were making noise by banging their pans. In doing so, they aimed to render the corrupted politicians aware of their anger, despair, and disillusion regarding the current state of affairs in the country. As Ana Dinerstein (2002:6) notes, they were telling “*Basta*” (enough) for the cancellation of their future, depriving quality of life, economic hardship; and political corruption and patronage. Demonstrators, particularly in the capital city of Buenos Aires, cried out against all the past decades of political oppression, economic deprivation, and social estrangement by the following motto: “*Que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo!*”, this means “out with them all, not a single one must remain (Dinerstein, 2002:7; Feinberg, 2008:27; North & Huber, 2004:964; Schaumberg 2008:368). The motto of the *Argentinazo* underpins Argentine people’s

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<sup>8</sup> See the note 3 above

disappointment with and anger against the current system; and a quest for a new social and political life. A social alliance of the unemployed, the working class, and particular segments of the middle class got together and mobilized against politicians and business elites by this motto (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:28).

The meaning and content of the motto is still a controversial issue around academic circles. Some claims that the motto first means that all politicians and technocrats must leave their office, but later on the crowds also started to cry out against the economic elites and financial groups as well (Galafassi, 2005:2). On the other hand, some emphasises that “*se quedan todos*” (all stay) has been the public consensus within a couple of years after the December uprising (Schaumberg, 2008:384); ordinary people changed their mind and started thinking like “all that can be done now is electing the lesser evil” (Schaumberg, 2008:383). According to some, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of December are not same (Schaumberg, 2008:372); in other words, the feelings and ideas of the demonstrators were high and influential against the politicians on 19<sup>th</sup> of December, but since 20<sup>th</sup> of December the *Argentinazo* movement started to get organised and politicised by different groups of the demonstrators in a variety of new ways<sup>9</sup>.

## **ii. Different Organizations of the *Argentinazo*: Action Repertoire of the *Argentinazo***

In the onset of this part, the social movement organisation as a concept needs to be introduced and elaborated. Social movement organisations (hereafter SMOs) are the various ways of demonstrators to organise for collective action and they entail informal networks, alternative institutions, and cultural groups (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:126). However, I prefer to use another concept instead of SMOs: Action Repertoire. According to Sidney Tarrow (1998:20-21 cited in North & Huber, 2004:964), action repertoire refers to “a range of ways coping with the problems and fighting back against neo-liberalism”.

As aforesaid, the *Argentinazo* movement got through a process of organisation and politicisation after the masses got mobilised on 19<sup>th</sup> of December. Even though there was an alliance among the unemployed, workers, and some parts of the middle class in the first days of the December uprising (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:28), different groups would get organised in different ways in the following days. In regard to organisation of the *Argentinazo*, there are brand new ways of action and organisation. The action repertoire of the *Argentinazo* is rather various and novel in regard to protest, action, and organisation

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<sup>9</sup> See the next section to get detailed knowledge regarding the different social and economic organizations of different groups in the *Argentinazo*

(Motta, 2009:92). Indeed, the various ways of the *Argentinazo* is rather illustrative for the new way of thinking in both political and economic realms. In other words, “the reinvention of the politics” is an end result of these various social movement organizations in the *Argentinazo* (Dinerstein, 2002:8; Motta, 2009:89). A radical reading of the motto and action repertoire in the *Argentinazo* implies a new vision for the society, economy and politics: A new politics without leaders, a new society without (economic) elites (Feinberg, 2008:27; Motta, 2009:91). Obviously, there were many different groups who attended the demonstrations in the first months of the December uprising (the middle class, workers, unemployed, students, women, the radicals, leftists and Personist etc.); therefore, they have different motivations to protest and different ways of organising for protest. All these difference in driving motives, ideas, and organisational characteristics are best seen in an analysis of four components in the action repertoire of the *Argentinazo*: Neighbourhood Assemblies, Recovered Factories, Piqueteros, and Barter Clubs.

**a. Neighbourhood Assemblies: “*Asambleas Populares*” and Direct Democracy**

In the action repertoire of the *Argentinazo*, *Asambleas Populares* is the innovation of the neighbourhood residents in Buenos Aires (Grigera, 2006:242). Neighbourhood Assemblies are where the residents of a neighbourhood gathered to discuss about their daily concerns, solve their daily problems, and exchange ideas regarding how to change things, such as infrastructure, increasing prices, high bills, and etc. (Asambleista, Buenos Aires cited in North & Huber, 2004:965; Galafassi, 2005:2). For people freely ponder and discuss about their problems and various issues at the local level, neighbourhood assemblies are examples for direct democracy. In particular, people from the middle class are mainly involved in the neighbourhood assemblies (Grigera, 2006:242). For that, most of the neighbourhood assemblies would follow a rather different path than other organisations in the upcoming years. There are a number of neighbourhood assemblies which arose after the December uprising. However, they are all not identical in terms of ideology, driving motives, relations with the state and so on.

The *Asambleas Populares* of San Telma consisted of 60-70 residents and they are regularly gathering in the historic Plaza Dornego, or get together in a nearby Tango bar in the neighbourhood (North & Huber, 2004: 966). This *Asambleas Populares* attended a long march for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the military takeover in 1976 to protest against the impunity of responsible military officers (North & Huber, 2004:966). Other than this specific case of *San Telma Assambleas Populares*, there are different neighbourhood assemblies with a

variety of ideologies and practices. In particular, these neighbourhood assemblies in the Buenos Aires Province are greatly diverse. None the less, they can be classified into two major groups as Northern and Southern neighbourhood assemblies. The Northern neighbourhood assemblies are in general consisting of wealthy and liberal residents; and they are organised on the principle of horizontality, in other words without a strong centrality and leadership (Schaumberg, 2008: 374). On the other hand, the Southern Neighbourhood Assemblies are mainly consisting of poorer residents, who are generally looking for a job or resources to their basic needs; and they are mostly linked to an outsider, namely the local government or Peronist *punteros* (Schaumberg, 2008:374). In particular, those linked to the Peronist *punteros* (political brokers) are endeavouring to solve the problems by the clientalist networks (North & Huber, 2004:961).

Apart from those in communication with the Peronist *punteros*, there are neighbourhood assemblies which are getting in touch with the local or provincial governments. Indeed, the local and provincial governments endeavoured to incorporate the neighbourhood assemblies into the local decision-making process since the neighbourhood assemblies first appeared in the political arena by the *Argentinazo*. Buenos Aires City Council devised particular strategies and policies to communicate with the local residents via the neighbourhood assemblies. There are two major attempts by the City Council. Firstly, *Centros de Gestian y Participacion* (Centre for Administration and Participation) to get the local residents and neighbourhood assemblies involved in the local decision-making process (Wainwright, 2003:42-69 cited in North & Huber, 2004:969). Another initiative taken by the City Council is Plan de *Presupuesto Participativa* (Participatory Budgeting Plan). Participatory budget was created to prepare the local or provincial budget plans directly in compliance with the local residents (Wainwright, 2003:42,69 cited in North & Huber, 2004:969). As an example, the *Asamblea Populares de Pompeya* participated in preparing local budget and also supported the Communal Law<sup>10</sup> (Schaumberg, 2008:376).

Neighbourhood assemblies are organised on the basis of democratic principles, like direct participation of the residents in decision-making process, horizontality, and solidarity. For that, they represent a significant model of direct democracy. However, there are particular question marks on the neighbourhood assemblies regarding their relations with the state and Peronism; and the lack of coordination among these neighbourhood assemblies and with other organisations of the *Argentinazo*. In particular, the neighbourhood assemblies are

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<sup>10</sup> The Communal law refers to the devolution of state functions to the local community organisations (Schaumberg, 2008:376)

the organisation of the *Argentinazo* which is rarely getting involved with other organisations of the movement, like *piqueteros*, recovered factories except the barter clubs (Grigera, 2006:242). Some discuss that the neighbourhood assemblies are mainly located in the residences of the middle class people; when they witnessed the violence and lootings in the following days of the *Argentinazo*, they alienated from the rest of the organisations and groups (North and Huber, 2004: 967-968).

#### **b. Roadblocks, *Piqueteros*: The Movement of the Unemployed for Autonomy**

Another tool from the action repertoire of the *Argentinazo* is the “*piquetes*”, roadblocks. *Piquetes* refers to roadblocks carried out by the unemployed people to put pressure on the local or provincial governments in order to get food, basic needs, infrastructure, provision of social services, and unemployment benefits (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:40; North & Huber, 2004:975; Trigona, 2002:1). Even though the rise of the *piqueteros* organisations dates back to the mid-1990s (Motta, 2009:93), it is the December uprising when they got popular throughout Argentina. During “the Battle of Buenos Aires”, the *piqueteros* developed their slogan<sup>11</sup>: “*Piquete, cacerola, la lucha es uno solo!*” it means “picket, pan banger, it is the one and the same struggle”. As in the case of neighbourhood assemblies, the driving motives behind the *piquetes* and organisation styles of the *piqueteros* are various. One of the *piqueteros* claims his motives as follows:

“So we, who live here, decided to bloc the road so that they would understand what our daily life is like. Kids cannot go to school. Patients cannot be moved since ambulances cannot get through. We want to live decently, we deserve it<sup>12</sup>.”

As clearly seen, the member of the *piquete* underlines that he wants to get visible in the political and economic realms. In other words, the *piqueteros* get visible and illustrate their deteriorating living conditions just as the pan-baggers raised their voice by making noise. In addition to the aim of getting visible, the *piquetes* are strategically used by the unemployed to receive work plans, such as social or unemployment benefits, by putting pressure on the government (Grigera, 2006:233). Then, the *piqueteros* organisations used the state subsidies to operate the *empredimientos productiuos* (productive ventures) as a source of income

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<sup>11</sup> The Battle of Buenos Aires is a term used by Ana Dinerstein (2002) to refer the events of 19th and 20th of December in Buenos Aires.

<sup>12</sup> See the note 3 above

alternative unemployment, such as small bakeries and small factories where they can produce bricks and diapers (Grigera, 2006:233).

*Piqueteros* organisations are varied depending on the driving motives of the *piqueteros*. There are three different organisations. One group of the *piqueteros* organisations are closely linked to the Orthodox Marxist Parties; they are in general aiming at the systemic change in Argentina by revolution (North & Huber, 2004:977; Galafassi, 2005:3). *Polo Obrero* and *Corriente Classista y Combativa* (CCC) are two significant representatives of these *piqueteros* organisations linked to the Leftist parties. Another group of the *piqueteros* organisations are those closely linked to either government or the Peronist Party. They are less eager on a social change, but they mostly care about finding a job and receiving social assistance, namely unemployment benefits (North & Huber, 2004:977). *Federacion de Tierra y Vivienda* epitomises as a *piqueteros* organisation closely linked to the Kirchner Administration (Grigera, 2006:234; North & Huber, 2007:977). Last but not least, there are those *piqueteros* which are not linked to any political parties, state institutions and any other form of organisation. They are autonomous and horizontal *piqueteros* organisations by simply refusing to participate in any cooperation with the state and political parties (North & Huber, 2004:977; Motta, 2009:95). *The Movimiento de Trabajadores de Solano* (hereafter MTD Solano) represents the autonomous and horizontal *piqueteros* organisation. One of the MTD Solano members characterises MTD Solano as follows:

“It is a liberated zone (the piquete), the only place where the cops will not treat you like trash. There the cops say to you, ‘pardon me’ we come to negotiate.” (MTD Solano, 2003b cited in Motta, 2009:94).

When compared with other *piqueteros* organisations influenced by the Peronist *pundetos* or the state, MTD Solano offers an alternative reading to the Movement of the Unemployment within the *Argentinazo*. As the member of MTD Solano remarks, MTDs<sup>13</sup> are creating an alternative or counter-power to the state (North & Huber, 2004:977; Motta, 2009) and they endeavoured to remain as democratic and autonomous organizations. Indeed, the Movement of the Unemployed, particularly MTDs, illustrate that even the powerless, unemployed people can contribute by taking action in the *Argentinazo* movement and this make them stronger and more autonomous against the state and market.

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<sup>13</sup> I use here a plural MTDs, because there are a number of autonomous *piqueteros* organisations besides MTD Solano.

### **c. *Empresas Recuperadas*, Recovered Factories: The Rise of Solidarity Economy**

Another form of action from the repertoire of the *Argentinazo* is the *Empresas Recuperadas* (Schaumberg, 2008:380), in other words, the recovered factories. After the factories went bankrupt due to the financial collapse of 2001, the former workers occupied the factories. There are nearly 200 cases of factory takeovers since 2001 (Galafassi, 2005:228; Grigera, 2006:227). Upon taking control of the factory, the workers continued the production, but there are different types of recovered factories on the basis of management styles.

There are two well-known examples of recovered factories; they are Zanon (ceramics factory) and Brukman (textile factory). Both of these factories got bankrupted as a result of financial collapse and the former workers continued operating these factories in order to keep their jobs (Aufheben, 2003 cited in North & Huber, 2004:972). After the occupation of the factories, Zanon and Brukman were operated collectively by workers and they are mainly based on worker's management under municipality ownership (North & Huber, 2004:972; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:51; Grigera, 2006:230). One of the first Brukman workers, Yuri Fernandez, emphasises the workers' self-management of the factories as follows:

“We want a dignified solution for all workers...Autonomous, self-generating production will be the solution.” (Trigona, 2002:2).

In his words, the worker of Brukman underlines that the recovered factories can be a solution for the long-standing problem of unemployment and worker's self management would provide the workers the dignity besides a job. In particular, Brukman is an example for how different organisations of the *Argentinazo* could carry out a joint action. In other words, when the court decided to turn over the Brukman factory to its former owners in 2003, various groups of the *Argentinazo* entailing the *piqueteros*, some neighbourhood assemblies, and Zanon workers demonstrated against the court decision and subsequent police enforcement (North & Huber, 2004:972; Trigona, 2002:2; Grigera, 2006:230). When the government endeavoured to remove the workers from the factory, the *piqueteros* supported the workers of Brukman. One of the worker activist, Celia Martinez express her ideas regarding the Battle of Brukman<sup>14</sup> as follows:

“There has been tremendous support from all of the movements... The *piqueteros* support us during the blockades, and when we are threatened with

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<sup>14</sup> Buenos Aires Herald names the government's efforts of removal and workers' resistance to it as “the Battle of Brukman, (Buenos Aires, 2003a cited in North & Huber, 2004:972).

removal. They are helping us but they are also hoping that our factories open in order to take in a great amount of new workers so they can work” (Trigona, 2002:2).

As Martinez indicates in the quote above, the *piqueteros* are looking for opportunities of jobs in these recovered factories. In addition, they are also cognisant that these recovered factories are creating an alternative and parallel production to the dominant capitalist system prevailing in Argentina. At this point, it should be underlined that the recovered factories mostly are operated outside of the capitalist mentality; in other words, the worker produces and the final products are sold to the local community by local networks, particularly the *piqueteros*; and the income is distributed among workers in an egalitarian way (Schaumberg, 2008:381,382; Solidarity Economy Coordinator, Buenos Aires City Council cited in North & Huber, 2004:973). Solidarity economy carried out by particular recovered factories, like Zanon ceramics, epitomises an alternative to capitalist mode of production (Solidarity Economy Coordinator, Buenos Aires City Council cited in North & Huber, 2004:973). However, there is a critical problem with the solidarity economy in general and the recovered factories in particular: It is related to how these recovered factories would continue their operations when the capitalist market economy is still the rule of the game in the town named Argentina (Grigera, 2006:228-229).

#### **d. Barter Clubs, *Nodes*: A Parallel Economy**

One another type of action repertoire in the *Argentinazo* is the barter clubs. Barter clubs emerged since the circulation of the Argentine Peso was strictly decreasing, because of the restrictions on the cash withdraws by the *corralito*. In addition, the impoverishment of the working class and the middle class; and the skyrocketing rates of unemployment and inflation increased poverty. For that, the barter clubs were formed to barter the consumer goods. Indeed, it is estimated that there are 500 *nodes* in Argentina and 30 million people used these barter clubs (Grigera, 2006:237). In these *nodes*, a new currency was introduced instead of overvalued Argentine Peso and it is *credito* (Grigera, 2006: 237,238). Introduction of the new currency aimed to prevent accumulation of and speculation on capital; in other words, there is little profit and price increase allowed by the *credito*. Obviously, this characteristic of the new currency illustrates the reaction of the people against the prevailing capitalist system prior to the financial collapse. By introducing new currency which does not allow any capital accumulation or speculation, the barter clubs are envisaged as an alternative/parallel economy to the hegemonic capitalist economy (Grigera, 2006:238).

Barter clubs got organised in wider networks. There are two competing networks of barter clubs. The first hegemonic network of barter clubs is *Red Global del Trueque* (RGT) (Grigera, 2006:239). RGT devised particular strategies to control and unite the barter clubs. It introduces the idea of “social franchising”; in other words, RGT monopolised the seigniorage (printing) of the *credito*. However, the monopolization of seigniorage led to divisions inside RGT and the *Red Global del Trueque Solidario* (RTS) was formed (Grigera, 2006: 239,240). RTS defended the idea that the monopolisation of seigniorage undermines the very essential ideals of the barter clubs, namely solidarity, reciprocity, community and etc. (Grigera, 2006:240). Even though the barter clubs arose as the promising institutions of the *Argentinazo*, two competing hegemonic networks of RGT and RTS could not unite the barter clubs as alternative to capitalist economy.

### **III. Theoretical Analysis of the Case Study: A Dialogue between Public Sphere and Hegemony in the Context of the *Argentinazo***

In this part, the research question posed above will be answered by means of a theoretical and historical analysis. The research question is as follows: Why did the *Argentinazo* movement failed to change Argentine politics and economy? To answer this question, the historical background of the *Argentinazo* movement must be analysed by referring to the theoretical foundations of this study; namely Habermas’ theory of public sphere and Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. The reason is that the historicity of the *Argentinazo* movement has particular repercussions on the theoretical explanation of the *Argentinazo* in this study. In other words, political and economic developments prior to the *Argentinazo* require a theoretical dialogue between the public sphere and hegemony in order to answer the research question. Firstly, I will illustrate how the political and economic developments since the midst of the twentieth century affect the creation of hegemony and public sphere in Argentina. Secondly, I will explain the failure of the *Argentinazo* by using the theories of hegemony and public sphere embedded in the historicity of Argentina.

Political-economic history of Argentina can be classified into three different periods: Peronism, Repression, and Neo-liberal Populism<sup>15</sup>. Each of these periods has specific characteristics regarding the state-market and state-society relations. First of all, Peronism refers to the era of state-capitalism (or import-substituted industrialisation) and authoritarian populism between 1940s and 1960s. Peronism was the dominant ideology which underlined

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<sup>15</sup> Neo-liberal populism refers to the hegemonic ideology used by mostly conservative governments which are favoring particular segments of the society (particularly the poor) by selectively distributing state benefits and thus carry out the neo-liberal economic reforms without any sunaltern antagonism

the role of the national bourgeoisie in the process of Argentine industrialisation via the state intervention (Flichman, 1990:8). Accordingly, it framed the relations between the subaltern and dominant groups. In other words, Peronism was an influential ideology in which the interests of the subaltern were articulated into the hegemony of state-capitalism. As Gramscian theory of hegemony envisages (Gramsci, 1988; Gramsci, 1978), the dominant classes (the peronist leaders and the national bourgeoisie) with the ideology of Peronism could provide a moral and political leadership to articulate the interests and demands of the subaltern groups (the working class and urban poor).

On the other hand, the authoritarian and populist characteristics of Peronism did not allow any development of a democratic public space where the Argentine people could effectively discuss and question the essential principles of state capitalism. According to Habermas' theory of public sphere and communicative action, all citizens should freely discuss the social, political, and economic tenets of the prevailing political and economic system in a free and democratic public space (Habermas, 1976; Habermas, 1984; Habermas, 1988). In particular, Peron established close links with the labour unions through patron-client relations (Flichman, 1990:8; Cochran & Reina, 1962:264). Therefore, he neutralised the labour tensions in his model of state capitalism. However, the patron-client relations caused that labour unions could not function as a public space where the working class could criticise the political and economic system in the country<sup>16</sup>. In other words, as Habermas underlines, labour unions were dominated by the interests of the Peronists and economic elites through populist policies and patronage. In addition to patron-client relations between Peron and labour unions, the authoritarian characteristic of Peronism did not allow any kind of alternative public space to develop. Peron censored the Media and controlled the universities (Romero, 1963:248); such authoritarian actions are explaining why a democratic public sphere did not arise. Accordingly, the public sphere was restricted by authoritarian and populist policies of Peron while Peronism provided the ideological base for the hegemony of Peron and national bourgeoisie to establish a historical bloc with the working class.

Secondly, the era of the military rule between 1976 and 1983 represents the repressive period of state-capital and state society relations. In 1970s, the historical bloc of Peronism was shaken by the economic depression and worsening labour-capital relations in

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<sup>16</sup> There may be an objection on the role of the labour unions as the public sphere, because they mainly represent the particular interests of the working class, not the rest of the society as Habermas claims. However, in this study, the labour unions are considered as a part of the third-estate (or civil society) outside the state and market.

Argentina. According to Gramscian theory of hegemony, this economic crisis led to an ideological (hegemonic) crisis; in other words, Peronism failed to function as a hegemonic discourse to keep the historical bloc between the working class, the bourgeoisie and the political elites. Accordingly, the military intervened in the politics in 1976 to sustain the social relations of capitalist production (domination of national bourgeoisie and political elites) by coercion, not ideological consensus. Ironically, the military rule had complicated repercussions on the development of the public sphere in Argentina. On the one hand, the military repression delayed further the development of a democratic public sphere in Argentina by suppressing the labour unions and violating the human rights. On the other hand, it gave rise to new voices against the military repression: The Movement of Mothers for the Disappeared. The Movement of the Mothers is promising for the future of grass-root organisations and movements in Argentina.

Thirdly, neo-liberal populism refers to the Peronist Carlos Menem's incumbency. With the election of Radical Raul Alfonsín, the Argentine people had high expectations regarding democracy, but then they realised that all their expectations were in vain. Even though Alfonsín promised it during the elections campaign, he did not abolish the impunity of the military officers who were responsible for mass human rights violations. Even though the military rule started to open up the Argentine economy to the international economy, it is Menem's era when Argentina witnessed the full-scale of privatisation, foreign debt and flexibility of labour market under the ideology of Neo-liberalism. Menem re-formed the historical bloc between foreign investors, national bourgeoisie, the middle class, and the working class around the ideology of Neo-liberalism with a populist dimension. While he was dismantling the labour unions, he was using a populist strategy by distributing selectively the social benefits to the working class and the unemployed. In doing so, Menem used neo-liberalism and populism as ideology to provide the moral and political leadership for the historical bloc with the middle class and the working class. Even though democratisation in 1980s and 1990s was an opportunity for the subaltern groups to develop a democratic public sphere, Menem's populism divided the subaltern groups by his patron-client relations with the working class and the unemployed. However, patron-client relations are major impediments for the development of a democratic public space, because the Peronist *punteros* intervene in the labour unions or other relevant civil society organisations by building patron-client relations.

Regarding all three periods of Peronism, repression, and neo-liberal populism, I have two observations. Firstly, the hegemony of capitalism (either through the ideologies of

Peronism and Neo-liberal populism or through coercion/repression) re-established itself every time. In other words, the counter-hegemony of the subaltern groups did not follow the ideological/hegemonic crisis, because the subaltern groups could not achieve to form a counter-hegemonic discourse/ideology and a political and moral leadership for a historical bloc. Secondly, I observed that the democratic public sphere in Argentina could not be formed in all of three periods owing to repression or populism/patronage.

**i. Why did the *Argentinazo* movement fail to change the Argentine politics and economy?**

As aforesaid, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of December are not same; people of different classes, occupations, and ideologies went out on the streets and cried out the same slogan of the *Argentinazo* by banging their pans. They were sure what they were opposing; inhumane face of neo-liberal globalisation, state violence, political corruption, and nepotism. However, they were confused on what they were standing for at the end of the day. Accordingly, the day after 19<sup>th</sup> of December illustrated that demonstrators got more organised and politicised. In the following days of the *Argentinazo*, it seemed that the driving motives, ideologies, expectations of demonstrators were rather diverse. Some of them were mobilised owing to their discontent with the government's policy of *corralito*; some were mobilised due to police repression to demonstrators, and some were mobilised against the state of siege. As clearly seen, the driving motives for demonstrators to participate in the *Argentinazo* are rather diverse. In addition, demonstrators have a range of different ideologies and class backgrounds; the working class, the unemployed, and the middle class; the radicals, Orthodox-leftists, and Peronists. On the basis of differences among their driving motives, ideologies, class backgrounds, and etc. demonstrators committed to the *Argentinazo* in different degrees and they chose to establish or participate different organisations of the *Argentinazo*. As an example, the middle class people were mainly involved with the neighbourhood assemblies and barter clubs, because their priority was to find food and solve daily problems, such as infrastructure. On the other hand, the working class and unemployed got involved in recovered factories and *piquetes*, because their primary concern was to find a job and source of income, like unemployment benefits. In fact, such differences in driving motives, classes, and ideologies affect the interaction and dialogue among different organisations of the *Argentinazo*. On the one hand, the recovered factories and *piquetes* are usually cooperating in their struggle against police force and for production activities. On the other hand, the neighbourhood assemblies alienated from particular *piquesteros*

organisations, because of their violent action against police. Last but not least, there were some representatives of each organisations in the *Argentinazo* got incorporated into either state-sponsored ventures or involved in clientelist relations with Peronist *punteros*. It is clear that the diversity among motives, ideologies, class backgrounds led to demonstrators to develop different types of organisations.

In addition to move different groups of demonstrators into different organisations, diversity or heterogeneity move each of these organisations away from one another. Indeed, there were particular cases when different types of organisations were involved in the affairs of the others; the case of Brukman textiles is rather illustrative for how different organisations of *piquetes*, neighbourhood assemblies, and workers got united against the threat of removal by the police force. However, such cases were few and spontaneous. On the other hand, most of these organisations were claiming to offer an alternative to the prevailing practices of capital and power, like the solidarity economy of the barter clubs or the anti-power, horizontal organisation of MTD Solano. Even if each of these different organisations had the alternative vision for a society, economy, and power; they were quite different and sometimes clashing, such as Peronist neighbourhood assemblies looking for a solution to their daily-life problems, but MTD Solano looking for a social change.

Referring again to my observations regarding Peronism, repression, and Neo-liberal populism above, I thought that the lack of a democratic public space could explain why the subaltern groups were not be able to form counter-hegemony and a political and moral leadership for their historical bloc. For that, I need to formulate a theoretical dialogue between hegemony and public sphere within the historicity of Argentina. I theoretically revise Gramscian theory of hegemony on the basis of Habermas' public sphere as follows: To form a historical bloc around their political and moral leadership, the subaltern groups need to create a public space in which they can articulate various interests and demands of different groups of the historical bloc on the basis of free speech and communication. In other words, I theoretically propose that the democratic public sphere is necessary in order to form a counter-hegemonic discourse by the subaltern.

In the light of this theoretical dialogue above, I will now explain why the *Argentinazo* movement failed to change the course of politics and economy in Argentina. The organisations of the *Argentinazo* did not have any consensus about what type of a social change they desire to get, what strategies they would use to achieve their basic needs, what type of a relationship they should have with the existing structures of power and capital. Indeed, such a lack of consensus is a result of the diversity among the organisations. In

addition to diversity regarding motivations, ideologies, and class backgrounds, they were detached from one another. This detachment is the main reason for these organisations not to achieve a common world-view alternative to hegemonic one; in other words, they could not come up with counter-hegemonic discourse against neo-liberalism. To achieve counter-hegemony, the problem of disconnection among the organisations must be overcome; however, these organisations failed to do so. It means that the organisations of the *Argentinazo* did not have a public space where the members of different organisations could gather, exchange their ideas, articulate different interests, and eventually form a counter-hegemonic discourse. At this point, it must be noted that some of these organisations, such as neighbourhood assemblies, functioned as a public space for its members to bring about their problems and discuss about various issues. However, such attempts were rather localised and temporal; therefore most of these assemblies were closed within a year. To get a counter-hegemonic discourse, all these different organisations must form a common platform; thus they could have counter-hegemony and establish a historical bloc among the unemployed, the middle class and the working class. However, they failed to form a public space.

The absence of the public space among the organisations of the *Argentinazo* should be contextualised within the historicity of Argentina. In other words, the democratic public space was either prevented or distorted by the military interludes, patronage, Peronism, and Neo-liberal populism in the history of Argentina. Interestingly enough, the same forces of Peronism, patronage, repression, and populism divided the organisations of the *Argentinazo* into different camps. Some involved in patron-client relations with Peronist *punteros*, some got incorporated into the local state, some still opposed to any form of engagement with the state and parties. Indeed, the lack of the public space, or a well-functioning civil society, left only one option to the masses; and it is to mobilise and protest via social movements. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, the streets of Buenos Aires turned out to be the public space for all different people with different concerns, ideas, class backgrounds, and ideologies to gather and protest against neo-liberalism and violence of state and capitalism. However, they failed to create such a public space in the following days. Therefore, my answer to the question above: The lack of a democratic public space is the main problem in Argentine politics; clearly the *Argentinazo* movement failed to overcome this problem; and the absence of a democratic public space in the *Argentinazo* movement caused the *Argentinazo* to fail to offer counter-hegemonic discourse against Neo-liberalism prevailing in Argentine economy for decades.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this part, I will briefly summarise the theoretical argument, methodological approach and the empirical evidence which I used to answer the research question posed in the onset of this study. I endeavoured to find out why the *Argentinazo* movement failed to transform the Argentine politics and economy. The research goal in this study is to offer alternative ways to analyse the phenomenon of the social movements in general and the *Argentinazo* movement in particular. For that, I use different theoretical and methodological approaches. In the formulation of the research question, this goal is essential. As a case, I chose to discuss the *Argentinazo* movement, because of its uniqueness. In other words, the *Argentinazo* epitomises one of the first anti-neoliberal version of globalisation at the national level even though most of academic studies are presently dealing with the global social movements as anti-globalisation movement.

In the theoretical argument, I have the goal to approach the social movement at issue from an alternative theoretical point of view. There are mainstream theoretical frameworks which are elaborating on the social movements, such as the resource-mobilisation, political-opportunity structure, breakdown, social capital and etc. However, I preferred to find a theoretical dialogue between Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Habermas' theory of public sphere. Both of hegemony and public sphere are elaborating on the issue of human emancipation from domination since Gramsci and Habermas were influenced by the idea of praxis as process. For the social movements are one of the agencies for social change, I considered that hegemony and public sphere can explain the social movements from perspectives alternative to mainstream theories of social movements.

In line with an alternative theoretical framework, I chose the critical approach as methodological perspective in this study. Such a critical approach revealed the underlying structures influential on the life course of the social movements. As a method, the single case of the *Argentinazo* movement provided in-depth knowledge regarding how a social movement at the national level could arise vis-a-vis the process of neo-liberal globalisation. I used two sources of information to gather relevant knowledge regarding the *Argentinazo* movement; the secondary resources and interviews with the demonstrators done by other secondary

studies. In particular, the parts of the interviews that I used provided significant reflections and narratives of those people participating in the *Argentinazo* movement.

In the evaluation of the case, I elaborated on the political-economic history of Argentina in last five decades and I mainly discussed the course of the *Argentinazo* from 19<sup>th</sup> of December to late 2004 when the most of the organisations of the *Argentinazo* faded away from the political and economic arena. Then, I formulated a theoretical dialogue within the historicity of the *Argentinazo*; in other words, I used both Gramscian theory of hegemony and Habermas' theory of public sphere to answer the research question in issue and evaluate the case of the *Argentinazo* with an emphasis on this theoretical dialogue. In addition, I reached two observations regarding the *Argentinazo*. Firstly, the *Argentinazo* could be understood within a broader historical perspective and that is why I introduced the argument regarding the political-economic developments prior to the December uprising of 2001. Such historicity of the *Argentinazo* necessitated a theoretical dialogue going beyond both theories of public sphere and hegemony.

I established the theoretical dialogue in which the idea of counter-hegemonic discourse can develop within a democratic public space. In other words, the subaltern groups, who are endeavouring to form counter-hegemony against the hegemonic one, needed to get together, communicate with each other, exchange their ideas, and find out solutions to their problems in a democratic public space. Most significantly, the diversity and detachment among the demonstrators and organisations of the *Argentinazo* caused a critical impediment before the *Argentinazo* movement; a democratic public space is where they could overcome their differences and reach consensus over counter-hegemony. Indeed, it was the lack of such a democratic public sphere that led to the failure of the *Argentinazo*.

The organisations of the *Argentinazo*; namely neighbourhood assemblies, *piquetes*, recovered factories, and barter clubs; got disconnected and such a disconnection between them caused them to alienate from each other. Each of them individually provided a public sphere and alternative discourses; however, they could not form a similar public space with other organisations of the *Argentinazo*. As aforesaid, their failure to form a public space is resulting from the fact that Argentina historically and culturally did not experience the development of a democratic public space owing to Peronism, patronage, authoritarian military rule, and neo-liberal populism. Accordingly, the historicity of the *Argentinazo* movement is a major reason for a democratic public space not to develop in the following days of the December uprising.

In this study, I answered the research question that I posed in the onset by forming a theoretical explanation (or a theoretical dialogue) based upon the theories of hegemony and public sphere. In other words, the *Argentinazo* failed, because the organisations, which were involved in the December uprising and the subsequent efforts of forming alternatives to hegemonic discourse of politics and economy, were not able to establish a common platform where they could achieve to formulate counter-hegemony. I should tell that this study is theory-oriented on the basis of the empirical data provided by secondary resources and secondary interviews. It contributed to the literature of social movements from a theoretical perspective. For the future studies, the advice may be to develop this theory-oriented study with a more emphasis on empirical data. In addition, the future studies can develop a similar theoretical dialogue between public sphere and hegemony to contribute in the literature of global social movements, which are commonly studied as the alter-globalisation movements. They can utilise the logic of this study; in other words, they can also elaborate on the alter/anti-globalisation movements within a national context as in the case of the *Argentinazo* movement.

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