

¡Que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo!

The Development of the Argentinazo Movement

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Abstract

Argentina went into a financial crisis in 2001, later in the 19-20th of December the same year, the streets of Buenos Aires were filled with violent protests from thousands of people, angry and upset over a policy, which stopped cash withdrawals from their bank accounts. The movement that developed is referred to as the Argentinazo movement and consisted of people from varying social backgrounds of the Argentine society. This thesis is a qualitative single case study and the purpose of it is to investigate why the movement developed by testing the theories of political opportunity, mobilizing structures and cultural framing processes on the movement. The empirical material consists of secondary sources from reports and other texts treating the contemporary Argentine history of politic economic development during the preceding years of the Argentinazo. The results of the study show that the politics of economy and labour in Argentina in the last decade before the financial crisis was neo-liberal, influenced by the IMF and favouring the unregulated market and low inflation. The consequences of these politics lead to a weakening of labour unions and high unemployment. It also shows that people were disappointed of the politics but that the strict economic policy to tackle the financial crisis provoked the civil society – which in replied by violent protests and the emergence of the Argentinazo movement.

Key words: Social Movements, Neo-Liberalism, Political Opportunity, Mobilization, Cultural Framing, Argentina and Argentinazo.

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1 Introduction

In 2001, Argentine went into a financial crisis as a consequence after four years consisting of disciplinary economic politics.

The response of the economic instability could be viewed at the streets of Buenos Aires in the 19th of December 2001, which consisted of riots; protests and violence by citizens filled with anger and irritated emotions. A single specific class or minority did not only represent the protests, instead it crossed the borders of the classes and consisted of a variety of people from socially different backgrounds of the Argentine society. “*¡Qué se vayan todos!*” (“Out with the politicians!”) were the most popular slogan amongst the people and reflected the general aggression against the institutions and politicians (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:28). The 19th of December has been considered as the rise of the *Argentinazo* movement (North & Huber, 2004:963). La Nación, one of the more influential newspapers in Argentina, do the 19th of December describe the riots, which dominated the streets:

“Fire, stones and various abuses occurred tonight at the Ministry of Economy and surrounding areas, featuring demonstrators continued to advance on the Plaza de Mayo. The repression continued tonight, with the aim to disperse the frenzied demonstrators was concentrated in the area. The shooting of the security forces increased, and that even the protesters remained in the historic Plaza.” (La Nación.)

How could so many from different social backgrounds of the Argentine society get involved in this movement? The main focus of this thesis is to test different theories to give an answer to the question of how and why the *Argentinazo* movement developed. By looking at the economical politics in Argentine the preceding years of the financial crisis through the lenses of the different theoretical perspectives the thesis get the opportunity to both justify the theories themselves but also make the case of the *Argentinazo* viewable and explainable in a variety of different lights.

1.1 Statement of Purpose and Research Question

The Argentinazo movement as a response to the financial crisis is an interesting case in many different views. There are many different theories of how and what reasons social movements develop.

The purpose of this study is to find out which theory that best can explain the rise and development of the Argentinazo. In the light of this purpose have I formulated my research question:

- *Why did the Argentinazo movement develop?*

Since the study intends to test the different theories on the case of the Argentinazo movement. The conclusion of the thesis will also contain arguments and reflections about which of the tested theories that best can explain the case of the Argentinazo. The result of the study can also contribute to that either justify or weaken them in relation to the case of the Argentinazo (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:48).

1.2 Method

The qualitative research method has the purpose to explain the qualities of a phenomenon. Other definitions of the method are that qualitative studies are about focusing to characterize the subject or a case.

Furthermore, to discover and generate knowledge of how people perceive the world, the focus in this thesis will rely on the challenge to test the theories on my case in order to explain it. There are three different types of qualitative research methods that focus on to explain a case: theory testing studies, theory development studies and theory consuming studies (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:264-5; Esaiasson, et. al. 2009:35).

The research method I have chosen to use in this thesis is the *theory testing* study, because I do not intend to develop a new theory or focus on just explaining my case. Instead, the focus of the thesis will rely on how the theories can be tested on my case. The role of the theories can be described as an assistance to help answer my research question. But, the differences between the theory consuming and theory testing study are in certain distinctions a matter of degree. The chosen approach intends to focus on the theories and not the case. Thus, it is still important to not underestimate the reliance on the case used in the study. Further, the purpose of the study and the research question is in many ways depending on when choosing in-between theory consuming and theory testing studies. The question of which of these nearly related methods that should be applied in the study can be answered by looking at the purpose of the study e.g. is the researcher

more interested in the theories that are going to be implemented or the case (Esaiasson, et. al. 2009:42-3).

1.2.1 The Single Case Study

Why is the Argentinazo movement relevant or interesting? The choice of selecting the Argentinazo movement as a case was made upon the interest of the tensions, namely those between the civil society and the political elite. Reflections of possible mechanisms behind these tensions were in many views a key to the idea of this thesis.

The awareness of the difference between the transnational and national social movements is in this thesis of great importance. But, could these two types of movements, one operating in a global, transnational context while the other within the borders of the state, have some driving mechanisms in common?

This underlying theoretical hypothesis might give the light of that a comparative methodological approach would be more suitable for the thesis. But the interest still remains in the theories that will be used and tested on the Argentinazo movement. But the theoretical hypothesis adds the dimension of a hypothetic deductive approach on the journey to answer the research questions (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:48).

An argument for this is that the theories do not make any difference when it comes to in which level the movement develops or the civil society make a response. Instead, they rely on the economical and political conditions in which the movement develop. This is also the argument for testing these theories on the Argentinazo movement. Because the theories still treats the mechanisms of the tensions in which social movements develop as an expression of the civil society.

Causality is a central institution within the field of methodology and treats the logic explanations e.g. A occurred cause of B. Studies use to be divided into two different approaches: first those explaining for the cause and reasons why an event occurred — *cause analysis* and secondly — *effect analysis*, which seeks to investigate the effects of an event or happening (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:54). This thesis seeks to investigate the cause of why the Argentinazo movement development in first hand. Thus, it is here important to make the statement that I am not looking for the effects of the Argentinazo movement and its activities. Instead, the research question seeks to explain why it developed. The intensive design of the study gives the opportunity, with the underlying hypothetical argument, to implement a case of process and mechanism tracing through and with help of the theories (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:247).

1.2.2 Criticising The Method

I have chosen to make my thesis to a single case study with a theory testing approach. Even if I have brought up the discussion of the similarities and

differences between the theory testing and consuming method, what could occur as an advantage or disadvantage?

First, the single case study means that one case is in focus e.g. a sequence of events. It can also be applied to illustrate or substantiate a theory or mechanism (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:82). The purpose of this thesis is to test theories in order to see which of them who best can explain the development of the Argentinazo movement. Therefore, the single case study has an advantage because the thesis is focusing on one single case. Thus, a comparative study e.g. with the protests in Greece during the financial crisis 2010 could give more implications and control about differences and similarities. Because a variation of independent variables could therefore be satisfying in order to gain control over differences and similarities. (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:83). The disadvantage of this study design is that Greece and Argentina are different states and that differences e.g. cultural or political between them could affect the result and conclusions. A counter argument could be the fact that a single case study can have the ability to generate many rival and different explanations without rejecting any of them. The final pro argument for doing the single case study is that the thesis focus to explain and understand the case of the Argentinazo movement with existing theories and not to compare it. Still, I do not reject that the comparative study most likely also could give interesting results and conclusions.

1.2.3 Materials and Source Criticism

Materials and sources in this study consist of secondary sources. Descriptive literature that describes the economic politics in Argentine the preceding years of the financial crisis will have an important role.

But also articles from Argentine newspapers, which describes the events in Buenos Aires when Argentinazo movement occurred, in this study do I use an article from the newspaper La Nación which is comparable as a well respected media arena for political debate in Argentina. A disadvantage with using this type of sources is the dependency of other authors, journalists and researchers own perception of the case. The source criticism used by historical researchers therefore needs to be implemented and sources do have to be selected carefully (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:104). Another source will be country profile reports from The Economist Intelligence Unit and Freedom House.

1.3 Outline of the Study

The second chapter focus on and present the theoretical definitions that will be tested on the case of the Argentinazo movement's development. The core of what the theories of social movement development are also here presented and defined.

The third chapter describes the contemporary history with focus on politics and economy in Argentina the preceding years of the Argentinazo. The time aspect will rely on the years between 1989 until 2001-2002 when the movement developed and acted. First, the historical part will shortly describe Argentina from the point when the country consolidated to democracy in 1983 and the following years until 1989. The argument for the stronger focus from 1989 to the development of the movement in 2001 is that 1989 were the year when Carlos Menem become president and ruled the state with a neoliberal approach in his politics until the year of 1999 — when Fernando de la Rúa took over the presidential post until the development of the Argentinazo movement in December 2001 (Campos, 2009:103).

The fourth chapter consist of the analysis where theory is linked to the case of the Argentinazo movement. Finally the fifth chapter summarise the study and the results of the analysis.

2 Theoretical Approach

2.1 Political Opportunities

The theory of political opportunities assert to the importance of the broader political system in structuring the opportunities for collective action. The focus relies on the link between institutionalized politics and social movements (McAdam, et. al. 1996:2). The interaction between movements and institutionalized politics has become central for two types of research questions.

The first question the theory seeks to explain is the “emergence of a particular movement on the basis of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system”.

Secondly, the theory have been used to account for “cross-national movements differences in the structure, extent and success of comparable movements on the basis of differences in the political characteristics of the nation states in which they are embedded” (McAdam, et. al. 1996:3). An important point in both cases is that social movements are “shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the national context in which they are embedded (*ibid.*).

There is a relationship between contention and constraints upon the movement. According to Sidney Tarrow, political opportunities matter in social movement development because modern contemporary history shows that contentious politics not can be derived to disorganisation of societies or the deprivation from which people suffer. The importance instead relies on the political opportunities people experience and the constraints on the freedom of action – and the threats they perceive to their interests and values (Tarrow, 1998:71). Because contention is more related to opportunities for – and limited by constraints upon – collective action, than by the persistent social or economic factors that people experience. When people gain resources, which grant them the opportunity to escape their compliance the contention increases. Especially if people feel threatened by costs they cannot bear and the consequence of this scenario can be that their sense of justice outrages. If the access to the institutions, the elite and its allies become available cause of that the state capability of repression declines the challengers find the opportunity to advance their claims (*ibid.*). Thus, changing opportunities must also be in conjunction with structural elements like the strength or weakness in the capability of repression it normally employs. But also that each movement react differently to concrete opportunities depending on which policy domain the protest is addressing (Kriesi, et. al. 1995:209). External opportunities do not necessary need to produce a sustained social movement. That process relies on the challengers to employ repertoires of contention and dynamically frame their messages along with the ability to access

or construct unifying mobilizing structures. Therefore, to expose weakness of enemies and revealing allies, the opportunities are crucial for the movement formation (Tarrow, 1998:71f).

Sidney Tarrow pointed out a typology of political opportunity structures, which consist of: *policy-specific opportunities*, *group specific opportunities*, *state-centered opportunities* and *dynamic statism* (Tarrow, 1996:42).

Relevant for this thesis are the policy-specific opportunities and dynamic statism, the former because it approaches how the policy and institutional environment channels collective action around particular issues and its consequences. The later with consideration on the argument of its proponents, that “entire political systems undergo changes in which modify the environment of social actors sufficiently to influence the initiation, forms and outcome of collective action (Tarrow, 1996:42ff).

While the typology mentioned above more rely on the focus of the movement studies is it more important to point out the core and specific *dimensions* of political opportunity structures because of their central role when studying social movements (McAdam, et. al. 1996:10). Another important point is that various authors have different conceptions for these dimensions (McAdam, 1996:24f).

Dimensions of political opportunity structure

1. The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political
2. The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird polity
3. The presence or absence of elite allies
4. The states capacity and propensity for repression

Sidney Tarrow titles these dimensions as *elements of political opportunity structure* which emphasize not only formal structures like state institutions – but also the conflict alliance structures, which provide resources and oppose constraints external to the group. In comparison with the dimensions listed above are these by Tarrow titled elements and the same list would be as follows: (1) *the opening up of political access* considers that rational people not often attack well fortified opponents when they lack the opportunity to do so. It also questions if people with full political access are more likely to encourage and participate in protests. According to the political scientist Peter Eisinger is the relationship between political opportunity and protests curvilinear. Neither the absence of opportunity or full access generates the higher levels of protests. Instead he argues that it looks like protests are more likely in systems with a mix of open and closed factors (Eisinger, 1973:15). An important point is that violent protest is not closely related to open political opportunity while nonviolent is clearly related to opportunity (Tarrow, 1996:54). (2) *Unstable alignments* are the second aspect of opportunity structure, which consider the instability of changing political alignments like electoral instability in liberal democracies. When government and opposition parties changes and the possibility of new coalitions is emerging, this might encourage insurgents to exercise marginal power and induce elites to seek

support from the outside of the polity. Because bad subordination between the elites open window of opportunity for the rebels in which they can influence. (3) *Influential allies* are the third aspect of political opportunity and consider the presence of influential allies, which can act as guarantors against violent repression, as friends in court or acceptable negotiators on behalf of constituencies, which if they are ignored, would be harder for the authorities to deal with. (4) *Dividing elites* approaches how conflicts within the elite, which can encourage unrepresented groups to engage in collective action. The divided elite promotes incentives for resource-poor groups to take the risk of engaging in collective action but also encourage parts of the elite to “seize the role of “*tribune of the people*” in order to increase their own political influence”. The affect of a divided elite often leads to that the circle of conflict become wider and gives groups outside the political system marginal power – compared with a unified elite which gives far less opportunity and opening for these groups to use such marginal power (Tarrow, 1996:54-6).

2.1.1 Global Politics Affect Local Politics and Opportunity

Tarrow defines internationalization as “the migration of international pressures and conflicts into domestic politics and the triangular relationship that this creates among ordinary people, their governments, and international institutions” (Tarrow, 2005:80).

This phenomenon can be identified through a political cycle consisting of some important mechanisms, which are; (1) the external pressure to adopt and implement policies of international institutions, either in form of advice or with incentives of economic sanctions or regulations. (2) The politics are implemented. (3) Protest from the civil society, their object is the international policy but the target becomes the government that implements it. (4) Repression or concession by the government against the protesting groups, or brokerage of the government between the civil society and the international institutions (Tarrow, 2005:80). These mechanisms do not offer a specific hypothesis about the outcome of the process but its possible to make three claims which are that: (1), international institutions can trigger protests by their pressure on the governments domestic politics and the government becomes the target of the protesting groups, (2) the government end up in a two-level game between the civil society and international institutions, (3) governments can act as brokers between external pressures and domestic claims (Tarrow, 2005:80).

2.2 Mobilizing Structures

The political system and its opportunities shape the prospects for collective action and the form of the movement. But the influence is not independent from the different ways through mobilizing structures in which groups seek to organise.

Mobilizing structures refers to “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action”. This approaches informal networks, organisations, meso-level groups that include the collective building blocks of social movements. Mobilizing structures as theory origins from *resource mobilization* theory, which focus on “mobilization processes and formal organizational manifestations of these processes” (McAdam, et. al. 1996:3). Further, its important to again point out that political opportunities, mobilization and framing processes are strongly linked, and these factors should be viewed as interactive rather than independent. Political opportunities are prerequisite to action, but collective action cannot appear in the absence of sufficient organization, and neither can it do without the emergent meanings and definitions, the cultural construction or *frames* – shared by the growing movement. The organization of the movement is therefore crucial and the success of its capacity of contention depends on the organization of the movement (McAdam, et. al. 1996:8).

There exist different views of movements and leadership, some theorists have argued that without leadership exercised through organizations the acts of the movement become primitive and soon disintegrate. Other say that leaders can deprive people from power to disrupt by not inspiring them to action. This is called the iron law of oligarchy and tells that the movement falls into routine and displace their goal, to end up accepting the game of the system. Thus, some leaders, working through certain types organizations, are obviously able to transform the contention into movements and sustain in the conflicts (Tarrow, 2003:123). There are different views on what makes the best organizational structure of the movement.

The challenge for a movement organizer is according to Tarrow, to create “organizational models that are sufficiently robust to structure sustained relations with opponents, but are flexible enough to permit the informal connections that link people and coordinate contention” (2003:124). He also mention that, “the most effective forms of organization are based on partly autonomous and contextually rooted local units linked by connective structures and coordinated by formal organizations” (*ibid.*).

Approaching the organization of social movements, Kriesi points out the important difference between social movements and formal organizations, which are that (1) they mobilize their constituency for collective action, and (2) they do it with a political goal which purpose is for the collective good (Kriesi, 1996:152). But, like formal organizations social movements do have resources, these are viewed as *internal* and *external*. Internal resources approach the capability of the movement to organize itself and its leadership, and the communication among members, which gives opportunity for collective action. External resources refer

to the surrounding environment of the movement and its relations with its constituency, allies and the authorities (Kriesi, 1996:154; Tarrow, 2003:131-132).

2.3 Cultural Framing Processes

Social movements and their coordination of collective action do not only need cooperation through mobilization to be successful. The sharing of ideas, identity and culture – frames within the movement, is important because it justifies and inspires people to collective action (Tarrow, 2003:21).

The contention and contest between movements and authorities can be read as a literary text because frames are based on the social and political interaction. Therefore it is important to relate the messages of the movement to the actual conflict and the context of the political environment (Tarrow, 2003:106).

The framing process can be divided into two components: first the *diagnostic*, which approaches the definition of the problem and its source. Secondly, the *prognostic*, which consists of the identification of a strategy to redress the problem, the strategy is often followed by a claim – message – which mirrors the agenda and goal of the movement. The great challenge for movements is to frame political struggles to the audience in a way, which convinces them of the necessity and utility of collective action to solve them. The framing criteria are therefore important when it comes to the question of movement emergence (McCarthy, et. al.: 1996:291; Ayres, 2004: 14).

Further, the constructing of frames is an active process, which occurs in different arenas. There are two types of framing processes, which define the situation and what is to be done – internally and externally. The external process is when movements and its leaders and activists challenge authorities or engage into debates to persuade them and bystanders, with the rightness of their cause. On the other side, the internal intra-movement process approaches a contest between tactics and goals and can lead to change of the movement dominant frame (Zald, 1996:269).

It is of great importance for movements to access different arenas of the society to communicate their frames. Media is one important arena but efforts are also made to influence the government, electoral and the public agenda. Another target are non-governmental actors like public leaders, reporters and party leaders. In order to make a political impact the movement needs to spread their message to broader part of the society, which is divided in: the public, media, electoral and governmental arenas. These contain sets of audiences, competitors and gatekeepers – which shape the issue agenda. Different arenas require different tactics to spread the frames and messages of the movement (McCarthy, et. al.: 1996:291-3).

The public arena is accessed through involving people from already existing infrastructural organizations, which serves as gatekeepers because their credibility

often is stronger through public respect and contact with individuals is structured. The public arena is more decentralized than other arenas and therefore more accessible for movements. In addition to media, organizations (churches, schools, business) communicate directly with individuals.

Modern technology also allow to spread messages to these networks of organisation with low costs, resource-poor operations can therefore spread a message widely without aid from media (McCarthy, et. al: 1996:294). The media arena is more centralized than the public and harder to access. But local editors and reporters may be more accessible than the gatekeepers of governments and electoral, especially in the case of policy-specific agendas (McCarthy, et. al.: 1996:296).

The electoral arena is more centralized than the public and media arena and there are fewer gatekeepers. The access to the electoral arena will vary over time depending on the legislative system, electoral cycles and parties. Thus regular election cycles open windows for movements to frame their issues to attention of the public and the elite. In the period of election is the public debate at a higher level than usual and even if candidates try to control and limit the debate, movements have opportunity to influence the debate in a way that not exist normally. In that sense, elections can act as a bridge between the public and formal agenda (McCarthy, et al: 1996:298f).

The governmental arena in democratic societies can be further broken down in legislative and executive arenas with agendas. Given the structure of the debate within the legislative arena it can provide opportunity and access to movements. Movements can also figure as opposition to the administration by raising issues that absent from their agenda. The strategy of movements to influence the arenas with their frames mentioned differs. Authorities can be challenged by strikes, boycott and physical coercion. The agenda setting process of frames within the various arenas often consist of a mix of activities depending of the access and way to influence the target arena (McCarthy, et al: 1996:300f).

2.4 Central Aspects of the Theoretical Approach

Political Opportunity – Approaches the importance of how the political environment surrounding the movement shapes its development process. The openness or closeness of the institutionalized politics is a dependent variable in case of which of the different arenas (media, legislative, public) the movement seek and try to influence.

Mobilization Structures – Approaches how the movement organization of both itself and its activities like collective action. The approach is divided in two types of movement resources, the internal that consist of the intra-movement activities and the external, which are relations to other movements, politicians and different types of networks of interest for the movement.

Cultural Framing Processes – Approaches how the movement *frame* their issues to get support for their claim. Not only does it frame the problem through a diagnostic frame, the movement even makes a prognostic frame, which consist of a solution to the issue. Frames are used by the movement to both encourage people to engage in collective action and to counter against the authorities.

3 Contemporary Argentine History

3.1 Democracy and Financial Crisis 1983-1989

Argentina becomes an independent state in 1816 after nearly three centuries under Spanish colonial rule. The following century was quite messy, military coups and war often interrupted when the country was under democratic rule. In 1955, the authoritarian populist rule of Juan Peron ended to be followed by a series of right-wing military dictatorships until Argentina consolidated to a democracy in 1983 (Freedom House).

Candidate Raul Alfonsín of the Radical Party was elected president in the first electoral in 1983 with great expectations from the Argentine civil society. Alfonsín were expected to deal with the judging of military officers, which were involved in the violation of human rights and stabilize the economy of the country through new economic models, which should care about social and economic rights of the civil society (Flichman, 1990:27).

But Alfonsín failed to fulfil his promise and in the middle of 1980s Argentine had gone through a financial crisis with foreign debts. The mismanagement of public finances led to hyperinflation, which in turn led to the consequence that the country had to sign an agreement in 1984 with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reschedule loans. But under the condition that Argentina put anti-inflationary measures into practice, the plan for this was Plan Austral (Flichman, 1990:27-8; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008:5).

A new currency, the Austral was introduced and even though Alfonsín decided to freeze increases in wages with regard to the inflation it did not change the positive image of him because the time of military rule was still a fresh memory in people's mind. But when the inflation rates did not decrease the following year and Alfonsín failed to charge the officers from the period of military rule, the public opinion turned negative of Alfonsín and his administration. With a great loss of support Alfonsín had to make the decision of earlier election in 1989, which was won by Carlos Menem of the Justicialist Party (Flichman, 1990:27; Schaumburg, 2008:370; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008:4).

3.2 The Presidency of Carlos Menem: Neo-liberal Hegemony 1989-1999

Carlos Menem came to power by promises of dealing with economic inequality among the citizens in his campaign preceding the election. But the politics practised by Carlos Menem took a liberal and market oriented approach and he started a full-scale privatization process (selling out state owned companies) of Argentina and in 1991, the peso was locked to the American dollar through the Convertibility Plan. The privatization process were not welcome by all, movements like Central de los Trabajadores Argentinos (CTA) and the division of the Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), the Peronist confederation of unions emerged with the goal of preventing the privatization of state owned business (Motta, 2009:92).

Thus, Menem's administration succeeded in the managing to gain control over the inflation through cooperation with his coalition, consisting of the financial groups from the time of military rule during the 1970s. His administration also succeeded in changing the constitution so that Menem could be re-elected in 1995. When the message of market reforms was carried out – Menem used to refer to the prevailing discourse “single way of thinking – namely market sovereignty” (Motta, 2009:91;The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008:5;Porta et. al, 2006:16).

The neo-liberal approach of Menem influenced even the labour politics. Unions of the workers were weakened to benefit a more flexible market. These politics lead to a rapid growth of informal economy and increase in under- and unemployment. The working and middle class lost their benefits and protection from the state and this social sector found itself in poverty and a political impotence that it had not been since the days of Peron (Motta, 2009:92).

Not only did these politics shape the middle and working class into an unsecure economic situation. The hollowing out of the state's economic and political capacity lead to that revenue decreased while debt increase in both the public and private, and weakened the state's capability of institutional “developmentalist”. The political elite and the state's incapacity of co-opt the popular classes lead to difficulties in legitimizing their authority and reinforced a process of de-collectivization, a disintegration in social and political practises (Motta, 2009:92). The policies, which weakened labour organizations, privatisations and flexibility in the labour market, were used to benefit Menem's political goals an the Peronist punteros (political brokers) intervened in the supply of unemployment benefits, which gained votes from unemployed people in poverty. These politics lead to (or tried to) split the working class from the unemployed through the selective distribution of social benefits through the political brokers. The unemployed- working and middle class therefore did not have any choice in the 1995 election (Motta, 2009:93).

In 1993, Menem decided to privatize the YFP oil company in Salta which he had promised the local voters not to, earlier in his election campaign, this led to a change in the social structure surrounding the company and the level of unemployment was high even by Argentine standards. The privatization of YFP became symbolic by two reasons, first, it was an old company founded in the 1900s. Secondly, the former workers of YFP decided to encourage collective action by a 23 day long occupation of municipality buildings demanding for unemployment subsidies from the provincial government – and succeeded, these events became the first political resistance against the neo-liberal politics of Menem. The unemployed created the organisation UTD (a parallel municipality) through which they made their political claims. (Schaumberg, 2008:377).

Another similar event took place in Santiago the same year when students, retired elderly, informal sector workers, unemployed youth, provincial and government workers protested in front of the government house, throwing stones and bricks while trying to get in. The contentious period of the “Santiagazo” came to be known for the protests against the neoliberal structure programmes and Argentine newspapers described the protesters as – “angry and hungry”, converging on the residence of “wrongdoers” (Auyero, 2003:118-9). Besides the occupation of the buildings, the unemployed also started to protest against politics by blocking roads and by gathering large assemblies for demonstrations. These roadblocks by unemployed are referred to as *piquetes*, and the organisation of the unemployed as *piqueteros organisations* (Schaumberg, 2008:381).

3.3 From Fernando de la Ruá to Riots 1999-2001

Menem lost a part of his power in the congress election 1997, the reason for were the discontent from the civil society of the unemployment and following great social sacrifices of his politics but also that the lack of transparency in the financial accounting of the state led to a victory for the coalition of the UCR and Frente del País Solidario parties. In 1999, Menem lost the last part of his power when Fernando de la Ruá won the presidential election (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008:4).

In the election held in October 2001, 4 million voters (40% of the electorate) left blank votes in order to protest against the economic crisis and political corruption and the discontent among the citizens was obvious (North & Huber, 2004:963). And the situation in Argentina got even more badly two months later, in December, Fernando de la Ruá stopped the outflow of money with regard to an increased financial speculation of the under regulated market. People went to their banks to withdraw savings, in order to stop the outflow of capital; the president put the corralito-policy into practice, a regulation with certain restrictions of withdrawal of cash and foreign money transfers (*ibid.*). The consequence of the corralito-policy with restrictions were negatively affecting the working and

middle class, however, it turned out to be an ineffective tool because it impoverished the working class and many in the middle class already had their capital in foreign banks (Dinerstein, 2002:2).

The massive demonstration protests (social uprising) of thousands of people on the streets of Buenos Aires in the 19th of December 2001 is referred to as the time when the Argentinazo movement developed and during the violent demonstrations 36 people were killed by the police (North & Huber, 2004:963-4; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:28). During the same day, president Fernando de la Ruá decided to approach the decree law, “Estado de Sitio” – state of siege. The violence of the police irritated and made the demonstrators even angrier and people started to walk out on the streets and banged their pans to protest against the state repression, corruption and economic deprivation. This phenomenon is referred to as “los cacerolazos” and the event looked like a carnival even if the behaviour of the demonstrators occurred from upset and angry feelings (Galafassi, 2005:2; Schaumberg, 2008:372).

The banging of pans were supposed to make politicians aware of their anger and frustration over the politic economic development the recent decade and people screamed “basta” – enough with this (Dinerstein, 2002:6) Another motto were “Que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo!” – out with them all, not a single one must remain. Under this motto, the unemployed, working class and parts of the middle class mobilized against the government and business elite. And the message of the Argentinazo was the disappointment with the system and a call for arms, a question after new economic politics (North & Huber, 2004:964; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:28).

4 The Rise of the Argentinazo

I will in this chapter link central aspects of the theory: political opportunities, mobilizing structures and cultural framing process with the politic economic development in Argentine the foregoing years of the Argentinazo.

As mentioned earlier, the Argentinazo movement referrer to the collective action of the people on the streets of Buenos Aires 19-20th of December 2001 (North & Huber, 2004:963). In order to answer the research question, the political development in the society preceding the period of the movements rise is therefore relevant. A challenge in this analysis is to keep the different theoretical criteria separated even though they are not independent of each other.

4.1 Pre-Analysis of the Preceding Years

The politic and economic opportunities for the people did change during the 1990-1999 through the neo-liberal politics of president Carlos Menem. Working unions were weakened and the level of unemployment was high even by Argentine standards, caused by the privatization process and the agreement with IMF to keep level of inflation low (Schaumberg, 2008:377;Motta, 2009:92).

According to Tarrow, international institutions like the IMF can bring an external political pressure on states, which lead them to a two level game where they can act as political brokers between the civil society and the international institutions (2005:80).

The agreement with IMF could have brought a political pressure on Argentina, with the consequences of unemployment and privatization to favour the market. This change of political conditions could put the people in a mode were they felt political alienation and less opportunity to express their claims. The occupation of the YFP oil company in 1993 is an example of how people because of the changed political conditions put a *diagnostic* frame of the problem and a *prognostic* for the solution of it with the result of mobilization for collective action – through which they also expressed their claims (Schaumberg, 2008:377 (McCarthy, et. al: 1996:291;Ayres, 2004: 14). The event of YFP also witness about how strongly the criteria of political opportunity, mobilization and cultural framing linked together is dependent of each other to develop a social movement.

Another similar event took place in Buenos Aires in 1996-1997, the *piquetes* (road blocks) when the *piqueteros* (organisations of unemployed workers making road blocks) started to block several roads in order to protest against the high rates of unemployment, and its benefits through the mismanagement by the state (Motta, 2009:93).

Auyero defines these protests as signs (frames) of high discontent with the neo-liberal politics of the Menem administration and their use of the unemployment benefits for gaining their own political goals. The promises of democracy and a better everyday life were framed as a disillusion cause of the policies and repressions by the state, which instead lead to a feeling of powerlessness and weakness in the civil society. But the civil society found its way by starting to protest against the actors responsible and related to their situation, the political administration which they directed their aggression and claims to, and attacked through the road blocks (2003:19).

The years preceding the Argentinazo movement is with no doubt quite messy in a political economic development view and this fact is also important to point out for understanding the societal and political environment that shaped the Argentinazo.

4.2 The Development of the Argentinazo

4.2.1 Political Opportunities of the Argentinazo

The discontent from the civil society for president Carlos Menem and his neo-liberal politics were apparent in the elections of 1997 and 1999. High levels of unemployment and lack of transparency of the government were the reasons (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008:4).

The elections cannot only be viewed as a victory for Fernando de la Ruá, but also as a political opportunity. The election were a channel to the government through which people could gain a political goal by showing their disappointment with the recent politics which they perceived as a threat to their social and economical interests (Tarrow, 1998:71). The change of congress and two years later president could be seen as a move of *opening up of political access* and *unstable alignment* because: (1) the election gave people the opportunity, (2) it was through the election a change of government opposition were made possible to achieve for the people (Tarrow, 1996:54).

But, the disappointment with the politics did not change with Fernando de la Ruá, instead, it was after the election in the midst of October 2001 with 4 million blank votes cause of economic crisis and corruption. The corralito-policy two months later, with closed cash withdrawals and stopped foreign money transfers did provoke and impoverish the working and middle class even more. What the government could have done instead was to act as *political brokers* to find a desirable solution of the problem for both parts. But history tells that they did not with the result of an upset civil society (Tarrow, 2005:80; North & Huber, 2004:963). This event could have added a more *policy-specific* dimension of opportunity for the people to rely their focus on (Tarrow, 1996:42).

Because not only were Argentina in a middle of a crisis, the government also made decisions which strongly affected peoples everyday life, the policy could therefore be viewed as a symbol (frame) to protest against through demonstration on the streets, the mobilization of people on the streets could have been a result of that the people were policy-specific in their compliance. But, it is still important to remember that movements react differently to their concrete opportunities depending on which policy domain the protest is addressing.

During the 19-20th of December 2001, the protests were violent and the state responded to the demonstrators by means of coercion, resulting in 36 civilians killed by the police. It is possible that the demonstrations could have been more violent – or less – if the government not took action against the people who could have felt that their political rights were diminished because opportunities lies in conjunction with the structural elements, the strength or weakness of repression the state normally employs (Kriesi, et. al 1995:209). However, the outcome of this constraint on people's freedom made them angrier which lead to the banging of pans, which might be an act of symbolism to demonstrate both the threat of their interests but also the value of their cause (Schaumberg, 2008:372;Tarrow, 1998:71). Further, the large amount of people demonstrating on the streets, can also contribute to expose the weakness of trust for the government, which with no doubt can put the government in an sticky situation because the absence of trust from the people illegitimate the power they exercise (Tarrow, 1998:71f).

To summarize the political opportunities it seems like the Argentine government by their restrictions of cash withdrawals and neo-liberal labour/economic politics put the people in a mode where they felt political unsecure and experienced problems with getting attention for their cause. The economic crisis with the corralito-policy could therefore be seen as a factor that gave the people a concrete event to start protesting against the politics that affected their everyday life during the last decade, the repression (police violence) from the state was perceived as a negative act, which made people angrier and more disappointed with the government and its politics.

4.2.2 Mobilizing Structures of the Argentinazo

The mobilization process of the Argentinazo is an interesting case because it involved groups from different social backgrounds. Not only in the events of Buenos Aires 2001 have Argentina proved that the civil society is capable of mobilizing a mix of protestants.

The occupation of YFP in 1993 and the “Santiagazo” earlier mentioned also witness of this phenomenon when students, elderly retired and workers – angry and hungry– attacked their target while throwing bricks and stones (Schaumberg, 2008:377;Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:28). According to McCarthy is the organization of great importance for its capability to gain success in achieving the goal of the movement (1996:8). None of the authors publications used in this thesis have mentioned any kind of “formal” leader for the movement. Different

theorists have also argued for that a leader can bring the movement into the iron law of oligarchy (Tarrow, 2003:123).

Thus, this does not necessary mean that there were no leaders of the Argentinazo movement. The mix of social backgrounds (working and middle class, students, elderly retired) of those participating in the Argentinazo (and the fact that thousands of people participated in the social uprisings the 19-21th of December 2001) witness of that it could have been a result of different social networks who encouraged to collective action through their own organisations (companies, schools, churches, NGOs etc.). This scenario should in this sense therefore mean that people did have leaders depending on their social background and position in the society, but that none of these were formal leaders for the movement but could by their position in their mother organisations still push and motivate the members of them to participate. This also manifest when Tarrow writes that, “the most effective forms of organization are based on partly autonomous and contextually rooted local units linked by connective structures and coordinated by formal organizations” (2003:124). In other words, no formal leader was needed and this could be strength for the Argentinazo, because it could instead mobilize through “unofficial leaders” – leaders of formal organisations who people met in their everyday life in the society. These organisations constructed a network of autonomous actors with a common goal. No formal leader of the movement could thus give two reflections: (1) their were no official spokesperson for the government to broke political peace with and the Argentinazo were harder to counter against for the government. (2) The Argentinazo could use collective action to manifest their claim and still be hard to deal with because there was no natural target (leader) of the movement.

The organisation of the Argentinazo was most likely a result of a mobilization of members from different formal organisations of the society, which did what Kriesi points out: mobilized their constituency for collective action with the political goal which purpose were for the collective good (protest against the recent decade of politics). The Argentinazo could in that way enjoy the construction of the mobilization process with its *internal* resources consisting of the different organisations along with the *external* – the relationship to the constituency and message to the government (Kriesi, 1996:152;Dinerstein, 2002:6;Tarrow, 2003:131-132).

4.2.3 Cultural Framings by the Argentinazo

The framing process has with no doubt been one of the most important key factors for the development of the Argentinazo. The elections in 1997 and 1999 witness of that the people’s great disappointment with the neo-liberal politics by Carlos Menem were a shared value, which even if it occurred two years before the development of the Argentinazo were exposed through the electoral/governmental arena by the people, which is important to inspire people to collective action (Tarrow, 2003:21). The elections become an even when the people had the opportunity to express their frames. The fact that Carlos Menem’s party first lost

the congress election and two years later the presidential also express that people were disappointed with the politics during a long period because the electoral arena is opened a political influential window which through the people could exercise power (McCarthy, et al: 1996:298f;The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008:4).

This disappointment was further proved by the result of the elections held in October in 2001; with 4 million blank votes were the discontent about the economic political development obvious. Thus, the corralito-policy two months later with cash withdrawals could as in case with the political opportunities helped the movement to put a *diagnostic* frame on the problem, which was the politics, and a *prognostic* which was to solve the problem through protests and the demonstrations under the development of the Argentinazo 19-20th December. The Argentinazo did base their mainframe, discontent with politics, on the social and political interaction with the government, and related their messages: “*Que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo!*” – “*out with them all, not a single one must remain*” / “*basta!*” – “*enough!*” to the government. This way of framing the issue and solution were also of great importance for the Argentinazo movement development because it gathered people under a specific message that made claim for its political goal – to change the politics of the government (North & Huber, 2004:963;Dinerstein, 2002:6;McCarthy, et. al: 1996:291;Ayres, 2004: 14).

The slogan, “*Que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo!*” could also be viewed as an *external* and *internal* frame of the Argentinazo, external because it helped the Argentinazo to access the media arena and its gatekeepers of the society with a clear and specific message about their political goal and claim. But also contributing with an argument for people to join their movement, a specific claim that people could feel identification with and agree to manifest through collective action (Zald, 1996:269;McCarthy, et. al.: 1996:296).

When the police killed the 36 demonstrators during the 19-20th of December 2001, this might have contributed to strengthen the intra-movement process of framing for the Argentinazo. Not only were the people already upset of the political and economical situations, the state answered by repression, which in fact could contribute to more angrier feelings about the issue the people had in common, which also can strength the bounds between the people and the issue they addressed. This event could in turn explain the happening of the “*cacerolazos*” – when people started to banging pans on the streets and also strengthen the theory that frames are based upon social and political interaction (contention) (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2005:28;Zald, 1996:269;Tarrow, 2003:106).

5 Summary

The purpose of this study was to test the theory if the theory of political opportunity, mobilization processes and cultural framing could explain the rise of the Argentinazo movement during the financial crisis in 2001. The results of the study implicates that all three aspects were important for the rise of the Argentinazo. I will explain this by returning to my research question:

- *Why did the Argentinazo movement develop?*

The answer to question is that the Argentinazo did not just develop in one day. It was rather a process of neo-liberal politics, which caused that people experienced issues related to politic economic development during the preceding decade before the rise of the Argentinazo. The elections of 1997 and 1999 made that president Carlos Menem lost his power but the new president, Fernando de la Ruá did not live up to the expectations of the civil society.

It is important to make a final statement that the theoretical approach of the political opportunities, mobilization and cultural framing processes is hard to analyse clinical and separated because they are not independent of each other. The theory can be related and explain the rise of the Argentinazo movement in following ways.

- *Political Opportunity* – political economical development and new neo-liberal policies and following repression by the state lead people into a mode were they felt weak and powerless. A discontent with the politics emerged in the social and political environment of Argentina.
- *Cultural Framing Processes* – the Argentinazo could by putting a diagnostic frame on the issue: the political economical development and its relation to effects on peoples everyday life draw people to the prognostic frame – the solution of the issue: to change government and politics.
- *Mobilization* – the frames helped the Argentinazo to motivate people to encourage and engage in collective action against the state in order to get attention for their claim. This was possible through using different autonomous networks of organisations, the mobilization were the action tool to put their frame on the political agenda.

The theoretical approach, which has been tested in this study, is clearly strengthened by being capable of explaining the dynamics and question of the Argentinazo emergence. It does not only bring interesting perspectives and reflections of the preceding years – it also contributes with the ability to see the Argentinazo through different lights in the time of the movement's emergence.

The final answer of the Argentinazo movement emergence is that the recent decade of neo-liberal politics had put people in a political and economical unsecure mode. The people demonstrated their disappointment through elections and changed the president. But when the financial crisis occurred the trust for the new government and president diminished, the corralito-policy worked as a launching factor for the Argentinazo emergence because people got upset of the economic deprivation from the cash withdrawals. This in turn gave them an argument, an angry feeling they could frame against the government and internal to recruit members for collective action. Police violence from the state as an answer to the demonstrations motivated and contributed with a stronger feeling of political repression which strengthened the motivation of the people. They mobilized to express their political claim – a desirable change of economic politics – indirect to the media, and direct to the public and government – and the streets of Buenos Aires went from siesta to fiesta. The Argentinazo movement had developed.

What important lessons can we draw from the case of social movements in general and the Argentinazo in particular? First, the process of the Argentinazo development in general illustrates how the civil society can exercise contention against the government. The contentions can be viewed as a response from below on the politics sent from above within the state. Because, if the government of Argentina did not had used these economic policies during the preceding decade, the Argentinazo should clearly not have emerged because the effects of the policies were what motivated and draw people to develop the movement.

Not only is this phenomenon important just in the case of the Argentinazo. The lessons from the Argentinazo is still of great relevance in our time. As I discussed in the method chapter, the financial crisis of Greece in 2010 and the following reactions from the civil society of the policies taken in order to tackle the economic situation is not far from the situation in Buenos Aires and Argentina 2001, because the financial situation and the taken policies of the government affected peoples social and political everyday life, which they reacted against through collective action and protests.

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