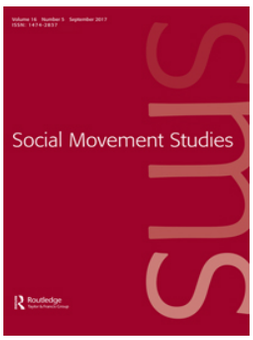

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Compulsion mechanisms: state-movement dynamics in Buenos Aires

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ABSTRACT

The article reveals and explains the workings of generally ignored mechanism of state–movement interaction proposed by Charles Tilly, namely the *compulsion mechanism*. Specifically, two types of compulsion mechanisms will be defined: *compulsive support* and *compulsive control*. In both types, without using physical repression, the state's institutions reinforce the movement's identity while also prompting it to adapt its repertoire of strategies to the state institutions' requirements. Empirically, this article focuses on the interaction of the assembly movement with the state in the City of Buenos Aires. This movement emerged as a result of the socioeconomic and political crises of 2001–2002 in Argentina. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research, the purpose is to unpack how the assembly movement's identities and strategies were built and how its interaction with the state evolved.

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State–movements interactions; urban politics; urban movements; popular assemblies; neighborhood assemblies; Latin America; relational analysis; Charles Tilly

This article argues that existing notions of clientelism, co-optation, and repression are insufficient to fully understand the relational dynamics between social movements and state institutions. Beyond those processes, is introduced 'compulsion mechanisms' that explain how different social movement sectors enter into reinforcing processes of interaction with state institutions that gradually construct the different paths pursued by the actors. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research, the article unpacks the interaction of the assembly movement with the state in the City of Buenos Aires. It examines the bifurcation of the movement into 'popular' and 'neighborhood' assemblies, and analyzes their interactions with a (non-monolithic) state. This illuminates the trajectories that each social movement sector took, in which their identities and strategies developed such that they went through different roads to similar fates. By examining the construction and maintenance of relationships between an emerging urban movement and a variety of key state institutions, this article identifies two forms of compulsion mechanism that ultimately provide an innovative and nuanced account of state–movement dynamics.

How social movements interact with state institutions is crucial for social movement studies because movements are political actors intimately related to the development of the state (Johnston, 2011). However, movement scholars generally analyzed the dynamics of interaction between social movements and state institutions as if movements and elites are clearly defined contenders that clash or cooperate (Gamson, 1975; McAdam et al., 2001). Until recently, the fact that the state is '… simultaneously target,

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sponsor, and antagonist for social-movements …' (Jenkins & Klandermans, 1995: 3) was generally neglected. We know from recent scholarship that movements are not only outsiders, but sometimes even participate inside government (Abers & Tatagiba, 2015; Banaszak, 2010; Giugni & Passy, 1998; Goldstone, 2003; McAdam & Tarrow, 2010; Rossi, 2017).

This important step in the analysis of social movements is a byproduct of the growing importance of the relational approach to the study of movements (Lavalle & von Bülow, 2015; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). However, even though scholars theoretically acknowledge that movements are complex networks of actors (Diani, 1992) that are being defined and redefined through the relational mechanisms of interaction with allies and antagonists (Melucci, 1989), the scholarship does not tend to empirically analyze movements in this fashion. Generally, studies present movements as already clearly defined actors, and not as being relationally built. Moreover, we tend to miss in the empirical analysis the unintended relational construction of identities and strategies (Tavera Fenollosa, 2015).

Even the most radical and autonomous movements inevitably define themselves – once they have reached a certain level of relevance in the political arena – in terms of their relationship with the state. The state institutions, directly or indirectly, are the main articulators of social relations and penetrate movements through diverse means. We know that clientelism, co-optation, surveillance, physical and symbolic repression, and other forms of policing of movements are widely used by the state (Davenport, Johnston, & Mueller, 2005; della Porta & Reiter, 1998). However, we also know that this is just part of the story, as many other forms of state–movement dynamics exist (Abers & Tatagiba, 2015; Alvarez Rivadulla, 2012; Auyero, 2003; Davis, 1997; Kriesi et al., 1995; Quirós, 2006; Rossi, 2015). As Tilly put it, there is a range of selective ways in which the state responds to collective action: repression, toleration, facilitation, and compulsion, adding: 'Governments which repress also facilitate. While raising the costs of some kinds of collective action to some kinds of groups, they lower the costs of other kinds of collective action to other kinds of groups' (Tilly, 1978, p. 106).[1]

Following Tilly, this article's purpose is to unpack how a movement's identities and strategies were built and how its interaction with the state evolved. It will end by revealing a generally ignored mechanism of state–movement interaction: *compulsion*, and show how it works empirically. According to Tilly (1978, p. 106), there is a spectrum of governmental response to movements that runs from repression, at one extreme, through facilitation, to compulsion. Compulsion is distinguished from facilitation then, because it involves '… punishing non-performance instead of simply rewarding performance.' By 'compulsion' I mean 'an irresistible persistent impulse to perform an act' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 11th edition). Understood here as a mechanism it is a relational outcome – thus, the actors do not (entirely) purposely seek it. As the next sections will show, the state is composed of multiple institutions with contradictory goals that many times develop policies that are a reaction to the disruption produced by a movement with no clearly defined aims beyond containing disruption. This reaction of the state might also reinforce some dimensions of the movement, while suppressing (or not) some others. Compulsion mechanisms enable explanation of this type of relational dynamic.

Two types of compulsion mechanisms will be identified, analyzed, and defined: *compulsive support* and *compulsive control*. In both types the state's institutions are shown to reinforce the movement's identity while also prompting it to adapt its repertoires of strategies to the state institutions' requirements. In the first mechanism, this will be done through state support to movement claims and goals, while in the second it will be done through control of the movement. In both, the outcome is that the movement goes through a process of transformation of its repertoire of strategies, while reinforcing their identities. This outcome is partially unplanned and it is the interaction of the movement with state institutions under the latter's logic that explains this result. Finally, it is worth clarifying that compulsion mechanisms are different from co-optation because no patronage, clientelism or demobilization is purposely sought on behalf of the state (cf. Gamson, 1975, p. 29; Meyer, 2007, p. 130; Selznick, 1949, p. 127; for different definitions). These are state–movement dynamics whereby a state actor facilitates movement claims and needs *in excess* (i.e. responding with more than what is even claimed by the movement, and sometimes anticipating the movement requests), producing movement changes as a result of this.

The compulsion mechanism will be illustrated with a study of the assembly movement of Buenos Aires. The assembly movement emerged as a result of the most serious recent crisis of elites' legitimacy in Argentina. During the 2001–2002 crisis, the assembly movement materialized and established itself as an alternative voice from below in the national political arena but over time came to decrease and localize the focus of its activities before demobilizing almost totally by 2003.[2] In this short period, the assembly movement sought to become recognized as a legitimate actor by the political authorities in a number of ways. From its inception, the assembly movement encompassed a wide diversity of interests that led to the emergence of two wings within it: the 'popular' and 'neighborhood' assemblies. These two groups are analyzed here through the respective case studies – the *Asamblea Popular Cid Campeador* (Cid Campeador Popular Assembly) and the *Asamblea Vecinal de Palermo Viejo* (Palermo Viejo Neighborhood Assembly). After observing several assemblies, these cases were selected due to their empirical proximity to the two ideal-typical models of 'popular' and 'neighborhood' assemblies that integrated the movement.[3]

After these two assembly sectors are introduced, this article will focus on the interaction of the movement with different state institutions in the City of Buenos Aires. The central question that will be analyzed in this article departs from an empirical puzzle: though both the 'popular' and 'neighborhood' wings defined their identity and strategy in different ways, the unfolding of their interaction with the state ended in a common outcome. The following analysis of the movement deliberately addresses two common problems that are associated with the literature about the assembly movement. First, the crucial fissure in the movement as outlined above has been repeatedly ignored but is dealt with detail here (but see: Rossi, 2005b, 2005c). Second, the interaction of this movement with the state has never been the subject of dedicated empirical research, with previous studies bestowing traditional classifications to it such as co-optation, clientelism, or movement dissolution (but see: Svampa & Corral, 2006).

This article is based on more extensive results obtained through ethnographic observation conducted from January 2002 to February 2003 in the case of the Cid Campeador Popular Assembly, and Palermo Viejo Neighborhood Assembly, from January to June 2002 in the case of the *Asamblea Popular de Belgrano-Núñez* (Belgrano-Núñez Popular Assembly), and from January to March 2002 for the *Asamblea Interbarrial de Parque Centenario* (Inter-Neighborhood Assembly of Parque Centenario). Eight more assemblies were also observed for the purposes of case selection and generalization. The cases were chosen because of being paradigmatic of each social movement sector (cf. Rossi, 2005b for a detailed explanation). The Cid and Palermo Viejo assemblies were observed systematically in all their weekly meetings for the whole period without participating in any debate. After disclosing in the first couple of meetings the goals of the research and identity, the observation aimed at not modifying the debates and regular activities, being something like Oscar Wilde's Canterville ghost – always present and perceived, but not perturbing anyone. The ethnography included observation of all the activities organized by the cases, interviews with all the relevant members (selected due to their roles in the different stages in the history of the assemblies), and regular communication with a key informant in each of the main cases. Also, the totality of the documents, leaflets, and web pages of each assembly were analyzed during the fieldwork period. Finally, secondary sources were utilized, including the national newspapers *Página/12*, *Clarín*, and *La Razón* alongside information published by online sources like *Indymedia* and several other alternative media outlets from December 2001 to March 2003.

From the crisis to the movement in Argentina

President Fernando De la Rúa led a very weak coalition government almost from the beginning of his mandate. In October 2000, less than one year after entering into office, Vice-President Carlos Álvarez resigned due to his rejection of a number of government policies. In October 2001, the government was defeated in the legislative elections losing its majority in both chambers. Economically, as a result of an average annual fall of 4.4% in GDP, with an accumulated contraction of 20.5% since 1995 (Novaro, 2009, p. 595), unemployment reached 19% by October 2001 (plus 16.2% underemployment), with poverty exceeding 35% in Buenos Aires. Within this critical context, a restriction on bank transactions

was applied in December in order to avoid the continuation of the run on the banks that had started in November. Things got worse, and on the 14 December several lootings broke out in Buenos Aires, Mendoza, and Rosario (Auyero & Moran, 2007). To control the situation the government declared a state of siege on the 19 December. In response, President De la Rúa delivered a televised speech justifying the decision but conjuring up memories of the dictatorship this was met with outrage by the urban middle class, which spontaneously performed enormous *cacerolazo* (saucepan banging) protests in the main squares of the City of Buenos Aires and in several other large cities. Later that night thousands went to *Plaza de Mayo* to demand the resignation not just of the government, but also of all the judges on the Supreme Court, as well as every one of the regional governors, deputies, senators, and trade union leaders. The people in the square shouted *¡Qué se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo!* (Get rid of them all, not a single one must remain!) as the political elite as a whole was considered responsible for the critical situation. The government reacted with repression. In two days, 35 people were killed by the police, and on the afternoon of the 20 December De la Rúa resigned. In the days that followed, several opposition leaders occupied the presidency as interim emergency governments, but quit almost immediately as crowds outside demanded their removal. While saucepan banging protests spread, public attacks on politicians intensified, alongside protests that demanded the resignation of the Supreme Court (Schuster et al., 2002).

It was amidst this political crisis that a movement calling for the practical application of *¡Qué se vayan todos!* (thereafter, QSVT) emerged. After Adolfo Rodríguez Saá resigned from a one-week presidency, in January 2002 Eduardo Duhalde became the interim president until May 2003. Under his presidency, he was able to stabilize the political system and govern until Néstor Kirchner was elected with just 22% of votes cast. As these events unfolded, the people involved in the protests developed two parallel, but connected, collective interpretation processes (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 5). Each process favored the constitution of local citizens' assemblies that met on the streets, but these diverged into the two wings (or sectors) of neighborhood and popular assemblies that differed in their interpretations of the disputed issues and of their role in the political process. As will be seen in the paradigmatic cases of the Cid Campeador Popular Assembly (thereafter, Cid) and the Palermo Viejo Neighborhood Assembly (thereafter, Palermo Viejo), the division of the movement into two groups was the result of different interpretations of the 2001 crisis and sociopolitical networks. While the 'popular' social-movement sector was mostly based on the activation of left-wing networks, the 'neighborhood' sector was the result of the politicization of part of the citizenry.

The activation of left-wing networks: Cid Campeador popular assembly

Anonymous, homemade posters invited anyone interested to meet in a small square below the monument to the Cid Campeador, in the City of Buenos Aires. The posters put up by members of the *Asamblea Popular La Paternal 'Diego "Nano" Lamagna*' said: 'Let's organize the saucepan protests.' Some La Paternal assembly members, who were also militants of the Trotskyist party *Izquierda Unida* (United Left, IU),[4] with the Cid expanded the movement's territorial penetration. In this sense, the Cid represented a typical path among the 'popular' assemblies. In other words, the Cid – as well as the group of assemblies that shared the same origins – emerged through leftist party networks that purposely tried to stimulate the reproduction of additional assemblies in different neighborhoods. Their goal was to take advantage of the crisis. This was done with the expectation of radicalizing antagonisms by multiplying spaces of contention in diverse locations of the city. This interest in the coordination of protest was shared by the 'popular' sector and led to the creation of the *Asamblea Interbarrial de Parque Centenario* (thereafter, Interbarrial) in the nearby park with the purpose of acting as a coordinator body for the plethora of different assemblies that had formed.

Simultaneously, the Cid was created without territorially delimited goals, while neither restricting itself to neighborhood nor Argentine conflicts. At its first session it rejected the use of the national flag as the logo of the assembly. Thus, they called the assembly 'popular' and eliminated the preposition 'of' (*de* in Spanish) from the name because it would have implied the belonging to a particular

neighborhood. Cid is not the name of a neighborhood, but instead a reference point; as one founding member said: 'The Cid is a place to meet' (interview, August 2002), hence in the name there is no territorial reference. The assembly was created with an organizational goal (Rossi, 2005b).

The politicization of the citizenry: Palermo Viejo neighborhood assembly

In November 2001, a group of people met in front of the national parliament during a protest that was organized by several opposition leaders to reject former President Carlos Menem's release from arrest. These individuals were not associated with any party, but decided to meet again in order to continue demanding transparency and justice. For several weeks they protested as *Ciudadanos Autoconvocados Contra el Fallo de la Corte Suprema de Justicia* (Self-Assembled Citizens Against the Resolution of the Supreme Court of Justice) in what resembled a weekly '… meeting [to share] … the sadness; and the disenchantment with politics' (interview, November 2002).

After De la Rúa resigned, they continued meeting until the *Asamblea de Plaza de Mayo* 'Invited us to go to the Interbarrial as the Self-Organized in the Congreso neighborhood' (interview, November 2002). Simultaneously, *Indymedia* announced the existence of a new assembly in the Congreso neighborhood, and on January 2002 this combination of casual factors generated the unplanned transformation of the *Ciudadanos Autoconvocados* into an assembly. Unlike the Cid, this assembly was created without the influence of any pre-existing political groups, but rather through inspiration from seeing other assemblies form.

Those in this grouping tended not to have any prior political experience but formed an assembly in a zone where they did not live. After December 2001, local issues concerning the quarter of Congreso and the QSVT replaced the initial debates about former President Menem. From this moment they decided to abandon the assembly and to replicate the experience in Palermo Viejo district, which was where many of them resided. A week later they called for the first session of the *Asamblea de Vecinos Autoconvocados de Palermo Viejo* (Self-Assembled Neighbors of Palermo Viejo), on the street corner of the block where some of the founding members lived. At this new gathering, they preserved the republican arguments of the protests at the Congress, and said: 'Change depends on us, don't miss the opportunity' (leaflet, January 2002). This type of assembly emerged within interpretative frames that are different from the ones of the popular assemblies. In this case, the crisis was interpreted as a vertical transference of the source of sovereignty to its political origins (the citizens) due to the abdication and/or incapacity of the representatives to govern. The crisis galvanized the indispensable need to debate how to save the Argentine Republic, renewing it by 'returning' to the founding principles that had since been corrupted. This was seen as a unique opportunity that must not and could not be missed: 'The Neighborhood-Assembly is a legitimate form of democratic participation, with no government officials nor political parties, made up of citizens who can express their opinions equally, listen to others and vote towards decisions for the common good' (leaflet, January 2002).

On the one hand, the Cid and the other popular assemblies were conceived as the organization of protests in multiple spaces of contention that promoted a centralized coordination toward the increased radicalization of conflicts within a cross-class debating space. On the other, Palermo Viejo and the neighborhood assemblies represented instances of collective decision-making with the goal of rescuing the republic from its elites who were seen as incapable of governing. The assembly was an open opportunity to express discontent, to share it with others and for many presented them with their first occasion to express themselves politically in the public space. In the case of Palermo Viejo, the basic definitions were not easily pre-established and thus required long debates. The assembly's quality as an open space constituted an important element of its character (Rossi, 2005b).

As sessions passed by, and largely because of the prolonged debates among both wings of the movement at the Interbarrial, both groups underwent a gradual transformation in their membership, leading to a clear division in April 2002. While the popular assemblies promoted the radicalization of protest toward the establishment of a new system that was different from capitalism and representative democracy, the neighborhood assemblies redirected their focus of action to the neighborhood

level, where they faced a government that was more willing to recognize them as valid interlocutors (Rossi, 2005b).

From the quest to explain the crisis to the construction of a collective identity

As the previous sections showed, both assemblies entered onto the political scene based upon radically different understandings of the 2001 crisis. This in turn shaped the formation of two distinct types of assemblies, the *popular* and the *neighborhood* ones.[5] In analytical terms, the emergence of the assembly movement was two-dimensional. On the one hand, the assemblies needed to build and present their own identity in the public space, yet simultaneously and on the other, the assemblies needed to strategically achieve social and political recognition as a new, legitimate interlocutor in the political arena.

In relation to the first dimension, the Cid defined itself as a 'popular movement.' Within the frame of diverse leftist ideologies, the members of the assembly looked for the 'organization of the saucepans.' This meant that the goal of the assembly was to reproduce spaces of contention to facilitate the radicalization of existing antagonisms. It is thus possible to interpret the identity of the Cid as a Gramscian 'collective intellectual,' rejecting the idea of a vanguard that guides the assembly, and instead promoting dialogue among the 'working-class' and 'bourgeoisie society' for the collective pursuit of strategies.[6] During the assembly sessions, the participants called each other 'companions' of the multiclass collective, organized under the guiding principle of 'unity among all the struggling sectors', a common principle of the left and some social movements in Argentina. A discussion about this slogan ensued each time the issue of whom the assembly should be allied with. For example, when the assembly decided to cooperate with the *piqueteros* (picketers) or unemployed workers' movement this principle was finally embodied in a new slogan, adopted only by the popular assemblies: *Piquete y cacerola. ¡La lucha es una sola!* ('Picket and Saucepan. The struggle is one and the same!').

Differently, Palermo Viejo may be defined as a 'discursive community' (Tarrow, 1994, p. 4) that was based on neighborhood solidarity. In other words, Palermo Viejo redefined its neighborhood as a *place* (Augé, 1994), referring to each other as 'neighbors' and with the membership exclusively confined to those who were resident or worked within a delimited area. In this sense, Palermo Viejo constituted the cohabitation of space as a *place*, one which provided an identity and a history. Thus, the preposition 'of' in the assembly's name became an important attribute, stressing the territorial belonging of the assembly. The discovery of the cohabited space, within which, prior to the assembly, vulnerability, and social decline had been experienced in isolation, became a central element of the identity of this collective. Thanks to the assembly, the former loneliness felt by many with regard to the consequences of the abrupt crisis was alleviated through their participation in a common dialogue (Rossi, 2005b). In contrast, the identity of the members of the Cid was not provided by an affinity to the neighborhood itself, and so the adjective 'popular' was used in the name instead. The Cid sustained its 'popular' identity through what they called the 'spirit of the assembly,' understood as the uncontainable disruptive and potentially creative power of the December social explosion, which was now preserved and channeled through the popular assemblies (Rossi, 2005b).

Simultaneously, both cases consolidated on achieving strategic recognition in the political arena in different ways. Palermo Viejo wanted to be recognized as an actor that was capable of fostering social bonds among diverse actors within their territorial space, as shown in a leaflet about the main activity established by the assembly – a festival named The Weave:

> By walking around the neighborhood to learn its history, to get to know its individuals and what their houses are like, and especially to get to know each other, we discovered that amidst the urban weave of the neighborhood there are other weaves: the social, the residential, the productive, the business and the artistic weave. And an idea began to form that we could promote other actions to reconstruct social, cultural and solidarity bonds, to restore the social weave that we had seen torn apart thanks to years of policies that were carried out behind people's backs. (leaflet, May 2002)

The festival proved to be very important for the assembly and became an incredible success: over two days it saw the participation of thousands of people, among them some of the country's most

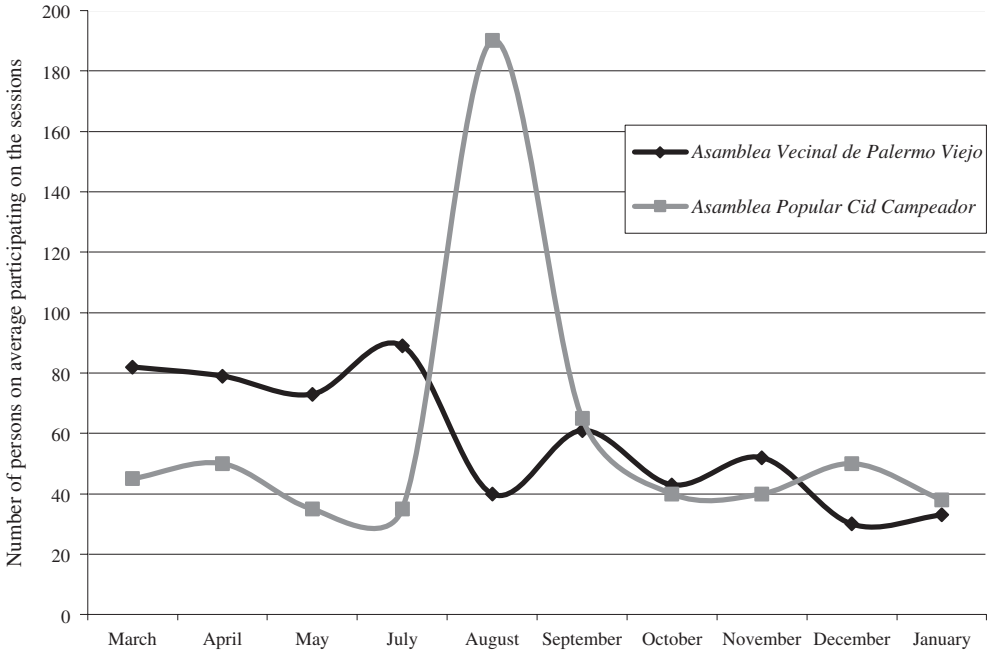

Figure 1. Monthly evolution in the number of participants for both cases of assemblies (2002–2003). Source: ethnographic observation 2002–2003.
Notes: The number of participants was counted in 28 sessions (all from 21 February 2002 to 30 January 2003, except for June) for the Palermo Viejo Neighborhood Assembly, and in 25 sessions (all from 1 March 2002 to 29 January 2003, except for June) for the Cid Campeador Popular Assembly.

important actors, intellectuals, and musicians, and received remarkable media coverage. Another important consequence was the temporary increase in the number of people participating during the assemblies between May and July (Figure 1). Shortly afterward the number then decreased abruptly due to the division that the assembly suffered following a discussion about how to take possession of a building to serve as a regular meeting place for the assembly to continue working. Once Eduardo Duhalde became president, the assembly movement started to be marginalized from national politics. The festival allowed the assembly to publically present its new objective for the first time, allowing members to express their voice. In other words, this assembly consciously tried to conduct its activities in public space in an attempt to be recognized by neighbors and the Government of the City of Buenos Aires (thereafter, GCBA) as an actor that was capable of constructing new social linkages based on a territorially based identity. They also deliberately held these in public spaces to symbolically reclaim the public space and the political system as one that should be transparent, open and accessible to the people – all in contrast to Argentina's representative democracy, which was accused of their exact opposite. In Figure 2, it is possible to appreciate how they delimited their area of influence to a group of blocks in the district of Palermo Viejo, as well as how the activities of The Wave Festival were distributed solely within these margins where they wanted to be acknowledged as valid interlocutors.

Meanwhile, the Cid adopted an entirely different strategy when presenting itself in the public space. It was conceived as a local node of a popular movement and formed in the name of 'the people' to take strategic advantage of the crisis in order to radicalize and expand protests through various assemblies across the country. Therefore, they wished to be recognized as actors that were capable of effectively coordinating and integrating multiclass interests in a collective that embraces all the 'struggling sectors.' This was a strategy of inclusion for all those social sectors that were perceived as victims of the system, and which therefore shared a common enemy that can only be defeated if they are united toward '… [the] development of other values and a culture opposed to the one of this system' (Bulletin of the Cid Campeador Popular Assembly, Issue 6, 24 July, 2002). Unlike the neighborhood assemblies, the popular

Figure 2. Map of the Palermo Viejo Neighborhood Assembly's area of influence and The Weave Festival's activities. Source: The Weave Festival brochure (Palermo Viejo Neighborhood Assembly, May 2002).

assemblies did not propose their identity as territorial. Instead, they sought to construct an alternative culture and power that was opposed to and independent from the state, that sought recognition from the other movements and allies as an important actor that nurture social protest with a new mobilized

social class: the urban middle classes. In other words, the strategic goal of the Cid was the constitution of an alternative to the capitalist system and representative democracy.

Evolution of the movement's relationship with the state

While the assemblies emerged in different cities, they only became a truly important actor in the City of Buenos Aires and its suburbs (Bloj, 2004). In Buenos Aires, a district of just 212.9 km^2 and 2.7 million inhabitants, there were more than 100 assemblies, each with an average of 70–150 participants who deliberated on the streets every week (Rossi, 2005b). In terms of their interactions with the state at the local level, the large number of assemblies and the characteristics of their emergence within the QSVT demand generated fear among the city's authorities of which local decisions could ignite a new saucepan banging protest against the local government that could force them to resign. Many of the city government policies should therefore be interpreted as an attempt to appease the movement and head off the threat of saucepan banging protests as a tool for questioning the GCBA.

Moreover, while the movement's 'neighborhood' group had defined its identity territorially, the 'popular' wing expanded its discourse to demand the replacement of the elites that were at the helm of the GCBA. This situation of potential growth and radicalization of the whole movement forced the GCBA to concede to a series of dialogs and concessions with the intention of strengthening their position vis-à-vis the movement; while simultaneously avoiding a potential domino effect following the resignation of the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires and the destitution of the one of San Juan. This GCBA strategy was a success and in the 2003 elections, Aníbal Ibarra was re-elected as Head of the GCBA, with 53% of votes.[7] Ibarra's ability to survive the crisis was impressive if one considers that Argentina's capital city had been a cauldron of anti-elites mobilizations just a few months earlier and that Ibarra was a prominent member of the same coalition that took De la Rúa to the presidency. However, the capacity of Ibarra to stay in power during the 2001–2002 crisis was not due to a miracle, but to the internal dynamics of the movement, as well as to the type of relationship developed between the state and the movement.

Among the endogenous movement factors was first, the intensive and lengthy debates at the Interbarrial (February–April 2002). These provoked a major split in the movement that severely weakened it. Second, the incapacity of the popular sector to convince the neighborhood wing of the need to expand and radicalize the conflict with the aim of removing the elites in the City proved significant.[8] Finally, the sheer intensity and quantity of protest events organized by the assemblies on a very wide range of issues, led to both 'burn out' among its members and to an inefficient excessive diversification of the few human resources available to plan protest events effectively.

In terms of the national state, the government was directly challenged by the QSVT demand from both wings of the movement. However, it did not apply repressive policies even though it had jurisdiction over the City's police force.[9] President Duhalde presented himself as someone who could unify the disparate political sectors in a government of national unity. His strategy was therefore to adopt a conciliatory tone: he did not repress the saucepan banging protests, nor did he declare them illegal or subversive. Initially, his government had attempted to respond to the demands of the assembly movement by proposing the reform of the political system toward a parliamentary one; however, the Interbarrial rejected this out of hand, sparking the continuation of protests. The strategy of the national government following that was to ignore the assembly movement, refusing to recognize them as a valid interlocutor and instead focusing on the claims of the other two main movements of the moment: the unemployed workers and the *ahorristas* (a movement organized by those who had lost their bank savings in December) Rossi (2005a, 2017).

However, Argentina is a federal country and in this case there was no coordinated strategy between the actions of the national and local governments. The GCBA responded to the popular wing's attack on its legitimacy in a way reminiscent of what McAdam et al. (1996) call the 'radical flank effect.' By isolating its popular group, it implemented a strategy of dialog with the more moderate neighborhood

assemblies. This uncoordinated 'trial and error' strategy generated a rapport with that side of the movement, while recognizing the claims of the moderate sector as valid.[10] The GCBA proceeded not only to facilitate some of the movement's activities, but also established a 'compulsion mechanism,' rewarding *in excess* the movement for some of the activities they organized, while *not* persecuting those activities done against the government. In other words, during this period the government offered those assemblies that wished to develop politico-cultural activities all the resources that they required without demanding anything in return, other than the event's success. As will be illustrated in the rest of the article, if the activity became politically relevant, had a high level of participation, did not generate violence or was considered to be valuable for the neighborhood, the government continued supporting the assembly, and often even increased its support (sometimes anticipating assemblies' requests). With this decentralized strategy it gradually established a dependency/reciprocity nexus between the GCBA and the neighborhood assemblies that reduced its demands for the removal of the elites solely to the national government.

The GCBA was therefore successful in surviving the crisis because it avoided involving itself in classical modes of state–movement relationship, such as co-optation (offering government posts), clientelism (exchanging resources for support), or selectively repressing collective action depending on the level of disruption attached to it.[11] The effect produced by the popular assemblies' call for the total transformation of the political and economic orders persuaded the government to avoid provoking further social unrest by embedding as many movement actions as possible within the state institutions. This, on the one hand, favored the local redirection of the neighborhood assemblies, as they were increasingly being recognized as valid articulators of local relationships. However, on the other, the government made the institutionalization of the popular sector of the movement more difficult, thus further radicalizing its demands and in doing so definitively splitting the movement in two factions. Therefore, the strategic decision of the national government to ignore the movement entirely, and of the GCBA to favor and promote all the activities of only one of its sectors, reinforced the division between the two wings, debilitating the movement. Crucially, this outcome was achieved without the GCBA needing to repress or censor the revolutionary discourses of the popular assemblies. In the next sections, the two subtypes of 'compulsion mechanisms' that arose at the City of Buenos Aires will be described, and their effects on the two assemblies' identities and strategies will be discussed.

Compulsive support: Palermo Viejo neighborhood assembly

In the case of Palermo Viejo, the process toward obtaining a physical space where they could organize and stage activities illustrates the compulsion mechanism referred to earlier. The assembly was established during the summer and met regularly in the street. They later moved to a sports club which supported the assembly for many months, until some club members objected. Thus, finding a suitable space to meet became the assembly's main preoccupation if it wanted to survive and consolidate its standing in the neighborhood. The pressure to do this increased more following the incredible success of The Wave Festival, which produced many new contacts and a more fluid nexus with the GCBA. In the end they agreed to move to an abandoned food market that was owned by the GCBA. The main problem became how to gain access to this location. During that period almost all the assemblies were discussing the same issue. The most relevant decision in the history of all the assembly movement was how to achieve a place to meet. Some assemblies decided (as will be seen in the Cid case) to unlawfully occupy abandoned spaces. But others, like Palermo Viejo, agreed (after lengthy debates) to follow an institutional path toward finding a space from which to operate. For some, this decision was viewed as a mistake, and the assembly finally split in two when one group linked to the Workers' Party created the tiny *Asamblea Popular Palermo Viejo* (Palermo Viejo Popular Assembly) (Mauro & Rossi, 2015).

In other words, the decision to negotiate with the government over the abandoned market restricted the assembly's demands of elite renewal to the national sphere only, as this negotiation logically implied its recognition of the legitimacy of the GCBA as a valid interlocutor. The assembly was granted use of a portion of the market after lengthy discussions with the local *Centro de Gestión y Participación*

(CGP), the City's office for decentralized participation and link with the local citizenry. In exchange for the building, the CGP laid down three basic requirements: it would co-govern the space through permanent negotiation with the assembly; the building would be used exclusively for cultural activities and those which promoted productive micro-entrepreneurships[12]; and no profit-generating activity would be permitted (*Carta de Acuerdo y Concesión en Comodato*, October 2002). As stated earlier, the assembly presented itself with the intention of being recognized as a local actor that could achieve the reconstitution of social bonds within the specific limits shown in Figure 2.

The government never explicitly declared any interest in receiving political support from the assembly, nor did it try to suppress them as a political actor. As the agreement clearly stated, the government simply established a series of precise requirements restricting what the building could be used for. Following this, the assembly gradually but definitively abandoned its original demand for the removal of the elites at all levels of state, and concentrated all its efforts on the organization of courses, debates, the coordination of a weaver's cooperative and establishing a handicrafts fair. In short, the assembly inadvertently self-restricted its available repertoire of strategies when deciding to negotiate for the abandoned market.

The impact that this outcome had on the identity and strategy of Palermo Viejo becomes clearer when analyzing the behavior of the assembly during the Presidential elections of 2003. While the Cid – and a large group of popular assemblies and other political groups – unsuccessfully promoted the boycott of the elections by organizing *escraches*[13] against the candidates while struggling for massive electoral abstention. Some members of Palermo Viejo – in cooperation with the *Asamblea Vecinal de Colegiales* – instead organized the 'QSVT 2003 Carnival' using the slogans: 'Participate so that what has never happened will happen!' However, on the elections day almost all the members of the assembly decided to vote.

Apart from this event, however, the assembly's most important political debates between November 2002 and the end of 2003 were related to the need to initiate a decentralization process in the City (enshrined in the Communes Law) which sub-divided the City of Buenos Aires into electoral districts and established elected neighborhood representatives.[14] They also worked on local campaigns such as organizing the vaccination of the *cartoneros* (informal paper and cardboard garbage collectors) who worked in the area. Thus, the assembly's interest in local issues and in articulating and representing neighborhood actors legitimized its desire for territorially based social recognition, a legitimacy that was reinforced by the compulsive support mechanism established with the GCBA.

Compulsive control: Cid Campeador popular assembly

On the first anniversary of the December uprisings the neighborhood assemblies did not organize any major commemoration. Instead, each one individually arranged local events to mark the occasion. However, a significant number of popular assemblies, in cooperation with some student's groups, countercultural centers, *piqueteros,* and some left-wing parties organized the *Piquete Urbano* (Urban Picket, UP). The Cid, as the main organizer, called for this protest action in the following terms:

> The idea of the 'urban picket' was put forth by our Assembly on 9th October and was inspired by the *piquetero's* strategies of direct action. It involves a single day of interrupting the operations of the speculative economy, and of major companies and corporations, which were primarily responsible for the destruction of the nation and our lives. It's about generating an effective political event to get rid of them all, comparable to the historic days of the 19th and 20th December 2001. It's about building unity of action, taking the initiative and hitting them where it hurts, aiming directly at the interests of those who are calling the shots. ('Call for a Great 'Urban Picket' on 19 December. Second Communiqué', October 2002)

This event was organized in the financial district of the City of Buenos Aires. This area was selected not because of any territorial identification but because it is the heart of where the country's economic decisions are made. The protests in this huge geographical space were organized by subdividing the areas by assembly, organization or party, with each one blocking the respective streets that allowed access to the offices of these firms. This made it impossible for these companies to work for one day.

This protest can be considered the most important one that was coordinated by the popular assemblies since the end of the saucepan banging protests and the dissolution of the Interbarrial. In addition, the media paid much attention to it. However, Duhalde's government completely ignored the peaceful protest, in contrast to its recognition of the equivalent pickets that were organized by the *piqueteros* or the protests by the *ahorristas*.

For a whole year prior to the organization of the UP, the Cid performed protests against the GCBA and state institutions in general, while maintaining a staunchly anti-system discourse. As with Palermo Viejo, the participants began to debate how to continue to meet and organize. After deliberating for a couple of months in a club, they decided to occupy an abandoned bank. The strategy of occupying the unused space of a financial institution was learned from the experience of the *Asamblea Popular Lezama Sur* and others, with the goal of violating the private property of financial institutions (considered chief promoters of the rejected economic system): 'Where there used to stand a financial institution that swindled thousands and laid off hundreds of workers … today the Assembly has conquered a space that is open to everyone …' (Leaflet, October 2002).

The space occupied by the assembly was '… recovered for the people … to organize and coordinate the struggles and vindications of the local workers' (Bulletin, Issue 7, 8 October 2002). Undoubtedly, this was a major event in the assembly's history, and led to a substantial increase in participation in August, although this soon declined (Figure 1). However, this action meant that the assembly clearly positioned itself within the popular assemblies group, and enabled several activities to be performed in such a big space. The *Indymedia* office was moved there, some *piqueteros* organized activities in the building, a small public library was set up, and several workshops, debates and politico-cultural activities were also conducted there. It then became the space for the organization of the UP, as well as the meeting point for one of the last attempts to centralize the coordination of the assemblies in 2003. Finally, as in Palermo Viejo, this decision led to the splitting of the assembly because a group of members rejected the idea of unlawfully occupying a building. A very small group created the *Asamblea Vecinal del Cid Campeador* (Cid Campeador Neighborhood Assembly), which continued meeting for one month at the club.

Regarding the interaction of the assembly with the state, at the same time as Palermo Viejo was developing its relationship with the GCBA, the Cid started investing more time in the organization of activities that would justify the social utility of the building to aid its legal case due to the fact that its legal owner had initiated a judicial action for the repossession of the property. This strategy was based on the advice of a lawyer provided by IU and on the experience of Lezama Sur assembly. The efforts were henceforth mostly aimed at transforming the building into a politico-cultural center. A communitarian dining hall for *cartoneros* was set up and workshops for the unemployed began to operate. With this strategy they could justify the occupation of the property and extended the time that they were legally permitted to have control over the building, avoiding the prospect of a violent eviction.

The eventual outcome of the court case in 2003 favored the assembly and considered it to be a de facto organization.[15] The existential problem that this decision posed was that it not only implied the state's recognition of the assembly but also validated its pragmatic decision to adapt its activities and organizational behavior in pursuit of a legal victory. Therefore, the assembly was at the same time obliged to recognize the legitimacy of the legal system that it claimed to oppose by adhering to the conditions laid out by the ruling.

Paradoxically, one consequence of this legal victory was to partially restrict the assembly's repertoire of strategies. In order to be recognized by the judiciary as a legitimate user of the building, the assembly was obliged to maintain an acceptable level of performance, by carrying out numerous activities inside it. The Cid rejected several invitations to cooperate with the neighborhood CGP, because, unlike Palermo Viejo, they did not consider it to be a valid institution. As mentioned earlier, Cid's demands extended to call for a complete replacement of the system, including its governing institutions at the national and local level. However, as soon as they started organizing projects such as the community canteen, they needed resources. In cooperation with some *piqueteros*, they mobilized outside the offices

of the GCBA to demand daily food rations (a common practice by some *piqueteros*). The GCBA through the CGP reacted by providing the food rations on the proviso that they be used solely for the canteen.

During the same period the assembly continued to debate about issues such as the war in Iraq, the failed coup in Venezuela and to organize *escraches* with the human rights organization HIJOS. In brief, they maintained their demands and goals, but their efforts gradually became focused on complying with the necessary obligations of the legal system and on the organization of cultural and social rather than politically orientated initiatives. In other words, although through different institutional channels, during the same period the Cid experienced a 'compulsion mechanism' similar to that of Palermo Viejo. Based on a court order, the Cid was compelled to organize sociocultural activities inside the building to prevent any judicial eviction, as well as having to organize the canteen if they wanted to receive the daily food rations. Neither the judicial power nor the GCBA ever argued about the (il) legitimacy of the popular assemblies' demands (these was simply tolerated, and ignored), whilst at the same time responding to the assembly's specific practical actions. The occupation of the building and the burdens this brought with it entailed an increased embeddedness of the assembly into the state's institutions due to the establishment of a *compulsive control mechanism* and in spite of the former preserving its anti-system discourse.

Regardless of its increased interaction with the state, the Cid continued its political objectives on a national scale. While Palermo Viejo organized the QSVT Carnival, the Cid coordinated the active boycott of the Presidential elections with other assemblies and left-wing parties:

> We are aware that calling for elections is no more than a tool to legitimize the system of inequality and exclusion that the current administration is trying to perpetuate. This is the same system and the same representatives that the people had unequivocally manifested itself against with the slogan 'QSVT' [So the assembly] … proposes a truly horizontal alternative, in which mechanisms of direct democracy are involved, just like the ones we have been building all this last year, [and therefore] the Cid Campeador Popular Assembly has decided to initiate an action of civil disobedience, for which we have planned to hold a Counter-Electoral Popular Assembly on the same day of the elections, while polls are open. ('Counter-Electoral Call,' posted in *Indymedia*, 27 January 2003)

This call is consistent with the declared socio-political objectives of the assembly that existed since its origin. Despite this, the *compulsive control mechanism* that they faced due to their interaction with the judiciary, forced them to dedicate almost all of their efforts on their cultural and social activities at the local level. After the Counter-Electoral Call failed, the localized actions became even more central. In brief, the relationship established by the movement's popular wing oscillated between compulsion and tolerance.

The evolution of the two assemblies therefore symbolizes the respective contradictory processes that were occurring along the fault lines of the assembly movement at the time. On the one hand, in terms of the repertoire of strategies, the distance between the Cid and Palermo Viejo narrowed during 2002–2003 as both assemblies became more parochial in terms of where their activities were conducted, these became increasingly sociocultural rather than political in their orientation and greater efforts were exerted toward the preservation of their physical space as time went by. Yet, concurrently the discursive distance between the two widened: the neighborhood assemblies redefined their goals and identity and sought the reconstitution of local social bonds through different mechanisms of interaction with local actors and the GCBA. Meanwhile the Cid refused to negotiate with (or recognize) these entirely.

Conclusion

How did the demands of the assembly movement evolve from the total renewal of the political elites to a focus on localized actions? The answer lies, on the one hand on the fact that movements do not present themselves as uniform and already established actors, but are dynamic networks that change as a result of their interaction with allies and antagonists. On the other, because the state promotes differential strategies in response to social movements according to the kinds of claims it must deal with.

In relation to the first point above, the dynamic nature of the movement was demonstrated through examination of a central division between its 'neighborhood' and 'popular' wings. This crucial division was manifest through – and favored by – their differentiated relationships with the GCBA and the judiciary, as well as with parties, unions, *piqueteros*, and so on. This interaction ultimately shaped the division between the 'popular' and 'neighborhood' forms of assembly, even though the actors and institutions involved in the process never consciously aimed to do so.

Concerning the second point, this article has shown that the way in which both assemblies interacted with the state produced a simultaneous – but differentiated – modeling of their identities and strategies. Notwithstanding activists' efforts, the autonomy and internal coherence of a movement are to some extent impossible. This is due to the series of embedded external institutional bonds that a movement generally has to negotiate with and confront through the state and other actors. It is this network of ties that will – depending on the level of institutionalization of the actor – shape the redefinition of its strategies and goals, and reformulate them within the dynamic of the process itself. This was observed in Palermo Viejo's negotiations with the state as a necessary interlocutor, and by the judicial 'imposition' that the Cid became subjected to.

Was this a classic story of how states divide and conquer movements? While it was certainly a story of how diverse state institutions tried to deal with a new movement, the relational approach taken in this article offered a more nuanced view of state-movement dynamics. The centrality of the state as the main articulator of social relations influenced the movement when it became a relevant political actor, without it being important as to whether the actions were of cultural or contentious nature. As analyzed here, the movement's collective actions implied the participation of different state institutions: the judiciary in the Cid; and the CGP in Palermo Viejo. The state is not monolithic, and thus the processes that played out were different depending on which state institution was involved. The compulsion mechanism was not the result of a planned imposition from the state. However, the fates of each of the movement's sectors were ultimately almost identical as a consequence of the two variants of compulsion mechanism applied. In both cases, the state did not seek to alter the identity of each assembly, but responded differently to their respective goals and the way they were pursued in practice. Therefore, the Cid moved from a disruptive origin to a gradual moderation in their repertoire of strategies. This process is reflected in the state's corresponding evolution: from national centralized recognition, to indifference and relative control (through compulsion mechanisms). Palermo Viejo, departing from an equally disruptive origin, maintained limited demands, while institutionalizing its repertoire of strategies by negotiating with the GCBA. As a result, a generally neglected relational pattern that can potentially be extended to other cases is revealed – *compulsion mechanisms*, and more specifically its two variants: *compulsive support* and *compulsive control* of the movement.

Notes

1. This dimension of Tilly's book has unfortunately been ignored for a long time (but see: Goldstone & Tilly, 2001; Kriesi et al., 1995).
2. This does not mean that the assemblies have entirely disappeared today, but that their main period of mobilization ended in 2003 (Mauro & Rossi, 2015).
3. For the detailed elaboration of each ideal-type of assembly, see: Rossi (2005b).
4. In this case was IU militants, in other assemblies were members of the Trotskyist *Partido Obrero* (Workers' Party), the anarchist group *Socialismo Libertario* (Libertarian Socialism), and the left-wing sector of one of the two main union federations – the *Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina* (Workers' Union of Argentina, CTA).
5. This strict categorization of the split in the assembly movement is presented in ideal-type terms.
6. A detailed analysis and conceptualization of how the Cid and Palermo Viejo identities were built can be found in Rossi (2005c).
7. Percentage reached in the second round. In the first round Ibarra obtained 34%, while his main contender Mauricio Macri, obtained 37%.
8. This failure was then reproduced at the national level, when they were unable to provoke national elections in January–March 2002 and then when the neighborhood sector refused to support a united boycott of the Presidential elections in 2003.

9. In 2002–2003, the City of Buenos Aires had no independent police forces, which were nationally controlled by the Ministry of the Interior.
10. Project of Declaration by the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires: '… we believe that the City's institutions should also draw from our neighbors' drive to participate by channeling citizens' demands under our jurisdiction. This way we will help to renovate our republican institutions and offer citizens an avenue to improve the quality of their lives and build a society with more justice and solidarity, where nobody is excluded' (September 2002, p. 2).
11. The lack of a local police must be considered as a factor that might explain this.
12. This was not a centrally coordinated strategy of the GCBA. Ultimately, it was associated to the fact of being a building under the jurisdiction of the finance and production area of the government, which could only allow for free use of the building to projects associated to the socioeconomic promotion of entrepreneurships, and not to a deliberate policy of the executive office to redirect the assembly toward this kind of activities.
13. A form of protest organized as a public humiliation of a person or organization. Originally created by the youth sector of the human rights movement (HIJOS) in order to condemn those involved in repression and disappearances during the 1976–1983 authoritarian regime. In the context of the assemblies, this was used as an expression of the rejection of the political elites.
14. The Communes Law was approved in 2006, but was only put into practice in 2011 (Mauro & Rossi, 2015).
15. Decision of the Court of Original Jurisdiction: '… there has been no violence, no threats, no tricks played on anyone … [etc.] [and that the site] became occupied by the accused after having being in a state of abandonment for years … [and given that] the activities the 'Cid Campeador' Neighborhood Assembly [*sic*] carries out in this place are announced publicly, giving social service to the area's most needy residents' (Judge Omar Facciutto, January 2003).

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