“Trade union models for/from the South”
To be presented at the Workshop
“Thinking governance from the South”

Abstract
This paper is part of our PhD on Trade Unions and their transformations during so-called transitions to democracy and proposes a study of 'trade union models for/from the South' from a socio-historical perspective. Our willing is to obtain a more accurate knowledge of trade unions’ structure that will allows for the understanding of their integration as a social and economic actor in Latin American politics. Varieties of trade unions will be considered, with a comprehensive review of the most important literature for the Argentinian case.

Key words: Democracy, Trade Unions, Labour, Argentina

Resumen
Este trabajo se integra en un proyecto doctoral que indaga las transformaciones de las organizaciones sindicales postdictadura, estudiando específicamente el período de normalización durante las llamadas transiciones democráticas.
En este sentido nos proponemos el estudio socio histórico de los modelos sindicales desde y para el sur, con el objetivo de profundizar nuestro conocimiento sobre las estructuras de estas organizaciones y sus cambios, destacando su importancia política como actores sociales en América Latina. Distintos modelos sindicales serán tenidos en cuenta junto con una revisión crítica de la literatura clásica sobre el tema para el caso argentino.

Palabras Claves: Democracia, Sindicatos, Trabajadores, Argentina
Introduction

This paper is framed around the investigation of transitions to democracy in the Southern Cone. Classic contributions to the literature in this area have been the subject of much debate (O’Donnell, Schmitter, y Whitehead 1986; Nun, Portantiero, y Altamirano 1987; O’Donnell y Schmitter 1988; Garretón 1988; O’Donnell 1997). More recently, the period of transition has returned to the fore in Latin American debates on 'recent history' (Robinson 1996; Groppo, Flier, y Feld 2001; Tedesco y Barton 2004; Franco y Levin 2007), 'dual transitions' and working class history (Galli telli y Thompson 1982; Abós 1984; Garretón 1987; Barrera y Falabella 1990; Rodriguez et al. 2006; Godio y Wachendorfer).

Most analysis devoted to the dictatorships of the Southern Cone have focused on the political strategies that promoted and sustained the different cycles of coups of the 1970s in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina. There are important studies on the structural features shared between these countries and recent findings on regional coordination of repressive intelligence, and on transnational training and indoctrination of Latin American armed forces. These investigations have unraveled the key role of the "national security doctrine" and the characteristics of the so-called fight against subversion, in actions such as "Operation Condor" that show such coordination, as well as the interference of the United States in Latin American policy (among others Dinges 2004). These relationships have been highlighted in the past decade within academic writing and beyond it, in legal and political arenas. The archives of repression have made visible further joint efforts and common methodologies used by these dictatorships (Bickford 2000; Catela y Jelin 2002; Funes 2006). Other studies in political science and history addressing the years of transition have focused mainly on different components of the dynamics of the authoritarian regimes themselves (Salazar Vergara y Pinto 1999; Caetano 2005; Pucciarelli 2006). The trials of military crimes ‘against humanity’, the production of official memory of the dictatorships by the state, and the study of the "new politics" have been the main issues and questions of this literature.

The role of working class was relegated to the margins in much of the research of the 1980s, and played, at best, a diffuse role in the classic transitology literature. This tendency also characterizes recent historical studies, where the agency and character of the working class today is either linked to the authoritarian past, or invisibilized in the big 'transitional problems' in those works focusing principally on the transitional period itself. This relative absence of serious scholarship on the role of the working class has been acknowledged by O'Donnell (1995) and raised sporadically elsewhere (Valenzuela 1988; Collier 1997) but this has not yet led to detailed empirical investigation. In the field of labour history there have been several studies on the goals and forms
of repression over workers (Lorenz 2004; Schneider 2005; Basualdo 2006), the cases of resistance to the dictatorships (Zapata et al. 1985; Pozzi 1988; Ranis 1997; Caetano 2005) and some theorizations on the peculiarities of industrial relations in the Southern Cone (Munck 1985; Godio 1985; Meikins Wood 2006; Ghigliani 2008; Azpiazu, Schorr, y Basualdo 2010; Santella 2011). Most of these studies have contributed to a novel consensus around the idea of "defeat" of the labor movement, a concept which has worked to obscure different possible interpretations of what happened to the labour movement during the transition, as well as how and why.

Thus, our approach attempts to bring the working class back in to the study of democratic transitions. In so doing it will analyze, both empirically and analytically, the key political-economic features of the period of transition, bringing to light the multiple and central continuities between dictatorship and democratic periods. In particular, our approach will focus on the continuities of the exploitative nature of capital/labour relationships underlying the social structure during both the authoritarian and post-authoritarian epochs.

Normalization of trade unions as a transitional dilemma

The social sciences have addressed the problem of authoritarian legacies from different perspectives, analyzing various aspects of a complex process. From an economic perspective, the relationship between dictatorships and capitalist restructuring has been stressed: neoliberal reforms, labor flexibility, and deindustrialization are some examples of dominant themes in this area (Haggard y Kaufman 1995; Antía 2003; Nef 2003; Azpiazu y Basualdo 2004 among others). From a sociological point of view, the effects of long periods of repression in different spheres of social life have been studied, noting also the phenomenon of "democratic openings", the emergence of new actors (social movements) and new identities pitted against the state. These social movements are also characterized by their questioning of the political limits of the new democracies (Cavarozzi 1995; Bermeo 1997; Caetano 2005; Ansaldi y Alcazar 2007). From the point of view of historical studies, and especially since the construction of recent history as a field of scholarly inquiry, the problems of memory, testimony, archives and sources, and the ethical, moral and political features of "the recent" have been explored (Catela y Jelinek 2002; Franco y Levin 2007).

As we have already mentioned, trade union issues have rarely been studied, particularly the question of how unions were normalized and recognized by the state through "democratic standards", as distinct from their relationship to the state under military regimes. There are some studies that have paid attention to the frameworks of normalization of the trade union system and its
relationship to the authoritarian legacy in the case of Argentina (Delich 1982; Gaudio y Domeniconi 1986 and some new attempts; Sangrilli 2010; Zorzoli 2011). Facing this matter, we will be able to better understand 'trade union models for/from the south'.

Theoretical framework

Our theoretical framework stems from two key areas of theoretical reflection in the field of Politics and the Social Sciences: transitology and industrial relations. The first one has already been briefly reviewed in the “introduction” section, that is to say the works within the framework of transitology.

The angle we choose to criticize classic and contemporary theorizing on democratic transitions needs to be understood from within industrial relations theory as well. Firstly, because industrial relations renders a particularly interesting understanding of multiple links between labour, capital accumulation and the state. One of these is the debate about how to characterize and explain the rise of “entrepreneurship unionism”, whether to look at the transformations of the organizations during dictatorships (Murillo 1997; Etchemendy y Collier 2007; Ghigliani, Grigera, y Schneider 2012) conflict and trade union's structure can be framed from a variety of approaches, though the tradition that begins with Hyman's (1975) critique of institutional approaches should certainly be taken into account. Along with more recent debates (Richard Hyman 2012) they have shown the limits of normative approaches to conflict within the employment relationship. The inclusion of conflict within the 'normality' of industrial relations and the multiple theoretical challenges this holistic and synthesized approach to this issues raise (Gall 2012) are parallel to our concerns of an institutionalized view of the transition to democracy. We should explore the impact of their idea that conflict and state control are 'normal' to the development of industrial relations to our own research problems. In this sense, the institutional vision of democratic transition and trade unions normalizations are also framed under another normativity, that is to say democracy, where labour is expected to 'adapt' and accept new rules, that is to avoid 'corporative claims'. Conflict and state control are then both at the core of these critical approaches to industrial relations and are relevant to our renewed theorizing of the role of trade unions during transitions.

I will summarize key aspects of this critical approach willing to make a contribution for building trade union models for/from the South (this will be presented in a PREZI /POWERPOINT
presentation with examples, which is one of the conditions of the Conference committee for these type of Workshops).

In general terms we were able to conclude that

1. **Industrial relations in Latin America cannot be understood normatively or in an isolated way. That is to say, you can’t divorce it from to class conflicts within capitalism.**
   
   In order to make sense of industrial relations and conflicts you must address a problem that is neither coherent, nor stable nor integrated. You cannot understand industrial relations as a whole, if you are trying to identify a normality (wish is in any case alien to class struggle and to a class society.

2. **Industrial relations must be studied historically (and yet without crystallizing the social order)**
   
   To organize the study of a set of given industrial relations (within certain specific historical limits) it is necessary to first understand the interactions between trade unions (and their complex power for and above workers), State and capital keeping in mind that the reification of any of these elements will invisibilize the historical properties and crystallize the social order as a constant.

3. **To overcome these limits, we sympathize with Hyman's proposal; that is to explore industrial relations by studying processes of control.**
   
   From this perspective, one must understand both the formal and informal system that are present in industrial relations. Studying control processes would help to avoid the study of conflicts isolated from the long-term dynamics of industrial relations. Is in those dynamics where you can find the most important source of information on the prevalent trade union model.

The issues of autonomy and forms of trade union organisation (and oppositions) have not received the analytical attention they deserve under “Hyman's paradigm”. Hyman downplays the emergence of *delegados* (to same extent synonymous with branch secretaries or rank-and-file/shop floor action and organisation). These in fact can cause a renovation of workers autonomy and be able to challenge the dominant conditions established in the capital/labour relations. This inherent
capacity is not necessarily challenging, delegates/shop stewards can also be a source of vitality and renewed *power of the trade union bureaucracy* (and through that even a source of capital control).

**In this particular case we need to consider** these general elements of post-dictatorship Argentine trade unions model:

1. Monopoly of representation in collective bargaining.
2. Control of union funds and social system linked to workers.
3. Trade union participation in economic activities caused by the post dictatorship reorganization (privatization, outsourcing, nationalization with compounds directories, etc.)

This, the existence of “stable” union leaders stems from these three elements, whose *political economy* is sustained not only in membership levels or corporate representation, but also in the government and control of varied internal and external resources. Core elements generally underestimated are: links to State agencies, management of funds and contracts of business peripheral activities (e.g. outsourced cleaners, foremen, security), strict control of political expressions inside and in the periphery of the union (against potential opponents).

However this picture can create a wrong representation of working class experiences and associations in our country in the last four decades, if they ignore other experiences that are relevant despite their size. Particularly in the last decade, but with a longstanding tradition, divergent forms of working place organizations (*delegados*, branch secretaries or rank-and-file/shop floor action) can be found. As Azteni and Ghigliani mention (2008) since 2003, “in a context of economic growth and political stability, labour struggles have resumed with trade unions and formally employed workers as the main protagonists”. Falling unemployment rates (after climbing in to 21.5 per cent October 2001) and a raising number of workers employed in the formal sector has signified a growth in the traditional power of trade unions but in grassroots experiences as well.

These two phenomena can’t be understood in an isolated manner, and the theoretical problem is how to integrate and update our framework to explain new phenomena such as labour market fragmentation between formal and informal jobs where the latter is associated to poverty and vulnerability, usually young people and women, and framed in a longstanding relationship of exteriority and exclusion from trade unions.

Therefore a complex picture of trade unions functions and structure, and links with the state is
revealed. Even more: by looking at these elements from a historical perspective we were able to ascertain that many of these elements changed *qualitatively* during the last dictatorship, thus allowing us to characterize the long-term heritage of these changes as “authoritarian legacies”.

We certainly need a better understanding of all these components of trade unions structure that reflect properly the differences between *working place organizations* and *traditional trade unions*, to understand their distinctive integration as a social and economic actor and the struggle between them.
Bibliografía


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