

Critical notes on populism, popular power and hegemony.
Lessons of Argentina from Kirchner to Macri (2003-2017).

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To understand that the rise of rightwing populism is, on the one hand, the result of the fragmentation of conditions of social reproduction due to neoliberal policies. Such policies have put into crisis the political composition of the working people. In that sense, on the other hand, rightwing populism is the result of the crisis of the left in the sense of being unable to articulate the particular demands of different fractions of the working people into wide-range, multi sectorial, political organizations. Different social movements have not been able to articulate and engage in a democratic, participatory way with each other, in a way that integrates and comprehend the fragmentation as part of the unity created by hetero-patriarchal, racist, extractivist capitalism. In Argentina this appears complicated by its history of Latin American populism, of peronist strand. In its recent neo-developmental version, Kirchnerism, this populist movement governed between 2003 and 2015, to be recently replaced by a right-wing alliance (Cambiamos, 'Let's change'). The understanding of the phenomena of populism as a form of constitution of political hegemony, has presented a recent debate led by Laclau's proposal for its rationalization. We will attempt to present a brief discussion of its main ideas as well as some criticism, before discussing Argentina's contemporary history and analyzing the constitution of the hegemony a new neodevelopmentalist capitalist project and its current transitional crisis.

I

Laclau's discussions on populism propose that populist movements, whether from the right or the left, need to be able to unite the fragmented demands in their effect to build a hegemonic political project. From his point of view, populism is **not an ideology** but a **'political logic'** (Laclau, 2008). Such logic depends on the possibility of a political camp of creating a 'chain of equivalences', that is to articulate a series of concrete demands.

Those demands cannot be self-satisfied but have to be made to some other institution (eg, the State). In general, says Laclau, it is assumed that since society is 'unified' -there's no social division- those demands can be satisfied within an administrative means, without antagonism. There operates the 'logical of difference'. No one questions nor the right of people to present the demand nor the right of the institution in charge of deciding over it. Each instance is just part of the socialized, highly institutionalized, 'immanence'.

According to Laclau, is the systematic frustration of demands that triggers the populist social logic, as unsolved demands foster solidarity's within the affected. Each, different demand appears as the 'tip of the iceberg', as one of a series of unsatisfied claims that can be discursively grouped through 'ties of equivalence' to all other unsatisfied ones.

It is because of this, that the 'democratic subject' of the logic of difference is replaced by a wider subject, resulting from the grouping of a plurality democratic demands: this is the **popular subject, the subject of populism**.

As the (institutional) system is growingly unable to absorb/solve these demands as coexisting differences, conditions are created for a **populist rupture**.

Since those equivalences between unsatisfied demands exist only in term of the absence (of solution) that impregnates them, they require the **identification of the source of such negativity**. Thus, the creation of the **opposition between the popular subject** (the people, the nation) **and the 'other'** (power, anti-national, establishment, etc.). The whole of the demands cease to be just petitions (claims) to become **'combative demands'**.

Populist logic also demands the constitution of a **political adversary ('enemy')** that allows it to **divide in two the political spectrum; this is *sine qua non* condition of populism**. There cannot be populism without the discursive construction of the enemy. Thus, the first condition of the representation of an 'equivalential moment' is the totalization of the power that opposes the whole of demands that constitute the popular will. **The pole of power, the enemy, will then be just the carrier of the negation of the popular pole. This creates an internal frontier.**

The representation of a 'chain of equivalences' can be accomplished through the transformation of one particular demand into the a signifier for the whole chain. Such process is called hegemony. Basically, the political articulation of "the people" is discursive process.

According to this, the constitution of a popular subjectivity requires the **constitution of tendentially void (empty) signifiers**; extension is gained at the cost of intention. Thus, the 'poverty' of populist symbols is the precondition for its efficacy. **At its highest this homogenization boils down to one name: that of the leader.**

The internal frontier created by the populist rupture **can be subverted** in at least two alternative ways. **First, by the satisfaction of particular demands** within a chain of equivalence, thus breaking in down. This is the path of **decline from populism**, through the erasing of internal frontiers and the increasing systemic integration within the institutional system: Gramsci's **transformist operation** (eg., 3rd Way); **politics is substituted by administration.**

The alternative is to maintain the frontier but changing its political sign. Since the ties between the empty signifiers and particular demands is weak, they are open to a variety of equivalent re-articulations, in as much as it keeps breaking society in two opposing camps (maintaining radicality). These signifiers not only are empty, but **can become floating, moving around between different political projects.** Thus, populism does not define the true politics of organizations, but **it is a way to articulate its themes, what ever they are.**

For Laclau, **populism is, as a matter of fact, a question of degree.** No political force is invalidated as such to create the figure of "the people" and pit it against "its enemies", if it can create a discursive social frontier. This will become **clearer in moments of political transitions, when the future of society holds only from a thread (eg, -in our understanding- in times of organic crisis, in gramscian terms).**

Then, for him holds true that if populism consists in presenting a radical societal alternative within the community space, that means that **populism is just a synonym for politics.** Populism pretends to question the institutional order, through the constitution of a particular social agent (the helpless); that is, **someone that appears as 'other' with respect to the established way of things.** **Populism is, for Laclau, the way to the radicalization of the democracy, the new objective of any socialist project.**

For Laclau, **the end of populism coincides with the end of politics, where the community conceived as a totality and the will that represents such totality are one and the same.** **Politics is replaced by administration,** and every trace of social division is obliterated: when the State becomes total and unquestionable (as in Hobbes Leviathan) or by the complete absence of it (as in Marx's universal subject in the classless society).

II

Laclau's theoretical strand has received many criticisms. First, **not every hegemony has to have,** due to its formal and non-historical character, **'the people' as the articulating reference,** or the empty signifier that organizes the constitution of chains of equivalence and the partition of the community in two (Melo, 2011).

Second, in Laclau's analysis there seems to be an abyss between populist logic and the institution (eg, the State). On the contrary, populism could be understood as a possible way to manage the coexistence between the homogenizing attempt of the hegemonic operation, and the constitutive heterogeneity of the social; that is, populism represents a particular way to negotiate the tension between the affirmation of differential identity and the pretension of global representation of the political community (Aboy Carlés, 2010). Thus, **populisms are not just anti-institutionalists but are great constructors of institutions** (Melo, 2013).

Third, it is the permanent oscillation of the political process (between rupture and institutionalization) that tends to prevent the totalitarian drift of populisms (eg, the absolute leader), thus imbuing them of a certain pluralism, the permanent redefinition of the 'plebs' (excluded) and the 'people' (as totality), and the porosity of the limits of 'demos' that refrain the possibility of complete institutionalization (Aboy Carlés, 2010). It is the uncertain and dynamic negotiation between the representation of the part and the representation of the whole that introduces in the populist experience an element of pluralism that drives it away from totalitarian phenomena, even if that doesn't mean its harmonic cohabitation with the institutions of liberal democracy.

Fourth, while Laclau equates populism and politics, De Ipola (1983) is critic of it since **its statist matrix together with the centrality of the leader represent the impossibility of the socialist drift,** even with its disruptive character and democratizing effects at the moment of its irruption.

Fifth, **if politics 'is' populism, then the term loses its explanatory capacity.**

Finally, in our opinion, Laclau's analysis lacks a materialistic approach to political constitution of hegemony, and there in lies its main weakness. The constitution of hegemony appears to be a

purely discursive process with little or no ties to the production and reproduction of capitalist/patriarcal/racist relationships.

III

On the contrary, we understand that the constitution of social hegemony is based on the material (re)production of social relations, be them class, gender, race, human in/with nature, etc. That is why the constitution of alternative forms of hegemony (in gramscian terms; see Gramsci, 1984, 2006) requires putting into question social practices through radical political action, that goes beyond current political forms, both in discourse as well as in practice. Gramsci's analysis of hegemonic constitution implies the ability of the left to mobilize the main fractions of the oppressed beyond their own corporative interests to lead others in intellectually and morally. This means the ability to articulate with others and provide a leadership that can include their economic interests, but can go beyond them, in, through as well as beyond the State. In this process, a hegemonic social bloc is formed.

From this perspective, hegemony can be built in at least in two veins. On the one hand, through a **transformist operation**, a passive revolution (or, 'revolution without revolution') can absorb other groups, neutralizing its interests and disarming the possibility of them opposing the hegemonic fraction within the dominant class. Any progress will come as a reaction of the dominant classes to the sporadic and inorganic subversion of the popular classes. The passive revolution assumes the inability of this classes to act on its own, autonomous action; even in their failure to political constitute a radical alternative, their movement appears a threat to dominant classes, hence their reaction. For Modonessi (2016) this passivity has to do, for Gramsci with the deepness of the politico-cultural relationship of obedience-command, to the correlation of forces as class struggle, as a subjective dynamic with societal implications.

On the other hand, **consensus building** allows a 'national popular will' to operate as cement for ideological unity. In any case, hegemony presupposes that leading fractions take into account the interests and objectives of those over whom it leads (eg, gaining some active consensus, and not just passive as in the other case). This implies certain 'sacrifices' that, however, cannot lead to put into question their dominant economic role: the hegemonic operation implies the ability to lead allied (fractions) classes and the domination over adversaries, so domination of a class assumes its ability to remain leading class.

We believe that the autonomous practice of the Left, of pre-figurative political forms of intervention, which reject current institutions, operates as a means to create alternative, radical, political consciences (as I understand, was Rosa Luxemburg's suggestion) and also to constitute new forms of social relations within left-wing political organizations.

In this sense, Laclau's idea puts the constitution of the People (eg, the subject of social change) at the level of the pure constitution of a political identity (from particular demands to popular demands), denying the the -most significant- practical process of inclusion of the 'excluded' (Martínez Olguin, 2013). For us, the constitution of the antagonistic social camps is tantamount to such process of inclusion, the **irruption of the people in the political scene**. The moment of emancipation, of populist rupture, boils down to the practices of emancipation (Barros, 2009), not the discursive articulation of a 'chain of equivalences'. In fact then, populism is but one particular, specific form of political identity (eg, in Argentina, peronism), while **emancipatory practices (the moment where the spirits adhere to the double cult of future and destruction**, to paraphrase Cioran, 1995) are the key element of the constitution of an radical hegemony.

As we understand it, **Populism is a not just a form of constitution of political identity but also a particular for of social practice**. In gramscian terms, ideology is not simple 'false conscience'. In fact, it is a disputed terrain were people can acquire conscience of their situation in a framework of confrontation of different hegemonic principles. This means that consciences is created through particular relations and practices where subjects are inscribed.

While right-wing movements build on the hatred, individualism, and fear created by capitalist (neoliberal or developmental) social relations and practices, left-wing movements need to practice and propose forms of political intervention that relay on other values such as solidarity, freedom (in Rosa's sense) and love. These practices and articulations must come from actual movements and struggles, of which, today, those against free trade and extractivism, for a democratic society, for feminism and against racism, seem to be the most powerful. These seem to pose the most radical interdictions to capitalism, but need to be mingled, intertwined, to gain massification and social power. The articulation of a new hegemony is for Gramsci the ground of the 'war of positions'. It is the role of the 'political party' to push forward a moral and intellectual reform, which must take the

form of economy reform, and need to interpret the interests of different subaltern groups to constitute a consensual political articulation.

IV

Neoliberal crisis in Argentina was an organic crisis in Gramsci's sense; that is, a crisis of social forms of capital. However, the crisis was contained through the year 2002, with a combination of new economic policy and adjustment (which led to economic expansion in late-2002), the constitution of a massive but basic system of cash-transfers, and the repression of social protest (eg., the so-called the so-called massacre of Avellaneda). These prepared the terrain for the constitution of a new political configuration potentially capable of reconstituting a solid hegemony of the capitalist order. The government of Néstor Kirchner, kirchnerism, represented since 2003 such attempt at social stabilization.

Dominant fractions within capital needed the constitution of a new hegemonic societal project. This should -simultaneously- allow them to, first, guarantee objective conditions for expanded reproduction of social capital under their control and, second, create the subjective conditions for the containment, channelling and normalization -even if only conflictive- of the demands of the new political composition of the working people.

Confronting the discursive traits of the neoliberal program, kirchnerism rescued the historical developmentalist story (the constitution of a 'national project' of development) from the beginnings to the peronist movement in Argentina in the 1940s. The role of kirchnerism was to systemically contain the appearance of the working people, which in new forms regained political power in the late nineties, as it was able to recompose itself politically. It is the irruption of the new constitution of 'the people' that forced the need for the constitution of a new hegemonic project, which in Argentina meant a revival of the peronist myth of social justice.

Simultaneously, Kirchner was able to 'read' the political moment at a regional scale, lining in the so-called 'red tide' of 'progressive' governments, although remaining closed to Brasil's neodevelopmentalism lead by the Workers Party (PT) and somewhat further away from the contents of the Bolivarian Revolution lead by Chávez in Venezuela.

The rhetoric of 'serious capitalism' and 'growth with social inclusion' (both part of the myth of a possible national capitalist project) constitute the new discursive synthesis that worked well to sustain the constitution of a new capitalist development strategy of neodevelopmentalist traits (Félic, 2012). We could say, to rescue Laclau's terms, that those became a sort of empty signifiers, for they could be seen as a synthesis of the many faced unsatisfied demands (popular demands) of the working people.

As a political force within the 'Parties of Order', to paraphrase Marx, kirchnerism looked to (and managed to for some time) consolidate a political articulation capable of sustaining the material bases for valorization of capital in neodevelopmentalism, through the super-exploitation of labour, bodies and territories, within a financiarized and transnational structure of capital. This was built on a new form of the State that had to contain the social consequences of the new structure of social capital, especially in its variable part (labour). This was achieved through renewed and intensified forms of precarization of paid labour and unpaid labour (reproductive or care labour), and also with new modalities of plundering of natural riches and common goods, through a qualitative jump in the scales and destructive capacity of productive activities in areas such as soya and other agropecuarian products, as well as in mining and energy production, amongst others.

Thus, in a way, kirchnerism led a transformist operation, in the gramscian sense, to constitute a new form of political hegemony of the dominant fractions of capital. Its goal was to avoid that the masses become (or continue to be, in some way) politically protagonist. In a sense, kirchnerist populist transition was very different from -for example- Chávez's led process. The Bolivarian Revolution implied -with its obvious limits- the irruption of the people in the political scene, in a way where the protagonic role of people's organization was key. Kirchnerism was -on the contrary- a means to contain and limit such protagonism, to avoid the possibility -even if slim- of turning popular protest in 'revolution' (Dinerstein, 2002; Bonnet, 2006; Félic, 2012)

Besides, we saw the multiplication of forms of management of the labour force that amplify alienation and exploitation as they create conditions of working and living completely articulated with fixed capital: rotating work shifts, extended labor day, incommensurable time of commuting back and forth to/from work, 'permanent guard' through the use of cel phones, etc. Also, we went through the consolidation of international networks of care work and the deterioration of the State as provider of social services (eg., health, education, public transport) that have strengthened the precarization and intensification of reproductive work. Finally, there's been a multiplication in the

use of productive practices, tied to new technologies (ranging from new paradigms in logistics, the use of Information and Communications Technologies, and the proliferation of the use of highly contaminant or destructive technics -such as agro-toxics, hydroelectric facilities and fracking in oil and gas production), which multiple the intensive exploitation of nature with dire consequences from the point of view of productive and reproductive work, the forms of exploitation of natural goods and the generation of waste, amongst other negative effects for the sustainability of life itself.

In such a sense, the constitution of the new form of the social State in the periphery was at the order of day (Félic and Díaz Lozano, 2017). On the one hand, recreating institutions for the regulation/integration of the unionized formal -mainly masculine- work force (bodies). On the other hand, constitution a new regime of social security of a basic universalist tendency for the containment of the work force (bodies) more precarized and marginalized in the labour market and in the space of reproductive work (in the spaces of care work, mainly sustained by women). This integration strategy was conflictive and disputed but eventually successful for the recovery of the hegemony for a new capitalist development strategy able to reproduce and widen the material bases for the new dominant fractions of capital.

Social and labour policies were the recognition of the strength organized of the most active fractions of the working people, while at the same time attempted to become new instruments for social control and political neutralization. As Raquel Gutiérrez states, in a certain way we were 'expropriated' from our own capabilities for struggle, which where re-integrated in the system, at least partially and temporally (León Pérez, Pérez Castillo and Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017).

Until the global crisis of 2008, the development of growing barriers to the process of valorization of capital could be delayed (Félic, 2015). The distributive struggle could be contained using the 'buffer stock' created by the conditions at the exit from neoliberalism and the increase in available extraordinary rents from commodity exports. The increase in their prices, the final phase of the speculative bubble in the US (2002-2008) and the irruption of China as a new sub-imperialist power in the South American region, make the framework of this first phase of neodevelopmentalism in Argentina.

Social demands that were not contained within new policies, where conveniently repressed through decentralized, low intensity, forms of social control; they were as successful or deadly as ever, though: 'easy-shot' by police, para-military groups in rural and eco-territorial conflicts in the new frontiers of soya and mining, repression of mobilizations of 'piqueteros' (unemployed) and employed-workers, etc.

Even so, the contradictions in capitalist production/reproduction in a dependent economy expressed in growing inflation, increasing difficulties to finance public expenditure, and falling global competitiveness of the economy.

V

After the 2009 crisis and an open conflict with new rentier fractions of the middle classes in agribusiness, kirchnerism begun in 2011 its 'program of transition'. Its political alliance, now in the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (CFK), widened its support from 45% of total votes in 2007 to 54% in 2011. This consolidated the key role of the leader that, according to Laclau, is tantamount to the populist moment.

This is the beginning of the 'fine tuning' of the kirchnerist strategy to contain and solve the tendencies for transitional crisis in neodevelopmentalism. The objective was to warrant its own reproduction as governing political force.

The goal was to give a qualitative jump toward a phase of developmentalist intensification, which would allow to overcome or temporary disarticulate the increasing barriers in Argentina's dependent capitalism.

To that end, the demands of the popular classes had to be moderated and made compatible with the need to created a quality jump in the investment rate; big transnational capitals were investing only 1 of 5 dollars of their profits (Manzanelli, 2011). However, the particular configuration of Argentina's dependent capitalism, was blocking or making extremely hard such qualitative transformation. The domination of big transnational capitals limited investment decisions and reinvestment of profits, which were taken within global strategies. Besides, since 2008, the rapid fall in extraordinary rent from the boom in export commodity prices and the 'flight to quality' (towards the center) of part of big transnational capital, corseted the expanded reproduction of capital in Argentina. This happened at a time were the limits of the neodevelopmentalist strategy were most evidente, especially since the beginning of CFK's 2nd

term in office (from late-2011): economic growth rate between 2008 and 2015 fell to less than half that of the previous state (2002-2008), with several years of outright stagnation or recession. Heterodox macroeconomic adjustment attempted to postpone the transformation of barriers of neodevelopmentalist into limits. However, in the meanwhile this adjustment disarticulated the bases of the political hegemony of kirchnerism.

The myth of development as 'growth with inclusion' was dismantled as high inflation consolidated, growth in employment and wages stagnated, and the only way to make the myth real became never ending personal indebtedness. Thus, the so-called 'chain of equivalences' lost its material base, losing grip as hegemonic discourse. And it created the political space for a new consensus, born without the need to contain the radicalization of struggles.

Due to its material constitution (objective and subjective, social, political and historical), kirchnerism could not face the transitional crisis in a radical (eg., leftist) way. As a political movement within the Parties of Order, it could not give the quality jump towards a 'anti-capitalist left' alternative. On the contrary, its own genealogy lead it to attempt a orderly transition, attempting to displace in time and space the contradictions, to maintain its role as the political leaders in the State's management. Kirchnerism was not, of course, a left-wing government but a traditional developmentalist (transformist, in gramscian terms) alternative within the peronist tradition.

The difficulties of this strategy were multiple. On the one hand, the idea of a 'national project' was untenable as a solution to most pressing problems of the whole of the people, especially when precariousness of living evidently persisted. This was especially true in as much as the middle-classes with aspirations of social improvement saw that dream offered to them by kirchnerism vanish: consumption as a permanent horizon of posible happiness, event if ephemeral and alienated).

In this context, the government attempted a policy of widening some 'citizen's' rights (eg., same-sex marriage, and gender identity) and in the precarious social State (eg., 'universal' endowment for children, precarious labour employment in State programs, pensions for old people without contributions). This only consolidated the basic core of its political alliance.

In stagnation and economic instability, social struggles increased, especially within the 'backbone' of the governing alliance: the organized labor movement, led by peronist union leader Moyano. The rupture of the implicit compromise of development as increasing consumption (through employment or State's transfers), turn into shreds the government's social alliance: working middle class and rentier middle classes dispersed to feed the supports of new coalitions, especially the right-wing coalition led by Mauricio Macri.

Only middle fractions of kirchnerist 'inteligentzia' (eg., 'progressive' intellectuals, some human rights movements) and fractions of the most precarious urban popular classes (highly dependent on State's transfers for their survival) remained faithful behind the kirchnerist presidential candidate (Scioli) in the 2015 election. In the first round of elections, the list led by Scioli obtained only 37% of the votes, while Macri (and his alliance, Cambiemos, 'Let's change') got 34%. In the 2nd round, Macri won with 51% of the vote.

VI

The consolidation of Cambiemos as a new expression of political hegemony in Argentina accounts for the constitution of the new form of dominant subjectivity, that relates to the new configuration of the working people, in its new political composition.

It appears paradoxical the this new right-wing political force was born and has consolidated from the insides of the first neodevelopmentalist era. However, the paradox may not be so. Kirchnerism appeared as a political force for the containment of political conclusions of neoliberalism (piquetero movement, 'excedent' demands for social inclusion). Its populist configuration may express -in fact- the irruption of the people through the crisis of neoliberal rule, thus the need for a new form of social hegemony.

Could Cambiemos be the political force best suited by express the new configuration of dominant fractions of capital and the core of the new subjectivity of the precarious way of living? Is Cambiemos a bullseye of the right-wing social fractions in terms of political strategy, marketing or discourse, or is it, above all, the necessary expression of a significative fraction, even if not majoritarian, of hegemonic social sectors?

Already in 2009 the main components of the alliance Cambiemos got about 47% of the vote in the legislative national elections (although back then, they participated in separate lists). That year, the Acuerdo Cívico y Social (Social and Civic Accord, with the UCR -traditional center-right party, as its main national member) obtained 28,9% of the vote for national representatives, a bit less than the

31% of the votes received by the FPV (Front for Victory, kirchnerist coalition). The coalition Unión PRO (led by Macri's party, PRO) got 17,7%.

Cambiamos is not born from the irruption of the masses against neoliberalism, as was kirchnerism. In fact, it appears as the next step in the build up of a new hegemonic rule. In this case, it attempts to create a new consensus around the dominant role of transnational corporations, and its place in any possibility of renewing the 'growth with inclusion' myth, even if such a myth may now come about in a more conservative fashion. While these corporations were in fact the dominant social agents during the Kirchner's administrations, kirchnerist political operation need to locate them as part of the discursive 'other', while at the same time promoting their structural power.

Cambiamos does not get to represent most impoverished fractions of the working people; it probably never will. In the most recent legislative election (October 22nd, 2017) kirchnerism kept the support of the poorest, whose material conditions for living are guaranteed -even if in precarious conditions- by social policies consolidated since 2002.

However, obtaining 42% of the vote in 2017's election, Cambiamos seems to be able to express the anguish of certain fractions of the middle classes of the people that face the daily precarization of their lives and hold the idea of social upgrade through 'merit' (eg, 'hard work', in capitalism, through paid-employment, education). Of course, the prevalence of such myth within those groups, does not make true in its conclusions. Meritocracy is the capitalist myth most widely impregnated in middle classes. They consider that their (in fact, privileged condition, in contrast to popular classes') is the result of their own -individual or family- effort. They have as a horizon to become part of the dominant fractions (paradoxically, generally in a strike of luck). Its greatest fear is to 'descend' to the world of the popular classes. Its greater aspiration is to become the 'employee of the month' (eg., example of the working in its highest form of alienation as 'human capital'). Therein lies in misunderstanding of capitalist reality: their particular situation is mainly out of their control, in the hands of actores whose only motivation is the maximization of the profitability of their capital.

This also expresses the prevalence of a form of social alienation that grows stronger as social form of production and reproduction of life tend to become more fragmented, individualized, privatized. On the one hand, as daily life becomes more and more accelerated, more precarious, more 'out of the control' of people, greater is the pressure towards 'privatization/individualization'. On the other hand, new forms of use/management/control of the labour force (by competences, entrepreneurship, team-work, subcontracting, etc.) strengthen individualistic social practices. Besides, mass media and 'social networks' have a key role in this process. As Christin Ferrer (2011) says, the refuge of intimacy allows us to momentarily elude the heartless mandates of labor processes and the sale of the 'appearance'; technology offers comfort to the besieged individual and give him leisure, planned excitement and homey narcotization in an untempered world.

A emergent hegemonic political force, Cambiamos does not simply express a return to neoliberalism, as many seem to believe (Félic, 2017; Félic, 2016b). It is no doubt a conservative social force and liberal in political and economic terms. However, to constitute in political demonic in the neodevelopmentalist era it has had to express the demands for social integration, even if in a limited way, that came forth from the neoliberal crisis. It appears as if after kirchnerist transformist operation, Cambiamos comes to help consolidate a new social hegemony of capital, now with labour's social radical forces mostly institutionalized.

The precarious social State (eg., universal but basic benefits and rights) came to stay, since the social crisis has become pervasive and permanent. The political conclusions are clear: without social containment policies, minimal but universal, insufficient but generalized, the new political composition of the working people (in its new organizations formas, with its multiplication of demandas) can be easily be turned into an immense destabilizing social force.

Cambiamos bets to become the political expression of the consolidation of neodevelopmentalist hegemony: the social hegemony of big transnational capital that integrates -partiality and in fragmented fashion- the working people as antagonistic force. In terms of the internal frontier, Cambiamos has attempted to antagonize with kirchnerism (now as a new coalition, Unión Ciudadana, Citizen's Union) as the opposing 'other'. In electoral terms, it has worked to consolidate its hegemony as political force in the State. The left, on its side, has been able to consolidate a 5% electoral representation nation-wide, mostly through an alliance in the tradition of trotskism; the so-called new left has not been able to set strong foot on the electoral terrain. In social terms, on the other hand, socio-political movements within the left camp have built a considerable strength but still remain marginalized by the political leverage of peronism.

Does the current situation, imply that this right-wing coalition could be operating in populist fashion? In Laclau's terms, this could be so, if it can constitute appropriate of some 'empty signifiers' (eg., 'growth with inclusion'), and as floating ones attempt to build a new hegemonic

discourse. Macri's government is attempting to do so. In the first two years it has advanced the macroeconomic adjustment the kirchnerism delayed, but maintaining most social policies. The question is whether or not Cambiemos can create the material conditions for the reproduction of those signifiers, and whether or not it can reproduce the basis for the social fracture with kirchnerism as the 'enemy'. After the recent national election, Cambiemos is attempting to set the march for further structural transformations. The scene is set for a new era.

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