The Other Struggle: The Sexual Division of Labor in Argentina's Movement of Empresas Recuperadas

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They might have stolen our dignity, but . . . especially his. The saddest thing is a man without work, a humiliated man. But I think he's going to get it all back. We're here so that he can get it all back. He and his compañeros behind him / Nos habrán robado la dignidad, pero... a él sobre todo. Lo más triste es un hombre sin trabajo, un hombre humillado. Pero yo creo que él va a recuperar todo eso y, bueno... estamos acá para que lo vuelva a recuperar, ¿no? Él y todos sus compañeros detrás.  

It was very hard, especially as women because of our responsibilities at home, to the children and husband. That was the other struggle, very difficult, very difficult / Muy complicado más como mujeres porque la responsabilidad en la casa, los hijos, y marido. Y fue otra lucha, muy complicada. 

In the year 2001, the Argentine economy hit rock bottom. Years of depression followed by the collapse of the financial sector triggered widespread unemployment that in turn resulted in protest, unrest, and civil disobedience. President after president resigned as piqueteros blocked streets, middle-class protesters smashed bank windows and ATMs, and unemployed workers cut the locks from the doors of their shuttered workplaces to resume work as empresas recuperadas - reclaimed businesses occupied and owned by the workers. This turmoil and the popular response captured the imagination of the Left around the world and, in the United States and Canada, articles, documentaries and books praised the workers' resistance as a blow against neoliberal globalization

† All quotes written in the format of “English / Spanish” are translated from the original Spanish by the author.
and as a new model of democratic economic recovery.

With over three hundred workplaces reclaimed by the workers, the movement of empresas recuperadas has been arguably the most diverse experiment in cooperativism, self-management, and worker ownership in recent history. Some empresas were immediately occupied and re-opened under worker ownership while other workers beseeched bankruptcy judges and local legislatures to grant them ownership in exchange for unpaid wages and severance. Still other empresas were reclaimed years after closing by community coalitions that did not necessarily represent the previous workers. Some workplaces have won ownership and recognition as worker cooperatives, others have failed, and still others continue to illegally occupy their empresas under the constant threat of police eviction. Organizational models are as numerous and diverse as empresas recuperadas, some of which imitated or even adopted the previous capitalist hierarchies, while others reorganized themselves according to radically democratic policies, but all were undertaken with the motivation to regain the economic security that had been lost.

Fourteen years after its inception, not much is heard internationally about this movement that has accelerated in recent years, but it continues to be an important case study into the potentials and challenges of democratic worker ownership in the midst of a troubled capitalistic economy. Overshadowed by the achievements of the movement, some of the shortcomings have been relatively overlooked internationally, especially as related to challenges regarding gender. Though largely absent from the most well-known reports and anthologies, some teams of researchers in Argentina have raised a particular
focus on the issue, such as Fernández Álvarez and Partenio; Bancalari, Calcagno, and Pérez Ferretti; Dicapua, Perbellini, and Tifni; and Ferrari, Perttierra, and Robertazzi. Canadian researcher Oseen has also contributed to gender analysis within the movement, and North American filmmakers such as Dworkin and Young (Argentina: Hope in Hard Times) and Klein and Lewis (The Take) have contributed footage of the accounts of workers and their families which, though not focused on the topic of gender relations, provide valuable materials for analysis.

This paper analyzes the economic crisis within and around Argentina's movement of empresas recuperadas which simultaneously created a crisis of gender roles in the home and the empresa, and how the boundaries around and within the empresas were redrawn in ways that maintained male domination. It first focuses on how the increased time demands of workers' participation in the movement simultaneously conflicted with women's primary role in the family as mothers with economic responsibilities, which in turn limiting their opportunity to participate on equal footing with the men in the movement. The article then analyzes accounts of where and how women were allowed or denied participation in workplace decision-making, and how those borders were redefined in temporary or lasting ways that substantially challenged or, more often, reproduced the previous sexual division of labor in the workplace and home.

A History of Exclusion

The position of women in the Argentine economy is the product of historical exclusion and continued marginalization of women from and within
employment, the legally codification of which reflects dominant values and assumptions in the culture. Regarding the gendered role of men and women in the home and employment, Genevieve Lloyd wrote sardonically: “Woman's task is to preserve the sphere of the intermingling of mind and body, to which the Man of Reason will repair for solace, warmth and relaxation. If he is to exercise the most exalted form of Reason, he must leave soft emotions and sensuousness behind; woman will keep them intact for him.” While women were largely excluded in practice from employment by domestic demands, the legal frameworks of Argentina and other former colonies of the Spanish Empire reflect the Napoleonic Code, codifying that men's martial power (puissance) and women's incapacity (incapacité) define women's and men's places in legal society. The Chilean Civil Code, derived from the same puissance/incapacity dichotomy, stated: “the husband owes the wife protection, and the wife owes the husband obedience”; in that legal and social climate, women’s role in the home and in employment has been formed.

In the 20th century, Argentina transitioned toward women's right to work. The 1926 Argentine Law on Women's Civil Rights granted single women equality to men but, while married women were also granted the right to control their own pay under the law (patrimonio reservado), their husbands still retained legal authority over family property and could forbid their wives to work. Not until four decades later, in 1968, were women considered fully capable citizens under the law.

Though all women in Argentina today have legal equality in employment, working women are liable to be considered second-class labor, reflecting the
historical illegitimacy of women's non-domestic work. As women's labor moved from the home to the place of employment, women's involvement in the labor market became shaped by social constructions of feminine technical incompetence and their supposed lack of qualifications. Additionally, the abilities tied to jobs considered to be women's work are commonly considered to be innate and therefore not skilled. Due to the marginalization of women's labor which challenges their access to the labor market throughout Western economies, a gendered division remains, with men expected to earn a family wage, while women's labor continues to be considered merely “pin money” for the family’s economy. Therefore, changes in employment levels in women's work are not considered “real” job loss or gain and, as Massey writes, “Women's unemployment is not seen to . . . cause TV programmes to be made about challenges to gender relations, for women do the domestic work anyway”. Within this history of the exclusion and marginalization of women in the labor market, their participation in the movement of empresas recuperadas was framed.

Though women made up 40% of the workforce in Argentina before the 2001 economic crisis, by 2010 less than one-sixth of the workers in the empresas recuperadas were women. The number is notably low, even after one considers differently gendered experiences of job loss since 2001; Argentine men in 2010 were nearly twice as likely as women to be unemployed (15.1% of men were unemployed versus 8.7% of women) while underemployment is nearly identically opposite (13.1% underemployed women versus 8.2% of men). What led to such remarkably low participation in empresas recuperadas? Was it the
product of the tendency, as Massey states, not to see women's job loss as the loss of “real jobs” because of the undervaluing of women's work?  
Or did organizers of empresas recuperadas, asambleas populares or other social movements make pragmatic (though perhaps subconscious) decisions to prioritize the recuperation of men's workplaces due to the greater economic harm to the community that resulted from the loss of higher-paid men's jobs? This inquiry begins to yield greater understanding of how the marginalization of women in employment systemically reinforces itself in times of economic crisis and social change.

“A Woman's Place?”

In 1984, Doreen Massey and Linda McDowell published an article titled, “A Woman's Place?” in which they analyzed records of the changing manifestation of male domination throughout processes of industrialization in various industries and regions of England. They analyzed the collieries of County Durham, the cotton towns of northwest England, the rag-trade of Hackney, and agricultural labor of Lancashire, with particular focus on the reflexive relationship between both the home and employment in shaping the role of the other. Women's independence through waged labor and “going out” to work paired with the insecurity of men's traditional employment roles created a crisis in the relationship between men and women, which in some cases resulted in new spheres of independence for women but too often resulted in campaigns by men's labor organizations and the Victorian middle-class to exclude women from particular areas of work and, sometimes, from employment altogether.

McDowell and Massey's analysis of “A Woman's Place?” demonstrates how
the spacial and temporal relationships shaped the very different courses that the maintenance of male domination took in the various industries and regions. In her introduction to her 1994 book “Space, Place and Gender” (in which “A Woman's Place?” was reprinted), Massey asserts that space and time cannot be considered separately because space is in a constant state of flux and social dynamics are inherently dynamic. As a result, the definition of the borders of a place such as a home, a union, or a factory reflects a moment in the past social dynamics and the defense of those borders is in itself an act of domination.

McDowell and Massey also assert that, while capitalistic relations expanded in Britain in the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution was not the creation of industrialism but rather the reshaping of it by capitalist organization; women were already directly or indirectly engaged in industrial production, whether through wage labor, homework, or providing the domestic labor that freed men to work outside of the home. Similarly, the organization of empresas recuperadas largely did not represent the entry of workers for the first time into employment; in fact, many of the empresas in which women are employed are composed of the same workforce as under the previous conventional, capitalist ownership. Rather, the movement represented a crisis in which the boundaries of the empresa and the home would be redefined, either maintaining or breaking away from male domination.

**Place in crisis**

Argentina’s unemployment crisis and the resulting movement of empresas recuperadas created a crisis in which the home and the workplace came into
conflict and could no longer simultaneously exist as they had before. Though all place boundaries are perpetually in a state of simultaneous reproduction and change, the major social currents at the time created conditions for rapid change and radical redrawing of borders around and within places. The home and the empresa could no longer exist side-by-side as they once had. In the lives of workers with both employment and domestic responsibilities, the boundaries of the home and the empresa were redrawn in ways that either overlapped or excluded that worker from one or the other.

The greatest driving force behind workers who withdrew from the empresas was the increased demand for the workers' time and energy. “Now you do a load of things in the day and time flies for you / Hoy hacés un montón de cosas en el día y se te pasa la hora volando,” one worker explained. “Not before. Before you went and stayed at a machine or in a post and were at that place all day, coming and going without any responsibilities / Antes no, antes era ir y quedarte en una máquina o en un lugar y estar todo el día en ese lugar, ibas y venías sin ninguna responsabilidad.” This is a common statement not only within the movement of empresas recuperadas, but also within all worker cooperatives; in addition to the regular work of production, cooperative worker may stay late into the night performing management tasks that previously had been left to the bosses and owners. Additionally, many empresas recuperadas were being illegally occupied and the threat of police eviction or the removal of assets by the legal owners required many empresas to occupy their workplaces around the clock, even after the work of production and management was over.

The radical redefinition of the boundaries of the empresa during the
process of recuperation challenged the boundaries of the place of the home. The gendered roles of breadwinner and domestic worker became precarious because the men in the empresas were no longer bringing home the wages they previously had and the women of the empresas who had previously labored after hours as wives and mothers were no longer to fulfill their familial obligations. One worker recounts this struggle to go to work, both before and after her empresa was reclaimed:

I already didn't pay attention to him because he didn't want me to come [to work]. Then he became angry, “Why so much!” He said, “Why so much!” And I replied to him, “Because you don't have a job, and because now I have one,” I told him, “I can bring home money now, why won't you let me?” And he kept saying no, but I carried on and on, and then when I didn't have a job and was in the protest tent, he got mad as well. “What are you going to do there? How could a lady go around there? Sleeping there, in the square,” he said to me. But I came with my daughter; she came with me and, well, her husband [in reference to a coworker] accepted it when she left the baby girls with him, but not my husband / Yo ya no le hice caso, porque él no quería que venga... Entonces se enojaba, ‘¡por qué tanto!’, decía ‘¡por qué tanto!’. Y yo le contestaba ‘porque vos no tenés trabajo y porque yo tengo ahora’, le digo eh... ‘porque yo ahora puedo traer un sueldo a mi casa ¿por qué no me dejas?’ Y que no, que no, y pero yo seguí, seguí, y bueno... Y cuando yo... no tenía trabajo y estaba en la carpa, él también se enojaba ‘¿qué vas a hacer ahí?, ¿cómo va ir una señora por ahí? durmiendo ahí... en una plaza’, me decía. Pero yo venía con mi hija... ella venía conmigo y bueno... el marido de ella [en referencia a una compañera] aceptaba, que le dejaba las nenas, pero mi marido no.20

Had this worker gone through this economic turmoil without the constraints and expectations of her domestic relationship, she might not have had her right to participate in the movement challenged. Her very right to go out to work outside
the home was legitimized by her having become the breadwinner. That temporary status as breadwinner granted her the power to define the already-precarious boundaries of the place of the home in ways that historically have been an extension of men's sole economic power over women. Her partner tried to re-assert his authority when the balance of economic power had shifted back, though, but the definition of a place can only be returned to an imitation of its previous boundaries, at best.

Though the boundaries around and within the empresa were redrawn in many ways, they were largely redrawn in ways that maintained male domination. With their jobs and abilities to provide financially for their families held precariously in the legal or political systems, men faced humiliation and sorrow in their inability to be the breadwinners. Speaking to the leaders of other empresas recuperadas of his struggle, one co-op president said with teary eyes and shaky voice,

I have a seven year old daughter who asks me every day, daddy, are you going back to work? . . . There were some days when all we had was eggplant and potatoes. I swear on my children / Tengo una hija de siete años que me pregunta todos los días, ¿papá, volvés a trabajar? . . . yo he pasao días a berenjena y papas fritas y ... lo juro por mis hijos. \(^{21}\)

About his unemployment, his wife said of him, “They may have stolen our dignity, his above all. The saddest thing is a man without work, a humiliated man / Nos habrán robado la dignidad, pero... a él sobre todo. Lo más triste es un hombre sin trabajo, un hombre humillado.” \(^{22}\) The wives of workers in another co-op spoke of their husbands who acted differently on their suffering:
The men were broken. They were the ones to maintain the home . . . With all that happened, they suffered a lot. Some separated from their partners, and others became drunks. Ours were broken. We were the ones who went out there / Los hombres estaban quebrados. Ellos eran los que tenían que mantener la casa . . . Con todo lo que pasó, sufrieron mucho. Algunos se separaron, otros se emborrachaban. Los nuestros se quebraron. Ahí salimos nosotras.  

The men whose partners worked in the empresas and the men who themselves worked in the empresas experienced a challenge to the power a breadwinners which had historically been their right.

**Pressures of the home**

Many workers, experiencing pressures to leave behind the struggle to save their work, faced a daily struggle to justify their devotion of time and energy staying overnight in the empresas, sometimes to such an extent that they were simply forbidden by family members from continuing with the struggle. Pressure to leave the empresa also came in other forms, though, as financial exigencies and pressure from institutions such as schools.

The conflict between workplace expectations and domestic responsibilities resulted in additional pressure imposed by social institutions on workers to prioritize their domestic obligations over the struggle, and those institutional pressures didn't come only from men. Recounting a time when her children's school teacher said to her, “your work is all well and good but you need to care about your children and come to the school / [la maestra decía] con su trabajo todo bien
pero tiene que preocuparse por sus hijos y venir [a la escuela],” the worker explains that “on that end I also think that I'm a little to blame because of how many hours I work, devoting so many hours to the struggle and I get distracted / Y yo por ahí también pienso que tengo un poco de culpa porque tantas horas de trabajo, dedicando tantas horas a esta lucha y me descuido.” The pressure to abandon the struggle came from both extra-familial institutional and familial sources, but resulted in internalized feelings of guilt and obligation in the minds of mothers responsible for childcare.

Meanwhile, economic obligations forced many workers to pursue better paying work in traditional employment. One worker who remained with the reclaimed Brukman suit factory, where the vast majority of workers were women, relates,

We pay for electricity, gas and telephone, and we divide what is left into equal parts. At that point there were many more of us; all of us were still there. Later, when we didn't have any more money, many left. There are people, I understand, who had to provide for a household. They can’t live on an dream. We achieved our dream, but it was a very, very hard struggle. There were people who had to pay rent, and that’s why I understand them. I understand those coworkers who stayed out / Pagamos la luz, el gas, el teléfono y lo que sobró nos lo repartimos entre todos por partes iguales. En ese momento éramos muchos más, todavía estábamos todos. Después cuando no hubo más plata, muchos se fueron. Hay gente, yo la entiendo, que tenían que mantener una casa. No podían vivir de una ilusión. Nuestra ilusión se cumplió, pero fue una lucha muy, muy dura. Habría gente que tenía que pagar alquiler, y por eso la entiendo. A los compañeros que quedaron afuera yo los entiendo.  

The return of the workers who left to paid employment was directly tied to the maintenance of the place of the home; workers were forced to instead pursue
employment for companies that satisfied the same social role of putting food on
the table as their previous work had.

Other workers were unequivocally forbidden to redefine their roles and
forced to choose between participating in the occupation of the empresa and their
place in the home, as one worker recounts:

So then I told my coworker, Susana, I told her, “Please call Marcos
[referring to her now ex-husband], tell him that I am going to stay here
tonight, that I'll explain to him why later. Then he called me here and said
to me, “What are you doing there? Get out of there! If you're going to stay
there, if you end up staying there, forget about me! It's the factory or me!”
I told him, “The factory or you? Great, I'll stick with the factory.” [she
laughs as she remembers] / Y bueno, entonces le dije a una compañera,
Susana, le dije: ‘por favor le podés llamar a Marcos, [se refiere a su actual
ex marido], decile que me voy a quedar esta noche acá, que después le
explico por qué’. Después él me llamó acá y me dice: ‘¿qué hacés ahí?, ¡salí
de ahí! Si vos te quedás ahí, si vos te llegás a quedar ahí... ¡olvidate de mí!,
¡o la fábrica o yo!” Le digo: ‘¿o la fábrica o vos? Bueno, me quedo con la
fábrica’(...) [se ríe mientras lo recuerda]. 27

In her case, the home and boundaries of the empresa and the home were irrecon-
cilable. It is also notable that in her story she made no mention of children; it
would be remiss to assume from this shocking but lighthearted account that
women with families were widely free to make such a decision. Another worker a
co-workers stayed but left because her husband wouldn't permit her to stay. 28 In
the archive of academic literature on this movement, many more stories can be
found of workers leaving behind their families to fight for recuperation, but the
stories of departed coworkers are largely silent in the discourse of the movement.
The stories of men in the empresas recuperadas tell the difficulty of leaving behind their familial responsibilities, as well. Though men's contribution to domestic labor tends to be significantly lighter than that of women, the loss of a man's participation in the home in favor of pursuing the fight for the empresa was also difficult. One man tells his struggle:

And now I've ended up living here, because there was a time when my family wasn't supporting me. And of course, it was nine months which isn't easy for a family to bear. One constantly has to be in here. I could easily have to go to the business district at three in the afternoon and at seven or eight o'clock in the evening I had to return. Already I'm tired all day long, so I just stay here. And this brought up family arguments, why I don't go home, why this, why that / Y ahora quedé viviendo acá, porque en un momento no apoyaba la familia. Y claro... porque son nueve meses, que no es fácil de sobrellevar una familia. Tenés que estar constantemente metido acá (...) Capaz que a las tres de la tarde me tengo que ir a microcentro y son las siete, ocho de la tarde y tengo que volver... Ya estoy cansado todo el día, y ya me quedo acá. Y eso llevó a discusiones de familia, que porque no voy a casa, que porque esto..., que porque el otro. 29

Reading his account, one can imagine the struggle of a wife at home whose domestic duties have been increased by an absent husband who, though he was struggling to regain the economic security the family had once had through his employment, was no longer contributing his small portion of domestic responsibility; instead it fell on her shoulders. Workers who are men recounted with sadness the difficult conflict in the home over their absence, but their accounts of “my wife didn't understand the struggle / mi señora no comprendía mi lucha” 30 or “why I don't go home, why this, why that” carry a different tone than the women who had to openly defy the demands of their husbands in order
to participate in the struggle on an equal footing with their coworkers.

**Participation in the empresa**

Though many workers were faced with making a choice between the places of the empresa and the home, the boundaries were in flux in many ways. The home itself entered the empresa because, when the places of the home and the empresas side-by-side were no longer reconcilable, neither would give way to the other.

Early in the occupation of the Brukman suit factory, several workers made the factory their home. Though the factory's workforce was 85-90% women, the first worker to make residence in the factory was a man. He told that only later was he joined by more coworkers because they didn't want him to believe that he was alone there. At that time there were many police raids against Brukman and other empresas recuperadas whose legal owners had the political clout to persuade the state to forcefully evict the workers who were peacefully occupying their workplaces and in one such raid he was arrested together with another co-worker who was on the sixth floor and another on the ground floor with her nine-year-old daughter. However the boundaries of workers’ homes might be defined, they only became more precarious when combined with the illegally-occupied empresas.

The home also entered the empresa in the form of childcare. Paid childcare was financially infeasible for many workers in those early days and the workday that had been extended to include managerial work made coordinating with family members even more difficult. In some cases, aspects of domestic work
were brought into the empresa, as the daily routine at one factory describes:

While Carolina is carrying out a task that she knows how to do but is different from what her job description was in the factory, her son has his morning nap. Despite the incessant noise of the machines, Lucas sleeps peacefully. His mom doesn't have to run out in the morning to leave him at her sister-in-law's house and can breast feed him more frequently / Mientras Carolina se ocupa de una tarea que si bien conoce difiere a la que definía su puesto de trabajo en la fábrica, su hijo hace su siesta de la mañana. A pesar del ruido de las máquinas, incesante, Lucas duerme tranquilo. Su mamá ya no tiene que salir corriendo a la mañana para dejarlo en casa de su cuñada y puede darle el pecho con mayor frecuencia.\(^{33}\)

In many ways this change in the organization of industrial production - the inclusion of children and childcare on the factory floor - relieved many of the pressures on working mothers; they wouldn't have family members or institutional figures scolding them for being away from their children nor will they have to scramble to coordinate the hours of paid child care or family members who are willing to provide child care for free. At the same time, however, the entry of the home into the empresa disproportionally increases the responsibilities of women during empresa work hours and has the potential to define their participation on the factory floor, in the cooperative, and in the movement in general.

It is valuable to note that, though the home entered the empresa, only the empresa remained bounded to its own physical space. The means of production and their management have become so physically bounded in space that, even in the lives of workers performing work coded feminine, only the boundaries of the home had the flexibility to enter the other place.
Domination maintained or changed in the new structures

The absence of women in the initial push for recuperation contributed in some cases to the empresas remaining places unwelcoming to women. In one artisanal glass factory, the effort was initiated by the local mayor and continued with the support of the country’s leading organization of empresas recuperadas, institutions headed by and dominated by men who reached out in those early stages to ex-workers who were men. Previous to the factory closing, the sexual division of labor had concentrated technical knowledge in the hands of men. Women, on the other hand, were rightly or falsely perceived not to possess the residual technical knowledge necessary to operate the factory. Women were therefore omitted from the initial occupation, and the building of the cooperative’s new decision-making structure reflected priorities and values of those who had first been there to define the place - the men.34

Though some workers were barred by familial obligations from certain places and times within the empresa, they were sometimes able to maintain their involvement by proxy of another family member who went in their stead. A mother working at another empresa tells of her husband's resistance to her choice to go out to join the overnight guard duty. “At the beginning he didn't like that I stayed on guard duty / Al principio no le gustaba que me quedara en la guardia,” she said, ‘but later I told him, it just came out of me: 'I'm going to go to the guard duty but you take care of things at home.' / pero después le dije, un día salió de mi: ‘yo me voy a ir a la guardia pero vos atendés la casa’.” 35 But by that point, her familial obligations had already cost her the freedom to participate
with her coworkers in a very critical period of the occupation of the workplace. In the margins of her statement we begin to see the long-term consequences of the absence of working mothers in the building of new cooperative decision-making structures.

In one documented factory in which a full third of the workers were women, women were disproportionally concentrated in finishing work that was considered to be unskilled while issues around biased assessments of the difficulty and skill of women’s work positions resulted in lower pay and marginal allocation of work assistance devices such as front-loaders. Women's voices in the new hierarchy were also silenced when departmental coordinators, who are elected from among the workers of a section to fulfill managerial roles and to coordinate work across the entire co-op, were eliminated in women's sections. Popular, cooperative-wide elections also selected for committee members who reflected the men’s majority and further excluded the possibility of women's access to top decision-making positions. As one of the women who had worked in the factory later related, reduced democratic involvement of workers in the co-op resulted directly in the exclusion of women from equitable pay and more lucrative positions. Though sometimes “some guys who have a problem recognizing women’s capabilities” seemed to keep women out of certain areas of work and undervalued their contributions, systemic exclusion from equal participation was, in fact, responsible.

The women on the shop floor who challenged the inequitable policies were targeted by the male-dominated hierarchy. Women who challenged the workplace biases were seen as too straightforward and causing too much
conflict and lost pay through evaluations that vaguely scored workers on being a good *compañero*. Those workers were eventually pushed out and today no women remain on the shop floor, and only a few remain in what are stereotypically feminine jobs. By failing to submit to the policies of the men-dominated hierarchy, they upset the boundary-based enforcement of domination and the hierarchy forcefully reinforced its boundaries.

However, not all empresas remained dominated by men's hierarchies; workers in some empresas substantially challenged the previous sexual division of labor in the workplace and home. But borders seemed to only be redefined in temporary or lasting ways in situations where women had the majority necessary to assume authority over the definition of place by direct, democratic means.

In recuperation, the technical division of labor (the concentration of decision-making in the hands of the managers who are the representatives of the owners, alienating workers from agency in their own labor) is largely eliminated as both ownership and work were consolidated into the hands of the workers. As cooperative worker-owners, women in these empresas recuperadas had at least nominal opportunity and responsibility to participate equally in democratic decision making. There are notable examples of women assuming leadership where they had previously been prevented by the paternalistic male hierarchy of ownership.

The elimination of technical division of labor in women's work has made profound, if temporary, changes in cooperatives that were dominated by men. In a previously mentioned glass factory where women's labor and management was
limited to stereotypically women's work, the male hierarchy instituted punctuality incentives that failed to take into account the domestic responsibilities that disproportionately fell on the shoulders of women. In their own section the women modified the punctuality rule due to the disproportionate effect it would have on women who shouldered a burden of childcare that the men in other sections did not. In that largely male-dominated workplace, women were able to create at least a small pocket of resistance, redefining their own place in employment work, though not as profoundly nor as permanently as in empresas like the Brukman suit factory where women made up the majority of the entire empresa.

As would be most expected, women's transition into decision-making happened most notably in workplaces where women were in the majority. Workers at Brukman suit factory, which received a degree of renown for being one of the earliest and most well-publicized workplaces that were occupied during the 2001 crisis and is often credited for at least partially inspiring the movement, were between 85 and 90% women. Depictions of the co-op often feature footage of motherly or grandmotherly figures facing down the militarized police and climbing over barricades on the front lines of protests, preparing to retake the factory and wearing sky-blue uniforms that became the flags of the struggle. Those workers not only became symbols of the movement but also became managers, business representatives and negotiators as they struggled to win legal expropriation of their factory as an end to the constant threat of violent eviction.
Conclusions

Workers engaged in the movement of empresas recuperadas experienced a radical change of the boundaries of home and empresa. Additional responsibilities of guard duty and management lengthened their work days, while their often decreased or non-existent pay created a situation in which the places of home and empresa could no longer co-exist separately as before, if at all. The redrawn boundaries of the home and of the empresa were in many cases drawn in ways that excluded workers from the other. The boundaries also at times overlapped in ways they could have never before, with aspects of the home such as residence and childcare entering the empresa. The place of the empresa did not enter the space previously defined as the home, though, because employment is bounded to the physical space of the empresa and the time spent there.

Boundaries also were redefined or reinforced within the empresa. Widespread exclusion of women from certain types of work and decision-making continued as they had under the previous capitalistic management and, when women challenged the definitions of those places, the boundaries were aggressively defended to maintain men's domination over those places. Women were able, however, to redefine place and the identities tied to it when and where they had the majority necessary to utilize the cooperative principle of one-worker-one-vote, but only in places where they were not already excluded by domestic obligations from the empresa's decision-making activities in the early stages of occupation or in after-hours meetings.

These findings suggest that the movement of empresas recuperadas was
perhaps only particularly successful in liberating the dominant group of workers within many of these workplaces – for the most part, men. They also suggest that the principle of one-worker-one-vote can still create a situation of tyranny of the majority, where by the means of the popular vote the dominant group within a body of people retains the power not only to recognize or deny the rights of the minority, but also to punish those who challenge the legitimacy of the political process. Instead of creating universal equality within the workplace, the movement largely continued to reproduce in occupational segregation and a history of marginalization of women working outside the home.⁴³ The liberation of the workers didn't necessarily extend to the workers who are women.
1. Melissa Young, and Mark Dworkin, *Argentina hope in hard times*, (Oley, PA: Bullfrog Films 2004), DVD.


7. Ibid, 60.

8. Ibid, 71.


20. Ibid, 128.


24 Ibid., 131.


28 Ibid., 128.

29 Ibid, 128-129.

30 Ibid, 128.

31 Ibid,129.


34 Ibid, 348.


37 Ibid, 16.

38 Ibid, 15.


40 Ibid, 15.

41 Ibid, 13.
