

“Uniting What Capital Divides”: Union Organizing in the Workplace and the Community
under the New Politics of Labor Informality in Argentina (2003-2011)

by

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Abstract

The prevailing class analysis of Latin American societies defines informality as a class cleavage that divides the working class. In this view, labor fragmentation has made it increasingly difficult for formal workers to engage in collective action and helps to explain why social conflict in the region has occurred mainly within the growing informal sectors. However, recent Argentine history (2003-2011) suggests that the labor movement became increasingly relevant again, due to protests organized by unionized workers employed in firms of the formal economy.

How can we explain the rise in organized labor militancy among formal sector workers given the persistence of the division between formal and informal workers? In this dissertation I sustain the hypothesis that there is an increasing interconnectedness between formal and informal workers that helps to explain labor revitalization in Argentina, in a context of high labor informality. I propose a mixed-methods study of the relations between formal and informal workers in Argentina after 2003.

The quantitative part of the study aims to show that the class structure of Argentina presents a more fluid boundary between formality and informality than the standard views usually assume. I use survey data from the “Encuesta Nacional de Estratificación Social” (Instituto Gino Germani - Universidad de Buenos Aires). In the study I provide evidence of strong structural connections between the formal and the informal proletariat, which include past work experiences and family ties across the formal-informal boundary.

In the qualitative part of the dissertation, I study union strategies of workers in three formal sector factories located in the city of Pacheco (Northern Gran Buenos Aires). Evidence from this comparison suggests that labor revitalization was possible, in part, because new *inclusive strategies* of organized labor have made headway in overcoming the effects of the divisions. The systematic comparison between the three unions has

allowed for the identification of the key variables that explain variation in the orientation and outcome of different union's strategies towards informal work. These variables include: the type of factory regime that regulates labor relations and company-community relations, the structural power of informal workers, the associational power and the organizational logic of the union.

There is an ongoing debate among labor scholars and activists around the world about the possibilities of organized labor as a force of resistance to neoliberal globalization: Is the labor movement still capable of leading the struggles for social justice in a globalized world? Evidence from this study suggests that the possibility of a new labor upsurge that confronts capital's offensive in the global south depends (once again) on the alliances that labor movements establish to broaden their constituency, both within and beyond the workplace.

DEDICATION

Dedicado a mi papá Jaime Elbert.

Y también a la memoria de mi mamá Silvia Edit Rut Gorvein (1945-2006), que se
fue demasiado pronto.

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Introduction

1.1 Puzzle: Labor Activism in a High Informality Labor Market

The conventional wisdom in scholarly discussions of Latin American labor movements is that high levels of labor informality and unemployment have made it increasingly difficult for workers employed in the formal economy to engage in collective action (Roberts 2002: 22). In Argentina, the dramatic increase in informality and unemployment brought about by the neoliberal reforms of the nineties is seen as the main cause of decreasing labor activism throughout the decade (Svampa and Pereyra 2003).

The eighties was a highly conflictive decade for the labor movement, with an average of 586 yearly conflicts between 1982 and 1990 and fourteen general strikes. This pattern was followed by a sharp decline in the nineties, after the imposition of the first austerity measures. In the period that goes from the launch of neoliberalism to the beginning of its crisis (1991-1997) there were, on average, 300 labor conflicts every year, representing around half of the average in the previous decade. Weakened Argentine unions defended their basic organizational assets, but could not struggle for better working conditions or salary increases with an increasingly heterogeneous workforce (Murillo 2001).

During the 1998-2002 crisis, the locus of social conflict and labor policy debates seemed no longer to reside in the passive, unionized working class but in the growing informal sectors (Garay 2007). Some authors suggested that informality in Argentina and Latin America was so widespread that the labor movement had ceased to be the main force in struggles for social change (Collier and Handlin 2005: 6).

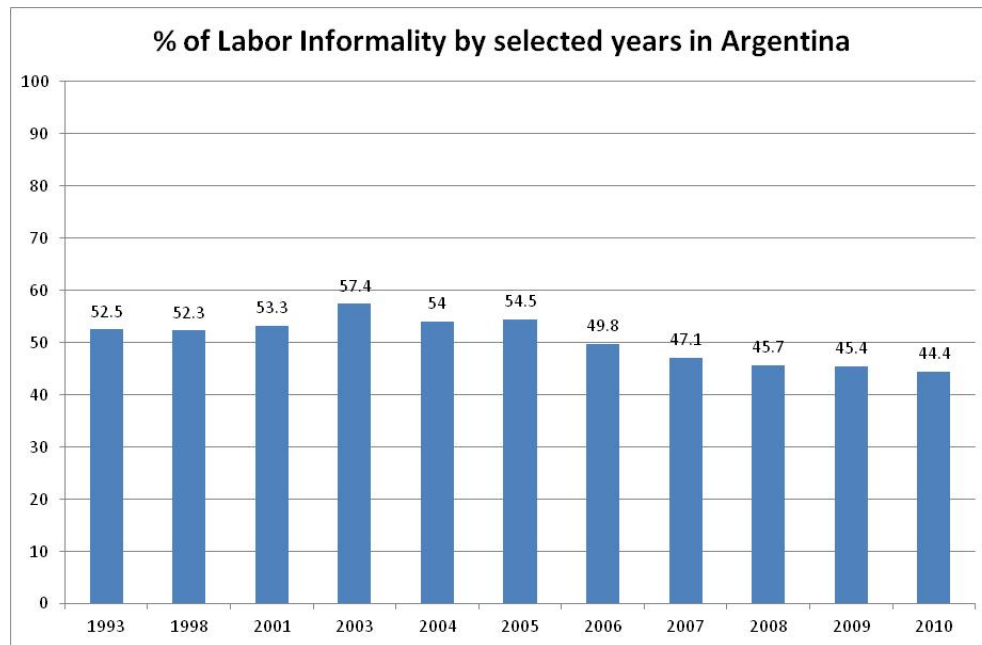
Figure 1.1: *Labor Conflicts in Argentina (1982-2012)*

Source: Nueva Mayoría Dataset of Labor Conflicts (Nueva Mayoría 2013)

This pattern seemed to confirm the idea that high levels of informality blocked the possibilities of labor mobilization in the region. Since the end of the meltdown in 2002, Argentina's GDP has grown an average of 8.9% a year. The rate of unemployment has shown a significant reduction, but labor informality still affected almost half of the labor force by 2010, as shown in figure 1.2 (Beccaria and Groisman 2008).

Given the high levels of informality as well as the recent history of passivity, it seemed unlikely that a militant labor movement would emerge in Argentina. However, labor revitalization did happen after 2003, and unions are again the main organizers of social protests (Etchemendy and Collier 2007). In 2005, for example, there were 824 labor conflicts, representing the highest count since 1990 (Nueva Mayoría 2013). During the post-crisis period (2003-2012) there were, on average, 456 labor conflicts, a figure which almost doubles the 251 average labor conflicts of the crisis years.

Figure 1.2: *Labor Informality in Argentina (selected years)*



Source: Own elaboration based on data from Beccaria and Groisman (2008); and Groisman et al. (2010).

This rising wave of labor protests challenges the claim that formal workers cannot mobilize when there are high levels of labor informality. Contrary to the expectations of the literature, labor revitalization in Argentina occurred in spite of a fragmented workforce: How can we explain the rise in organized labor militancy among formal sector workers given the persistence of the division between formal and informal workers? This dissertation sustains the hypothesis that there is an increasing interconnectedness between formal and informal workers that helps to explain labor revitalization in Argentina.

In order to test this hypothesis, I propose a mixed-methods study of the changes in the relations between formal and informal workers in Argentina after 2003. The quantitative part of the study aims to show that the class structure of Argentina presents a more fluid boundary between formality and informality than is usually assumed. In particular, I study the prevalence of temporal and mediated class relations that connect the formal and the

informal proletariat. The qualitative design draws on 14 months of fieldwork studying union strategies of workers in three factories located in the city of Pacheco (Northern Gran Buenos Aires): K-Foods, V-Car and FR-Meat meat packing plant.

1.2 Conceptual Layout

The dynamics of peripheral capitalism in Latin America has led to the co-existence of modes of production in the region, combining a core capitalist sector with the unregulated petty production of commodities. The literature first defined this unregulated sector as the “urban informal sector”, which included own-account workers engaged in survival activities and employees of micro-enterprises. The modernization school of development theory expected that these workers would be absorbed by the capitalist nucleus, but the urban informal sector persisted even after a period of sustained economic growth during import-substitution industrialization (Portes and Benton 1984: 590).

Authors working within the dependency school of development theory questioned these predictions and stated that the structural dynamic of peripheral economies generated “dual societies” in which there was an important portion of the population never fully incorporated to the dynamic capitalist nucleus of the economy (Nun 1969). These authors coined the term “marginal mass” to label the group of people who were excluded from the modern economic sector. This definition rejected the “optimistic” view sustained by the modernization school. At the same time this concept gave birth to the idea that there were no ties between the formal and the informal economy, and that those employed in the informal economy were somehow “marginalized” from mainstream society.

This notion prevailed in the literature until the early 1980s, when Alejandro Portes and his colleagues challenged the idea that the informal economy was at the margins of capitalist society (Portes and Benton 1984). Portes defined the informal economy as “a

process of income-generation characterized by one central feature: it is unregulated by the institutions of society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated” (Castells and Portes: 1989). One common feature of all informal economic activities (defined this way) is the systematic connection to the formal economy. The reason for this connection is that “the specialized networks formed by unregulated enterprises free large firms from the constraints imposed upon them by social control and institutional norms” (Castells and Portes 1989: 26).

The advantage of this definition is that it helps to capture not only the traditional urban informal sector, but also the informal work arrangements that grew in firms that are at the core of the formal economy (Kalleberg 2009: 2). This view has been adopted by the International Labor Organization in 2002, which defines an informal worker as one “whose labor relationship is not subject to labor legislation and tax rules, and has no access to social protection or right to certain labor benefits” (International Labor Organization 2002). Based on this definition, there is a group of unambiguous informal jobs, which includes the unregulated survival activities of the self-employed as well as salaried workers employed through agreements that are not legally regulated.

However, this definition raises the question as to which jobs in legally regulated companies should be classified as informal: Is it only unregulated jobs? Or the definition also includes legally regulated precarious jobs? In the framework of my dissertation research, the classification of two groups of workers is particularly problematic: those in temporary employment and those who provide services under subcontracting arrangements (also called “subcontracted workers” or “outsourced workers”).

On narrowly technical grounds, jobs that are precarious but legally regulated are formal jobs, but these workers are employed under irregular and more insecure conditions than standard workers. There is currently no consensus in the literature as to where to

draw the line that distinguishes formal and informal jobs in legally regulated companies (Rosaldo et.al. 2012:3). In this dissertation I decided to include these cases under the category of “nonstandard work in legally regulated companies” and therefore, as informal jobs. This definition includes salaried workers who are subject to temporary work or a loose and/or triangulated relationship with their employer, even if they are employed in legally regulated firms (Cobble and Vosko 2000).

The Class Analysis of Informality: The Standard Approach and the Alternative view.

Portes’ approach had far reaching implications for the class analysis of informality. In particular, it challenged the prevalent notion of the “marginal mass”, which implicitly suggests that those groups outside the fully capitalist economy are classless (Portes 1985: 9). Once the idea of “marginal mass” is rejected, the following question emerges: What is the class location of informal workers?

Portes view is that the class map of Latin American societies needs to add the informal proletariat as a new class. The difference in modes of remuneration to labor generates groups of workers with different material interests, identities and lived experiences. In addition, the expectation is that the wide variation in wages, work conditions, job security, social benefits and relations with capital across different categories of workers provides no basis for collective action (Roberts 2002: 22). In this dissertation, I define this view as the “standard approach” to the class analysis of informality, because it is the one that became prevalent in the past three decades.

The standard approach helped to overcome the idea that the informal proletariat is part of a “marginal mass” excluded from mainstream society. In addition, it recognized the growing importance of informal employment relations in the mainstream economy. The

problem with the definition of informality as a class cleavage is that it assumes that high levels of labor informality necessarily cause the fragmentation of the working class. This perspective is particularly problematic if we want to relate levels of informality to the dynamics of labor mobilization, because it could be that high levels of informality do not necessarily mean the absence of social relations connecting formal and informal workers.

Instead of assuming that informality is a class cleavage that divides workers, empirical research should study the specificity of the social relations that link (or separate) formal and informal workers. In this dissertation I propose an alternative approach that retains the basic class schema proposed by Erik Olin Wright and treats informality as adding complexity to class relations only at a subsidiary level through temporal and mediated class locations (Wright 1997). At the level of the class structure, the study of these relations will be guided by the distinction between two ideal types of informality: Segmented informality will be present in a society when there are few and weak temporal and mediated class relations connecting formal workers to informal workers. On the other hand, interconnected informality will be present when there are strong and stable temporal and mediated class relations connecting these groups of workers.

The basic idea here is that what it means to say that a person is “in” a given class location is very different if the probability of leaving the location is very high or very low and if people in such locations typically have strong family ties to people in a different class location. In effect, the class character of a location with highly porous boundaries – both to interpersonal ties and to movement over time – is very different from a location with rigid boundaries. In the case of segmented informality, it is reasonable to consider informality the basis of a real *class division*; in the second it is not.

The alternative view challenges the idea that the contrast between the formal and the informal proletariat has the same conceptual status as other class cleavages. In particular it rejects the notion that informality is a deep cleavage that divides the working class in Latin America and blocks the possibilities of labor mobilization in the region. In particular, this new perspective is useful to understand the dynamics of labor mobilization in contemporary Argentina, because it allows for the study of the organizing linkages between formal and informal workers even in contexts of high labor informality.

This perspective replaces the strong structural view with a more nuanced understanding of the interactions between social structure and organizational dynamics in the making of labor protests. The main hypothesis of this research is that the increasing interconnectedness between formal and informal workers in core industrial regions has allowed for the emergence of new strategic orientations within the labor movement¹. In order to test this hypothesis, this dissertation will compare the organizing strategies of formal workers in three different factories in the city of Pacheco, Northern Gran Buenos Aires.

The study of these strategies will be guided by the distinction between two types of labor organizing: *exclusive* organizing happens when formal sector unions develop monopolistic actions to protect standard formal sector workers. On the other hand, *inclusive* organizing will be present when formal sector unions establish relations of solidarity with informal workers both within and beyond the workplace. Previous research on labor movements around the world has shown that in some contexts it is possible to see the emergence of inclusive union strategies that go beyond the protection of the

¹ This argument is similar to the one suggested by Gay Seidman (1994). This author argues that the resurgence of labor militancy in Brazil in the 1980s centrally concerned a new strategic and organizational model: social movement unionism.

narrow economic interest of standard formal workers (Seidman 1994; Clawson 2003; Moody 1997; Collins 2003).

The comparison between union strategies will take into account different characteristics of each case that determine the structure of opportunities limiting the union's action as well as the characteristic that explain each union's orientation to particular organizing strategies: the company's factory regime and relations to the community, and the union's associational power and organizational logic.

Following Burawoy (1985: 7-8) I define the factory regime as the combination of the political and ideological effects of the organization of work and the apparatuses of production which regulate production relations. In general terms, I identify regimes that encourage the opposition between labor and capital and regimes that encourage the cooperation between the two (Wright 2000). The distinction between factory regimes will also take into account each firm's "localization strategy", which refers to the different ways in which companies relate to surrounding communities and labor markets (Lee 1995; Collins 2003; McKay 2006).

I also analyze each union's associational power and organizational logic. The union's "associational power" lies in its capacity to realize workers' class interests in the workplace (Wright 2000). In places like Argentina, where there are regular elections of union officials, the associational power of unions is based on the union's exercise of the political leadership of the majority of workers in the shop floor. Finally, a shop floor union is defined as democratic if it uses democratic decision making processes through which rank and file workers make decisions through deliberation (Fung and Wright 2003: 5).

The main hypothesis here is that the firm's factory regime and the associational power of the union determine the *structure of opportunities* for the local union to develop *inclusive organizing strategies*. On the other hand, the organizational logic of the union

explains the union's *motivation* to establish relations of solidarity with informal workers both within and beyond the workplace. The expectation is that a strong and democratic union will be more likely to advance *inclusive organizing strategies* than a weak and democratic union. Additionally, both of these unions should be more prone to *inclusive organizing* than non-democratic unions.

1.3 Research Design and Map of the Dissertation

The dissertation is based on a mixed methods design: 1) The quantitative analysis of survey data has looked for evidence of mediated and temporal class relations connecting formal and informal workers in at the level of the class structure, 2) The qualitative study sought evidence of the relationship between formal and informal workers during the organizing campaigns of workers in three formal sector companies located in the city of Pacheco, Northern Gran Buenos Aires.

Description of the Survey Study

The first part of the mixed method study is the statistical analysis of the results of a national survey on labor market and social stratification patterns in contemporary Argentina. This study sought for evidence of temporal and mediated class relations connecting formal and informal workers in Argentina. I use survey data from the “Encuesta Nacional de Estratificación y Movilidad Social en la Argentina” (ENES)², conducted in 2007. The sample is a multistage probability design of the Argentine population of 18 years old and older (N=3,314). The sample used in this analysis consists of individuals

² The survey was collected by the survey research center CEDOP-UBA housed at the Instituto Gino Germani, University of Buenos Aires. The center, is directed by PhD Jorge Raul Jorrot. Both Professor Jorrot and the center's research assistant Manuel Rivero were extremely helpful in the preparation of the dataset for the current analysis.

between 25 and 65 years old, who were part of the employed labor force at the time of the survey (N=2,035):

Table 1.1: *Description of Dataset*

<i>Survey characteristics</i>	<i>ENES</i>
Year	2007
Respondent	Individual
Sample size	3,314
Geographic coverage	Argentina
Age of respondents	18 and older
<i>Analytical Sample</i>	
Sample size	2,035
Age of respondents	25-65
Labor market status	Employed

The ENES survey is suited to answer my research questions, as it provides information on the class and informality characteristics of the current job of the respondents, as well as of two previous jobs. For those currently co-habiting, it collected information about the current job of the partner. Finally, it also included questions measuring the respondent's class self-identification. The appendix to Chapter 2 presents a description of all variables used in this dissertation.

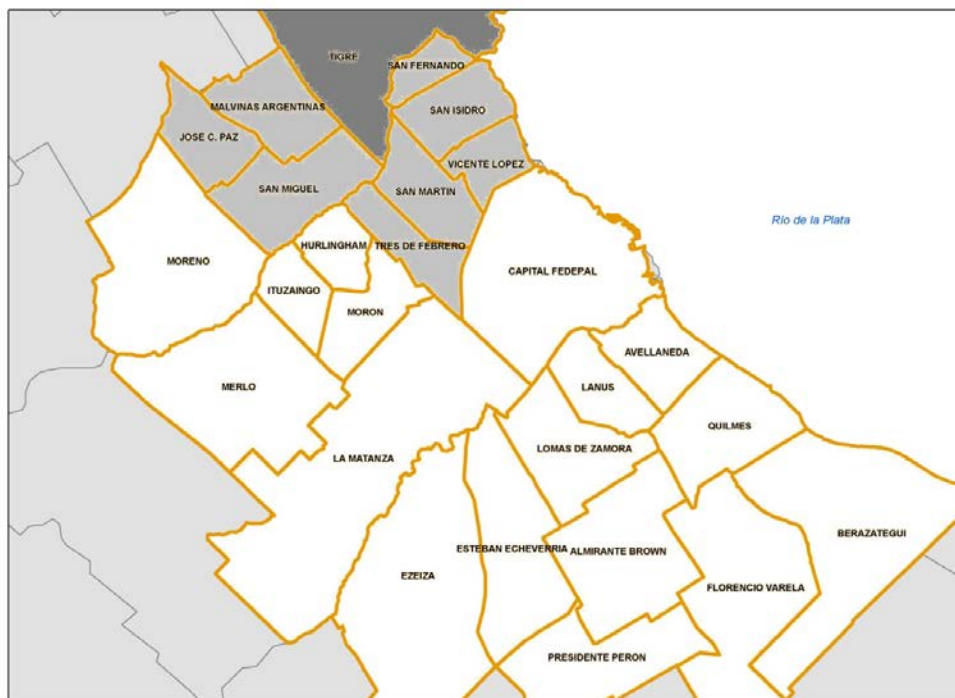
Fieldwork Site and Case Studies: The City of General Pacheco in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires

The qualitative part of this research is based on a combination of in-depth interviews and participant observation that collected evidence on the relations between formal and informal workers in the city of Pacheco, Northern Gran Buenos Aires. I

conducted the research between March 2010 and April 2011 thanks to funds provided by the National Science Foundation DDRIG. Preliminary visits to the fieldwork site were done in 2008 and 2009 and were funded by the WAGE initiative and the Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Institute, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The Northern Gran Buenos Aires region includes 9 districts to the North and Northwest of the City of Buenos Aires, located around the Pan-American highway. The 2010 census counted more than 2,300,000 persons living in this area, representing 24% of the population living in all 25 districts of the Gran Buenos Aires (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos). The following figure is the map of all 25 districts of the Gran Buenos Aires. The Northern Gran Buenos Aires includes the districts of Vicente Lopez, San Martín, Pilar, San Isidro, San Fernando, Malvinas Argentinas, San Miguel, Jose C. Paz and Tigre. The NGBA region is colored in gray, with the district of Tigre in the darker shade:

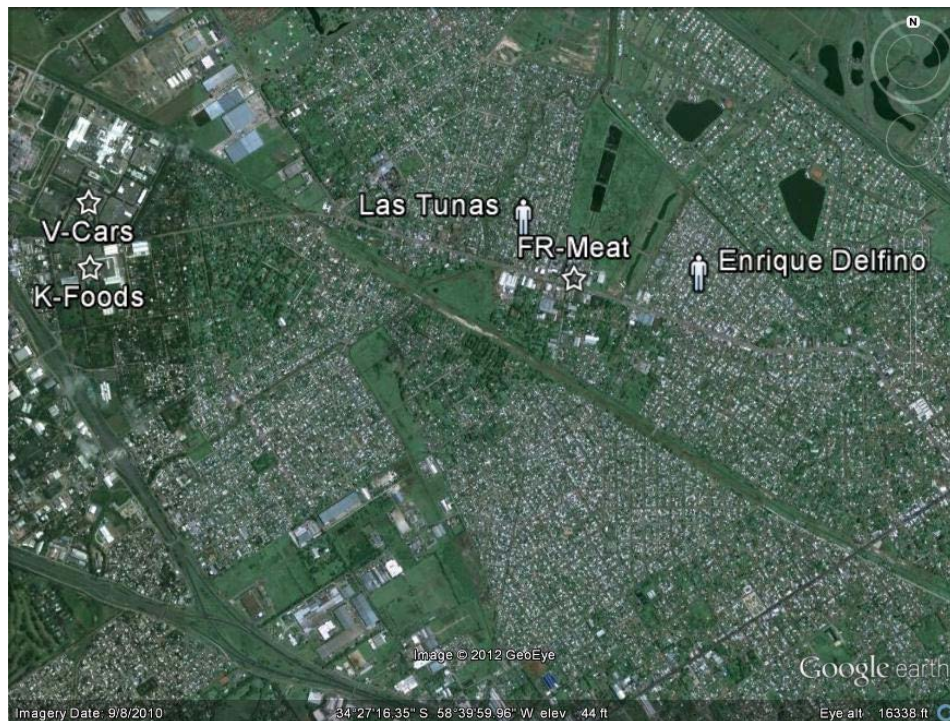
Figure 1.3: *Map of 25 Districts of the Gran Buenos Aires area.*



Within the larger NGBA region, the focus of the study is the city of Pacheco, located in the district of Tigre, 42 km north to the city of Buenos Aires. Pacheco is one of the most industrialized cities in the country since the 1970s, when multinational auto manufactures established production in the intersection of the Pan-American Highway (the name in Spanish for this highway is Autopista Panamericana) and Henry Ford Avenue. By the end of the 1990s, the city was still one of the industrial powerhouses of Argentina, but two decades of structural adjustment policies and a process of de-industrialization led to an important impoverishment of the population (Garay 2007).

This dissertation is based on fieldwork research in a portion of Pacheco that begins in the intersection of the Pan-American highway and Henry Ford Avenue to the west, and ends approximately 4 km to the east with the FR-Meat meat packing plant. Its strategic location next to the Pan-American highway, made it an ideal location for some of the biggest industrial plants of Argentina:

Figure 1.4: *Google Earth Snapshot of Fieldwork Area in the city of Pacheco*



Coming from the west (left of the image), K-Foods and V-Car are the first two industrial plants on Henry Ford Avenue. Both plants are located around 4 blocks away from the Pan-American highway. After approximately 2 kilometers, Henry Ford Avenue becomes Avenida de los Constituyentes, and the industrial landscape leaves its place to a typical working class residential area with a small commercial center. In this area there are some medium size industrial plants, including the Meat Packing Plant of FR-Meat, as well as some upper middle class gated neighborhoods and two working class neighborhoods: Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino.

Case Studies in the Formal Sector

In the formal sector, I focused on the organizing strategies of unions in three factories located in the city of Pacheco: K-Foods, V-Car and FR-Meat. I conducted 42 in-depth interviews³ of workers, union organizers and managers. When I use quotations from the interviews, I provide fantasy names of the interviewees in order to protect the confidentiality agreement. I also conducted participant and non participant observations in union meetings and demonstrations; and a detailed analysis of labor publications and national media articles on labor actions. Table below provides a summary of the descriptive and analytical information of each case study.

³ The number of interviews does not strictly correspond to number of interviewees. There are 8 individuals that I interviewed a second time, and one individual that I interviewed a third time. There were also three occasions when two individuals participated in the same interview.

Table 1.2: *Case Studies in the Formal Sector*

	Case Study		
	K-Foods	V-Car	FR-Meat
Industry branch	Food processing	Car production	Meat packing
Total workforce	2,400	4,500	700
Factory regime	Opposition	Cooperation	Opposition
Temporary work	Yes	Yes	Yes
Subcontracted work	Yes	Yes	Yes
% workers in nearby neighborhoods	10%	3%	60%
Union's power	Strong	Strong	Weak
Union's logic	Democratic	Bureaucratic	Democratic

K-Foods

K-Foods is a multinational company that entered the Argentinean food market in 1990. The industrial plant in Pacheco that I studied during fieldwork research was originally owned by Tommassi, a national cookie manufacturer, acquired by NN in 1994. After the process of mergers and acquisitions of the 1990s, K-Foods acquired NN and concentrated production in the Pacheco plant, which produces chocolates, cookies, crackers, soft drinks, and pasta, most of which are directed to the domestic market.

By 2010 there were 2400 workers employed at the K-Foods industrial plant in Pacheco. Ten percent of these workers live in the nearby neighborhoods of Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino. The factory regime at K-Foods can be defined as scientific despotism, because it combines the statistical control of production with management's imposition of production policies (Burawoy 1985). On the shop floor, this imposition fosters a conflict-based relation between the union and management. When K-Foods started managing the Pacheco plant it maintained nonstandard work arrangements, including temporary

contracts and subcontracted operations, which had been already implemented by NN's management. Nonstandard workers employed under these arrangements have lower salaries than core workers and their labor contracts lacks stability.

The shop floor union is led by a democratic bloc that combines the use of confrontational tactics with the pursuit of radical goals. The union's strong associational power is based on the exercise of the political leadership of the majority of the workers. Since 2005, this bloc has been active in shop floor politics, promoting radical goals such as the upgrade of all labor contracts for nonstandard workers. After winning the union election in 2009, the group has been the official representative of K-Foods workers. They won elections again in 2011, allowing them to represent the workers two more years until November 2013.

V-Car

In 1980, the German car maker V-Car began its manufacturing operations in Argentina through the acquisition of two plants located in the Western Gran Buenos Aires. In 1987, the company became part of Autolatina, a Joint Venture between V-Car and Ford in Argentina, which moved all operations to Ford's auto manufacturing plant in the city of Pacheco (Northern Gran Buenos Aires). The Joint Venture was short lived, and the two companies parted ways in 1995, but V-Car maintained its operations in a 700,000 m² sub-division of the Pacheco plant.

Since the 1995 split, the performance of V-Car Argentina has combined periods of sustained growth and periods of production decline. Since 2003, following the general trend of the economy, the company has experienced a sustained growth in production output, which was translated into the growth of the workforce over the years. The V-Car

Pacheco plant increased the number of production workers from around 1,200 in 2006 to more than 4,000 in 2010, when I conducted fieldwork research in Pacheco. At this time, around 50% of V-Car workers were living in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires region, but less than 3% in the surrounding neighborhoods of Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino.

In the framework of economic growth, the company set up what Burawoy would define as the hegemonic factory regime based on cooperation between management and the union (Burawoy 1978). This regime guarantees high salaries for workers in exchange for high productivity and workers' collaboration in production. In the framework of this hegemonic regime, the union has also agreed to the implementation of nonstandard work arrangements in the Pacheco plant, including temporary contracts and subcontracting arrangements. The shop floor union at V-Car has always been a strong union with a top-down bureaucratic organization that shares the class collaboration approach to labor projected by the Peronist national government.

FR-Meat

Established in 1974 in the city of Pacheco, FR-Meat is one of the largest meat packing companies of Argentina. According to the company's management, in August 2010 there was a workforce of 700 workers, 580 of whom were assigned to production duties, making it the biggest employer in the Argentinean meat industry. The factory regime here is a variation of what Burawoy would call "localistic despotism" (see also Lee 1995: 384). In production, despotism is characterized by the imposition rather than the negotiation of production policies. In this particular case, despotism is reinforced through the imposition of nonstandard work arrangements such as temporary work and subcontracting. The localistic component of the regime is the result of the firm treating the surrounding neighborhoods as a pool of readily available labor. The networks that play the

role of “recruiting agency” include the regional union, the political networks of the Peronist party and the social networks that link workers among themselves and with low management.

A corrupted shop floor union has been a key element of the imposition of this despotic localism in the past. Since the opening of the plant in the mid-1970s, the shop floor union has been led by a Peronist local boss. This hegemony ended in November of 2008, when a grassroots group won the union election and has since then questioned the despotic regime established in the past. Within the workplace, the union challenged the company’s nonstandard work arrangements. Beyond the workplace, the union challenged the clientelistic networks tying the company to the neighborhoods.

The Nearby Neighborhoods: Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino

The neighborhoods of Enrique Delfino and Las Tunas are the two places that I included in this research in order to study relations of solidarity between formal workers employed in the factories, and informal workers living in the area. The majority of neighborhood residents are part of a broadly defined working class, with a higher proportion of unemployed and informal work than the average Gran Buenos Aires city (Boniolo 2009).

A large part of the informal employment available for neighborhood residents comes from the upper middle class gated neighborhoods which are located in Pacheco and other neighboring cities. Residents work as gardeners, janitors, and doing construction and maintenance jobs. Those who are not employed usually hold some kind of social security benefit, such as the *Planes Argentina Trabaja*. Because of the combination of high labor informality among area residents and the new labor activism in the factories, this

portion of Pacheco provides a good scenario to study changing relations between formal and informal workers in the framework of Argentine labor revitalization.

During the fieldwork period, I interviewed 7 neighbors and 6 grassroots activists from adult education centers and soup kitchens in the neighborhoods. In addition, 13 of the workers that I interviewed in the three formal sector factories live in these neighborhoods. Finally, I interviewed 4 individuals living in other neighborhoods located in the area. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on their work and housing history, their involvement in grassroots activism in the neighborhoods, and their perspective about the new labor activism in the neighboring factories. During the fieldwork period, I also visited the neighborhoods at least once a week in my role as civic education teacher in the adult education center “AECSB” in the barrio of Las Tunas.

Adult education centers like this one were formed by activists some 15 years ago and staffed largely by volunteer teachers drawn from universities, unions and other sites of activism. They are neither private nor state organizations, but rather community based organizations that are part of the social economy operating as nonprofits. The AECSB serves mostly unemployed and informal young students with no high school education, who reside in the neighborhoods of Las Tunas or Enrique Delfino. My class started with around 20 students and by the middle of the year we had around 15 students. Everyone except 4 students was between 17 and 20 years old. Younger students are mostly unemployed and come from working class families that are first or second generation living in the neighborhoods.

Chapter 2

Informality in the Class Structure: Is there an Informal Proletariat in Argentina?

2.1 Introduction

The standard view of informality in Latin America is that formal and informal workers form two distinctive classes with different structural locations, interests, identities and lived experiences (Portes 1985). Because of this, the class analysis of Latin American societies needs to add informality as a new class cleavage, resulting in the following class schema: capitalist class, petty bourgeoisie, middle class, formal proletariat, informal proletariat and informal petty bourgeoisie (Portes 1985; Portes and Hoffman 2003). In this chapter, I evaluate this proposition on theoretical and empirical grounds.

In the first part of this chapter I describe the standard approach and propose an alternative perspective that rejects the idea that the formal and the informal proletariat form two different classes. My perspective retains Erik Olin Wright's class schema and treats informality as adding complexity to class relations through mediated and temporal class relations (Wright 1997). In the second part I analyze the distribution of class and informality locations in the Argentine class structure, and study the effect of direct and indirect class-and-informality locations on individual's class identity.

I use survey data from the "Encuesta Nacional de Estratificación y Movilidad Social en la Argentina" (ENES), conducted in 2007. The sample is a multistage probability design of the Argentine population of 18 years old and older (N=3,314). The sample used in this

analysis consists of individuals between 25 and 65 years old, who were part of the employed labor force at the time of the survey (N=2,035).

2.2 The Standard Approach: Informality as a Class Cleavage

According to Portes, the informal economy is “a process of income-generation characterized by one central feature: it is unregulated by the institutions of society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated” (Castells and Portes: 1989). Based on this definition, Portes developed a new perspective for the class analysis of Latin American societies that defines informality as a new class cleavage dividing the working class. The existence of this new cleavage means that the class maps of advanced capitalist societies cannot be reproduced in Latin America without major changes.

Table 2.1 *Portes’ “Characteristics of the Latin American class structure”*

<i>Class location</i>	<i>Control over Means of Production</i>	<i>Control over Labor Power</i>	<i>Mode of Remuneration</i>
Capitalist	yes	yes	Profits
Executives and Elite workers	no	yes	Salaries/bonuses linked to profits
Petty Bourgeoisie	yes	no	Profits
Formal Proletariat	no	no	Protected wages
Informal Proletariat	no	no	Casual wages; direct subsistence
Informal Petty Bourgeoisie	yes	yes	Irregular profits

Source: Table 1 in Portes (1985: 10); and Table 1 in Portes and Hoffman (2003: 46)⁴

⁴ Alejandro Portes first introduced his class schema in a 1985 paper published in *Latin American Research Review*. The second version of this schema was published by the same journal in 2003. In the new schema, the dominant class is separated into four classes: capitalists, executives and the petty bourgeoisie, and the

The first four classes in this schema correspond to locations that also appear in the class structure of advanced capitalist societies: capitalist, middle class, petty bourgeoisie and working class (Wright 1985). The last social class in the schema of advanced capitalist societies is the working class, composed of individuals who do not own the means of production and do not possess skills or organizational assets. In the case of Portes' schema, this group is the formal proletariat. According to this author, "relationships between the dominant and bureaucratic/technical classes and the formal proletariat resemble those predominant in the advanced countries in that they are characterized by contractual agreements and bureaucratic regulation" (Portes 1985: 13).

However, Portes thinks that this account would be incomplete for Latin America, because "social classes such as the "proletariat" can be defined as relatively homogeneous entities in the advanced societies while, in the periphery, they are segmented by their limited incorporation into the fully monetized, legally regulated economy" (Portes and Hoffman 2003: 44). As a consequence of this, the class map of Latin American societies needs an additional class cleavage: the difference in modes of remuneration.

This new cleavage "refers to the distinct forms through which different social classes receive their means of consumption, ranging from profits and regular salaries to casual wages and direct subsistence production" (Portes 1985: 8). The distinction between the formal and the informal proletariat results from the difference between two modes of remuneration to labor: "protected wages" vs. "casual wages/direct subsistence". This

bureaucratic-technical class is presented as Elite Workers. With regards to the treatment of informality, the informal petty bourgeoisie is collapsed into the informal proletariat. In this paper, when I refer to the "Portes schema", I use a combination of the two schemas that distinguishes between the informal petty bourgeoisie and the informal proletariat (like the 1985 version), and also distinguishes between the formal petty bourgeoisie and the dominant class (like the 2003 version).

difference is the structural basis of the class differentiation between the formal and the informal proletariat. In this paper, I define this view as the “standard approach” to the class analysis of informality, because it is the one that became prevalent in the past three decades⁵.

In this dissertation I propose an alternative approach that will guide the study of the structural linkages connecting the formal and the informal proletariat. Following Wright (1997), the study of the class relations between the formal and the informal proletariat is based on the notions of temporal and mediated class locations. As I explain below, the alternative approach consists on determining whether or not there are temporal and mediated class relations connecting the formal and the informal proletariat.

2.3 The Alternative Approach: Temporal and Mediated Informality Locations

The concept of “mediated locations” concerns the ways in which peoples’ lives and interests are linked to class relations through social relations (especially kinship) other than those connected to their own jobs. As Wright (2005: 18) points out, mediated locations “add particularly interesting complexities to class analysis in cases in which a person’s direct class location and their mediated class locations are different”. In the case of informality this concerns the familial linkages between formal and informal workers.

Secondly, the notion of *temporality of class locations* allows the study of the way informality affects “the life-time biographical trajectory of individual’s locations within the class structure” (Wright 1997: 393). Temporal class locations concern the ways in which lives over time move across locations. In the case of informality this concerns personal

⁵ It can be argued the standard approach adopts a Goldthorpe type logic of class analysis – where the nature of the employment contract is the central issue (Goldthorpe, 2000) – and argues that Goldthorpe’s specific typology misses one critical form of variation: the differences in modes of remuneration to labor that divides the working class.

movement in and out of informality. These two dimensions determine the type of boundaries of informality locations. These boundaries can be very porous –both to interpersonal ties and to movement over time- or very rigid. In the second case, informality locations could be viewed as similar to class locations.

The study of the temporal and mediated dimensions of the class structure will guide the distinction between two ideal types of informality in the class structure of societies: Segmented informality will be present in a society when informal workers are employed permanently through informal labor relations and have few family links with individuals employed in the formal economy. Interconnected informality will be present when workers move regularly in and out of informality and when family links exist between formal and informal workers sharing the same households.

In the following pages I describe the type of informality that characterizes the Argentine class structure. I first describe the class structure in terms of the twelve class location schema developed by Erik Olin Wright (1997). I then study the prevalence of temporal and mediated informality locations within each class location. This will provide the contrast between the standard class analysis of informality that just measures the size of the informal proletariat, and the alternative approach, that studies the temporal and mediated relations that connect the formal and the informal proletariat. I finally test the efficacy of the standard approach vis-à-vis the new approach to explain the effect of class and informality on individuals' class identity.

2.4 The Basic Contours of the Class Structure in Argentina

In this section I map out the class structure of Argentina. According to Wright (1997), the fundamental locations in the class structure result from the distinction between

those who own the means of production (capitalist and petty bourgeoisie) and those who only own their labor power (employees)⁶. In addition, the differentiation among employees is done along two dimensions: their relationship to authority within production (or possession of organizational assets), and the possession of skills or expertise.

These two dimensions lead to the division of the class of employees in two main groups: those in contradictory class locations (because they are subordinated to capital but at the same time possess organizational or skill assets); and those properly located in the working class (subordinated to capital; but also subordinated to other employees in the process of production and lacking of formal credentials related to their jobs). Table 2.2 presents the distribution of the employed labor force in the twelve class locations resulting from this schema:

⁶ Those self-identified in the survey as paid family workers were treated as employees, while unpaid family workers were treated as self employed.

Table 2.2 *Class distribution in Argentina (2007)*

	n	%
Capitalists	17	0.8
Small employers	64	3.1
Petty bourgeoisie	388	19.1
Expert managers	28	1.4
Expert supervisors	55	2.7
Experts	89	4.4
Skilled managers	7	0.3
Skilled supervisors	58	2.9
Skilled workers	380	18.7
Nonskilled managers	1	0.0
Nonskilled supervisors	78	3.8
Nonskilled workers	870	42.8
Total	2035	100.0

The owners of the means of production who employ workers compose around 4% of the employed labor force in contemporary Argentina. Those properly located in the capitalist class are less than 1%, while those defined as small employers (self-employed individuals employing between two to nine employees) compose the remaining 3%. The last group among the self-employed is the Petty Bourgeoisie, which includes self-employed people with no more than one employee (Wright 1997:48). In Argentina, this location represents 19% of the employed labor force⁷.

⁷ A proportion of those identified as self-employed are in fact employees or quasi-employees. Differences in the criteria to identify “hidden employees” produce different estimations of the Petty Bourgeoisie, which ranges from 18.3% to 26.3% of the employed labor force. In this paper I use an intermediate criterion that combines the person’s occupation and whether or not her job requires the use of an office space. Based on this criterion,

The remaining 77% of the employed labor force are employees. Those located in contradictory locations are 15.5% of the labor force⁸. The largest location within this group is that of the experts, which includes professionals and technicians who are employed in non-managerial positions in the state or capitalist companies.

The proletariat is the largest class location in contemporary Argentina, comprising roughly 43% of the employed labor force. The majority of individuals in this location are part of unskilled occupational groups, such as service workers, agricultural workers and manual non-craft occupations. On the other hand, the skilled working class is mostly composed of individuals in occupations that involve on-the-job skills such as craft workers. This group represents 19% of the employed labor force. Adding up the proportion of individuals in proletarian locations to that of the skilled working class, 62% of the employed labor force in contemporary Argentina is part of the working class.

2.5 Informality in the Class Structure

Following Portes, I define an informal economic activity as a process of income generation that is unregulated by the institutions of society (Castells and Portes 1989: 12). This definition can be applied to all class locations, because an informal job is defined as a job that is not regulated by the state, irrespective of its class characteristics. So, there could be informal employers as well as informal middle class locations. Nonetheless, in this paper I decided to apply the informality criteria only to two class locations: the petty bourgeoisie, and the working class. The reason for this decision is that the type of

I define as Petty Bourgeoisie to the following groups: i. Self-employed professionals and technicians, ii. Self-employed in occupational groups that had been historically part of the petty bourgeoisie, such as plumbers and car mechanics ii. Self-employed in other occupational groups who conduct their work in an office space (no matter if this space is their own, it is rented or belongs to their home).

⁸ According to Wright, at this point it is important to define how restrictive or expansive are the criteria that we use to define the thresholds for the lines of demarcation on the skill and authority dimensions of the class structure (Wright 1997: 81). See the methodological appendix for a summary of the criteria that I used in the analysis of the class structure in Argentina

informality that affects individuals in the privileged classes is not relevant for the specific purposes of my analysis, which has to do with the effects of informality on solidarity and union strategies⁹.

The state regulation of the laboring activities of the self-employed in Argentina is that self-employed individuals have to declare their activities to the tax collecting agency and pay a monthly tax. Ideally, I would define the formal petty bourgeoisie as the self-employed who have declared their laboring activity to the tax collecting agency, and the informal petty bourgeoisie as those working outside the regulation of the state. Unfortunately, the questionnaire didn't gather information about the legal status of the self-employed, so an alternative measure needs to be applied.

This problem is also present in other studies of informality based on survey data, because household surveys in most Latin American countries don't include questions about the legal status of employment among the self-employed (Gasparini and Tornarolli 2007). There is consensus in the literature that the best alternative is to use the completion of formal educational degrees as a proxy of the legal status of employment (Gasparini and Tornarolli 2007: 3). Following this criterion, in this chapter the formal petty bourgeoisie are those self-employed individuals who completed college education, while the informal petty bourgeoisie includes self-employed individuals in lower educational levels.

On the other hand, an individual is defined as belonging to the informal proletariat if he or she holds a working class job, and this job is not legally declared by the employer. The empirical indicator to determine the informality status of employment is the respondents' answer to the following question: Does your employer deduct from your salary a monthly social security payment? A negative answer indicates that the employee

⁹ This decision excludes from the analysis the problem of the increasingly precarious security of middle class jobs. That is a relevant object of study in contemporary labor markets, and one could use the term informality to cover that phenomenon.

is not legally declared because the Argentine law stipulates that each employer is enforced to deduct a monthly social security payment for all his legally declared employees.

There is a group of workers who have declared jobs but are on temporary contracts. I decided to include these cases as part of the informal proletariat, because although they are "declared" and some of their conditions may be regulated, they are without job security, pensions, and many of the rights (seniority, grievance procedures) that permanent workers enjoy. So even though the job is "declared" it would seem to be exempt from many other regulations that pertain to formal sector jobs. On all these factors, their experience would seem to be closer to those of the informal proletariat than the formal labor force¹⁰.

Table 2.3 *Class and informality distribution in Argentina (2007)*

		n	%
Privileged class	Capitalist	81	4.0
	Formal Petty Bourgeoisie	97	4.8
	Middle Class	316	15.5
Formal Working class	Formal Working Class	592	29.1
Informal working class	Informal Proletariat	658	32.3
	Informal Petty Bourgeoisie	291	14.3
Total		2,035	100.0

¹⁰ A similar decision should be applied to subcontracted workers. These are workers who have "declared jobs", but who have a triangulated relationship with their employers. In theoretical terms, I define these workers as part of the informal proletariat, a definition which is explained in Chapter 3. In the survey study, however, there were no questions allowing the identification of these workers' triangulated relationship with employers.

The majority of self-employed individuals in Argentina are part of the informal petty bourgeoisie, which accounts for 14% of the employed labor force. The informal petty bourgeoisie includes small shopkeepers, mechanics and plumbers, among other occupational groups. The formal petty bourgeoisie, which represents 5% of the labor force, is mostly composed of independent professionals of the liberal arts as well as licensed technicians working on their own.

The informal proletariat represents 32% of the labor force. In other words, this criterion determines that the informal proletariat accounts for around half of the working class jobs in Argentina. Adding up the informal petty bourgeoisie to the informal proletariat, 47% of the employed labor force is informal. However, as I have discussed in the theoretical section; the presence of a large informal working class does not mean that there are no structural relations linking formal and informal workers.

Is Informality in Argentina Segmented or Interconnected? Temporary and Mediated Locations

The proposition that guides the analysis here is that segmented informality will be present in a society where there are weak family linkages connecting individuals in the formal and the informal working class, and there are few individuals whose job trajectories includes formal and informal jobs. The opposite would be the case if there is interconnected informality in any given class structure¹¹. Given this framework of analysis, the empirical task is to determine the prevalence or absence of “interconnected”

¹¹ It is important to note that it is impossible to get an indisputable measure of the “interconnectedness” of informality in a given class structure. The definition of the type of informality in the class structure should always be relative to the class structure of other contemporary societies or the past class structure of each country. In this paper I don’t have the information required to develop these comparisons, so I measure the “degree of interconnectedness” in contemporary Argentina as a first step that should be continued in future research.

trajectories and mediated relations among individuals in different class-and-informality locations.

Regarding the temporal link between formal and informal employment, the main research question is the following: What is the proportion of working class individuals that alternate between jobs in the formal and the informal sector? I address this question by measuring the prevalence of stable and mixed trajectories within each class-and-informality location. A trajectory is defined as “stable” when it does not include jobs across the informality frontier, and “mixed” when at least one of the previous jobs of the individual is across the informality frontier.

Table 2.4 *Class and informality trajectories in Argentina*

	n	%
Stable Privileged Class	290	14.3
Mixed Trajectory into Privileged Class	203	10.0
Stable Formal Working Class	294	14.5
Mixed Trajectory into Formal Working Class	297	14.7
Mixed Trajectory into Informal Working Class	333	16.4
Stable Informal Working Class	610	30.1
Total	2,027*	100.0

* Excludes 8 cases with missing information in description of previous jobs

Half of individuals currently located in the formal working class have “stable trajectories”, meaning that they didn’t have an informal job in the past (defined as the two previous jobs). The other half of the formal working class (14.7% of the total employed labor force) presents “mixed trajectories” because at least one of their two previous jobs can be categorized as informal. Regarding the informal working class, there is a higher

proportion of individuals who present “stable trajectories”, representing 30% of the employed labor force, compared to those in “mixed trajectories”, who represent 16% of the employed labor force. Individuals in “mixed trajectories” are those currently located in the informal working class and who had at least one job that can be categorized as part of the formal working class or the privileged class.

If we exclude from the analysis all individuals who are currently located in the privileged class, we can get a better sense of the prevalence of stable trajectories vis-à-vis mixed trajectories among individuals in the working class. Out of the total number of individuals currently in the working class (1534) 59% come from stable job trajectories, while the remaining 41% present mixed job trajectories. Some of these mixed trajectories represent an upward direction towards formality (47% of all mixed trajectories), while others are part of a downward trend from formality into informality (53%).

The second dimension that determines the interconnectedness of informality is the existence of mediated relations linking the formal and the informal working class. The ENES survey collected information about the class and informality characteristics of the job of the respondent as well as his/her co-habiting partner. Combining this information, I determine the class-and-informality composition of the household.

Families are categorized as “heterogeneous” if the couple is diverse in terms of informality location. The main research question that I answer here is: What is the proportion of “heterogeneous” families over the total number of working class families in the sample? In order to answer this question I analyzed the class and informality location of both partners in dual earner households:

Table 2.5 *Class and informality composition of dual-earner households (%)*

n=942		Wife's informality location			
		Privileged class	Formal working class	Informal working class	Total
Husband's informality location	Privileged class	14.3	10.6	6.9	31.8
	Formal working class	3.8	12.3	14.6	30.8
	Informal working class	4.9	8.8	23.7	37.4
	Total	23.0	31.7	45.2	100.0

Taking into account the privileged class, half of the households in the sample are homogenous in terms of class-and-informality. However, to determine the prevalence of informality-heterogeneous households among working class families I exclude from the analysis any household that includes an individual in the privileged class. This reduces the sample to 560 households that matches exclusively individuals in working class locations. Out of this universe, 60% of the couples are “homogenous” in terms of informality. The majority of these couples match informal workers together (40% of all working class couples). On the other hand, 40% of working class couples are “heterogeneous”, and the most prevalent match within this group is the combination of an informal working class wife to a formal working class husband.

So far I have analyzed the prevalence of temporal and mediated class relations connecting formal and informal workers in the class structure. I will now measure the overall picture of this interconnectedness by adding the two dimensions together in the analysis. The following table provides the combination of temporal and mediated relations

for individuals in the sample that are currently in the formal working class (first table) and individuals currently in the informal working class (second table)¹².

Table 2.6 *Percentage of individuals who are currently in the working class and have temporary and/or mediated relations across the formal-informal boundary*

Currently Formal Working class (N=591)

		Mediated relations across boundary		No mediated relations ^a	Total
		No	Yes		
Temporal links across boundary	No	16.1	6.1	27.6	49.7
	Yes	15.7	9.6	24.9	50.3
	Total	31.8	15.7	52.5	100.0

a. These are non-cohabiting individuals. In these cases there was no information about the class and informality location of a partner.

Currently Informal Working Class (N=943)

		Mediated relations across boundary		No mediated relations	Total
		No	Yes		
Temporal links across boundary	No	16.3	12.2	36.2	64.7
	Yes	8.5	9.1	17.7	35.3
	Total	24.8	21.3	53.9	100.0

¹² The table excludes from the analysis all individuals in the sample that are currently in the privileged class. However, it includes privileged individuals as partners of individuals in the sample. In those cases, the privileged class was treated as part of the formal side of the formal-informal boundary. For example, a sampled individual from the informal proletariat, married to someone in the privileged class is classified as having mediated relations across the boundary.

The rows in the previous tables categorize individuals according to the presence or absence of temporal links across the formality-informality boundary in their job trajectories. The variable in the column classifies individuals according to the presence or absence of mediated links in the composition of their family.

Overall, the tables provide a picture of the structure of interconnectedness among formal and informal workers. The percentage of individuals with no ties across the boundary is similar in the two groups (16%). The proportion of individuals with both temporal and mediated ties is also similar in the two class locations (9%). However, there are significant differences in the cross-diagonal categories: There are 6% of individuals in the formal working class who have mediated ties but no temporal ties across the boundary, while this proportion is doubled among the informal working class (12%). Alternatively, 15% of formal workers have temporal links across the boundary but no mediated links, while this proportion is of 8% among informal workers.

It is also important to analyze the “degree of interconnectedness” of the class structure. What is the proportion of individuals who have at least one link across the formality-informality boundary? The table below indicates the percentage of people currently in the working class who have at least one link across the formality-informality boundary. Overall, half of individuals currently in the working class have at least one link across the boundary. There is a higher proportion of “interconnected individuals” among the formal working class, where 56% of individuals have at least one link across the boundary represent 56%. On the other hand, this percentage goes down to 47% in the informal working class.

Table 2.7 *Percentage of individuals who are currently in the working class and have temporary and/or mediated relations across the formal-informal boundary*

Currently Formal or Informal Working class (N=1,534)

		Mediated or temporal links across boundary		
		No	Yes	Total
Current class location	Formal Working class	43.65	56.35	100.00
	Informal Working class	52.49	47.51	100.00
	Total	49.09	50.91	100.00

2.6 Testing the Alternative Approach: The effect of Mediated and Temporary Informality Locations on Class Identity

In this section I study the relationship between direct and indirect informality locations and the probability of having a “lower-class” identity. The class identity of individuals was measured through a self-identification question included in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked whether or not they thought of themselves as belonging to a social class. Those who gave a positive response were asked to identify that class from the following list of options: upper class, upper-middle class, middle class, lower-middle class and lower class¹³. For those who didn’t consider themselves as belonging to a social class, the following question was asked: “Many people say they

¹³ Ideally, the list should have included a “working class” option, because the term lower class has a stigma attached to it, and designates a different kind of demarcation in the society than does working class. This measurement problem is especially serious in a country like Argentina, where there is a strong labor movement. Because a strong labor movement self-identifies as working class, and sees the expression lower class to mean something different. When individuals are forced to make the choice between lower class and middle class, they are told that they have to locate themselves in a different classification scheme than the one they would prefer.

belong to a social class. If you would have to make a choice, which class would you choose from the following list?" (the same options as before were provided here).

In order to assess the relative explanatory power of the different type of structural locations, I will test a series of hypothesis about the relationship between direct, temporal and mediated class locations and the class self-identification of individuals:

Hypothesis 1: There should be a lower percentage of capitalist people and middle class people who say lower class than working class people, and a lower percentage of formal working class people who say lower class than informal workers.

Hypothesis 2: Within the working class portion of the matrix attitudes should become monotonically more lower class when moving from stable formal trajectories to mixed trajectories, and then to stable informal trajectories.

Hypothesis 3: The class attitude of individuals in the working class should become monotonically more lower class as you move from homogeneous formal households to heterogeneous households, and then to homogeneous informal households.

Hypothesis 4: The class attitudes of individuals in the working class should become monotonically more lower class as you move from individuals with neither mediated nor temporal ties across the formality-informality boundary, to individuals with mediated or temporal ties across the boundary, and then to individuals with both mediated and temporal ties across the boundary.

Before I turn to the analysis, I will explain the logic behind the stated hypothesis. Hypothesis #1 establishes the validity of the measure by testing the statistical relationship between the class structural variables and the class attitudinal variables. The hypothesis predicts that when we move from the privileged classes to the working classes, the percentage of individuals self-identifying with the lower class should increase. If the

variable doesn't behave in this way across the current locations of people it would not be useful for testing the importance of ties. The analysis should show that in spite of the weakness of the identity variable, it behaves properly.

Once the validity of the measure is tested, I will move on to the substantive tests. Hypotheses #2, #3 and #4 test the argument about the interconnectedness of informality among the working class. The reasoning is that the presence of ties connecting the formal and the informal proletariat affects the class self-identification of individuals in ways that question the treatment of informality distinctions as class distinctions. The second and third hypothesis suggest having temporal and mediated connections across the formality-informality boundary will make individuals in the formal working class more like individuals in the informal working class in terms of class self-identification. The fourth hypothesis brings these two dimensions together through an "index of interconnectedness". The index allows measurement of the impact of having zero ties, one ties or two ties across the formality-informality boundary on class self identification.

Results

Table 2.8 below indicates the proportion of individuals who self-identify with the lower class within each direct class location. These data confirm the predictions of Hypothesis 1. First, it shows that individuals in the privileged classes are less likely to self-identify with the lower class than individuals in the working class: 20% of individuals in the middle class consider themselves part of the lower class, while 31% of the formal working class self-identifies as lower class. It also confirms the prediction that formal workers would be less likely to self-identify with the lower classes than informal workers. There is a 20%

difference in the self-identification with the lower class in the comparison between the formal and the informal working class¹⁴

Table 2.8 *Percentage of people who say they are in the lower class in different direct class locations*

N= 2,035

	Spontaneous Middle Class	Forced Middle Class	No class identity even when asked to choose	Forced Lower Class	Spontaneous Lower Class
Capitalist	76.54	8.64	2.47	2.47	9.88
Formal Petty Bourgeoisie	81.44	5.15	2.06	1.03	10.31
Middle Class	73.73	5.70	0.95	1.90	17.72
Formal Working Class	63.34	4.73	0.84	3.21	27.87
Informal Working Class	45.21	4.64	0.84	4.43	44.89
Total	57.89	5.01	0.98	3.44	32.68

In terms of the discussion of temporal locations, Hypothesis 2 predicts that formal workers that had an informal job in the past would be closer to the informal working class than formal workers that never had an informal job in the past. Table 2.7 below indicates the percentage of individuals who self-identify with the lower class within each trajectory: 27% of individuals with a stable trajectory in the formal working class self-identify with the lower class, while this proportion jumps to 36% among formal workers with mixed trajectories. These numbers prove a strong trajectory effect on class identity among

¹⁴ I presume that a portion of this difference might be explained by the absence of a "working class" option in the questionnaire. Given that the only non-middle class option was the "lower class" I would expect that cross-nationally, where there is a strong labor movement, the difference between the formal and the informal working class will be larger. Where there is a weak labor movement, it is going to be smaller.

individuals currently located in the formal working class. This effect does not hold for individuals currently in the informal working class: there is no significant difference between stable and mixed trajectories in the frequency of lower class identity.

Table 2.9 *Percentage of respondents identified with the lower class by type of informality trajectory*

N=2,007^a

	%
Stable Privileged class	14.9 ^B (288)
Mixed into Privileged class	20.2 (198)
Stable Formal working class	27.1 (292)
Mixed into Formal working class	35.7 (294)
Mixed into Informal working class	49.7 (332)
Stable Informal working class	49.9 (603)

a. Excluding cases with missing information in description of previous jobs, and cases in the “no class identity” category.

B. Entries are the percentage of individuals in the class category who say that they are in the lower class. The total number of cases in the type of trajectory is in parenthesis

Table 2.10 shows the percentage of men and the percentage of women who consider themselves part of the lower class in each cell of the household typology¹⁵. In the first table, among formal working class men married to formal working class women, 23.9% have a lower class identity, while this percentage increases to 58.0% for formal working class men married to informal working class women. On the other hand, mediated locations don't make much difference for informal working class men, since the proportion

¹⁵ A note on reading this table: a household with a privileged men and an informal woman is the upper right hand cell in the first table. This cell is equivalent to the lower left hand cell in the second table, which represents the % of lower class identity for privileged women married to informal men.

of individuals self-identified with the lower class is similar among informal working class men married to formal working class women when compared to those married to informal working class women (in both cases around 50%).

Table 2.10 *Percentage of people who say they are in the lower class in families with different class-and-informality composition (dual-earner households only)*

Male respondents (N=404)

		Wife's informality location		
		Privileged classes	Formal working class	Informal working class
Husband's informality location	Privileged classes	8.6 ^a	23.1	11.1
	Formal working class	31.8	23.9	58.0
	Informal working class	22.2	50.0	49.4

a. Entries are the percentage of respondents in a cell who state they are in the lower class.

Female respondents (N=532)

		Wife's informality location		
		Privileged class	Formal working class	Informal working class
Husband's informality location	Privileged class	10.4	14.3	42.9
	Formal working class	17.0	29.4	30.8
	Informal working class	28.9	43.7	52.2

In the case of female identities, among formal working class women married to formal working class men, 29.4% self-identify as lower class, while this percentage grows to 43.7% among formal working class women married to informal working class men. On the other hand, informal women married to formal working class men have a 30.8 lower class identity, while those married to informal working class men have a 52.2 lower class identity. Surprisingly, informal working class women married to privileged class men have a stronger lower class identity than that of informal working class women married to formal working class men (42% compared to 30%).

I would like to end this section with comparison of the percentages of lower class identity among men and women in similar households. For example, 23% of formal working class men married to formal working class women self-identify with the lower class, while a similar percentage of women in this group identify with the lower class (29%). When we move on to formal male workers married to informal working class women, 58% of these individuals self-identify with the lower class. Similarly, the proportion of formal working class women married to informal working class men and self identified with the lower class is 43%. These cells show a similar pattern in the interaction between mediated links and class identity.

The difference emerges when we compare individuals in the informal working class. Among male informal workers, 58% of those married to female formal workers self-identify with the lower class, which is similar to the 49% of those married to female informal workers. Among women, informal workers who are married to formal working class men self-identify with the lower class in a proportion of only 30%, while this proportion jumps to 52% among informal workers married to informal working class men.

The final table in this chapter summarizes the two dimensions that I have analyzed so far in an “index of interconnectedness”. Individuals have a value of 0 in this index if they

have neither temporal nor mediated class relations across the formality-informality boundary. The value of 1 is for those individuals who have one or the other, and the value of 2 is for those who present both mediated and temporal relations across the boundary.

Table 2.11 *Percentage of people who say they are in the lower class by class location and degree of interconnectedness*

N= 2,007 ^a	Degree of Interconnectedness		
	Neither temporal nor mediated	Temporal or mediated	Temporal and mediated
Current Class location			
Privileged class	13.83	19.25	35.00
Formal Working class	25.26	30.11	51.79
Informal Working class	52.25	48.20	43.02

^a Excluding cases with missing information about temporary or mediated locations, and cases in the "no class identity" category

The results in table 2.11 above confirm the strong relationship that exists between the degree of interconnectedness and the class identity of individuals. Among the privileged class and the formal working class, the percentage of individuals with lower class identity is higher for those with one link across the boundary than those with zero links. In addition, the percentage of individuals with lower class identities is higher among those with two links across the boundary than those with one link. This relation shows the opposite results in the informal working class, where the percentage of lower class identity is higher among individuals with no links across the boundary when compared to individuals with one or two links.

2.7 Summary and Discussion

The results confirm that the class structure in contemporary Argentina presents a more fluid boundary between formality and informality than what the standard approach

characterizes. Around half of the formal working class had at least one informal job in the past. In addition, around 40% of working class households in Argentina are “heterogeneous” in terms of the informality status of the co-habiting partners.

The chapter then focused on the relationship between direct and mediated informality locations and the class self-identification of working class individuals. This analysis followed Wright’s suggestion: “the reason for introducing the distinction between direct and mediated class locations is because we believe that an individual’s location in a class structure is consequential and that this distinction provides a better specification of this consequence producing process.” (Wright 1997: 260-1)

Indeed, the results show that the distinction between direct and indirect informality locations is consequential in the study of class identity formation among working class individuals. In particular, data provide evidence of a strong effect of temporal and mediated locations on the class self-identification of individuals: the lived experience of having ties across the informality boundary and having a lived experience of moving across this boundary makes formal workers more like individuals that have been permanently in the informal sector¹⁶.

In more abstract terms, this means that the self-understanding of workers is shaped not just by their instantaneous positions in the economy, but by their lives. The broader argument in my dissertation is that this matters also in the question of solidarity in the context of labor conflicts. The three case studies that I analyze in the following chapters will test this hypothesis.

2.8 Methodological Appendix

¹⁶ I suspect that, if working class was an option there, it might even turn out to be a stronger set of relations, because not as many core formal workers would defect to the middle class category.

Managerial Authority

The Managerial authority variable took into account three dimensions:

1. Whether or not the employee had subordinates and how many subordinates he/she had: No authority: 0 subordinates; Medium authority: 2 to 9 subordinates and High authority: 10+ subordinates.
2. Position within the formal managerial hierarchy (Manager, Supervisor, Nonsupervisor);
3. The type of authority they had in the workplace (Task, Sanctioning, Full, Nominal).

Based on these three dimensions, I constructed the managerial authority typology, which resulted in the following 20 categories:

Table A2.1: *Managerial authority typology*

Hierarchy	Type of authority	Power over subordinates	Managerial location typology
Manager	Full	High	1. Full manager
		Medium	2. Medium manager
	Nominal	High	3. Non supervisory manager
		Medium	4. Non supervisory manager with medium authority
Supervisor	Full	High	5. Full supervisor
		Medium	6. Full supervisor with medium authority
	Sanctioning	High	7. Sanctioning supervisor
		Medium	8. Sanctioning supervisor with medium authority
	Task	High	9. Task supervisor
		Medium	10. Task supervisor with medium authority
	Nominal	High	11. Nominal supervisor
		Medium	12. Nominal supervisor with medium authority
Nonsupervisor	Nonsupervisor	13. No subordinates but in hierarchy	
Nonsupervisor	Full	High	14. Full supervisor not in hierarchy
		Medium	15. Full supervisor not in hierarchy with medium authority
	Sanctioning	High	16. Sanctioning supervisor not in hierarchy
		Medium	17. Sanction supervisor not in hierarchy with medium authority
	Task	High	18. Task supervisor not in hierarchy
		Medium	19. Task supervisor not in hierarchy with medium authority
	Nonsupervisor	Nonsupervisor	20. Non-supervisor on all criteria

The second step in the operationalization process was to group the 20 resulting categories into a three categories domination typology: Managers, Supervisors and Nonsupervisors. I chose the intermediate criterion, which resulted in the following distribution of employees along the three categories:

Table A2.2: *Domination typology*

Managerial location typology	Domination typology	n
1-4	1. Manager	36
5-11, 14, 16, 18	2. Supervisor	191
12-13, 15, 17, 19,20	3. Non-supervisor	1,337
	Total	1,564

*Skill Assets**Table A2.3: Assets in scarce skills*

	Occupation	Education credential	Job Autonomy	N	%
1. Experts	Professionals and Professors			107	6.8
	Managers	B.A. or +		14	0.9
	Technicians	B.A. or +		51	3.3
2. Skilled	School Teachers			122	7.8
	Craft workers			233	14.9
	Managers	Less than B.A.		8	0.5
	Technicians	Less than B.A.		71	4.5
	Clerical	B.A. or +	Autonomous	11	0.7
3. Uncredentialed	Clerical	Less than B.A, or	Non-Aut.	239	15.5
	Service workers			201	12.9
	Farm laborers			18	1.2
	Manual non-crafts			489	31.3
Total employees				1,564	100.0

Typology of Informality Locations in the Working Class

The identification of the informal proletariat presents two major classification problems. The first problem results from the distinction between the legal status of the job and the legal status of the employing company. Historically, formalization of the jobs corresponded to the nature of the enterprise, because undeclared employees were an almost exclusive characteristic of undeclared enterprises. The problem is that now

formalization no longer has that strict correspondence, because there is also undeclared work within formal enterprises¹⁷.

Table A2.4 *Informality Locations in the Working Class*

		Social Security	Labor contract	Type of enterprise	n*	%
Formal Locations	Formal jobs	Yes	Permanent	Large private	332	27.2
	in Formal enterprises	Yes	Permanent	Public	217	17.8
	Formal jobs in Informal enterprises	Yes	Permanent	Small private	35	2.9
Informal Locations	Temporal jobs in Formal enterprises	Yes	Temporal	Large private or public	69	5.6
	Informal jobs in Formal enterprises	No	No	Large private or public	138	11.3
	Temporal jobs in Informal enterprises	Yes	Temporal	Small private	10	0.8
	Informal jobs in Informal enterprises	No	No	Small private	421	34.5

*Excluding 26 cases which had missing info in Informality status

¹⁷ Given the difficulty of measuring the degree of formalization of the firm itself, the convention has been to say that Very Small Enterprises (VSEs) should be classified as unregulated. Some studies use 5 as the cut point to distinguish the two categories. For these authors, an informal enterprise is the one that employs up to 5 workers, while a formal enterprises employs 6 or more (Gasparini and Tornarolli 2007: 3; Beccaria and Groisman 2008: 102). The question in the survey that I am using here provided ranges (1 person, 2 to 4, 5 to 9, 10 to 49, etc). Because of this, I can't use the same cut point, and decided to locate those enterprises with 5 employees as formal. Although this leads to a slight underestimation of the informal sector, it has been used by other authors, such as Portes and Hoffman (2003: 54).

The question then is whether or not undeclared jobs in legally regulated companies should be defined as informal work. In this paper, I follow Portes' suggestion of including this group as part of the informal proletariat. I label this group as "Informal workers in formal enterprises", they represent 18% of the working class in contemporary Argentina.

The second classification problem deals with a group of workers which have declared jobs and are employed in formal sector firms, but are on temporal contracts. Although they really are formal sector jobs, I decided to include these cases under the same label "Informal workers in formal enterprises.". The reason is that, although they are "declared" and some of their conditions may be regulated, they are without job security, pensions, and many of the rights (seniority, grievance procedures) that permanent workers enjoy. In general, they also cannot be long-term members of the unions representing the large firm workers. So even though the job is "declared" it would seem to be exempt from many other regulations that pertain to formal sector jobs. On all these factors, their experience would seem to be closer to those of the informal proletariat than the formal labor force.

Chapter 3

Union Strategies in the Workplace: The Politics of Nonstandard Work under Three Factory Regimes

3.1. Introduction

Labor revitalization in Argentina occurs in spite of high levels of labor informality, which includes the presence of a stable informal sector and the existence of nonstandard labor practices in formal sector companies. The combination of labor revitalization and working class fragmentation in contemporary Argentina raises the following puzzle in the study of union politics in the formal sector shop floor: How can we explain the rise in organized labor militancy among formal sector workers given the persistence of the division between standard and nonstandard workers in firms of the formal economy?

One possible explanation to this anomaly is that through one mechanism or another, this division has declined in economic salience. This view would suggest that the conflict of interest between standard and nonstandard workers that might have weakened unions have become less salient. An alternative explanation is that labor revitalization was possible in firms of the formal economy because new strategies of organized labor have made headway in overcoming the effects of the economic divisions. This chapter addresses this puzzle drawing on 14 months of fieldwork studying how unions deal with nonstandard work arrangements in three factories located in the city of Pacheco (Argentina): K-Foods, V-Car and FR-Meat meat packing plant.

Unions from all three factories have dealt at some point in the analyzed period with the problem of nonstandard work arrangements. In the case of K-Foods, there were

campaigns asking for standard contracts for two groups of subcontracted workers and for temporary workers. In the case of V-Car, the union has sought a salary raise for subcontracted janitors. Finally, the shop floor union at the Frigorifico has demanded standard contracts for subcontracted and temporary workers as part of its workplace campaigns.

Table 3.1: *Nonstandard Work Arrangements and Union Campaigns in Three Factories*

	Nonstandard workers	Union campaigns for
K-Foods	Subcontracted lift-truck drivers	Standard contracts
	Subcontracted janitors	Standard contracts and improved working conditions
	Temporary workers	Standard contracts
V-Car	Subcontracted janitors	Salary raise and improved working conditions
	Temporary workers	Accepts nonstandard work arrangement
FR-Meat	Subcontracted workers	Standard contracts and improved working conditions
	Temporary workers	Standard contracts and improved working conditions

Although all unions have addressed the problem of nonstandard work arrangements, there are variations in terms of the union's strategic orientations and the outcome of the different campaigns. In some instances, unions developed a strategy of *subordinated integration* that organized informal workers to get improvements in their working conditions or salaries, but did not challenge nonstandard work in the factory. In other instances, the union organized informal workers in the pursuit of the elimination of

nonstandard contracts and their incorporation as workers with full rights. However, not all of the campaigns accomplished this radical goal.

The chapter explores the variables that might explain the variation in union strategies as well as the outcomes of the different campaigns. These variables include: the type of factory regime that regulates labor relations, the associational power of the shop floor union and the structural power of nonstandard workers within production. The next section provides a discussion of the theoretical definition of these concepts. The chapter then continues with three sections devoted to the study of the different campaigns in each factory. The final section of the chapter provides a systematic comparison of the cases and a detailed discussion of the variables that might explain the successful collective action of some unions in the context of working class fragmentation.

3.2 Theoretical Framework: Nonstandard Work in the Formal Sector and Sources of Variation in Union Strategies

In the past, nonstandard work arrangements were characteristic of firms operating in the “informal” sector of the economy (Portes and Hoffman 2003). However, in the last decades precarious and informal work arrangements also grew within economic sectors based on high-skilled work and high productivity that had traditionally been at the core of the formal economy (Kalleberg 2009). In Argentina, this transformation was the result of a round of labor flexibility reforms in the 1990s, which deeply affected legislation regarding individual workers, especially in hirings and dismissals (Cook 2006).

This dissertation defines standard workers as those with regular and stable employment contracts, employed by companies of the formal sector. On the other hand, nonstandard work “is essentially defined by what it is *not*: a stable, permanent job under a

single employer that is regulated under protective labor law frameworks” (Chun 2009: 12). Two groups of nonstandard workers are included in this chapter: temporary workers and subcontracted workers. Temporary workers are subject to temporary work and lack of guaranteed income and social security benefits attached to seniority. They are usually not union members because of their short term appointment. Subcontracted or “outsourced” workers are defined by the existence of a loose and/or triangulated relationship with their employer, even if they are employed in firms of the formal economy (Cobble and Vosko 2000).

The particular interest of this chapter is to study differences in union strategies to establish relationships between standard and nonstandard workers in a period of labor revitalization. The three main characteristics of each case that I will take into account in this comparison are the type of factory regime, the degree of union’s associational power and the organizational logic of the union. These are the concepts that will guide the analytical comparison of the chapter.

In first place, the study includes a description of the different factory regimes imposed by each company, and analyzes how these regimes incorporate nonstandard work arrangements. Following Burawoy (1985: 7-8) I define the factory regime as the combination of the political and ideological effects of the organization of work and the apparatuses of production which regulate production relations. In general terms, we can identify regimes that encourage the opposition of labor and capital and regimes that encourage the cooperation between the two (Wright 2000). In this particular study, V-Car presents the hegemonic regime based on the cooperation of labor and capital, while production relations at K-Foods and FR-Meat are mostly based on conflict.

I follow Wright (2000) to define “associational power” as the capacity of unions to realize workers’ class interests in the workplace. This can be done through its capacity to

disrupt production organizing strikes, or its “disruptive potential” implemented during negotiations with capital. This disruptive capacity is based on the shop floor union actually exercising the political leadership of the majority of workers and the existence of a factory regime that allows for a major role of the union in the discussion of production policies.

In addition, I use Wright’s concept of structural power to understand variations in the role of nonstandard workers within production. Nonstandard workers with high structural power are those directly involved in production processes. The collective action of these workers, therefore, can potentially disrupt production. Although there are nonstandard workers in production tasks, the majority of nonstandard workers are in charge of janitorial or security related duties, which provides them a low structural power. Variations in the structural power of nonstandard workers can produce different outcomes in union campaigns for standard contracts even within the same shop floor.

Finally, it is important to distinguish between democratic and bureaucratic unions. A shop floor union is defined as democratic if it uses democratic decision making processes through which rank and file workers make decisions through deliberation. This definition is based on the idea of Empowered Participatory Governance, which identifies institutions that are participatory because they rely upon the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation and [are] empowered because they attempt to tie action to discussion” (Fung and Wright 2003: 5).

In contrast, a union is said to be “bureaucratic” or “opportunistic” when the organization’s survival is as independent as possible of the motivation, the solidarity, and the ‘willingness to act’ of the members (Offe and Wiesenthal 1980: 216-7). Shop floor unions at K-Foods and FR-Meat can be defined as democratic, while the union at V-Car is better described as bureaucratic or opportunistic. The following table summarizes the characteristic of each of the cases in the relevant variables:

Table 3.2: *Analytical Dimensions of Case Studies*

Case	Factory Regime	Associational power of the union	Organizational logic of the union
K-Foods	Opposition	Strong	Democratic
V-Car	Cooperation	Strong	Bureaucratic
FR-Meat	Opposition	Weak	Democratic

The aim of this chapter is to show how the interaction between these characteristics helps to explain the type of strategies that unions develop with respect to nonstandard work arrangements. In the next section I focus on the case of K-Foods, where the union led two successful campaigns against nonstandard work. I then analyze V-Car's union stance, which accepts nonstandard work but has demanded better salaries and working conditions for nonstandard workers. I finally discuss the case of FR-Meat, where the union has campaigned for standard contracts for nonstandard workers but so far has not accomplished that goal.

K-Foods Argentina: Successful Grassroots Challenge to Nonstandard Work Arrangements

Production, Nonstandard Work and Union Politics at K-Foods

K-Foods organizes the production of each food product into a different "product line," which is divided into two main sections: manufacturing and packaging. Product lines start with the mixing of different raw materials on the upper level of the factory and end with the packaging and transportation of the finished products on the lower level. During the process, workers in different sections of the product line are in charge of specific duties, which include raw material transportation, raw materials mixture, raw product preparation, cooking, packaging, and transportation of products.

Around 50 persons work in each product line for every shift (morning, afternoon, and night), and there are four or five “leaders” who supervise each duty across product lines. For example, there is one leader who supervises 15 workers in the raw materials mixture for all product lines. In turn, the leaders are supervised by production coordinators. In general, men are assigned to production duties and women are assigned to packaging duties, because, according to a female coordinator, “women are more apt to do manual duties. Men are usually more uncaring” (Personal Interview, Alina, Production Coordinator at K-Foods, 03/31/2011).

Industrial relations in the plant are characterized by conflicts between workers and management. From the workers’ perspective, these conflicts are the result of management’s mistreatment and power abuse. Most of my interviewees remember at least one occasion on which they felt that line leaders or coordinators were mistreating them. A middle-aged worker told me that “we are never silent about our problems, and that is how tensions and problems with leaders emerge. This is a huge company, but for some reason there are always problems. They always want more from you, but they give you nothing” (Personal Interview, Julian, Worker at K-Foods, 08/25/2010). Every worker I interviewed had at least one story about discussions that emerged when leaders refused to give them paid sick leave, or yelled at them when they made a mistake in the line.

From management’s perspective, conflicts emerge because the shop-floor union is ideologically set against the company. They think that the company needs to establish a one-to-one relationship with workers that would counterbalance the union’s influence on workers’ behavior. One of the managers said that “we try to be closer to the workers, so they can see that the shop-floor union does not represent their interest. We have to solve the workers’ problems faster than the union” (Personal Interview, Jose, Manager at K-Foods, 03/31/2011). These and other excerpts from my interviews with managers unveil a

more or less explicit competition between the company and the union to secure workers' loyalty. This competition is usually translated into daily conflicts about production pace, workers' illnesses, appropriate clothing, and machinery maintenance, among other things.

Nonstandard Work Arrangements

When K-Foods acquired the Pacheco plant, it continued with nonstandard work arrangements based on temporary and subcontracted work. On the shop floor, these two types of nonstandard work arrangements involve important differences for workers in relation to their work situation and their labor contract. The following table summarizes the basic information for each group of workers:

Table 3.3: *Types of Nonstandard Work Arrangements at K-Foods*

Name of hiring company	Nonstandard arrangement	Tasks	Union contract/Same as standard workers?
K-Foods	Temporary	Production	Yes/Yes
Help Agencies	Temporary	Production	Yes/Yes
Incom	Subcontracted	Lift-trucking	Yes/No
Eslimpio	Subcontracted	Janitorial	Yes/No
Selimpia	Subcontracted	Janitorial	Yes/No
Segure	Subcontracted	Surveillance	Yes/No
Catering Co.	Subcontracted	Restaurant/Store	Yes/No
Maintenance Co.	Subcontracted	Maintenance	Yes/No

By 2007 there were around 900 temporary workers in the plant. The majority of temporary workers were young (18–29) and their wages were established by the collective bargaining agreement of the Food Industry Workers' Federation (Federación de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Alimentación , FTIA), which meant that they were also represented by this union. There are two categories of temporary workers at K-Foods: those directly hired by the company under temporary contracts; and those hired by temporary help agencies. Because of the lack of seniority and of certain benefits, their salaries are substantially lower than those of standard workers. However, the main disadvantage experienced by this group of workers is the lack of stability of their labor contracts.

On the other hand, subcontracted workers are hired by contract companies in charge of specific operations within the plant. There are contract companies that are in charge of janitorial work, run the plant's restaurant, run the in-factory store, provide surveillance services, and do the maintenance of cooling machinery. Until 2007, there was also a company in charge of the transportation of finished products within the plant, employing 55 male workers who are now standard workers employed by K-Foods (a change I describe in more detail later). The majority of subcontracted workers are not represented by the Foods Industry Workers' Federation, and except for the workers in charge of the cooling machinery, their salaries are substantially lower than those of standard workers.

Union Politics

The Food Industry Workers' Federation is the national-level federation of workers in the food-processing industries. The federation and its powerful Buenos Aires branch (Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria de la Alimentación, STIA) are led by Rodolfo

Daer, who is the head of the Peronist group that has been running both organizations for the last three decades. This group was the only contender in the last union election at STIA-Buenos Aires, which allowed Daer to be elected head of the union for four years starting in 2008.

Union activism at K-Foods is divided into three main groups. Each group has a different political orientation and a different stance toward the company's nonstandard employment policies. The first group is centered on 30 representatives of STIA-Buenos Aires, who are standard K-Foods workers aligned with the national union leadership. They have paid positions and are in charge of the relationship between K-Foods workers and the union, but they do not intervene in negotiations with the company. Both the union and this group of representatives have accepted the nonstandard employment policies developed by K-Foods and other food companies over the past decades.

Between 1993 and 2008, the shop floor union was led by the second group, a group of activists that has historically been opposed to the Peronist leadership of the national and regional unions. This group, called "Agrupación 1º de Mayo" won the shop-floor union elections in 1993 and since then has led union politics at K-Foods. Most union activists in this group (as well as the majority of rank-and-file workers who supported them over the years) are longtime standard workers of the morning shift. The group is of leftist political orientation and has denounced the company's nonstandard employment policies over the years. Activists showed me union flyers denouncing temporary contracts and labor outsourcing over the years, but there has been no major action or strike over these issues.

The third group of workers that influences shop floor union politics at K-Foods has emerged in the past few years as the result of a grassroots campaign against the company's nonstandard employment policies. Since 2005, this group has developed a

strategy of grassroots politics based on regular meetings of rank-and-file workers in order to discuss their work situation and possible labor actions. Most of the workers in this group were nonstandard workers with little or no previous experience of union activism. The main objectives of their activism have been the creation of solidarity links between standard and nonstandard workers and the elimination of nonstandard employment policies.

Union Campaigns against Nonstandard work: Subcontracted Lift-truck drivers, Temporary Workers and Subcontracted Janitors

An analysis of the relationship between standard and nonstandard workers during recent labor conflicts at K-Foods will help us understand the emergence of labor militancy and union-based conflict in the factory. The first conflict occurred between 2005 and 2006, when lift-truck drivers from the subcontracted company in charge of the transportation of finished products won permanent contracts as standard workers. The second conflict occurred between 2007 and 2008, and was the result of the grassroots organization of temporary workers demanding permanent contracts. These conflicts provide a good opportunity to analyze the relationship between standard workers and two groups of workers that are subject to nonstandard labor relations: temporary workers and outsourced workers. The section concludes with the analysis of the union's relation to janitors, who recently campaigned for some bread and butter gains but so far have not organized a campaign for standard contracts.

The Campaign against Subcontracting

K-Foods continued the labor subcontracting policy initiated in the Pacheco plant during the early 1990s. In addition to maintaining those services that were already outsourced, the company subcontracted other internal operations, such as the lift-trucking of finished products within the plant. The company transferred 20 lift-truck drivers who were in charge of this task to other positions, and hired Provinter (2003–2004) and then Incom (2005–2006) to take charge of these operations (Personal Interview, Javier, Union Activist at K-Foods, 12/04/2010).

By 2005, there were 55 Incom lift-truck drivers doing transportation work for K-Foods in Pacheco: they were almost all men, young and with some previous experience in factory work. Each Incom worker was assigned to transport finished products of a single production sector:

“I work in the ‘Chocolate’ sector. I am lift-truck driver [zorrista] there. Our work is quiet when there is only one production line working. We can then talk to the others. But there are 4 production lines in the ‘Chocolate’ sector, and when they are all working you don’t have time to do anything, not even going to the restroom. And now, that they added robots, we don’t have time for anything, it is way faster than before. There is a line that produces one cookies [alfajor] package every 4 or 5 minutes. We have to take the package to DEA (which is 70 meters away), enter it into the system, wrap it, and everything. So, if one production line is producing one package every 5 minutes, and you take 5 minutes to take it to DEA, you can imagine what happens when there are 4 lines working” (Personal Interview, Ariel, Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 05/21/2010).

This description shows that the decision to subcontract transportation tasks resulted in the existence of a group of workers that could be defined as ‘core’ in terms of the production process, but were hired through a nonstandard work arrangement. By 2005, when these duties were assigned to Incom, the main disadvantage emerging from Incom workers’ labor contracts was that their salaries were substantially lower than those of standard workers. This was because they were not given overtime pay for working

overnight hours or weekends and were also excluded from the K-Foods category-based payroll system. Another difference was that Incom workers were not allowed to eat at the factory restaurant. Last but not least, their contracts did not have the same stability as those of standard workers because their continuity depended on the contracts established between K-Foods and the subcontractor.

Although Incom workers were assigned to core production duties, the regional union (STIA-Buenos Aires) never requested their incorporation as standard workers. It exerted some pressure in two directions: Incom workers should be members of the Food Industry Workers' Federation instead of the Teamsters Federation, and they should be allowed to have lunch at the factory restaurant. Both demands were addressed in 2005. The demand that Incom workers should be hired as standard workers appeared as a result of a process of grassroots organization that began in 2005.

The grassroots organizing of Incom workers began in 2005, based on weekly meetings of union activists, standard workers and subcontracted workers of the night shift. The main focus of their activities was, at the beginning, the organization of different social activities that would strengthen their group, like friendly soccer matches and birthday celebrations. In addition to these activities, the group held regular meetings in the nearby Saracho bar to discuss problems related to their situation as outsourced workers.

The main problem, as they saw it, was that their salaries were much lower than those of standard workers. By that time, a standard worker with just a few years of seniority could double the salary of Incom workers. Even if both received a basic salary of around AR\$1,000, standard workers would get 100% overtime payment for every hour they worked on Saturdays after 5pm and 200% for Sunday hours, yielding a monthly salary of more than AR\$2,000 (Personal Interview, Ariel, Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 05/21/2010). In response to this disadvantage, the grassroots group

organized a campaign for “equal payment for equal work” so they could get overtime payments for working weekends.

As part of this campaign, during the first months of 2006 Incom workers implemented a strategy of “non-collaboration”, meaning that they did not work the hours for which they believed they deserved overtime payment. According to union activists, the solidarity of standard workers was essential for the success of these actions:

“[...] standard workers were supportive of their demands. Every time when Incom workers decided to leave work as a way of protesting, [leaders and supervisors would ask standard workers to replace them]. And standard workers would say things such as ‘I’m not in charge of that’, or ‘I can’t drive the lift-truck’, or ‘If you want me to do that, you should assign me the machine officer payroll category’ and they wouldn’t replace Incom workers” (Personal Interview, Pablo, Union Activist at K-Foods, 07/16/2010).

During the interviews, workers recalled many instances in which line leaders and supervisors had to come in on Saturdays or Sundays to replace Incom workers. In addition to workplace solidarity, standard workers also expressed their support by participating in activities outside the workplace. The most important of these activities were multiple soccer tournaments which gathered as much as 30 teams representing both standard and nonstandard workers. In the following chapter I describe these tournaments and analyze their role at creating relations of solidarity outside the workplace.

The activist campaign provided visibility to Incom workers, who after a few meetings with management, the shop floor union, and the regional union, finally got the pay raise they were asking. However, as part of these meetings they also found out that K-Foods had not to renew its contract with Incom, generating a high uncertainty of whether or not they would keep their jobs after December 31st, 2006. As a response to this uncertainty, workers deepened the militant campaign in two directions: they started

to demand to be hired directly by K-Foods as standard workers, and they included strikes as part of their repertoire of protest.

Ariel, who was one of the main activists in this campaign, explains why it made sense for them to ask for standard contracts as part of this campaign:

“Q: What were the main advantages of being hired by K-Foods when compared to work for a subcontractor?”

A: The main difference was the money, because some weeks we would work from Monday to Monday, and a standard worker would still double our salary. That was the main demand. But we were also worried about our future. Because we thought ‘what will happen to us if we are hired by another subcontractor but their contract expires like Incom’s contract expired’ And we knew that if we were hired by K-Foods we would have a secure job for a while. So that’s why we started with the strikes and all that and, well, we finally won our contracts as K-Foods workers” (Personal Interview, Ariel, Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 05/21/2010)

In order to achieve this new objective, workers organized five surprise two-hour strikes and one six-hour strike. After the six-hour strike, which was the longest strike of Incom workers up to that day, management agreed to hire them as standard workers after the contract with the subcontractor expire in December of 2006. The success of this campaign deeply affected the balance of power in the factory, transforming the issue of nonstandard contracts into a major point of contention. In the following pages I analyze the situation of two other major groups of nonstandard workers: temporary workers, who successfully organized a campaign to get standard contracts between 2007 and 2008; and janitors, who were able to organize for better working conditions but did not win standard contracts.

Temporary Workers Win Permanent Contracts

K-Foods maintained the temporary work policy previously implemented by NN in the Pacheco plant. Temporary work in the company includes workers that are directly hired by K-Foods under temporary contracts (*contratados*) and those who are hired by temporary employment agencies (*de agencia*). The main disadvantage of both groups of workers when compared to K-Foods workers is the lack of stability of their labor contracts. Their wages are also lower, mostly because of their lack of seniority.

By 2006 there were around 700-900 temporary workers in the plant, representing between 20% and 30% of all production workers at that time (Personal Interview, Javier, Union Activist at K-Foods, 12/04/2010). This situation changed after a group of young temporary workers started to organize against temporary contracts during the first half of 2007. By mid-2008, all temporary workers had been given full contracts by K-Foods. How did this happen?

By the end of 2006, the grassroots group had regular morning meetings in the nearby Saracho bar, gathering standard workers, subcontracted workers and temporary workers, all employed in the night shift. The most active subcontracted workers in these meetings were the lift-truck drivers who won standard contracts in 2006. Pablo, who was the union representative for the night shift, was the only union activist participating in these meetings. Temporary workers who were part of this group decided they would not accept more layoffs, a decision that was tested in February 2007, when the company fired 7 temporary workers:

“In February, the company fires a group of temporary workers (*contratados*). Managers called them at 5:30 AM, when their shift was about to finish, and told them ‘Look, your contract expired, you are fired. Pick up your stuff and tomorrow we will call you to let you know about the last payment’. But we agreed not to accept this anymore. During a December meeting that gathered around 45 workers we decided that if temporary workers were laid off again we should resist. So, when they

were laid off in February, temporary workers don't accept that, and they occupy [the entrance]. And that's why managers decided not to fire them. Managers said it was a mistake and that they should go back to work”
(Personal Interview, Pablo, Union activist at K-Foods, 08/25/2010)

Although these workers were finally dismissed when their contracts expired, activists see this action as a good precedent for the subsequent struggle against temporary contracts¹⁸. After this action, the grassroots group started to grow in influence among temporary workers. The morning meetings at the Saracho bar were gathering more and more temporary workers, who decided to organize a campaign against the company's temporary contracts policy.

The opportunity to organize a visible action against temporary work came in May 2007, during the yearly salary negotiations between the regional union and the companies. There was a widespread dissatisfaction among the workers about the ongoing salary negotiations, but there were no union-organized strikes or actions of protests at K-Foods. In this context, the grassroots group held a 300-worker meeting in the nearby Saracho bar, where they decided to organize a blockade of the Pan-American highway in order to press for three main demands: (1) a salary raise for all workers; (2) “permanent standard contracts” for temporary workers; and (3) “standard contracts” for subcontracted workers. The majority of workers who participated in the blockade were temporary workers from the night shift, but subcontracted workers, standard workers and activists from the shop-floor union were also involved:

“During our meetings at Saracho we were evaluating different actions that would allow us to force the company to give a salary raise. We first thought that we should organize a demonstration in the regional union and

¹⁸ Two precedents for the fight against temporary work include: 1. A production line was stopped in mid-2006 after a temporary worker had his hand trapped in a machine. This worker lost the mobility of his hands because management wasn't quick enough in freeing him. After the city firefighters freed the worker, the regional union and the shop floor union stopped the production line to protest against managements' lack of response. 2. There was a 3-hour strike after the layoff of 3 temporary workers in 2006. The strike was called jointly by the regional union, the grassroots group and the shop floor union.

force them to get a salary raise [...] but then we learned that workers from Fate [a tire factory] successfully organized a blockade of the Pan-American highway in the city of San Fernando. They had a huge impact [...] so we decided we should also block the Pan-American highway [...] So, some workers talk to the shop floor union leader and ask him to join our action, so some union activists came to our 300-worker meeting [of May 23rd]. That's where we decided to block the Pan-American highway holding three main demands: Salary rise for all, standard permanent contracts for temporary workers and standard contracts for subcontracted workers" (Personal Interview, Pablo, Union Activist at K-Foods, 08/25/2010)

This was the first blockade of the Pan-American Highway by K-Foods workers in seven years, and the first time in which such an action was led by a group of nonstandard workers. The blockade started at 7:00 a. m. on May 23rd and ended at 9:30 a. m. that day, resulting in 7 km long traffic lines of vehicles wanting to go to Buenos Aires city from the suburbs (Diario Clarín, 05/23/2007). Most of the workers in the blockade were temporary workers, although there were also standard workers from the night shift and activists from the shop floor union. In addition, union activists from nearby factories such as Fate and Donolley were present (La Verdad Obrera, 05/24/2007).

One week after the blockade, K-Foods suspended the contracts of around 150 temporary workers, arguing that a lack of natural gas was slowing down production. Union activists consider that these suspensions were the company's attempt to halt temporary workers' increasing activism. The result was exactly the opposite, because temporary workers of the night shift rejected the decision and broke into the plant calling for an all-factory strike to revert the company's decision:

"These workers had been working for K-Foods for one month and a half when the company tries to suspend them. When managers tell them that they can't get in the factory they just broke into the plant [*saltan los molinetes*]. So we organized a meeting and told everyone that there were some workers that had been hired under temporary contracts for more than 2 years and then fired. And thanks to the support of standard workers from the "amasado" sector we can organize an all-factory strike [...] this way we were trying to avoid the suspensions, because we told everyone that the company would fire temporary workers today, but it would use the same excuse to fire standard workers in the

future. And that's how workers organized an all-factory strike [...]" (Personal Interview, Pablo, Union Activist at K-Foods, 08/25/2010)

The shop floor union decides to end the strike the following day, after the Labor Office dictates that K-Foods should re-hire all suspended workers until an agreement with the union is reached. After five weeks of negotiations, although the company didn't provide them standard contracts, it agreed to the combined demand of a pay raise for all workers and to maintain the jobs for temporary workers. In July 25th, the shop floor union published a flyer summarizing the combined struggle for a pay raise and standard contracts for temporary workers. In particular, the union highlights the role played by this group of "young temporary workers":

"This labor conflict began when the company suspended around 100 temporary workers and threatened us with more suspensions. The 45 days of subsequent struggle end today, when we finally got everyone back to work and got a pay raise of 31.5% (which is not enough for our needs). We also decided to elect union representatives in every sector. Standard workers should be aware that our victory is in great part the result of the activism and rebellious attitude for this group of young temporary workers. Especially, they were a key part of the blockade of the Pan-American highway [back in May 23rd]. We were so strong because we were able to unite the demand for a pay raise for all workers with the defense of temporary workers' jobs. And these young coworkers should also know that their struggle for standard contracts gained momentum when they united their action to that of standard workers" (Shop floor union at K-Foods, Union flyer, 07/23/2007)

In the subsequent months, as a response to increasing activism over the issue, the company gave standard contracts to most of the temporary workers whose contracts expired. According to the shop-floor union's estimation around 90% of all the workers who were formerly employed under temporary contracts received standard permanent contracts (Personal Interview, Javier, Union Activist at K-Foods, 12/04/2010). In addition, many former temporary workers were elected rank and file representatives of different sectors in an all factory election that took place a few months after the strike. According to

union sources around 40% of elected representatives were former temporary workers (La Verdad Obrera, 05/29/2008)

The united action of temporary workers and standard workers resulted in a combined victory for workers, who got a pay raise and standard permanent contracts for most temporary workers. This campaign, together with the campaign of subcontracted lift-truck drivers provided evidence that in a context of labor fragmentation, nonstandard workers can mobilize if they develop a grassroots strategy to get the solidarity of standard workers. Now I analyze the case of janitors, one among different groups of subcontracted workers who could not organize a campaign for standard contracts even in this favorable shop floor environment.

Janitors

Like most big industries in the Argentinean formal economy, K-Foods food subcontracts janitorial tasks. There are two companies in charge of these tasks: Selimpia is in charge of cleaning production lines, and Eslimpio is in charge of cleaning the offices (located in a separate building HQ) and the warehouses. In the following table, I summarize the relevant information about subcontracted janitors:

Table 3.4: *Basic Information about Subcontracted Janitors*

Workforce	150
% Female	60%
Basic Salary	AR\$1100
Total Salary	AR\$1900
Overtime Payment	100%/hour
Union	SOM (Janitors Union)
Access to Child care, Gym	No
Access to in-plant store	Yes

According to one of K-Foods' human resources manager, the main reason for hiring subcontractors is to reduce labor costs (Personal Interview, José, Manager at K-Foods, 03/31/2011). This rationale is translated into lower salaries and worse working conditions for janitors when compared to standard workers. Since 2009 the grassroots group, elected as union representatives in the plant, attempts to fight this inequality through an organizing strategy that combines the long-term demand of standard contracts for janitors with the short term strategy of supporting their bread and butter demands.

This two-sided strategy consists in supporting janitors' bread and butter demands but at the same time organizing for winning them standard contracts. A 30-year-old female activist explains how this strategy works:

“Q: Why do you think the shop floor union supports janitors' struggles even if you are not required to?”

A: We think that all workers have the same rights, no matter if they are janitors or they are doing the maintenance of the cooling machinery. We have to support them when they fight for better salaries or improved working conditions. Thanks to our influence on the shop floor, management may put some pressure on the subcontractor to improve workers' conditions. For example, there were janitors who didn't have appropriate clothing, or were not paid overtime hours, and we helped them win those

demands. We can force the subcontractor to accept worker's demands because we can ask K-Foods not to pay them for their service. That's what happened when janitors were struggling for the June salary bonus. We threatened with an all factory strike and the company agreed to pay them the full bonus [...] However, what we really want is to win standard contracts for all subcontracted workers. Because subcontracted workers (like the ones doing maintenance work for cooling machinery) are part of the company. They are inside the plant, why can't they have standard contracts? [...]

Q: Why do you think K-Foods hires subcontracted janitors?

A: Some people say that janitors used to be standard workers until K-Foods hired these subcontractors. And I think they subcontract to save some money.

Q: Is it cheaper for K-Foods?

A: Yes, because janitors make much less money than we do. K-Foods wants to save as much money as it can [...] but I think that janitors should have the same salaries than standard workers, because they also work inside the plant. If there are no janitors the factory doesn't work. I wish one day we can win standard contracts for them [...]

Q: Do you talk to janitors about this?

A: Yes, I talk to them a lot. Because I was also a janitor for some years and I don't think I'm better than them now that I am not a janitor anymore. I think that is one of the good things of the new shop floor union: we treat everyone equally [...]” (Personal Interview, Nancy, Union activist at K-Foods, 07/14/2010).

Other union activists expanded this idea, saying that the shop floor union had to unite all workers in order to struggle against the company's explicit policy of dividing workers into standard, temporary and subcontracted. Within the workplace, the union expresses this long-term goal by including the demand of “standard contracts for nonstandard workers” every time they strike for salaries. For example, in the protests organized during the 2010-salary negotiations, the shop floor union demanded salary

raises for standard workers and standard contracts for subcontracted workers. Estela, who is a 21-year-old female janitor, explains why she thinks the union holds this demand:

“Q: Why do you think that the union helps janitors even if they have no obligation of doing it?”

A: Well, it is not that they are required to help us. They helped us because they could see that we were unjustly treated by the subcontractor. I think that’s the reason why they helped us. They also helped us because they want us to win standard contracts.

Q: That is one of their demands?

A: Yes. And we also want that, but it is not going to happen. They have been asking that for a long time.

Q: Have they done something to achieve that?

A: Yes, many times. Every time they strike, they demand standard contracts for subcontracted workers. They always demand that, but it hasn’t happened yet [...]”(Personal Interview, Estela, Janitor at K-Foods, 06/30/2010)

This stance against nonstandard work arrangements is also expressed in the union’s political activism beyond the workplace. For example, in July 2010 K-Foods workers’ union organized a meeting that gathered union activists from more than 50 factories of the Northern Gran Buenos Aires region. The final document of the meeting stated that shop floor unions “had to lead a national campaign against precarious work, demanding standard contracts for all subcontracted and temporary workers” (Shop floor union at K-Foods and other organizations, 07/31/2010). As part of this campaign, K-Foods workers led a protest in front of the Chamber of Industrial Companies (*Union Industrial Argentina*), where they demanded: “Equal Pay for Equal Work”, “Standard contracts for all subcontracted and temporary workers” and “Stop prosecuting union activists” (Diario Clarín, 08/06/2010).

As I have previously noted, the union combines this long-term goal of standard contracts for janitors with a support of their short-term demands and struggles in the

workplace. In first place, the solidarity appears in the relationship between union activists and individual janitors who have some particular problem in the workplace. This was the case of Ceferino, a 50-year-old male janitor. He was threatened with a suspension because he was resting on the food patio during his working shift:

“So, he [the supervisor] tells me ‘Who told you that you could go to the food patio?’ And I say ‘Nobody’ and he says ‘So you are your own boss then?’ ‘No, I’m not my own boss. It is just that I had finished my work, and needed to take a break’ so, he then starts yelling at me, and I was so pissed off that I almost punch him, because I was really pissed off. So I tell him some things I thought about him, and he threatens me with a suspension. So I tell him ‘Well, if you want to suspend me why don’t you just do it? Bring the forms and I’ll sign them’ I tell him that, but at that point I had already talked to Pablo, who is the shop floor union representative of K-Foods workers in the night shift.

Q: But isn’t he representing K-Foods workers only?

A: No, they can also represent us. When there is a problem and our union representative doesn’t help us, we can talk to them, because both K-Foods and Eslimpio are paying our salaries.

Q: So, can you talk to the shop floor union?

A: Yes, we can talk to them, but our union representatives don’t like when we do that, because it is a way of ignoring them. But the thing is that when we talk to our representatives, they never solve anything, because they tend to defend the company [...]

Q: So, what happened when you talked to Pablo?

A: So, I told him that the supervisor yelled at me, and Pablo tells me ‘Ok, if he gives you a suspension, we can denounce him in the national labor’s office’. And there were other complains about this supervisor, because he mistreats everyone [...] so at the end he didn’t suspend me.

Q: Did he know that you talked to K-Foods workers’ union?

A: Yes, I guess he knew [...]” (Personal Interview, Ceferino, Janitor at K-Foods, 10/20/2010)

This story shows how the involvement of the shop floor union helped Ceferino avoid a suspension. Estela provides another example of the union’s commitment to solve

janitors' daily conflicts. Estela had some problems with a coordinator, and in order to solve this problem she requested the advice of the shop floor union:

“The new coordinator used to be our coworker, but when he was promoted, he started mistreating workers. Everyone had problems with him, except for 5 or 6 workers that were aligned with him. For example, my problem was that my 1-year-old daughter had a breathing problem, and she would get sick very often. So I would tell him in advance that I couldn't go to work because she was sick. And even though I would give him the doctor's note to justify my absence, he wouldn't count it as a justified absence, so I would lose the pay for that day. Because of that I got 23 suspensions [...] so we were fighting all the time, and the last time we argued he pushed me inside the restroom, and slammed the door. After he did that, I went to talk to the shop floor union and they immediately asked him to stop with the harassment.

Q: K-Foods workers' union?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they pay attention to you?

A: Yes. They gave me their support. I went to Buenos Aires city with them so I could talk to their lawyer. And I also went to their meetings. I had to be very careful that my employer didn't know about it.

Q: But they are not your representatives, are they?

A: That's right, but they helped us a lot [...] they helped us to file the formal complaint against this guy, and he stopped harassing us [...]

Q: So the union would help you, even if they were not your representatives?

A: Yes. They helped us many times. Our supervisor used to tell us that we shouldn't talk to the union, because they will do nothing for us. He used to say that they belong to a different union, so they wouldn't help us.

Q: What did you respond to that?

A: Nothing. I would just let him talk to himself” (Personal Interview, Estela, Janitor at K-Foods, 06/30/2010)

These two stories show the commitment of the shop floor union to solve janitor's daily conflicts with supervisors and coordinators. They also show that the union has enough influence in the shop floor to modify a decision made by a subcontracted

supervisor. The combination of this commitment and their influence in the shop floor is at the core of the union's solidarity strategy with workers' bread and butter demands. Based on this strategy the union has also helped janitors in broader struggles, like a recent conflict over salaries.

The conflict began in December 2009, when one of the subcontractors (Selimpia) failed to include janitors' overtime hours when estimating the end-of-the-year bonus. After a few days of negotiations between the company, the janitors' union and K-Foods's shop floor union, the company agreed to pay the full bonus to janitors, and promised that the coming June bonus would also be paid in full. However, in June 2010 there were problems with the bonus again, and this time janitors decided to organize a strike to get the full payment. The strike started at 2 p. m., and a few hours later the company offered to increase the payment, but the janitors wanted nothing less than the full payment. At this point, the shop floor union got involved in the struggle. Ariel, who is K-Foods workers' representative assigned to the afternoon shift, recalls the negotiations:

“So we said that if by 12:00 A. M. the conflict was not over, we would have to stop the whole plant, because workers cannot work if the place is not clean. The truth is that it wasn't so dirty, but we used that argument to threaten with an all-factory strike. So we told the subcontractor if they didn't find a solution, we would stop working. And then K-Foods's managers come and ask what is going on. And we tell them that janitors have not been cleaning since 2:00 P. M., and if they didn't start working by 12:00 A. M. we would also go on strike. So, by 11:00 P. M. Selimpia had already paid the full June bonus.

Q: So this means that you can call for an all-factory strike if janitors don't get the full bonus?

A: Yes. Well, we can call a strike, but standard workers won't strike. Maybe 3 or 4 out of every 100 workers would strike. But if we tell them 'we can't work in this mess. It is full of garbage on the floor, and this should be really clean', then they would strike. And that's how janitors got paid the full bonus, because we threaten Selimpia that we would stop the plant. Janitors were really happy that we helped them to solve that problem, so we organized some meetings with them to talk about organizing a campaign asking standard contracts for janitors. And they want that, but it is going to be really difficult to win that campaign. I was also a lift-truck

driver a few years ago and we won standard contracts. But it took us more than a year of strikes and 4 of our coworkers were laid off, so we have to see what they can do to win standard contracts” (Personal Interview, Ariel, Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 07/01/2010).

In this case, the subcontractor agreed to pay the full bonus to the janitors thanks to the threat of an all-factory strike called by the shop floor union. This threat is a good example of the union’s strategy of short-term solidarity. At the end of the quoted paragraph, Ariel also mentions some meetings between union representatives and janitors in order to discuss strategies to advance the long term goal of standard contracts for janitors. From the union’s perspective, the achievement of short-term goals is a way of developing ties with the most active janitors so they can organize a campaign for standard contracts. This was also the case of Estela, the 21-year-old janitor that could stop harassments from her supervisor thanks to the help of the shop floor union.

In summary, the shop floor union has developed a strategy that combines actions of solidarity with janitors’ bread and butter struggles with an active militancy towards the long-term goal of winning standard contracts for this group of workers. In the workplace, this militancy means that the union supports short-term demands of janitors and raises the demand of standard contracts for nonstandard workers every time they strike. Beyond the workplace, this militancy appears in the union’s participation in regional union meetings that raise the demand of “standard contracts for nonstandard workers” as one of the main contemporary demands of the Argentinean working class.

V-Car Argentina: The Politics of Nonstandard Work Arrangements in the Hegemonic Factory Regime

Production, Union Politics and Nonstandard Work

Since 1995, the performance of V-Car Argentina has been shaped by the dynamics of the Argentinean economy in general, and the car manufacturing sector in particular. Between 1995 and 1997, the company produced around 15% of all cars sold in the country, in the context of a growing market that reached its decade high with 455,000 cars purchased in 1998 (V-Car Argentina “Reporte social 2006-2008”). Since then, the Argentinean economy entered a 4-year recession, which reduced car sales to 82,000 in 2002. V-Car made around 12% of 2002 sales.

In 2003, the Argentinean economy showed the first signs of recovery. The car manufacturing sector started a growth trend that eventually led to 611,000 cars purchased in 2008. In the framework of this economic growth, the company increased its share to an average of 20% for 2006-2008. The following table shows V-Car Argentina figures for production and employment in 2002-2010:

Table 3.5: *Workforce Composition for 2006, 2007, 2008. V-Car Argentina (including the Pacheco and Cordoba Manufacturing Plants)*

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Local Market production	19008	21208	25808	25666	46864	57476	
Export production	13576	14266	16119	16414	30453	36172	
Personnel	2586	2588	2728	3120	3741/6	3784/860	5588

Source: Own elaboration based on information published in V-Car Argentina (2008) “Reporte Social 2006-2008”

V-Car Argentina has experienced a sustained growth in production output since 2003. This has been translated into the growth of the workforce over the years, which went from around 2,500 in 2002 to an all-time high of more than 7,000 workers in 2010. As part of this growth, the V-Car Pacheco plant hired workers in 2006, 2008 and 2010. In total, this hires increased the number of production workers in the plant from around 1,200 in 2006 to more than 4,000 in 2010 (Personal Interview, Miguel, Union Activist at V-Car, 09/01/2010). In the framework of this growth, the company set up a hegemonic regime based on consensus between management and the union. In the following section, I describe this regime based on the exchange of increased productivity for higher salaries for standard workers. I then turn to analyze the politics of nonstandard work under the hegemonic regime in a period of economic growth.

Union Politics in the Hegemonic Factory Regime

Auto workers from V-Car Argentina are represented by the Automotive Union of Mechanics and Related Trades (S.M.A.T.A.), which represents auto workers in the country, including those employed in small and medium companies and those employed in the big auto factories such as V-Car. This union has a history of “official unionism with a moderate or status quo political orientation” (Anner 2011: 150). By 2010, the union was a core member of the National Labor Federation (C.G.T.) and a strong supporter of the Peronist government of Cristina Kirchner.

The shop-floor union at V-Car-Pacheco is politically aligned with the S.M.A.T.A. national leadership and is composed of 76 members who hold paid positions and are not required to work in production. Twelve of these officials are members of the “leadership committee” (Comisión Interna). The remaining officials are assigned the representation of

workers in different sectors. For example, there are 12 officials who represent 500 workers in the Painting facilities during all three working shifts.

The relationship between the company and the union is shaped by a hegemonic factory regime that regulates labor relations in the company. This factory regime guarantees high salaries for workers in exchange for high productivity and workers' collaboration in production. Since 2004, the salary component of the hegemonic agreement has been secured in yearly salary negotiations between the company and the union. In 2010, these negotiations resulted in a 25% raise for V-Car workers, and did not involve any major labor action of protest. According to Guillermo, leading member of the "leadership committee", the agreement was reached through dialogue. He told me that negotiations were smooth because the company is more flexible in times of high production output (Personal Interview, Guillermo, Union Activist at V-Car, 09/06/2010).

The second component of the hegemonic agreement involves the union's collaboration in production. This component became particularly important in the past few years, as production output grew to address increasing domestic and international demand. In this framework, the union is involved in solving daily production problems in order to secure the plant's output rate. Some of the union activists that I interviewed emphasized the union's role in production:

"We care a lot about production output. Sometimes we pay more attention to production output than managers themselves. And the CEO listens to us more than what he listens to them [...] so right now we are really committed to secure production output. If for some reason production stops, I go to the sector and require a written report about the problem. I compile all those reports and give them to the union's general secretary, who regularly meets with the company's CEO and tells them about our problems" (Personal Interview, Marcelo, Union Activist at V-Car, 10/20/2010)

"This is hard to believe, but many times the union representative is able to solve problems that supervisors can't solve. This is because the union representative has more power within the shop floor than the company's supervisors. For example, when a supervisor asks for a replacement of a tool [lijadora], managers tell him 'ok, we'll let you know when it's here', but

they don't really care. However, if the union representative says that this is causing problems in production, high managers will usually solve the problem because they really need to keep production going" (Personal Interview, Guillermo, Union Activist at V-Car, 09/06/2010)

As these two excerpts show, the union is highly involved in securing production in the Pacheco plant, to the degree that union representatives feel more powerful than the company's supervisors¹⁹. The role of the union in the hegemonic regime is coherent with its Peronist ideological orientation, which emphasizes class collaboration between workers and capitalists as a way of social and economic advance of workers. Guillermo understands the union's role in these terms:

"Q: Does the company listen to the union?

A: Yes. Many people don't believe how strong the union at V-Car is. We are so influential that a supervisor can't make a move without first talking to us. We are so strong because V-Car workers support their union. We first had to convince workers to back us up, and workers realized that the only way to have good working conditions is to support the union. And the company taught us this lesson many times, because it made us struggle for our rights. But this doesn't mean that the union is the enemy of the company. To the contrary, if V-Car does not produce cars, there is no work for our people. I don't get paid if V-Car does not produce. So we are not the company's enemy. We have to be strong, you know, so there has to be equilibrium between labor and capital, that's all. Sometimes this doesn't exist, but we are fortunate enough that this is happening here" (Personal Interview, Guillermo, Union Activist at V-Car, 09/06/2010)

The existence of this strong agreement between the company and the shop floor union makes the V-Car Pacheco plant an ideal case to study the politics of nonstandard work under a hegemonic factory regime. For standard V-Car workers; this agreement means an exchange of increasing productivity for higher salaries. In this framework, the following question emerges: What is the situation of nonstandard workers under this

¹⁹ Union representatives also make their case in comparative terms. They told me that the shop floor union at V-Car was much stronger than any other autoworkers union. In particular, the union was stronger to that of the neighboring F- Motors plant.

agreement? In the following pages, I analyze how the shop floor union relates to subcontracted janitors and temporary workers in this period of sustained production growth.

Nonstandard Work in a Period of Growth

There are around 500 subcontracted workers employed in the V-Car Pacheco plant and more than 1000 workers hired under temporary contracts. The following table summarizes the basic information of nonstandard workers at the V-Car Pacheco plant:

Table 3.6: *Nonstandard Work Arrangements at V-Car*

Name of hiring company	Tasks	Nonstandard arrangement	Union contract/S.M.A.T.A.?
Lin	Janitorial	Subcontracted	Yes/No
Segure	Security	Subcontracted	Yes/No
BF	Painting	Subcontracted	Yes/No
DD	Logistics	Temporary	Yes/Yes
HO	Re-painting	Temporary	Yes/Yes

There are subcontracted companies in charge of janitorial tasks, logistics and transportation of products, quality control and security, among others. In addition there are two companies hiring temporary workers for V-Car: DD hires workers under 18-month contracts, and HO hires workers on 3 to 6-month contracts. In general, subcontracted

workers have lower salaries and worst working conditions than V-Car workers. Bigger subcontractors allow the existence of union representatives, and abide by the collective bargaining agreement of its respective activity. Temporary workers, on the other hand, have salaries and working conditions that are similar to those of V-Car workers, and are protected by the S.M.A.T.A union contract. Their main disadvantage, of course, is the short term character of their labor contract. In the following sections, I analyze the politics of nonstandard work arrangements in the V-Car Pacheco plant in the past few years, focusing on the case of janitors and temporary workers.

Subcontracted Janitors

By 2010, when I conducted fieldwork research for this dissertation, janitors working at V-Car had higher salaries than janitors employed in other companies thanks to a monthly bonus that was added to their basic salary. During the past three years, they won a campaign that guaranteed them this bonus, as well as the right to have lunch at the plant's restaurant together with V-Car workers. In addition, S.M.A.T.A. union representatives include their salaries as one discussion item of their yearly salary negotiations. In the following pages I the role of role of auto workers' shop floor union during the campaign that resulted in these improvements.

Janitors' disadvantages in relation to salaries and working conditions are expressed in the collective bargaining agreement that regulates their activities. The agreement of the Janitors' Union (Sindicato de Obreros de Maestranza) is particularly disadvantaged when compared to that of the auto workers' union. By 2007, janitors at V-Car started to demand that the auto workers' union (S.M.A.T.A.) should include them in their collective bargaining agreement and salary negotiations. The demand gained

momentum among V-Car janitors after subcontracted janitors at the nearby Ford Motors factory won a similar campaign:

“Q: Before they got the bonus, were janitors demanding standard contracts?”

A: Yes, at that time janitors here knew what had happened at Ford. There was this subcontractor called Todoli that was in charge of janitorial work at Ford. Janitors at Ford were under the janitors union’s collective agreement, but in all other companies, Todoli employees were under the Truck Drivers’ agreement. So Janitors at Ford started to demand the Truck Drivers’ agreement, which is much better than the janitors’. So the auto workers’ union S.M.A.T.A. included some of these janitors under their agreement, so they could avoid the Truck Drivers’ Union entering the company. So now, those janitors that are cleaning the site of production got the new contracts. And when janitors at V-Car learned about that they started a campaign to get the S.M.A.T.A. agreement. [...]” (Personal Interview, Miguel, Union Activist at V-Car, 09/01/2010)

The first result of the campaign was that they won the right to have lunch at the factory’s plant. But their main demand was still unfulfilled: their salaries were still determined by the janitors’ collective agreement. At that time, this contract stipulated a basic salary of AR\$1300, compared to AR\$5000 for auto workers. The regular meetings that janitors were having in the factory to discuss their situation called the attention of S.M.A.T.A. union activists. Shop floor representatives decided to support the janitors’ campaign.

Once auto workers got involved in the campaign, shop floor activists of the S.M.A.T.A. union actually took the lead of the campaign. They would tell janitors when to mobilize, and when to strike, and would lead the negotiations with management (Personal Interview, Ciro, Union representative of Janitors at V-Car, 01/25/2011; Personal Interview, Ale, Union representative of Janitors at V-Car, 01/25/2011). But instead of demanding that janitors should be included under the S.M.A.T.A. collective agreement, activists shifted the campaign’s objective to higher salaries. Three years later, when I conducted fieldwork

research in the plant, two of the auto workers' union activists explained me why they couldn't demand to switch janitors to their collective agreement:

"There is a legal reason why janitors are under the Janitors' union collective agreement. So we can't just tell the labor office that we want them to join the auto workers' union. They belong to a different union. We can't steal workers from them. Right now they are still under the janitors' collective bargaining agreement, but they have higher salaries than any other janitor anywhere. And any problem that they have, they ask for our help. They don't go to their union, they come to us. And the company also talks to us. It's sad, but that's the truth [...]" (Personal Interview, Guillermo, Union Activist at V-Car, 09/06/2010)

"For example, janitors at Ford are under the S.M.A.T.A. collective bargaining agreement. They are hired by Todoli, which is a subcontractor, but they are part of the auto workers' union.

Q: Is it possible to win that for V-Car janitors?

A: No, it would be very difficult to win that.

Q: What is the union's take on this?

A: We think that we first need to give them some directions [ordenarlos]. So only after all 500 janitors are organized we can think [of bringing them to our union]

Q: And could you demand standard V-Car contracts for them?

A: No. We can eventually get them under our collective agreement but they would still be Lin employees. Not V-Car employees [...] But we first need to give them some directions [ordenarlos]. If we add them to our union without first giving them some directions, we are just adding a problem to our union.

Q: What do you mean when you say 'giving them some directions'?

A: I mean that we have to convince them to always follow the union guidelines. They should always listen to the union representative. They should follow a leader. Because right now there are 500 janitors, and maybe 100 of them listen to the union rep, 200 don't listen, and 100 don't know what to do. So if we add them to S.M.A.T.A. we are adding 500 problems to the 4,000 problems we already have. Once they start supporting their union representatives we can think of adding them to S.M.A.T.A." (Personal Interview, Marcelo, Union Activist at V-Car, 10/20/2010)

These two excerpts summarize the activists' perspective regarding janitors' demand to be protected by the auto workers' collective agreement. They ruled out any strategy to get this in the short term, using as a justification that they couldn't steal workers

from another union. And they think that, even if at some point it might be possible to include janitors in their union, there is no chance to winning for them standard contracts. Based on this perspective, during the 2007-fight they switched the campaign's objective. Janitors were first demanding to be protected by the auto workers' collective agreement and ended up asking for a salary raise. They actually won the raise, and starting in 2007 janitors working for V-Car get a AR\$500 bonus to supplement their salaries.

Some janitors were disappointed with the changing strategy, but they couldn't organize for an alternative strategy, given the influence of the shop floor union in the plant, as well as the fact that an important group of janitors supported this strategy. Checho is a 25-year-old janitor that was part of this campaign. He wasn't a core activist, but did participate in the different actions of protests that janitors coordinated with S.M.A.T.A. union officials. Even if he really values the outcome of this campaign (the pay raise and the right to have lunch in the plant), he also expresses some disappointment for the changing objective:

“Once we won the in-factory lunch, we started the campaign for pay raise. We first organized janitors' meetings in the factory so V-Car could see that we were unhappy about some things. And after a while, we started the coordination with the shop floor union, who were giving us guidelines on when to stop working. They wanted us to do that so V-Car workers could see us, and they said ‘Don't worry if there is a problem, because we support you all the way. We will fight until you get your pay raise’.

Q: When was that? 2007?

A: Yes. But Lin didn't want to give us the raise. They said ‘We can pay them half of the raise, but V-Car has to pay the other half’. Ha ha ha. They didn't want to pay it all. So there were some meetings between Lin, V-Car and the shop floor union to discuss who was going to pay us the raise [...] after one month of negotiations we got a AR\$500 monthly bonus jointly paid by both companies [...]

Q: Why do you think the shop floor union decided to support your demands even if you were not part of their union?

A: Well, at some point they said we might be able to get under the auto workers' collective agreement. We would still be employed by Lin but we could have an auto workers' labor contract. But I don't know what happened with that

proposal. It didn't work. The union representatives told us we should wait, that we could get auto workers' contracts if we struggled for them but that it would take some time. So that way they started to [abandon that demand]. And we believed in them but they did nothing.

Q: Did you want to be protected by the auto workers' collective agreement? A: Yes, sure. Because we would get better pay that way. And right now we still want that. Q: But do you also demand to be directly hired by V-Car?

A: Yes, we would [like that] but it all depends on the shop floor union. They have the power to do that. If they want us to get V-Car contracts, that will happen [...] but they said they were going to fight to unionize janitors as auto workers. They said we should wait because it wasn't easy. They said 'the janitors' union won't be happy if we add you to our union. They don't want to lose their members' and that way they deceived us.

Q: What was your demand at that time?

A: We wanted a pay raise. Well, we actually wanted to change unions so we could be included under the S.M.A.T.A. collective agreement. That way we could make twice the money we make now.

Q: Have you ever asked to be directly hired by V-Car?

A: No. If we ever asked that, the union representatives would be really mad at us. They always tell us what to do.

Q: So there was no chance to get janitors into the S.M.A.T.A. collective agreement?

A: There was a chance, but right now they don't talk about it anymore. I don't think there is a chance right now [...] We still get a pay raise when auto workers do, but if we ask for auto workers contracts they won't like it, and maybe we lose what we have. That's how they work. You can't organize on your own. They have the power.

Q: And did you talk among yourselves about getting auto workers' contracts?

A: Yes, sure. We talked about that. But we are afraid that if we demand that, we might lose our jobs" (Personal Interview, Checho, former Janitor currently Temporary worker at V-Car, 10/18/2010)

This excerpt summarizes the involvement of the S.M.A.T.A. activists in the janitors' campaign. They changed the objective of the campaign, which started as a struggle for new union contracts and ended as a struggle for a pay raise. During the campaign, S.M.A.T.A. activists coordinated their actions with Ciro and Ale, who, at that time, were

rank-and-file janitors active in the struggle. After they settled for the monthly bonus instead of the union contracts, Ciro and Ale became official union representatives of janitors at the V-Car Pacheco plant. When I interviewed them in 2010, they recalled how some janitors were unhappy with the outcome of the campaign, and a period of “discipline” to go back to work was necessary:

After we won the pay raise, they [S.M.A.T.A. activists] told us ‘Where there is a right, there is also an obligation’. They gave us the right, so we have the obligation to work. Some janitors just stopped working hard enough. So it took us quite an effort to convince everyone to go back to work.

Q: Why? They got used to the strikes?

A: Yes, they got used to that. C: They thought that it was going to be like that forever [...]” (Personal Interview, Ciro, Union representative of Janitors at V-Car, 01/25/2011; Personal Interview, Ale, Union representative of Janitors at V-Car, 01/25/2011)²⁰

“C: That was all to our benefit. But there were some janitors that didn’t understand how to behave.

A: They took advantage of the situation.

C: Yes, they wanted to strike for no reason. And it doesn’t work that way. You can’t stop production for no reason” (Personal Interview, Ciro, Union representative of Janitors at V-Car, 01/25/2011; Personal Interview, Ale, Union representative of Janitors at V-Car, 01/25/2011)

This section has described the union’s involvement in a janitors’ campaign for better salaries and working conditions. The outcome of the campaign was that janitors got a monthly bonus of AR\$ 500 jointly paid by V-Car and Lin. In addition, S.M.A.T.A. currently gets involved in the janitors’ yearly salary negotiations. As a result of this, janitors at V-Car have better salaries and working conditions than janitors in other companies. For example, in 2010, the basic salary for Janitors was AR\$1800, while the basic salary of a Janitor working at V-Car is AR\$2500. However, the intervention of the auto workers’ union also

²⁰ This was a joint interview, but in the references I cite them as two separate interviews, because in addition to the joint questions, each union representative answered a separate set of questions.

meant that a campaign for union contracts was transformed into a campaign for better salaries. And S.M.A.T.A.'s union officials were responsible for this changing strategy, and implementing a "discipline" policy after janitors obtained the pay raise.

Temporary jobs

In December 2009, V-Car Argentina organized the public launching of the Amarok Pickup for the local market. In presence of public authorities (including the nation's president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner) the company's president Víctor Klima announced that "Since we are already the number one car dealer in Argentina, the launching of this project is the ice for the cake: the worldwide production of the Amarok happens here, in Pacheco" (Diario El Litoral, 01/06/2010).

The Amarok project had a huge impact in the V-Car manufacturing plant located in Pacheco. According to union sources, in 2008 the plant was producing around 300 cars a day, totaling 80,000 cars that year. By that time there were around 4,000 workers employed in different areas of the Pacheco plant, 3,000 of whom were dedicated to production tasks. By 2010, the daily production output was over 500 cars a day, there were around 4,500 workers in production duties.

In order to produce the Amarok pickup, the company had to develop for the first time ever a three-shift-production scheme (producing 190 units, 190, 160), hiring around 1,300 workers between 2009 and 2010. The majority of these hires were done through nonstandard labor arrangements. In the following pages, I analyze the politics around nonstandard work arrangements that were part of the launching of the Amarok project.

Like all worldwide car manufacturing projects, the decision about where to locate the Amarok project was based on the competition between manufacturing plants located in

different countries. The project seemed to be a great opportunity for V-Car Argentina, which had never been in charge of the launching of a V-Car car model before. Usually, projects were first launched in other countries and then brought to Argentina. In addition, the project would bring new economic and human resources to the company.

According to union sources, V-Car Argentina had good chances of being selected for the project; however, a major obstacle was that it would need to hire too many workers in order to produce the pickup. German management at the headquarters would not accept so many hires, so the solution seemed to be based on negotiations between local management and the union. Based on the assumption that otherwise the project would go to some other location, the auto workers union agreed to allow local management to underestimate the hiring they need to do for the Amarok project, and then hire subcontracted companies and temporary workers to complete the workforce needs for the third working shift.

The first nonstandard work arrangement resulting from the Amarok project was the hire of around 1,000 workers through a subcontracted company called DD. Even if the legal form of this hires is subcontracting, this is actually a form of hidden temporary contracts. Workers hired by DD have 18-month contract and are in charge of internal and external logistics of the Amarok project. DD workers are protected by the collective bargaining agreement of the auto workers' union S.M.A.T.A. They have the same workplace rights and salaries as workers hired by V-Car. The major disadvantage of this group of workers is, thus, the instability of their labor contract.

A second group of around 300 workers was hired by the temporary agency HO under short term contracts of 4 months, 6 months or 12 months. HO is a staffing agency which is in charge of job searches for V-Car Argentina, and is also the employer for V-Car temporary workers. This group of workers is in charge of re-doing certain parts of those

pickups that come out from production with some kind of failure. They are also covered by the collective bargain rights of S.M.A.T.A., so their main disadvantage is the short term character of their contracts.

The existence of a hegemonic factory regime and a strong labor union shaped the politics of nonstandard work arrangements at the V-Car Argentina Pacheco plant after the launching of the Amarok Project. Local management and unionists agreed to allow nonstandard work arrangements in order to win the worldwide competition between V-Car manufacturing plants. As of 2010 there were rumors of exporting the manufacturing of certain components of the Amarok pick up to South Africa, with a subsequent job loss in the Pacheco plant. The existence of these constant threats of job loss makes it unlikely that the union will try to upgrade nonstandard jobs that came to existence with the Amarok project. The management-union agreement of the past has then locked the union in a place where it cannot lead struggles against nonstandard work arrangements, since the upgrading of jobs will depend on the future of the Amarok project.

FR-Meat: Nonstandard Work under Flexible Paternalism

The Argentinean meat industry has experienced an unprecedented growth since the currency devaluation of 2002. However, this growth trend has not reversed the historical cyclic pattern of the industry, which varies according to the international market for the product and cattle production patterns in Argentina.

These cycles were sharpened after 2006 because of an export quota system implemented by the government with the goal of keeping meat prices at affordable prices and in 2008 because of the local impact of the global financial crisis. For example, 2009 was a record year for the meat industry (Fortunaweb, 11/10/2011), but since then, exports

went down by 54% in 2010 and slaughtering went down by 30% to 11 million heads per year. Overall, the stock went down from 58 to 49 million heads since 2006 and there were 15,000 layoffs in the industry (La Nación, 04/10/2011).

The overall figures for production and employment in the industry show that companies deal with the instability of its markets by transferring the risk to workers, hiring in periods of growth and firing workers in periods of production decline. FR-Meat is no exception to this pattern, and deals with the cyclic character of production with a factory regime that can be defined as Flexible Paternalism. This regime combines a paternalistic approach to labor relations with the imposition of different non standard labor arrangements and high labor force turnover. In the following pages I describe the basic characteristics of Paternalism and how, after 2008, a grassroots union challenged this regime by organizing against nonstandard work arrangements.

Nonstandard Work Arrangements

Established in 1974 in the city of Pacheco, FR-Meat is one of the largest meat packing companies in Argentina. The factory regime developed in the plant can be defined as Flexible Paternalism, as it combines a charisma-based domination with the flexibility provided by nonstandard work arrangements. As any other factory regime, flexible paternalism combines a set of policies that link the company and the community with a set of policies that regulate labor relations within the workplace. In the workplace, the company imposes flexible paternalism through two main mechanisms: flexible production through nonstandard work arrangements and a “social peace agreement” between the company and the shop floor union.

In August 2010, there was a workforce of 700 workers, 580 of whom were assigned to production duties (Personal Interview, Luis, Manager at FR-Meat, 07/15/2011), making it the biggest employer in the Argentinean meat industry. Even if the majority of workers are legally hired and unionized, there are two types of nonstandard work arrangements: the treatment of part of the workforce as ‘de-facto’ temporary workers and the existence of subcontractors that are in charge of specific duties and working shifts. The following table summarizes these arrangements:

Table 3.7: *Nonstandard Work Arrangements at FR*

Company	Nonstandard arrangement	Tasks	Union contract?
FR-Meat	Quasi-temporary contracts	Production	Yes
NV	Subcontracted	Production	Yes
AK	Subcontracted	Production	Yes

Regarding temporary work, FR-Meat has been implementing a hidden temporary contracts policy which affects mostly young workers and women. It is hidden because workers are usually given full permanent contracts, but when they are laid off, they are forced to resign to their rights to severance payment and unemployment benefits. The benefits that workers are forced to resign include the right to be paid in cash a sum equaling to a percentage of one salary for every year of work, monthly unemployment salary for 6 months and the right to health benefits for 6 months after laid off. If they resign to these rights, supervisors and managers promise them that they will be hired again in the future, if production output grows again (Personal Interview, Cesar, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/21/2010).

Most workers usually accept this suggestion, and search for informal work in construction or the meat industry in the periods when the company doesn't need them. As a result of this temporary employment policy, the job trajectories of young workers and women combine periods of full time employment at the Frigorífico with periods of unemployment or informal employment in the meat industry.

The second nonstandard work arrangement imposed by the company is the subcontracting of certain production duties. There are two subcontractors in charge of production duties in the Frigorífico. The first one is NV, which hires 50 workers for cleaning and packaging the animal's offal for export clients. These workers have similar salaries and working conditions as those of standard workers. The second subcontractor, AK is in charge of the meat processing tasks of *Depostada* during the night shift. The *Depostada* sector is a high salary sector linked to the Frigorífico's export clients. The existence of the subcontractor, therefore, reduces the structural power of standard workers, since management can threaten them with shifting production to the subcontractor. The subcontractor hires between 30 and 90 workers, depending on management's decision of the proportion of meat processing that should be outsourced at any given time.

Subcontracted workers at AK have similar salaries to standard workers, and like standard workers, their salary also depends on production output. However, their production levels are much more uncertain, and they don't have a "guaranteed income" if production goes down. The main problem facing AK workers is that around 70% of their salary is off the books and they lack proper medical coverage of work-related illness. Because they are being paid off the books, they don't have the right to paid vacations and the salary bonus that standard workers get twice a year. Finally, although they work the night shift, they don't get paid the salary differential for night work included in the meat

workers union's collective agreement (Personal Interview, Pedro, former Subcontracted worker and Union representative at FR-Meat, 09/29/2010).

Union-Management Agreement and its Breakdown

The policy of nonstandard work has been possible in the Frigorífico because of the existence of a paternalistic factory regime based on the agreement between the company and the shop floor union. The paternalistic agreement between the company and the shop floor union lasted until November 2008, and it was mostly based on the exchange of low levels of conflict in the shop floor for economic gains for union officials.

Different workers confirmed during the interviews that it was well known in the plant that union officials in the past would sell out to the company in exchange for guaranteeing low levels of conflict. One member of the current shop floor union told me that "historically, the company used to meet with elected unions officials and ask them what their personal needs were, and just buy them out" (Personal Interview, Cesar, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/21/2010). According to other activists, shop floor union officials would make AR\$3,000 every two weeks in exchange for guaranteeing the "social peace" in the plant (Personal Interview, Camilo, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/14/2010)

One key actor in the history of this paternalistic agreement at FR-Meat is Hugo Segundo Molina, who is currently the general secretary of the regional meat packers union and leader of the Peronist group that runs the union. Starting in the early 1980s, Molina has been the leading figure of the shop floor union at FR-Meat, developing strong ties with the company owner Rodolfo Constantini. In the 2008 union elections, the Peronist group presented two candidates for the regional union elections. Molina was one of them, and won the election thanks the economic and political support of Rodolfo Constantini

(Personal Interview, Pedro, former Subcontracted worker and Union representative at FR-Meat, 09/29/2010). The support of Constantini was translated into a 250 vote difference in favor of Molina among the workers of FR-Meat. According to union sources, the company's human resources manager was in charge of paying AR\$15,000 to each of the election officials in the plant in order to secure that difference in votes in favor of Molina.

The unintended consequence of the split between the two Peronist groups in the 2008's elections for the regional union was that a militant grassroots group of workers won the shop floor union elections at FR-Meat. The week after the elections, management met with the newly elected officials, and as they usually did, offered them a pay raise and the possibility of not showing up to work in exchange for their "collaboration" in labor-management relations. Those who rejected the agreement would be subject to all kinds of harassment from management and unionists from the regional federation. All elected officials except 2 reached to some kind of agreement with management, or just decided to quit after months of not being paid their salary or being exposed physical violence (Personal Interview, Camilo, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/14/2010)

The remaining 2 elected officials were leading the shop floor union in March 2010, when my fieldwork research started in Pacheco. Under their leadership the shop floor union took a more militant role in the defense of workers' rights, challenging the paternalistic agreement between union and management that had historically shaped labor relations in the Frigorífico. In particular, the union took an oppositional stance towards nonstandard labor arrangements. In the following pages I describe the main changes in the union's stance towards nonstandard work arrangements since the grassroots group took over the union:

Table 3.8: *Union Strategies Towards Nonstandard Work Arrangements*

Name of hiring Company	Nonstandard arrangement	Bureaucratic union (Until October 2008)	Grassroots union (Starting November 2008-)
FR-Meat	Temporary contracts	Accepts temporary work. Demands workers to be re-hired when production grows	Rejects temporary work. Demands severance payments and unemployment benefits for laid off workers
NV	Subcontracted	Accepts because similar salaries and working conditions	Rejects in principle, but accepts because similar salaries and working conditions
AK	Subcontracted	Accepts because subcontractor bribes them	Rejects and helps subcontracted workers in struggling for better working conditions

Grassroots Challenge to Hidden Temporary Work

The company's temporary work policy was deepened since the government quota system sharpened the traditional cycles of the Argentinean meat industry, starting in 2006. Around 2007, the plant had a labor force of 1100 workers. Since then, the company laid off around 400 workers, most of who were employed at the high salary *depostada* sector (Personal Interview, Luis, Manager at FR-Meat, 07/15/2011). The majority of these workers were laid off in two rounds, 140 of them in 2008 and 78 of them in 2010. These two events provide a good opportunity to analyze how this hidden temporary contracts policy operates in times of production slowdown, and the different responses provided by the shop floor union each time.

The first layoffs, in October of 2008, were part of the company's response to a drastic drop of the international demand of meat products as the result of the global financial crisis (Infocampo, 10/21/2008). As a response to the crisis, the majority of the companies implemented special work regimes such as the reduction of working hours but did not lay off workers. FR-Meat laid off 75 workers in October 20th, and 65 workers in November that year (Personal Interview, Cesar, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/21/2010); making up to a total of 140 laid off workers as a response to the global financial crisis.

These layoffs followed the previous pattern of 'hidden' temporary employment, since the majority of workers were not given severance payment or unemployment benefits. This was possible because the leader of the regional union agreed with management that the union would not strike if workers were given the chance to be hired again when the economy recovered.

The second time in this period that the company resorted to massive layoffs was in January of 2010. This time production slowed down because of droughts in the farming regions (Infocampo, 03/09/2010). Overall, there were 350 laid off workers and around 4500 workers with some type of special work regime as the industry's response to production lull. In January 28th, FR-Meat laid off 75 workers.

As it had done in October 2008, the company tried to deal with these layoffs within the "hidden temporary employment" framework. This means that management tried to force workers to resign to their severance payment and unemployment benefits. In addition, the company announced that it would have to fire 140 more workers in the following weeks if the situation did not improve. However, this time they were confronted by the opposition of the grassroots shop floor union elected in November 2008.

The immediate response of the union was an attempt to organize an all-factory strike in order to reject the layoffs. However, they could only guarantee a partial strike (Personal Interview, Camilo, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/14/2010). Once the partial strike proved ineffective, the union organized a road blockade of the Route 9 right in front of the plant, stopping the traffic going to and from downtown Pacheco. The decision to organize a road blockade as a response to the dismissals took the labor conflict outside the plant and into the community, getting the solidarity of workers from neighboring factories, neighborhood organizations and workers living in the neighborhood of Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino.

With the support of these organizations, the shop floor union could maintain the road blockade for a few days. As a response to the blockade and the pressure of the regional union, the national labor office dictated a mandatory agreement [‘conciliación obligatoria’], which suspended the layoffs for fifteen working days, so the company and the union reached an agreement. During the period of ‘conciliación obligatoria’, there was a meeting between representatives of the regional union, the company and the labor office, during which the shop floor union organized a second road blockade in the main avenue of downtown Tigre. The result of this meeting was that the company re-hired 27 workers and agreed to pay full severance payment and unemployment benefits to the remaining 48 workers.

In summary, the grassroots shop floor union was able to fight some aspects of the hidden temporary contracts policy that the company had been implementing in the past decade. Even if they could not get all workers back to work, they got severance payment and unemployment benefits for all lay off workers. As one union activist put it:

“In January [of 2010] they dismiss 75 workers. Thanks to our struggle against that we started to gain influence again. Because we managed to get 27 of them back to work. And although 48 workers could not get their

jobs back, the novelty was that they were paid severance payment and unemployment benefits, which are things that the company never paid in the past. In the past, they used to lay off 200 workers and none got severance payment or unemployment benefits [...] it is a kind of seasonal job. There is production between February and September at most. [...] They give you a permanent contract, but when they fire you they take the risk of a judicial action by not paying you the corresponding benefits. The problem is that most workers accept that, because managers tell workers 'Look, in three months production will go up again, and I will call you back' And they say 'Ok'. And that's it. They used to lay off rounds of 50 workers, and maybe 2 or 3 hired a lawyer, that's the company's gain. And even so, the severance payment that they have to pay is not a lot. Well, what changed after this conflict is that they had to pay the severance payment and give workers unemployment benefits. And that's when our prestige among workers started to grow again" (Personal Interview, Cesar, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/21/2010)

This conflict shows the limits of a union struggle in the context of the paternalistic regime and labor fragmentation. The key event of the story is that the shop floor union was unable to organize an all factory strike. Their strategy was then to link their struggle to the community, and in this way they were able to get back some of the rights that had been taken from workers in the last decade. This strategy allowed them to revert the layoff of one third of the workers and get full severance payment and unemployment benefits for all lay off workers.

Grassroots Challenge to Subcontracting

Between 2004 and 2005, the sub-contracting company AK began a process for declaring bankruptcy and changing the legal name of the firm so it could avoid payments for past labor demands. The owner of the company had a meeting with workers and asked them to resign so the old company didn't have to provide them severance payments. In exchange, they would be re-hired by the new company, which would take into account their seniority in future payments. Although there were some attempts by union activists to

organize against this policy, the company fired all workers who were opposed to this measure and gradually convinced the rest to resign in order to be re-hired by the new company. (Personal Interview, Pedro, former Subcontracted worker and Union representative at FR-Meat, 09/29/2010).

At that time the main activists at the Frigorífico's shop floor union were aligned with the Peronist group of Segundo Molina. According to the main union activist among the subcontracted workers, unionists refused to help them in their struggle:

“At that time the main activists at the shop floor union were Fatiga and Pintos, those rats.

Q: Are they aligned with Molina?

A: Yes, they are Molina's people. They work for Molina. At that time, I asked for their help. They are the workers' representatives, and they can't allow all this illegal arrangements going on in the company. If the [Frigorífico] has a thousand employees, and they all get paid what they deserve, the union can't allow that the subcontractor is paying salaries off the books. When I told them that, they said 'We don't know about that' the just told me 'that's none of our business' ” (Personal Interview, Pedro, former Subcontracted worker and Union representative at FR-Meat, 09/29/2010)

According to this testimony, the reason union activists refused to help was that the subcontractor would pay them AR\$300 a week. These bribes were part of the broader paternalistic agreement that ruled the Frigorífico's factory regime. In particular, in this case the subcontractor was part of the agreement by buying the loyalty and support of the shop floor union. As I have already shown, this paternalistic agreement broke down in 2008, when the grassroots group was elected at the shop floor union. Now I turn to analyze now a more recent conflict that involved subcontracted workers and the grassroots activists in the shop floor union.

In March 2011, there was a labor conflict at the subcontracting company which provides evidence to evaluate the role of the shop floor union with regards to subcontracted workers after the paternalistic agreement broke down. Since December 2010 a group of subcontracted workers had been organizing a struggle in order to get their full rights as workers of the subcontractor (Personal Interview, Cesar, Union representative at FR-Meat, 03/31/2010).

After a few months of organizing, a group of workers decided to send a legal note to the company asking the company to pay them equal salary and give them equal working conditions as those of standard workers (AK workers' legal note, undated). The company's response was to send the workers another legal document denying all the charges from the workers, and stating that since they were not collaborating with the company in the workplace, there was enough legal reason for laying them off (AK workers' legal note, 03/30/2011).

The last document of this "legal battle" was the worker's denounce at the national labor office on March 31st, 2011, which was backed by the shop floor union activists (that sent a similar document to the labor office that same day). In addition to the past demands, now the workers added a few other demands. In this document, the workers also denounced that the company was harassing the organizers of the protest:

"...we also demand the payment of AR\$400 as 'refuerzo adicional no remunerativo' which was agreed upon in the yearly salary agreement of June 10th, 2010 and was never paid to us. In the past weeks the company answered our demands by cutting our working hours, bringing other workers to replace us in production, and by threatening us with massive layoffs. This is the way in which FR-Meat implements labor outsourcing, which means lower salaries for standard workers in meat processing duties of Depostada" (Legal document sent by workers to Regional Labor Office, March 31st, 2011)

The two main demands that were added to this document are that the company should give workers proper clothing and working tools; and that it should pay them AR\$400 monthly that the regional union had secured for meat packers during the yearly salary negotiations. This particular demand was suggested by the shop floor union activists, as a part of a strategy of uniting the struggle of the subcontracted workers with an ongoing struggle of standard workers to get paid the AR\$400 that the company owed them.

The company's response to this document was to lay off 14 subcontracted workers who were the main activists of this struggle. At this point, the shop floor union took the leadership of a struggle that had two main demands: that the subcontracted company should re-hire those 14 workers, that the Frigorífico should pay all workers the AR\$400 that it owed them from last year's salary agreement and that the company should give all workers a salary raise.

None of these demands were immediately addressed, leading to a labor conflict involving actions of both standard and subcontracted workers. During the conflict, the shop floor union organized a one week strike having both demands on equal standing. On April 5th and 12th, the strike was combined with a blockade of the Pan-American highway, calling the attention of the national media to the conflict (Diario Clarin, 04/05/2011).

Another important feature of this struggle was that the shop floor union had the strategy to take it to the community, with the organization of different activities involving neighborhood organization. The main activity was a music festival and soup kitchen on Friday April 9th to collect money for laid off workers and to raise awareness in the neighborhood of the problems that workers were facing. The participation of community organizations was important to make the neighborhood aware of the problems in the Frigorífico, and generated economic support for laid off workers. In addition, workers got

the invitation to give presentations at nearby schools about the problems they were facing (Shop floor union at FR-Meat, 05/02/2011).

The result of this struggle was that the subcontractor re-hired 8 of the 14 laid off workers and began negotiations to answer the demands of the workers. In addition, standard workers got the payment that the company owed them from last year. This struggle shows that it was possible to generate a solidarity strategy uniting standard workers and subcontracted workers. The main actors producing this solidarity were the grassroots activists of the shop floor union. However, the outcome also shows that it is difficult for this strategy to succeed in the framework of a strong paternalistic alliance between the company, the subcontractor and the regional union to prevent subcontracted workers from fighting for their rights. In a factory regime that sustains labor degrading policies thanks to the agreement of these powerful actors, workers had the chance to revert some of the layoffs in the subcontracting company and won the possibility of beginning negotiations about their working conditions.

3.3 Conclusion

This study has shown that an increasing activism of nonstandard workers was part of labor revitalization in all three factories. But it has also shown that union's response to the increasing demands of nonstandard workers was different in each case. Which are the variables shaping successful campaigns against nonstandard work arrangements in a context of labor revitalization? The following table summarizes the basic information of each of these campaigns in a comparative perspective:

Table 3.9: *Systematic Comparison of Campaigns Within and Across Factories*

Nonstandard Workers	Comparative case	Control Variable	Explanatory variation	Outcome
Lift-Truck Drivers at K-Foods	Janitors at K-Foods	Grassroots Union	Location within production	Standard contracts for Lift-Truck drivers vs. Nonstandard contracts for Janitors
Janitors at V-Car	DD temporary workers at V-Car	Location within production	Democratic Union	Standard contracts for Lift-Truck drivers vs. Subordinate integration of DD workers
Janitors at Ford ²¹	Janitors at K-Foods	Location within production	Bureaucratic-Hegemonic union	Monthly Bonus for V-Car Janitors vs. Better working conditions for K-Foods janitors
Lift-Truck Drivers at K-Foods	Janitors at V-Car	Location within production	Unionization drive by truck drivers union	Standard contracts for Janitors at Ford
Lift-Truck Drivers at K-Foods	Subcontracted workers at Frigorífico	Democratic union	Associational power of union Location within production	Standard contracts for lift-truck drivers vs. Improved working conditions for Frigorífico workers

The most successful campaigns revealed in this study were those of lift-truck drivers and temporary workers at K-Foods who were able to change their labor contracts from nonstandard to standard after the activists' campaigns from 2006 to 2008. The structural advantage of both groups of workers in comparison to Janitors at K-Foods was that they not only had a daily contact with standard workers, but were also a key part of the production process. This could lead us to think that there is a structural determination of the struggles against nonstandard work. However, these workers were already

²¹ The comparison between janitors at V-Car and Ford emerged in my interviews with V-Car union activists. Even if Ford is not included as a case in the dissertation, it provides useful information for this table.

disadvantaged before 2006, but there were no union campaigns to end with this disadvantage.

Furthermore, some groups of nonstandard workers at V-Car also share these two characteristics, being both part of the core production process and having daily contact with standard workers. However, there were no struggles for standard contracts in this case. This comparison also rejects straightforward voluntaristic interpretations that would say that the sufficient condition for a successful struggle against nonstandard work is the existence of a grassroots democratic and oppositional shop floor union. The partial victories and defeats of the grassroots union at the FR-Meat prove the opposite. How can we interpret the findings of this study? The following table aims at combining the variables that might explain the different union strategies in all three cases:

Table 3.10: *Analytical Comparison of Campaigns*

		Organizational logic of the union and Associational Power		
		Bureaucratic/ Strong	Democratic/Strong	Democratic/Weak
Role of nonstandard workers in production	Core	Subordinated Integration into the hegemonic regime through salaries and working conditions	Successful campaigns for standard contracts	Partially successful struggle to eliminate temporary contracts
	Non-core	Subordinated Integration into the hegemonic regime through salaries and working conditions	Long term goal of standard contracts combined with short term support for better salaries and working conditions	Long term goal of standard contracts combined with short term support for better salaries and working conditions

The comparison between the three cases shows how the combination of production politics, associational power and organizational logic of the union affect union strategies regarding nonstandard work. In the case of V-Car, the union strategy of cooperation was also reflected in the case of nonstandard work. As part of the hegemonic agreement the union accepts the company's flexible employment policies. The first example of this is the union's co-optation of the labor militancy of janitors. Although janitors first demanded their inclusion in the "auto workers" collective agreement, when the shop floor union took over the struggle, the main goal of the campaign changed into better salaries. In addition, in 2010, the union accepted temporary contracts as part of the launching of a new pickup in the V-Car Pacheco plant. This project was based on the creation of a third working shift in the plant, mostly based on temporary contracts. These shows that in the framework of the hegemonic regime, a shop floor union might use its associational power to improve the working conditions of nonstandard workers, but at the same time reinforcing the precariousness of their labor contracts.

FR-Meat shows a very different situation. In 2008, a grassroots union is elected in the framework of a strong paternalistic factory regime, leading to the existence of a grassroots democratic union with low associational power. In 2008-2010, the union develops a strong oppositional stance towards nonstandard work arrangements, and attempts to build solidarity networks between standard and nonstandard workers. This was expressed in the union's strategies during two recent labor conflicts. First the union organized workers against the temporary work policy implemented by the company in January 2010. The union could not guarantee an all-factory strike against the layoffs. However, it developed strong relationships with community organizations, and it achieved a partial victory when the company re-hired one third of the workers and gave severance payments and unemployment benefits to the rest.

In addition, the union was able to create solidarity links between standard and nonstandard workers in a struggle of subcontracted workers for better working conditions and salaries. The result of this struggle was that the subcontractor re-hired 8 of the 14 laid off workers and began negotiations to answer the demands of the workers. Standard workers got the payment that the company owed them from last year. These struggles show that it was possible for a grassroots democratic union to generate a solidarity strategy uniting standard workers, temporary workers and subcontracted workers. The main actors producing this solidarity were the grassroots activists of the shop floor union. The outcome also shows that it is difficult for this strategy to succeed in the framework of a strong paternalistic alliance between the company, the subcontractor and the regional union to prevent nonstandard workers from fighting for their rights.

Finally, in the case of K-Foods, the combination of a grassroots democratic union with strong associational power resulted in two successful campaigns against nonstandard work arrangements. Nonstandard workers at K-Foods were disadvantaged in economic terms (their salaries were substantially lower than those of standard workers) and their employment contracts lacked stability. Because of these objective conditions and the lack of interest of union leaders and activists in opening up the union as a space of activism, they had been excluded from labor organizing.

Once they started to get involved in union politics and shop-floor activism, they proved the success of a union strategy based on strong associational power and grassroots democratic organization. In opposition to the established union practices, nonstandard workers' campaigns were based on regular meetings of rank-and-file workers as the place for collective deliberation and decision making. A nearby restaurant was the site of countless meetings that often gathered dozens of workers and sometimes (in

moments of more intense activism) hundreds of nonstandard workers (and some standard workers) who would collectively decide labor actions and goals.

The second characteristic of this grassroots activism has been its energetic pursuit of the creation of solidarity ties between standard and nonstandard workers. The group, whose main priority was the transformation of temporary and outsourced jobs into standard jobs, was able to combine this demand with those of existing standard workers. For example, during the blockade of the Pan-American Highway of May 2007, the group demanded a pay raise for standard workers and the end of temporary and outsourced employment. Likewise, most of the group's social activities were oriented toward creating these solidarity ties, such as soccer tournaments or birthday celebrations that gathered together standard and nonstandard workers.

This grassroots strategy of solidarity has proved to be an effective way of fighting the company's nonstandard labor policies in the past few years. The movement went beyond this achievement, and by November 2009 it won the shop-floor union elections. Most of the elected union officers are temporary or outsourced workers who became standard workers thanks to the two labor actions described above. In this case, the grassroots shop-floor activism of nonstandard workers was able to generate solidarity practices in a context that had been previously adverse for labor actions aimed at uniting standard and nonstandard workers. The emergence of these practices of solidarity reversed the tendency toward labor fragmentation imposed by capitalist employment policies. In the past, this fragmentation was reinforced by the nationally driven agenda of the FTIA.

3.4. Appendix I: Systematic Comparison Across Cases

Table A3.1: *Systematic Comparisons Across Cases*

	Nonstandard workers	Role of nonstandard workers in production	Daily contact with standard workers	Union campaigns for improving conditions? Success?	Union campaigns to end nonstandard work? Success?
K-Foods	Lift-truck drivers	Core	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
	Janitors	Non-core	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/No
	Temporary	Core	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
V-Car	DD temporary workers	Core	Yes	No	No/--
	HO temporary	Non-core	Yes	No	No/--
	Janitors	Non-core	Yes	Yes	No/--
FR-Meat	Temporary workers	Core	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Partial
	Subcontracted	Non-core	No	Yes/Yes	Yes/No

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Chapter 4

Labor Revitalization in a Fragmented Landscape: Union Strategies in the Community

4.1 Introduction

The fragmentation of the working class in Latin America over the past three decades has coincided with the decline of labor organizing among workers employed in the formal economy. However, recent Argentine history suggests that the labor movement became increasingly relevant again, due to protests organized by workers employed in firms of the formal economy. In this context, this chapter asks the following question: Are there union strategies beyond the workplace that establish relations of solidarity between formal and informal workers? Or, on the contrary, is labor revitalization exclusively based on the monopolistic actions of unions to protect formal sector workers?

In order to address this puzzle, this chapter draws on a study of union strategies in three formal sector factories located in the city of Pacheco, Argentina: K-Foods, V-Car and FR-Meat meat packing plant. The evidence shows that labor revitalization in two of the three factories included new strategies of organized labor to establish relations of solidarity with organizations of informal workers.

However there are differences in the intensity and geographical scale of those relations: the shop floor union at FR-Meat developed strong relations with grassroots organizations of the local neighborhoods. In the case of K-Foods, the union has reached the local neighborhoods in some instances, but most of its militant energy was focused on the broader community of the Northern Gran Buenos Aires Region. Finally, the shop floor

union at V-Car did not develop new strategies to reach informal workers beyond the workplace. This union was part of unstable coalitions with organizations of informal workers as part of the ruling Peronist party, but it didn't establish lasting relations of solidarity with these organizations.

The next section clarifies the concepts I use to compare the three cases. I then focus on the strategies that unions have developed beyond the workplace to relate to organizations of informal workers. In the final section, I present a systematic comparison of strategies and discuss the variables that explain the variation in the scale and intensity of the solidarity in each case. I also address the relevance of these findings to understand new labor activism in Argentina since 2003.

4.2 Conceptual Map: Sources of Variation in Union Strategies in the Community

Existing theories are unable to explain the combination of labor resurgence and high informality because they underestimate the relations between formal and informal workers in contexts of high labor informality. This view assumes that informality constitutes a deep cleavage that divides the working class in Latin America and blocks the possibilities of labor mobilization in the region. In this chapter, I propose an alternative view that studies the organizing links between organizations of formal workers rooted in the factories and community organizations gathering mostly informal workers.

Instead of assuming that informality is a class cleavage that isolates the organizing efforts of the formal working class, empirical research will help me find out whether or not there are organizing linkages between organizations of formal and informal workers. The study of these links will be guided by the distinction between two ideal types of labor organizing: *exclusive* organizing happens when formal sector unions have no organizing

ties with community organizations. On the other hand, *inclusive* organizing will be present when unions establish relation of solidarity with community organizations. Solidarity is defined as the willingness of one group to make sacrifices for the interests of the other group.

The definition of *inclusive* organizing is based on previous research that has noted the emergence of “models of fusion” that tie labor organizing to community-based organizations (Clawson 2003; Moody 1997; Collins 2003). This literature suggests the importance of studying union’s strategies of solidarity outside of the workplace, which is much broader than workplace unionism (Seidman 1994). Based on this framework, I answer here the following question: Are there organizing efforts across the informality divide in contemporary Argentina?

In order to answer this question, I study unions strategies aimed at establishing relations of solidarity with organizations of informal workers in the community that surrounds the three factories. The objective of the chapter is to describe these relations and explain the sources of variation in the scale and intensity of the solidarity. The two characteristics of each case that I will take into account to explain variations are the *localization strategy* of the capitalist firm and the *organizational logic* of the union.

The firm’s *localization strategy* refers to site-specific character of labor control strategies (McKay 2006). This is one of the dimensions of the company’s factory regime, defined in chapter 3 as the combination of the political and ideological effects of the organization of work and the apparatuses of production which regulate production relations (Burawoy 1985: 7-8). I add here a new dimension to the analysis of the company’s factory regimes: the different ways in which companies relate to surrounding communities and labor markets (Lee 1995; Collins 2003).

In particular, I analyze from which neighborhoods management recruits workers. The geographical pattern of hires determines the workforce housing pattern. In operational terms, I distinguish between dispersed and concentrated workforces. A workforce housing pattern is concentrated when the majority of the workers live in the two nearby neighborhoods included in this study: Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino. This is the housing pattern that best describes the workforce at the FR-Meat. On the other hand, a workforce is dispersed when only a minority of the workers lives in these two neighborhoods. However, this dispersion is always relative because the majority of the workers live in a broadly defined Northern Gran Buenos Aires region (NGBA). This definition describes the workforce housing pattern at K-Foods and V-Car.

Once I have analyzed each company's localization strategy I turn to the analysis of the shop floor union's organizational logic, which distinguishes between democratic and bureaucratic unions. Following Fung and Wright (2003: 5), in the introduction I have defined a union as democratic if it uses democratic decision making processes through which rank and file workers make decisions through deliberation. This description fits the grassroots unions at K-Foods and FR-Meat, since both unions emerged from a grassroots organizing process that challenged existing bureaucratic leaderships in those factories. On the other hand, I have defined the shop floor union at V-Car as "bureaucratic", because of its alignment with the national leadership and the absence of truly democratic elections that might impose alternative views in the shop floor.

Table 4.1: *Sources of Variation in Union Strategies in the Community*

Case	Workforce Housing Pattern	Organizational logic of union
K-Foods	Dispersion	Democratic
V-Car	Dispersion	Bureaucratic
FR-Meat	Concentration	Democratic

The hypothesis here is that the firm's localization strategy determines the *structure of opportunities* for the local union to get involved in politics beyond the workplace through the geographical distribution of workers' housing. In this framework, the organizational logic of the union explains the union's *motivation* to establish political alliances beyond the workplace. The interaction between *localization strategies* and union's *organizational logic* will determine the scale and intensity of the union's organizing strategy beyond the workplace.

K-Foods

During the first month of fieldwork, I asked workers and union activists at K-Foods if there was one city or neighborhood where the majority of K-Foods workers lived, and where they focused their organizing strategies beyond the workplace. The most common answer that I got to my question was "I have no idea, but I think somewhere in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires region". On other occasions, they would mention at least five or six cities from the NGBA as possible sites:

"[...] most of the workers live in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires. Places like Malvinas Argentinas. In the Malvinas Argentinas district, [cities like] Grandborough, Polvorines, Villa de Mayo, Pablo Nogues [...]. There are a lot of people coming from Jose C. Paz and from Garin. Well, people also come from Tigre, el Talar. Some people live in the surroundings [like] Ricardo Rojas, el Talar, Las Tunas. And there are also workers coming from the Southern Gran Buenos Aires, the Capital city. They are *los trasladados*" (Personal Interview, Pablo, Union Activist at K-Foods, 04/15/2010)

At first, I thought that this lack of knowledge of specific neighborhoods accounting for the majority of workers' houses was going to be an obstacle to study union's organizing

strategies in the community. However, as I continued interviewing activists and managers, I realized that these answers were themselves good evidence of the workforce housing pattern: there is no one single city or neighborhood accounting for the majority of workers' houses. Based on my interviewees with union activists and managers, I can estimate the following geographical distribution of K-Foods workers' place of residence:

Table 4.2: *K-Foods: Percentage of Workers Living in Each Area*

	% of Workforce
NGBA (except nearby neighborhoods)	60
Nearby neighborhoods	10
Southern Gran Buenos Aires and other	30
Total workforce	2100

Source: Own estimation based on interviews with workers and managers. Excludes nonstandard workers

This geographical pattern produces a *dispersed* workforce, because there is no single city or neighborhood where the majority of the workers live. In particular, only one tenth of the workers live in the nearby neighborhoods. Although only a minority of the workers lives in the nearby neighborhoods, around 70% of the workers live in a broadly defined Northern Gran Buenos Aires region. Within the NGBA, my informants mentioned that most of K-Foods workers live in the following districts: San Fernando (mostly the city of Garin), Jose C. Paz, Tigre (mostly the cities of Pacheco and Escobar), Malvinas Argentinas and San Miguel.

According to my key informants, workers that live in the NGBA use public transportation to commute to and from work. I confirmed this information during my non-participant observations of the factory entrance, noting that a minority of workers drives their cars, motorcycles or bicycles, while the vast majority walks from the factory door to one of the multiple bus stops located in the surroundings. In particular, workers take

public buses that travel through the Pan-American highway connecting the industrial settings to the working class neighborhoods around the NGBA. The trips home across the highway can take between 30 minutes for those living closer to the plant and up to 90 minutes for those who live further from the plant but within the limits of the Northern Gran Buenos Aires.

The second largest group of K-Foods workers lives in the Southern Gran Buenos Aires. They are called “los trasladados” [the relocated] because at some point in their work trajectories they were transferred from other production locations. The older workers in this group were already working for K-Foods when the company had its main manufacturing plant in the South, and kept their jobs when the company moved production to Pacheco in the 1970s. The younger of these workers used to work for smaller factories that were acquired by K-Foods during the 1990s and early 2000s. These workers were relocated when K-Foods decided to unify all its operations in the Pacheco Plant.

These workers live in southern neighborhoods of the city of Buenos Aires, such as San Telmo or Barracas; or in Gran Buenos Aires cities, such as Avellaneda, Quilmes or Lomas de Zamora. When the company decided to concentrate its operations in Pacheco, it established a service of charter buses for those workers living in the South. Every day, between 5 to 10 charter buses parked outside the plant waiting for workers to finish their work and start the trip home. For some workers, this trip can take around 1 hour, while for others it can take as much as 2 hours to get home.

The geographical distribution of the workforce is a direct consequence of management’s recruiting and retention decisions over the past decades. Right now, recruitment decisions are centered on workers’ educational level, work experience and

place of residence, in that order. Two of the managers that I interviewed during fieldwork explained me how this hiring process works:

“Q: How do you select and hire workers?”

J: We have two recruiting strategies. First, we work through recruiting agencies, who search and select workers for us. We also have our own database which mostly includes applications posted in our webpage. This database also includes workers’ recommendations. They can recommend persons to us, but they can’t recommend their relatives. We don’t hire our workers’ relatives because we don’t want to have conflicts of interests. Nonetheless, most of the hires are done through recruiting agencies [...] like Manpower, Addeco, Sesa, which are all located in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires [...] We provide them with the profile of the workers we need and they do the search. They run the first round of interviews and choose the potential candidates, which will then participate in group interviews conducted by our Human Resources people. After that, they go to an interview with the responsible of production lines. Finally, if we select them, they have to approve the psychological and health tests [...]

Q: What are the requirements for hiring production workers?

J: They need to have at least a high school degree. We prefer those that finished a technical high school degree. We also prefer workers that already have some experience at factory work. This plant is so big that if we hire someone who has no factory experience, they get lost. So we take that into account too” (Personal Interview, Jose, Manager at K-Foods, 03/31/2011; Personal Interview, Fabiana, Manager at K-Foods, 03/31/2011)²²

Managers highlight that the main requirements are that the candidates should have at least a high school degree and have some experience at factory work. In addition, managers prefer to hire workers that live in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires because they spend less time commuting:

“Q: Do you have any estimation of where your workers live?”

²² This was a joint interview. I cite them as two separate interviews because each manager answered separately questions about their area. A third person joined in the last hour of the interview. She was a production coordinator who led the tour through the plant that we did after the interview.

J: They are very dispersed [...] we obviously try that all new workers are area residents. A large group of workers live in the area [NGBA], including Garin, Pacheco, Escobar, Maschwitz, Maquinista Savio, Malvinas Argentinas. These area accounts for more than half of our workforce [...]. It is better for them, mostly for practical reasons.

Q: Is this also because the recruiting agencies that you use are located in the NGBA?

J: Yes, absolutely. So, most workers come from the NGBA. There is also a group of workers that used to work in *CANALE*, which was located in Barracas. They live in [the Southern cities of] Barracas, Avellaneda, Lomas de Zamora or Quilmes. The workforce is really dispersed. There are also workers coming from the Capital city [...]. Around 30% of the workers live in a city that is not located in the NGBA, because they used to live there before. For these workers we offer charter buses, because we agreed to give them that benefit when the company moved its operations [to Pacheco].

Q: Does it make a difference for the company if the worker lives closer to the plant?

J: Yes. Because it is easier for them to come to work [...] although we offer the charter buses for the other workers, it is still easier for those who live around here. The reason is that even if they take the charter bus, they still have a two hours trip to the plant. Some workers come from Berazategui, for example, which is really far from the plant. On the other hand, if you live in Escobar, which is 10km away from the plant, you have a 30 minutes bus trip. But Berazategui, for example, is 70km away from the plant. So you have to do 70km to come to work, and then another 70km to come back home. In addition you have the tolls, piquetes [road blockades]" (Personal Interview, Jose, Manager at K-Foods, 03/31/2011; Personal Interview, Fabiana, Manager at K-Foods, 03/31/2011)

The top priorities for hiring are that the person holds a high school degree and that they have some experience of factory work. In addition, as shown in the previous excerpt, managers prefer to hire workers living in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires because it is easier for them to get to work. In order to contact workers living in the NGBA region, K-Foods conducts most of its hires through multinational recruiting agencies like Manpower and Adecco, which operate branches in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires region. Within this region, only a small proportion of workers live in the

nearby neighborhoods. The reason for this is that the company hires workers who hold at least a high school degree, and most of the adult residents in these neighborhoods have not finished high school (Boniolo 2009).

In summary, the company's hiring policies over the past decades have resulted in a housing pattern of the workforce that I define as "dispersed". This means that in spite of the fact that two thirds of the workers live in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires region, there is no one single city or neighborhood where most of the workers live. In particular, only a small proportion of the workers live in the nearby working class neighborhoods. In the following section I analyze the ways in which the democratic union of K-Foods workers aims to link the factory and the community in the context of this dispersion.

Union's Politics beyond the Workplace: Building Community in the North Gran Buenos Aires

The geographical pattern of workers' housing presents a challenge to a grassroots union that aims to expand its influence beyond the workplace. All the activists that I interviewed agreed that it was important for the grassroots union to reach the working class community, but they also said that it was a difficult task in the framework of workforce dispersion.

Given that the workers at K-Foods are dispersed across quite a few neighborhoods and cities, and specifically that the majority of them does not live in the neighborhoods immediately adjoining the factory, the union's creative response was to focus community organizing on the broader Northern Gran Buenos Aires region. In particular, the union has expanded the notion of community through a combination of organizing strategies that include activism in the nearby neighborhoods but it is not restricted to them: I. Mixed campaigns based on the workplace and the community; II.

Focused solidarity with grassroots organizations from nearby neighborhoods; III.

Regional network of grassroots organizations located in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires.

Strategy I: Mixed campaigns based on the workplace and the community

The development of campaigns that combined workplace and community organizing is one of the innovations that grassroots activists brought to K-Foods' union politics. In multiple instances activists used working class neighborhoods as sites that facilitated building solidarity during organizing campaigns. Here I analyze the role of the community in two campaigns: the campaign to get standard contracts for outsourced workers between 2005 and 2007; and the campaign to promote women's rights in the shop floor and at home, starting in 2011.

The first of these campaigns shows the strategic use of informal social activities as part of union organizing. Between 2005 and 2007, the grassroots group began a campaign to win standard contracts for a group of lift-truck drivers. The group's first step during the campaign was to organize social activities, such as soccer matches and birthday barbecues. They invited both standard and nonstandard workers for this kind of activities:

“Q: Why do you think that the union achieved the solidarity of standard and nonstandard workers in 2007?”

A: [...] this unity is the result of an organizing strategy, which started from the basics, such as organizing a soccer match. We also organized birthday celebrations for our co-workers. We used to organize a birthday barbecue after work, soccer matches, etc. So workers created the tradition that the birthday person had to pay for the barbecue. If he couldn't afford it we would all pay for it, but in any case we would celebrate [...] we also regained the working class tradition of helping your co-worker to build his house. [...] That is very common right now, and everyone participates, including standard and nonstandard workers. We shared birthday celebrations, we used to go to the children's birthdays, and we helped each other to build our houses. That way, your co-worker becomes part of your life, and you don't want anyone to hurt him. So, if the company attacked a

co-worker, everyone would support him. We didn't even have to go to the [national] union because everyone in the shop floor would defend him, no matter if he was standard or nonstandard worker. That solidarity was the result of our grassroots strategy to unite standard and nonstandard workers [...] (Personal Interview, Omar, Former Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 04/28/2010)

Activities included soccer games, barbecues and birthday celebrations, as well as “construction brigades”. It is worth making the point that these kinds of informal social activities are not a novelty in the history of the Argentine working class. However, it is not everywhere that they became a vehicle for union organizing. Another worker explained me how this worked during the soccer matches:

“[...] our first steps were to arrange barbecues and soccer matches as a way to organize nonstandard workers. That's not something that occurred in one or two days. It took us months to set up these activities. The first activity was a weekly soccer match among nonstandard workers. After that, we started to invite more people [standard workers] and we even organized a few tournaments. The games confronted teams of standard workers against teams of nonstandard workers.

Q: Was there a rivalry between the two groups?

A: I think that they wanted to win the matches, so they played really hard. We just wanted to talk to them so we could get their support in our struggle for core contracts [...]” (Personal Interview, Ariel, Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 05/21/2010)

According to Ariel, during the events, they talked to standard workers about their problems in the shop floor. Actually, this excerpt suggests that nonstandard workers were less worried about winning the game than getting the support of standard workers for their demands. After a few months, the organization of social activities became a core strategy for the grassroots group in their objective of creating solidarity ties between standard and nonstandard workers.

The best example of the involvement of standard workers in these activities was a soccer tournament in early 2006. Workers and activists organized the tournament in order to collect money for a nonstandard worker who had recently been laid off. In addition to the presence of teams of standard workers, there were two teams representing informal workers living in the nearby neighborhoods:

“When we started with our strategy of ‘non-collaboration’ in the plant, the company fired one of our coworkers. So we organized a soccer tournament to collect money for him. More than 30 teams signed up for the tournament, that’s a lot. That was in the beginning of 2006. It was fully organized and managed by [nonstandard] workers. We collected the money and bought the prizes. The prize for the winner was meat and beverages for a barbecue, and the second place also got meat, but a bit less than the first place. Except for the money that we spent on the prizes, all the rest was given to our coworker [...]

Q: And who won the tournament?

A: A sector called ‘cubridora de chocolate’, which were standard K-Foods workers from the afternoon shift. And there were also teams from the nearby neighborhoods. I invited one team from Las Tunas, and another guy invited a team from Ricardo Rojas” (Personal Interview, Ariel, Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 05/21/2010)

The campaign succeeded in winning standard contracts for lift-truck drivers. In the narratives, activists suggest that social activities were instrumental to this success in two main ways: social events were sites of recruitment of new activists and they strengthened the relations of solidarity between standard and nonstandard workers. In terms of their geographical location, birthday barbecues and construction brigades were organized at the workers’ houses and neighborhoods, while the site for the soccer matches and tournaments was a soccer field located in the nearby neighborhoods.

The second instance in which union activists decided to take union politics into the community was the campaign to promote women’s rights in the workplace and the household, which started in 2011. The group of grassroots activists that won the union

elections in 2009 included 6 male activists and 5 female activists. This is the higher proportion of female activists in the history of the shop floor union. During the election process, these young and energetic activists proposed to create the women's committee as a way of fighting the discrimination against women in the shop floor and the community.

The committee, called in Spanish "Comision de Mujeres" was designed to include three groups of women: female workers at K-Foods (both standard and nonstandard), the wives of male K-Foods workers, and friends and neighbors of these workers:

"This committee is grouping female workers, but also our co-workers' wives. We think this should be extended to the neighborhoods, where our co-workers will talk to their friends and neighbors about this. That's a way to reach the neighborhoods: to make workers' organizations known in the neighborhoods [...]" (Personal Interview, Omar, Former Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 04/28/2010)

Omar says that through the inclusion of these groups, activists expected that the women's committee would become a reference for the reproductive struggles of women that live in the working class neighborhoods. Another activist explained the political orientation and goals of the committee:

"[...] we decided to set up a women's committee in the factory because we think that women are the most exploited and oppressed workers. Our salaries are lower than men's and we have no access to the higher payroll categories. We are the ones that work harder in production and support faster production pace. We see how our co-workers get their bodies mutilated at work. The company does not recognize our work related health problems like tendinitis or back pains. That's why we decided to set up a women's committee that can fight for our rights as workers, but also our rights as women. We demand that March 8 should be a holiday for women workers. We also demand that the company accepts our right to stay home to take care of our children when they are sick. We want to ask all the women that came here to deliver this message to show that women can fight. It was women who led the labor conflict [at K-Foods] during the swine flu epidemics. We want women to go on and fight and demand [their

rights]. That's why we want to propose that every union sets up a women's committee at work so you can fight for women's rights and gender demands. And we want to tell to our male co-workers: don't forget that the woman who is next to you are exploited at work and are also exploited at home because they have to do a double shift. At home she has to take care of the kids. She wakes up really early and at the end of the day she is exhausted. We are here because we want to change this" (Anonymous female activist, speech at First Encuentro de Zona Norte)

At the time of this research, the committee had just been created, so it is difficult to assess the actual functioning of the group. However, the evidence suggests that the committee was effective in advancing women's workplace demands. In the first meetings, which happened during the fieldwork period, the committee gathered both standard and nonstandard female workers, providing them a shared space to discuss their problems in the shop floor.

These meetings helped to raise awareness among all workers about the particular problems that female workers faced in the shop floor. For example, these activists played a central role in organizing and sustaining a strike denouncing a supervisor that sexually assaulted a female worker (La Verdad Obrera, 09/29/2011). The strike was called during the night shift after a female worker denounced a supervisor for making improper sexual advances at work. Management's response was to dismiss the accusation and to suspend the worker for three days. The union's response, with the central role of female activists, was to organize an all-factory strike. The strike ended when management cancelled the workers' suspension and moved the supervisor to a different sector.

The second goal of the committee was to penetrate the working class neighborhoods, linking them to the workplace through the activism of female neighbors and relatives of the workers. During the short period of fieldwork that coincided with the women's committee, I didn't find much evidence of the participation of the neighbors in the

meeting. However, the committee did make some advancement in their community involvement, like the creation of a radio show chaired by K-Foods workers and oriented to women in the community.

The show was called “Nuestra Lucha. La Voz de las Mujeres Trabajadores”, and included the participation of female workers as well as political activists of the left party “Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas”. The show was broadcasted to different neighborhoods surrounding the factory through the community radio station “Radio Benavidez”. The show aired six times between October and November of 2011. Topics discussed in the show included: work-related illnesses that affect women, women’s reproductive rights and the situation of grassroots unions in the NGBA, among other topics.

Part of labor revitalization in K-Foods during the past years can be explained by a change in the way the grassroots union has related to the workers’ neighborhoods. In this section I have analyzed two campaigns in which activists used these neighborhoods as sites to strengthen the solidarity among K-Foods workers, but also to establish ties with informal workers living in the working class communities. In the context of the geographical dispersion of the workforce, some of these activities were located in the nearby neighborhoods, but there was also an effort of the activists to reach the multiple neighborhoods where the workers live.

Strategy II: Focused Relations of Solidarity with Community Organizations

Another example of the union’s effort to take labor organizing into the community was the 2009 “swine flu” conflict, which led to the emergence of a solidarity network that tried to link the struggle of the workers to the broader community. The struggle lasted three

months and started because the company attempted to close down the child care facilities during the swine flu outbreak. The company alleged health concerns for closing the child care, but refused to provide working mothers with alternative child care or paid leave of absences. As a consequence of this, women workers would not be able to take their kids to work, as they used to do. In addition, workers denounced that they did not have face masks to protect them from a potential outbreak within the plant. The struggle included various blockades of the Pan-American Highway and multiple strikes.

As a way to end the conflict, management fired 156 workers. Most of the workers were union activists who had won a previous strike against sub-contracting jobs in 2007. After the layoffs there was a 1 month long factory takeover by the workers, which ended when the police entered the plant and expelled workers through violent repression. Two weeks later, the majority of the shop floor union and the company signed an agreement that allowed the factory to resume operations if part of the workers were reincorporated to work.

The six week conflict provides an excellent opportunity to study the relationship between the union and the community, because most of the labor actions happened outside the factory. Once workers were expelled from the shop floor, the union developed a solidarity network trying to link the struggle to the broader working class community of the Northern Gran Buenos Aires. This network included grassroots unions as well as community organizations located across the Northern Gran Buenos Aires.

The main actors within this network were the grassroots unions of other factories located in the NGBA, such as FATE (Tire production), Pepsico (Food processing) and FR-Meat (Meat packing). Activists and workers from these factories participated in different events that K-Foods workers organized outside the factory, collected money for the workers, and published numerous statements supporting the strike. The strongest support

came from the workers at FR-Meat, who conducted a one hour solidarity strike when the police expelled K-Foods workers from the shop floor.

With respect to the broader community, there was an active involvement of regional representations of unemployed workers' movements, left parties, human rights organizations and student organizations, among others. In addition, the solidarity network included the participation of grassroots organizations of the nearby neighborhoods. Based on union flyers and in-depth interviews, I could identify the following organizations from the nearby neighborhoods as part of this network: Churches from the city of Pacheco (evangelical and catholic churches from the neighborhoods of Ricardo Rojas and Las Tunas), Adult education centres from the neighborhood of Las Tunas, and Unemployed Workers Movements from the neighborhoods. Omar, who was at that time a K-Foods worker and activist, analyzes the union relationship to community organizations:

“[...] Q: Did you see that kind of support [from neighborhood organizations] during the [swine flu] labor conflict?

A: Yes, there was some support. There were some organizations that expressed their support. There were even some local churches that came to our music festivals [...] these churches are located in the surrounding neighborhoods. There were also some local unemployed workers' groups. But all this was part of embryonic neighborhood solidarity. Most of the solidarity was channeled through the [Northern Gran Buenos Aires] unemployed workers' movement, the leftist parties and college students [...] Most of the unemployed workers supporting the struggle belonged to the CCC, but there were also members of the Polo Obrero. This group was way smaller than the CCC, who was coming from Northern Gran Buenos Aires cities like Pilar and Grandborough.

Q: Was any of these groups from Pacheco?

A: No. That's why I think that there was embryonic [neighborhood] solidarity. In the future we need to work harder on achieving this. We need to have a strategy to get the neighborhood [organizations] to get involved in these struggles, because their support will be essential. [...] We think that was something missing [in our strategy]. We got some support from the neighborhoods. It was very spontaneous, and also a very embryonic support [...] For example, we got the support from evangelic and catholic

local churches. They came to our music festivals. [...] (Personal Interview, Omar, Former Lift-Truck driver and Union activist at K-Foods, 04/28/2010)

As we can learn from Omar's interview, although there was some presence of neighborhood organizations during the conflict, they played a secondary role within the broader solidarity network. Therefore, the community orientation of the union should be described as an attempt to link workplace struggles to the broader community of the Northern Gran Buenos Aires region. This includes the nearby neighborhoods like Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino, but it is not limited to them. In the months following the conflict, the union's community efforts were oriented at maintaining this solidarity network over time through the organization of regional meetings of grassroots unions rooted in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires region.

Strategy III: Regional Meetings of Grassroots Unions of the Northern Gran Buenos Aires

The third strategy to extend union organizing beyond the workplace was the creation of a network of grassroots unions of the NGBA region. As part of this strategy, the shop floor union organized two regional meetings (called Encuentro de Trabajadores de Zona Norte) on April 17th and July 31st, 2010. I conducted observations during the meetings, which gathered between 300 and 600 activists in a high school located in the city of Pacheco.

Most of the participants were union representatives and activists from companies located in the NGBA region, such as food processing industries (K-Foods, Stani, Pepsico), tire manufacturers (FATE), meatpacking plants (FR-Meat, Ecocarneres), metal workers (Finig-Cat, Emfer), petrochemicals (ALBA) and printing industries (Donolley). There were

also grassroots activists from auto industries (Ford, V-Car and Lear), bus drivers (Linea 60), and different state agencies (School teachers, county workers and hospital workers).

There were also political activists from regional branches of leftist parties (Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas, Movimiento al Socialismo, among others) as well as college students who helped to organize the event. Although a minority, there were also some activists of organizations of informal and unemployed workers living in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires. All participants were sitting in plastic chairs facing a front stage where a group of activists led the discussion under a banner of the K-Foods Workers Shop Floor union.

Pablo was the K-Foods activist giving the opening speech at the meeting. His discourse was centered on the importance of the solidarity of grassroots organizations of the Northern Gran Buenos Aires during the one month plant takeover at K-Foods in 2009. As I noted in the previous section, during the struggle K-Foods' union became the center of a network of solidarity that included all the grassroots unions in the region. In the speech, Pablo expressed a moving "Thank you" to all activists, and showed that the union had high expectations in extending this solidarity network.

After the opening speech, there were short speeches by 30 or 40 union activists. Most of the speeches focused on the need to unite core and non-core workers in the shop floor. Activists said that that one of the main goals of the workers movement nowadays is to fight against temporary work and sub-contracted work within the plants and also for salary raises that can equal the inflation index. In addition, activists proposed a broad definition of the working class that includes formal and informal workers, as well as the unemployed:

"We need to unite the working class by ending the divide between core workers, subcontracted workers, temporary workers and informal workers. We should be all under the same collective contract, and get paid the same if we do the same work.

We also have to end unemployment by reducing the work shift and through a better distribution of work hours. We can't accept that some people work 10, 12 or 14 hours a day to support their families, while there are millions suffering from hunger. Everyone should get a living wage. This is the only way to put an end to the working conditions imposed in the 1990s and maintained by this government and the political opposition [...]" (Shop Floor Union at K-Foods and other organizations, 2010)

The meetings showed a clear political orientation of the activists consisting in organizing across the informality divide. This orientation was expressed in the flyers calling to the meetings, as well as in the speeches of union activists. Probably the main weakness of this orientation was the minimal presence of organizations of informal and unemployed workers in the meetings. Nonetheless, as a witness of the meetings, I feel that the orientation was sincere and that activists honestly placed their bets at a union activism that united formal and informal workers.

Finally, the regional focus of the meetings was effective in expanding the union's influence beyond the workplace. In a framework of a dispersed workforce, the meetings are part of a systematic union strategy that redirects the orientation of their community involvement to the Northern Gran Buenos Aires. Activists have learned from past experiences that they can't focus exclusively on the nearby neighborhoods because K-Foods workers are widely dispersed across the NGBA region. In addition, they know that they would need far more resources than they have if they want to reach out the multiple neighborhoods where the workers live. Therefore, the grassroots meetings of NGBA unions are a creative and effective response to the geographic constraints to their activism.

V-Car Argentina: Workforce Dispersion and Union's Peronist Politics

By 2010, there were around 4,500 workers employed at the V-Car Pacheco plant, 3,000 of which were core workers involved in production tasks. The following table shows the geographical distribution of workers' place of residence. The estimation is based on union's records about the place of residence of the workers that were employed in production tasks in 2009:

Table 4.3: *V-Car: Percentage of Workers Living in Each Area*

	% of Workers
NGBA except nearby neighborhoods	52
Nearby neighborhoods	3
Western Gran Buenos Aires	28
Other	17
Total Workforce	2260

Source: Estimation based on 2009 union data.

This information suggests that management's hiring policies over the past decades have produced a dispersed workforce. Half of the workers live in a broadly defined Northern Gran Buenos Aires. The company prefers to hire workers living in northern cities which are well-connected to the plant through the Pan-American highway, but it does not privilege a particular city or neighborhood within this area. In particular, only a small proportion of workers live in the nearby neighborhoods of Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino. The main reason, as in the case of K-Foods, is that the company hires workers who hold at least a high school degree, and most of the adult residents in these neighborhoods have not finished high school.

Finally, one third of the workers live in different cities of the Western Gran Buenos Aires region. The majority of these workers live in major cities such as San Justo, Isidro Casanova, Moron, Moreno and Gregorio de Laferrere. This group is composed mostly of older workers who started working for the company when the plant was located in the western city of Monte Chingolo. In addition to these older workers, there is a group of younger workers who also come from these cities. These younger workers were hired through workers' recommendations. As a result of this, young workers from Western Gran Buenos Aires who have family or friendship connections to older workers got hired in the past years.

As part of my ethnographic research, I conducted observations at the main entrance of the V-Car plant in order to determine workers' preferred method of transportation to commute to work. During the fieldwork period I conducted three non-participant observations of workers coming in and out of the plant at 2pm, when workers from the morning shift are exiting the plant to leave their place to workers doing the afternoon shift. At this time of the day, there are around 2,000 workers in transit from and to the plant.

During my observations, I saw workers exiting the plant in an expedited way, eager to start their way back home. Although sometimes there were small groups chatting for a few minutes, the majority of the workers went straight to the cars, motorcycles or buses that would take them home. Every day at 2pm, the combination of cars, motorcycles and buses coming from and to the plant create a traffic jam in the Henry Ford Avenue. I could observe that a minority of workers come to work taking public buses or riding bikes, which would be a preferred transportation for those living in the nearby neighborhoods. This reflects the fact that only around 3% of the workers live in the nearby neighborhoods.

On the other hand, I could see that most of the workers drive their vehicles (mostly cars, but also motorcycles) or car-pool to work. Finally, workers living in the Western Gran Buenos Aires area choose between two forms of transportation: either they drive their cars to work (or car-pool), or they take charter buses that come to the plant from different cities in the area. As can be seen in the second picture, these charter buses usually park in front of the plant in order to wait for workers to exit the plant.

Uncomfortable Coalitions: Union's Peronist Politics beyond the Workplace

During the fieldwork period there was no single instance in which the V-Car shop floor union reached organizations of the nearby neighborhoods, or when these organizations expressed solidarity during a workplace conflict. In this case, the combination of a dispersed workforce and a bureaucratic union has resulted in the absence of a conscious strategy to organize in the community. However the fact that the union does not relate to neighborhood organizations does not mean that it is not engaged in politics beyond the workplace. As I will show in this section, the union's political engagement happens within the framework of the Peronist party.

Union activists at V-Car do not see grassroots neighborhood organizations as valid interlocutors for their activism beyond the workplace. Guillermo, who is the head of the shop floor union, explained me the reasons for this:

“Q: Are there relations between the union and neighborhood organizations?”

A: No, not at all [...] sometimes the company raises funds for poor neighborhoods. We can help them, or communicate that to the workers. If they ask for our help, we help. We [raised funds] for schools located in [poor regions of the country]. But we don't do that on our own [...] For example, in my neighborhood no one knows that I'm a union activist. They know that I work for V-Car, but that's it. We don't translate [the activism] outside the workplace.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know if there is a reason. Maybe it's because there is so much to deal with in the workplace that when you get home you want to forget about those issues. These might not be huge problems, but still you have to be alert all day. So, in my neighborhood no one knows I'm a union activist [...] It might also be because of the politics of the neighborhood. In the past, the neighborhood organizations were part of the Peronist party, but nowadays they are aligned with the left. I don't think the left is bad, but if you ask me for a reason, maybe that's the reason [...] (Personal Interview, Guillermo, Union Activist at V-Car, 09/06/2010)

Guillermo thinks that there are no relationships between the union and neighborhood organizations because of the leftist orientation of these organizations. If they were part of the Peronist party it would be easier for the union to relate to them. In the absence of an organizing strategy linking the workplace and the community, the union's activism beyond the workplace is channeled through the CGT's intervention in national Peronist politics. The shop floor union's politics beyond the workplace is based on its participation of Peronist political gatherings. Guillermo explains me how this works:

“Q: Do you consider yourself a Peronist?”

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any experience of political activism?

A: No. I think I am an activist in my workplace. Because whenever I have to go to show my support to a Peronist candidate I go, and I take with me all my co-workers. The ones that want to come with me, of course.

Q: You support local candidates?

A: No, only when it's about national elections [...] we all go to support them. Most of the unions are Peronist. Our dream is that one day we can have our own Lula Da Silva. We want a worker to become president. That's our dream. It won't be easy. Whether you like it or not, the unions are closely related to politics. There are some unions that can't even mobilize one person, but they have a lot of political power. We have the opposite problem. We can mobilize 50,000 with a one day notice, but we still don't have political power” (Personal Interview, Guillermo, Union Activist at V-Car, 09/06/2010)

The union's involvement in politics beyond the workplace is restricted to its participation in national Peronist politics. As part of this participation, the union entered into unstable coalitions with organizations representing Peronist informal and unemployed workers. During the fieldwork period there were two instances in which the union was actively involved in political events that brought autoworkers together with informal workers: The remembrance of Eva Peron, on July 26th 2010 and the memorial service of former president Nestor Kirchner, on October 27th and 28th, 2010. These events were party initiatives, and the shop floor union took part of these as part of the national labor federation.

On the evening of July 26th, around 50,000 persons marched in downtown Buenos Aires, holding candles in the memory of Eva Peron. The main speaker at the event was former President Nestor Kirchner, who was also the most likely Peronist presidential candidate for the coming 2011 election. The novelty of the event was not to be found in Kirchner's speech, but in the fact that the event was jointly organized by the National Labor Federation and the main organization of informal and unemployed Peronist workers: the *Movimiento Evita*. For the first time since the emergence of the unemployed workers' Movement in the 1990s, the main labor federation was siding with one such organization.

I arrived early at the event, when there were only scattered groups walking around the stage, and a musician singing a song in the memory of Evita. A few minutes after my arrival, the 5,000 workers column of the CGT arrived and occupied the space located right in front of the stage. Once the columns of the CGT occupied the space in front of the stage, the column of the *Movimiento Evita* arrived to the event. The column was divided into groups identified with different districts within the Gran Buenos Aires area. Under the banner of each district, unemployed and informal workers were organized according to the neighborhood where they live.

The event was presented as a joint effort of the organizations of formal and informal workers to remember the legacy of Eva Peron, and the speeches emphasized the need of solidarity between these two groups. The following excerpts from the main representatives of the National Labor Federation and the informal workers' Movimiento Evita underscores this idea:

“We didn't engage in politics to think about the public opinion polls. We engaged in politics to think about the needs of our people and the love that Evita and Peron showed to our people. That's why we are engaged in politics. And that's our President [Cristina Kirchner]'s politics too. That's why we celebrate the Asignacion Universal for our children, that's the first step forward. I can see that the head of the Social Security Administration [ANSES] is here, as well as the previous head of this institution. And we are proud that our compañeros, who are unemployed or underemployed, now have to do the paperwork [to get the Asignacion Universal] in the Social Security Administration, which is the same institution that deals with employed workers. That's because we are re-uniting the working class through equal rights [...]” (Emilio Persico, head of the Movimiento Evita, Public Speech)

“Thanks to Evita many of us had our first toy, or eat Christmas cakes for the first time. What was she teaching us? She was teaching us that we have to be aware of what we deserve. We have to be conscious about workers' rights. Like Emilio was saying before, in the past we had the Christmas cake, but now we have the Asignacion Universal por Hijo, which is awarded to the sons of the workers, whether they are employed or unemployed. That's Evita's message, and everyone should understand (especially young people) that every time Peron or Eva Peron gave a speech they were also giving us a message. And I remember when Evita used to say: the fatherland resides in every single worker” (Hugo Moyano, head of the CGT, Public Speech)

In spite of the good intentions expressed by the leaders, the relationships between the two organizations did not last long. On the contrary, in the following months, the CGT increased its pressure to include more union activists in the Peronist lists, what generated increasing tensions between union leaders and the Kirchnerista faction of the Peronist party. In spite of these tensions, both organizations gathered together for the memorial service of Nestor Kirchner, who passed away in the morning of October 27th,

2010. This was the last event where Peronist organizations of formal and informal workers acted together.

I went to the funeral as part of a group of 1000 V-Car workers attended the service. We gathered in the factory and departed in various buses rented by the union. When I asked autoworkers which Kirchner's most important policies were, they all chose the imposition of yearly salary negotiations. They also said that it was important to remember Nestor Kirchner because he was the president that took the country out of the economic crisis. Workers highlighted that the societal model that Nestor Kirchner implemented to replace neoliberalism was fair because it was based on a more just distribution of income.

When we arrived to the Plaza de Mayo square, I could see numerous organizations gathering Peronist unemployed and informal workers. I approached to a group of informal workers under the banner of the "Movimiento Evita" from the district of Tigre. When I asked them which Kirchner's most relevant policies were, they talked about the *Argentina Trabaja* social program and the *Asignacion Universal por Hijo* both of which greatly benefited unemployed and informal workers. They emphasized how the expansion of the Argentinean welfare state under Kirchner's government benefited the poorest, which were now remembering their leader on the square.

The relationship between the organizations of formal and informal workers changed throughout the fieldwork year, depending on their positioning within Peronist Politics. In July they organized a joint event to remember Evita, which provided a unique opportunity to study the common grounds between the two groups. By October, the relationships were not so fluid, but both groups participated in the two days funeral of Nestor Kirchner. These two events were rare moments of unity between organizations representing formal and informal workers in the Peronist party. They had not previously

organized other event together, and they did not repeat events like these during the fieldwork period.

The party leadership initiative to create different kinds of events bringing together these groups of workers is one more indicator that in Argentina there is a weakening of the boundary between formal and informal as a cleavage and more as a problem to be dealt. This represents a change in the broader set of relations between the formal and the informal working class. However, in the case of a bureaucratic union representing a dispersed workforce, this new scenario did not generate any meaningful solidarity from the union towards informal workers.

FR-Meat: Union Strategies in the Community under Localistic Despotism

The factory regime in this company is a variation of “localistic despotism”, because it combines the enforcement of despotic rules in the shop floor with a prevalent pattern of localistic associations bonding the workers (Lee 1995: 384). In this case, the networks that shape localism are tied to the neighborhoods surrounding the meatpacking plant, where the company has hired most of its workers since its opening in the mid-1970s. In particular, according to management and union sources, most of the workers live in two neighborhoods which are located right next to the plant: Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino:

Table 4.4: *FR-Meat: Percentage of Workers Living in Each Area*

	% of Workforce
NGBA except nearby neighborhoods	30
Nearby neighborhoods	60
Southern Gran Buenos Aires and other.	10
Total Workforce	700

The Human Resource manager explains why they choose to hire workers that live in these neighborhoods:

“A: We mostly hire workers that live in the neighborhoods that surround the plant. At most, they live within a 10km distance from the plant. Thanks to that hiring policy, we developed a great relationship with these communities.

Q: You worked for the company for the last 40 years. Has this hiring policy always been like this?

A: Yes, I maintained the same policy. First of all, because this is to the company's benefit because the worker lives closer to the plant. If the worker lives closer to the plant they will care more about their job. They also make more money than other workers because they don't spend money on transportation. And all this assures higher levels of loyalty to our company. We highly value the workers' loyalty” (Personal Interview, Luis, Manager at FR-Meat, 07/15/2011).

The localistic component of the regime is the result of the firm treating the surrounding neighborhoods as a pool of readily available labor. In particular, there are two main networks that play the role of informal “recruiting agencies” in the neighborhoods: one centered on the national union leader Hugo Molina; and the other centered on Analia Gimenez, who is the main Peronist boss of the area.

Molina is a long time resident of the neighborhood of Las Tunas who has also been the leading union activist in the shop floor since the late 1980s. Since 2005, Molina became the head of the powerful Sindicato de Obreros de la Carne, who represents meatpackers employed in factories located in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires. Combining his powerful position within the meatpacking industry and his local roots in the neighborhood, Molina remained an influential figure able to recommend neighbors to be hired in the meatpacking plant.

Neighborhood residents can also resort to Analia Gimenez if they want a job at the meatpacking plant. She is the most prominent Peronist boss of the area, and is currently the vice-president of the Tigre district's board of representatives. In addition to her ties to the Peronist party, Grandi has commercial ties to the meatpacking plant: she gets cow's offal at a discount price from the plant and resells them to small area shops. Her strategic location within the political networks of the Peronist party and the commercial networks of the meatpacking plant makes her an effective node that links the company to the surrounding neighborhoods. Camilo, a union activist and long time resident of the neighborhood, explained me Analia Gimenez's role in the meatpacking plant:

“Q: Where do most of the workers live?”

A: Most workers live in the neighborhoods that surround the plant. They live in Las Tunas, Enrique Delfino, La Paloma, Benavidez. If you ask to the residents of Las Tunas, it is hard to find someone that hasn't worked in the meatpacking plant. That's the union's great advantage. The reason [that explains that there are so many residents of Las Tunas employed in the plant] is that Analia Gimenez recommends them for the work. At least half of them got the job thanks to Analia Gimenez.

Q: Does she have any ties with the company?

A: Yes. She sells their offal. She started selling their offal, and now she was elected to the district's board of representatives. And she has recommended many persons that got a job in the plant.

Q: Does she belong to the Peronist party?

A: Yes. She is aligned with Massa [the district's mayor]

Q: So, she recommended many persons that got jobs in the plant. Where does she live?

A: She lives in El Zorzal. Well, she has many houses around here, I don't know where she lives [...] one of her nephews is a union representative in the plant. There are a few relatives of her working there [...]” (Personal Interview, Camilo, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/14/2010)

The local roots of the national union and the Peronist party are the main informal recruiting agencies that link the company to the nearby neighborhoods. These networks guarantee the localistic component of the despotic localism that has ruled labor relations in the meatpacking plant for decades. As I have shown in the previous chapter, in November 2008 a grassroots group won the union elections and effectively challenged the factory regime imposed by the company. On the shop floor, the union organized campaigns against nonstandard work arrangements, against massive layoffs and for salary raises. In addition, the union developed strong relations of solidarity with grassroots neighborhood organizations. In this section I will analyze how this counter-hegemonic practice challenged the localistic component of the factory regime.

Community Solidarity during labor conflicts

In this section I analyze the union strategies to reach the neighborhood during a labor conflict that took place between March and May, 2011. The evidence that I analyze here was collected in the following ways: i. in-depth interviews with union activists, non-activists neighbors and activists from neighborhood organizations; ii. I conducted non-participant observations during some of the actions of protest and workers' meetings; iii. I collected union flyers published during the conflict as well as articles from local and national newspapers that referred to workers' actions of protest; iv. I followed publications made in a Facebook group created by union activists and with a membership of 150 workers.

The conflict began at the end of March 2011 when a group of subcontracted workers started a campaign to demand better working conditions and the end of off the books payments. The subcontractor's response was to lay off 14 workers and threaten to dismiss any other worker that might join the campaign. After the layoffs, the shop floor

union decided to combine the demands of subcontracted workers with core worker's campaign for higher salaries. The first action was a one week strike that ended when the regional branch of the National Labor office dictated the "*conciliacion obligatoria*" between the conflicting actors.

During this week, the union organized a week long blockade of the plant with intermittent blockades of the Avenida de Los Constituyentes, two blockades of the Pan-American Highway (April 5th and April 12th), one demonstration in downtown Pacheco on April 8th and a music festival in the evening of April 9th. During those actions of protest happening in front of the meatpacking plant, the workers counted on the solidarity of neighbors and neighborhood organizations.

For example, during the music festival, two *cumbia* bands composed of young neighbors made their first public presentation. In addition, the members of the neighborhood's *bachilleratos populares* helped collecting food and money for the striking workers. During the festival the meatpackers made a poster where they expressed their gratitude to the supporting organizations. In this poster, the meatpackers thank to the four *bachilleratos populares* (Bachi Raices, Merendero Gauchito Gil, Bachi Simon Rodriguez, Rompiendo Cadenas) and to the workers from different companies also located in the Northern Gran Buenos Aires (Linea 60 bus drivers, K-Foods, Donnolley, Cocarsa and V-Car). They also mention two movements of unemployed workers (CCC, CTD) and different public workers' unions and students' organizations. Among the workers, it is important to note the solidarity of the bus drivers from the Linea 60, who were also going through a labor conflict with their employer.

The drivers not only participated in the music festival, but also provided free transportation for the meatpackers when they went from the plant in Avenida de Los

Constituyentes to downtown Pacheco. During the music festival one of the drivers' union activists suggested that both groups of workers should simultaneously block the Pan-American highway and the Avenida de Los Constituyentes (video taken at the music festival and posted on the internet). This action would stop all the traffic going from Pacheco to the City of Buenos Aires, but was suspended because the meatpackers had to end their strike on April 12th after the government issued "conciliacion obligatoria".

After this government's measure, the meatpackers decided to go back to work, and deepen their strategy of taking the conflict into the community. They addressed the residents of the nearby neighborhoods, but also those living in other cities of the Tigre District. The first example of this strategy is taken from the way the workers presented themselves to the public opinion during the April 12th blockade of the Pan-American highway:

"They should pay more attention to us. This conflict affects the 600 families of the workers. But it also affects all the *barrios* that surround the meatpacking plant. That's because at least half of those who live in these *barrios* is currently working for the Frigorifico, or has at some point worked here. And they all know the awful working conditions and the hyper exploitation that has been going on in this plant for more than 40 years. We finally stood up against these conditions, and we won't surrender until we win [workers applaud and cheer him up].

Reporter: Why do you block the Pan-American highway?

A: The blockade of the Pan-American is one of the ways in which we can protest. That's because if we keep the protest within the workplace, our employer, with the help of corrupt public officials, will weaken us and defeat our struggle. That's why we come here to tell all the working people that with our salaries we can't afford to buy the meat that we produce in this plant [...]"(C5N Television News Report, Interview to Cesar during the blockade of the Pan-American Highway, April 12th, 2011.)

This excerpt shows that one of the strategies that the meatpackers developed to take the conflict into the community was to represent themselves as both workers and neighbors. In addition, the activist says that they are blocking the highway because they

have to take the conflict outside the workplace and into the community if they want to win. The effort to take the conflict into the community characterized the meatpackers' struggle in the following weeks.

The first action directed to achieve this objective was the distribution of a one-page flyer in the nearby neighborhoods and in the plant's door during the street blockades. The flyer was called "You should know why we fight" and addressed community residents in the following way:

"We, the workers of the FR-Meat, are in struggle because we are tired of being abused by the company. We handle the meat at work on a daily basis, but we can't afford it when we want to feed our children. [...] The owner of the company said our situation would improve by this time of the year, but he doesn't fulfill his promise and fires those who dare to complain. That's why we want to stop the abuse. And we are united to win this struggle. And we want to thank to all the neighbors and to all the organizations that came to the plant to express their solidarity. We can win this struggle thanks to our conviction and your help" (Shop Floor Union at FR-Meat, 04/22/2011)

The distribution of flyers and posters in the neighborhoods provided a great visibility to the workers in conflict. For example as part of the activities commemorating the international workers day of May 1st, a group of workers was invited to speak to the students in one school of Las Tunas (ESB39) and one school of downtown Pacheco (ESB5). Union activists described these activities: "We could speak in front of numerous teenagers [who are attending these schools]. Many of these kids are our own children or our close relatives. Thanks to this invitation, we could tell them about our struggle, and both students and teachers showed us their solidarity" (Shop floor union at FR-Meat, 05/02/2011).

But the strategy of taking the conflict into the community was not restricted to the nearby neighborhoods. In order to address a broader audience, the meatpackers decided

to distribute the “Why we fight” flyer during massive public activities in the district of Tigre. The opportunity knocked in April 27th. As part of a series of activities aimed at promoting tourism in the district, the local government organized a tennis exhibition featuring past world number ones Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras. More than 9,000 persons watched the exhibition, and thousands of them received the flyers distributed by the meatpackers (Municipio de Tigre, 04/28/2011).

This action of protest had an important repercussion in the district, and won the workers a meeting with the district’s mayor Sergio Massa. After the meeting, different government officials talked about the conflict in the following terms:

“[...] Julio Zamora, president of the district’s legislative body [Concejo Deliberante] said: “we got to know workers’ concerns about the dismissals and the need of a salary raise [...] our role is to mediate between the two actors, to bring them closer and help them reach an agreement. The FR-Meat is an emblematic company in our district” [...]. In addition, Eduardo Fernandez, who is second to the secretary of employment, said: “These workers are citizens of our district, and that’s why we get involved in this conflict [...] the faith of 700 families is at stake here. Our duty is to keep the jobs for these workers”. The reason why this conflict affects so many families in Tigre is because many workers actually live in our district. We can’t forget that this company, located in the city of Pacheco, is one of the biggest meat packing plants in the country.” (Infoban, 05/03/2011)

The meeting itself is evidence that the meatpackers succeeded in their strategy of taking the labor conflict outside the workplace and into the community. But the news article also provides evidence of how other actors accepted the workers’ self-representation as neighbors and workers. This can be seen when the public officials say that “these workers are citizens of our district” and also in the closing paragraph of the article, where the journalist says that “this conflict affects so many families in Tigre because many workers actually live in our district”.

In the subsequent weeks, the meatpackers forced the subcontractor to re-hire 8 of the 14 laid off workers and began negotiations to answer the demands of the workers. In addition, core workers got the payment that the company owed them from previous salary negotiations. The good news for the workers did not last long, because two months later the company fired 60 core workers. Managers said that the dismissals were the company's response to production slowdown and plant re-structuring, but the union denounced them as part of the company's response to the increasing workers' activism (Shop floor union at FR-Meat, 06/29/2011).

During this labor conflict, the meatpackers combined actions of protest within the workplace with an effort to take the conflict into the community. This effort was based on their self-presentation as both workers and neighbors and in the different strategies they developed in order to communicate their problems to community residents. The geographical focus of their actions was the nearby neighborhoods of Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino, where most workers live, although they also extended their actions to the whole district of Tigre.

It is important to highlight some variables that explain the relevance and content of community solidarity in this case. In first place, the effort to take the conflict into the community was born out of workers' weakness within the workplace. Because of the opposition of the national union, the national labor office and the corrupt methods of the employer, workers could not sustain the initial strike.

Only when the workers realized that they were not going to win this conflict through strikes and work stoppages, they decided to deepen the strategy to take the conflict into the community. Once they were in the street, the decision to focus the solidarity in the nearby neighborhoods was based on the fact that the majority of the workers live in these

neighborhoods. It is reasonable to think that in the absence of this geographical concentration of the workforce, it would have been much harder for the workers to present themselves as both “workers and neighbors”, and take the conflict to the highest political offices of the district.

Union involvement in the neighborhood

What is the role of the meatpackers and their union during the livelihood struggles by the residents of the nearby neighborhoods? To answer this question, I analyze the occupation of a public lot in Las Tunas that occurred between April 26th and June 17th 2010. In particular, I focus on the role of Marcos, who is a union representative at the meatpacking plant and at the same time played a leading role in the land take over.

At the time of the occupation I was already conducting fieldwork in the nearby factories and teaching a high school class in one of the *bachilleratos populares* of the neighborhood. In order to reconstruct the history of the occupation, I analyze interviews that I conducted at the time of the occupation and within a five months period after the occupation ended. These includes interviews with three occupiers (Karina, Graciela and Marcos), two union representatives that helped the occupiers (Camilo and Cesar) as well as neighbors and workers that expressed their opinions about the occupation, whether or not they got involved in it . I also analyze flyers that the occupiers distributed during and after the occupation and regional newspapers and websites that published about it.

The occupation started on April 26th, 2010, when a group of residents of Las Tunas took over a public parcel located in the neighborhood in order to demand that the mayor allow them to build houses or provided them with proper housing. The occupation ended on June 17th, when the police expelled the 32 families that were sustaining the

occupation. During the two months of the occupation the families built wooden houses and organize a daily routine that involved food preparation, cleaning of the camp and daily discussions of their situation (Personal interview, Karina, Occupier of lot in Las Tunas, 11/24/2010).

In addition to the collective organization of the daily routine, the occupiers had to deal with other tasks that had to do with the future of the occupation. For example, they had to talk to the police during expulsion threats, establish contacts with other neighborhood organizations and talk to the districts' politicians to broaden the occupation's support network. According to my interviewees, one of the persons that was at the center of these efforts was Marcos, who was a long time resident of Las Tunas and union representative at the nearby meatpacking plant.

Marcos is 25 years old and has worked at the FR-Meat for around 5 years. He has lived in the neighborhood of Las Tunas all his life and says that "everybody knows me and I know everyone". In the past he was part of the youth gangs of the neighborhood and took part in some small robberies. At some point he decided that that was not the kind of life he wanted and got a job at the meatpacking plant, where his now retired father worked for some time. He is very outspoken and has developed a good relationship with other workers. That personality, as well as his opposition to the previous union leaders got him a place in the grassroots group that won the union elections in 2008. At the time of the land occupation Marcos was on a paid leave at work, but kept a good relationship with the Cesar and Camilo, who were leading the union at the time.

Marcos' role during the occupation shows the close relationship between the meatpackers and the livelihood struggles of the residents of nearby neighborhoods. When

I asked my interviewees why they thought that Marcos had such a leading role during the occupation, they emphasized his double role as neighbor and union activist:

“Q: Was Marcos the main organizer? I mean, would people listen more to what he had to say? Or they listened to everyone?”

A: Sure. During the occupation we knew that we needed to contact someone that could support us. And Marcos was able to contact these persons, and he helped us get some food and supplies. So we said ‘Ok, let’s follow Marcos’ and that’s the decision we made. He was the one throwing out more ideas, like saying ‘I know persons that we should contact. We shouldn’t be isolated’. I think that’s because he is used to have this kind of problems in the meatpacking plant. For example, a few days ago they blocked a road. And he is a union representative there.

Q: Really? He is a union representative?

A: I don’t know if he still is a union rep, but he was back then. And that’s why he knew how to handle things.

Q: Why?

A: Because they are used to have problems in the plant. For example the company says the workers will get their salaries and then they don’t pay them.

Q: So, it was good for you that he was a union representative?

A: Yes, sure. And the people chose him here. Because we knew that we needed someone to do things and to go to different places. And we chose him.” (Personal interview, Graciela, Occupier of lot in Las Tunas, 11/24/2010)

“Q: The meetings were at first about the water supply problem, right?”

A: Yes. Because the people living in that block was really tired of not having water. And Marcos told me ‘If we need to organize a road blockade we will do it’ and that’s how everything started. And everyone paid attention to what he had to say because he was a union representative at the meatpacking plant [...] It’s a good thing that he knows how to communicate to the people [...]

Q: Did everyone know that he was a union representative?

A: Yes. They knew he was a union rep at the meatpacking plant [...] because he has lived here for many years already. His mom lives here, and he grew up in this place. [...] Q: And other neighbors would know that as a union representative he would...

A: He would know more people. That he would know other people, because we know no one. For example, I only know those who live in my block [...] But when the union activists go to union meetings, or when they organize a road blockade, they get to know more people” (Personal interview, Karina, Occupier of lot in Las Tunas, 11/24/2010)

When the occupiers had to explain why Marcos played a leading role in the occupation, they emphasized two dimensions of his experience as union activist: that he knew how to express his ideas during group meetings, and that he would “know other people” that could support their cause. A good example of the first dimension is his role as spokesperson of the occupiers when they met with the county’s board of representatives. In multiple occasions, the occupiers raised their demands during the meetings of the board, and Marcos was the leading voice of the group. In one of those occasions, Marcos had a one-to-one discussion with Analia Gimenez, who was the vice-president of the board:

“[...] No one from the County’s board ever helped us. We once had a meeting with Analia Gimenez and Zamora, who are members of the board. And Analia Gimenez yelled at me ‘stop provoking me’ she said, ‘stop provoking me’ [...] She is the vice-president of the county’s board. She told me ‘stop provoking me’. That’s because I told her the truth. I told her ‘you don’t know the *barrio*. I know the *barrio* more than you do’ She replied: ‘I did a lot of things for that *barrio*’ so I said ‘What have you done? You haven’t done anything for us’ [...]

Q: Did you know her from the *barrio*?

A: Yes. I knew her from the *barrio* and from the meatpacking plant. At some point in the meeting she said ‘I have helped a lot of people to get a job in the meatpacking plant’ so I replied ‘Ana, don’t be shameless. How many people have you helped?’ And she said: ‘A lot. More than 100’ so I told her ‘Yes, you help them, but for how long can they keep their jobs? You help them in, but after two months they are jobless again. You never helped anyone. I have worked in the meatpacking plant for a long time’. I don’t mind telling them the truth. When I got to the board I said ‘My name is Marcos and I’m a union representative at the meatpacking plant’. And I also told Analia Gimenez once: ‘If you want to talk to the company’s manager about me, just do it. I’m not afraid of you or him’ [...]” (Personal Interview, Marcos, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/21/2010)

Marcos’ discussion with Analia Gimenez provides evidence that during the occupation he maintained his double role as union activist and spokesperson of the occupiers. As I have shown in a previous section of this chapter, Analia Gimenez is a

long time Peronist boss of the Las Tunas with strong ties to the meatpacking plant. When Marcos had to confront her, he emphasized his identity as union representative and occupier, confronting her on the two fronts: she wasn't doing anything to help the residents and her capacity to help the meatpackers was also overrated.

In addition to his ability to speak in public, my interviewees also noted that Marcos played a leading role in the take because, as a union representative he “knew more people” than a non-activist neighbor. During the take Marcos was able to get the solidarity of different individuals and organizations, both from unions and political activists. With regards to his contacts with union activists and leaders, Marcos got help from one of the regional federations that represent meatpackers, which provided him with key resources, such as money and a telephone. On the other hand, union representatives from the meatpacking plant provided a sustained support to the occupiers, both in resources and in activism over the period of the occupation. One of the activists recalls how they first got to know about the occupation:

“[...] One day Marcos called us and says ‘There are some problems near my house. Could you come and help us, because you are more used to this kind of stuff’. So we go to his place, and the problem was that there was no water supply in his block [...] so the neighbors went to Marcos’ house because they knew he was a union activist, and asked him if he could help them. And he gave us a call and we went there to help him [...] we said ‘why don’t we write a flyer to invite other neighbors to discuss this problem. So, the main topic to discuss was the lack of water supply, everyone was really annoyed because they didn’t have any water for three months. So we participated in the meeting, and everyone was talking about the lack of water supply. At some point there is a guy that says ‘And what about that empty parcel over there? Why do we talk about water? We need the land! We should go and occupy that parcel’ and most of them liked the suggestion, and that same day, a few hours later [the occupation happened]” (Personal Interview, Camilo, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/14/2010)

Union activists from the meatpacking plant supported the residents from the very first moment of the occupation. During the occupation, their actions of solidarity included participating in the weekly distribution of flyers on Saturday mornings, providing meat for the occupiers' collective meals and helping with fundraising efforts. But the activists' solidarity to the occupiers was also seen in their presence during key events, such as the resistance to police expulsion threat in the day 5 of the occupation, a road blockade the day after the expulsion and a demonstration to downtown Tigre that the occupiers organized a few weeks after the expulsion.

Two of the activists explained me that the reasons for their strong support of this community-based action:

"[...] A: During the occupation, we used to distribute the occupiers' flyers in the neighborhood. One Saturday morning, when we were doing this, we met many of our co-workers that were doing some shopping. And most of them stayed with us for a while, asking what the situation in the occupation was. I think that before we took over the union they wouldn't care about the occupation. But now they asked questions about it, and they supported the fact that we were there, confronting the government and the police. They think that there has to be someone doing that.

Q: Why did you decide to support the occupation in the first place?

A: [we supported them] because they live in the neighborhood but they don't own a house. [We also supported them because] the government gave the parcel to a Peronist boss, and they decided to occupy it [as a form of protest]. They made that decision. It wasn't our decision, but we thought 'we have to support their struggle' [...]"

(Personal Interview, Cesar, Union representative at FR-Meat, 07/21/2010)

"Q: How is it that the meatpackers supported the occupation?

A: There were some workers that were renting and didn't have a place to live. But also we supported the occupation because we want to work closer to our neighbors. We want to help with the neighborhood's problems, because around 70% of the meatpackers live in this neighborhood. The vast majority lives in the neighborhood. So, when the company fires so many workers, it is affecting those families who live here. We want to help the neighbors because some day we will need them to support us. We want them to be informed about our actions. They should know why we block the roads some times. They will know that if we explain them our

reasons. Because many people don't know that our salaries are so low, or that the company mistreats the workers. One way to let them know [about our problems] is getting involved in the struggles they conduct, like the land occupation" (Personal Interview, Liliana, Former worker at FR-Meat, 06/22/2010)

These interviewees explain that the workers got involved in the land occupation because of the deep connection between workplace and neighborhood: most workers live in the neighborhoods that surround the plant; but also many of the neighborhood residents currently work (or have worked) in the meatpacking plant. In addition to this deep connection, the meatpackers' solidarity is the result of the political orientation of the new grassroots union, which aims to unite neighbors and workers. They support the occupation because they think it is a fair demand, but also because in the future this might win them the neighbors' support to their workplace struggles.

4.3 Conclusion

Evidence from fieldwork suggests that in two of the three factories labor revitalization included new strategies of organized labor to establish relations with informal workers. In particular, the comparison between the successful cases suggests that there are multiple potential geographical scales of solidarity between formal and informal workers: the local neighborhoods that surround the factory and the broader community of cities of the Northern Gran Buenos Aires. These are all sites of political involvement beyond the workplace, and each union prioritized one of them when it tried to extend its influence outside the factory gates.

The following table summarizes the descriptive information of each case that I have provided throughout the chapter:

Table 4.5: *Analytical Dimensions*

Case	Workforce Housing Pattern	Organizational logic of union	Intensity of solidarity	Scale of solidarity
K-Foods	Dispersion	Democratic	Medium	Regional/local
V-Car	Dispersion	Bureaucratic	No	--
FR-Meat	Concentration	Democratic	High	Local

Based on this information, this conclusion proposes a systematic comparison between the three cases according the variables that cause the variation in union strategies in the community. The first variable is the housing pattern of the workforce. The distribution of workers' place of residents determines the structure of opportunities for the union to get involved in politics beyond the workplace. The second variable is the organizational logic of the union, which explains the union's motivation to establish political alliances beyond the workplace. In addition, the table includes the outcomes in union strategies beyond the workplace for each of the cases:

Table 4.6: *Analytical Comparison of Union Strategies*

		Workforce housing pattern	
		Dispersion	Concentration
Logic of the union	Democratic	KF: Regional scale	FR: Local scale
	Bureaucratic	V-Car: No solidarity	

The first case included in this study was the shop floor union at K-Foods. In the recent past, the grassroots union at K-Foods has focused its activism in fighting informal

work within the workplace, winning union campaigns against labor outsourcing and temporary contracts. Beyond the workplace, union activists agreed that it was important for the grassroots union to reach the working class communities, but they also said that it was a difficult task in the framework of workforce dispersion.

As I have shown, the pattern of geographical distribution of K-Foods workers' houses can be described as one of "dispersion". In this context, grassroots activists have developed multiple strategies to organize workers beyond the workplace. In first place, the union attempts to reach the workers' households through social activities and organizing activities focused on gender discrimination. Secondly, during a 2009 labor conflict the union has created a network of solidarity that includes neighborhood organizations from the nearby neighborhoods, but also from other neighborhoods in the NGBA region. Finally, the more systematic organizing strategy beyond the workplace has been the organization of two meetings of grassroots unions of the NGBA region.

The geographical focus of all these campaigns is a broadly defined Northern Gran Buenos Aires region, which includes the nearby neighborhoods but is not restricted to them. In this case, we should replace the notion of union-neighborhood relations with the idea of "union-community", which might better capture the character of the extension of union strategies and worker lives/struggles beyond the workplace.

Similarly to K-Foods, V-Car's hiring policies have generated a dispersed workforce. During the fieldwork period there was no single instance in which the shop floor union reached neighborhood organizations, or when these organizations expressed solidarity during a workplace conflict. A similar situation in the case of K-Foods allowed for the existence of actions of solidarity between the shop floor union and neighborhood organizations. What is difference in this case? The comparison between cases suggests

that the existence of a top-down bureaucratic union in the case of V-Car blocks the emergence of the type of local solidarity that I could see in the case of K-Foods.

Finally, the union at the FR-Meat is the one showing the most successful strategy of solidarity with grassroots organizations from the nearby neighborhoods. The majority of workers at FR-Meat live in two neighborhoods that surround the plant: Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino. The clientelistic networks tying the neighborhoods and the company include the regional union and the political networks of the Peronist party. Although these links between factory and neighborhood operate as part of the regime of workers' domination, since 2008 it has also allowed the emergence of links of solidarity between the grassroots shop floor union and different neighborhood organizations. This emergent solidarity has challenged the localistic feature of the company's despotic factory regime.

During fieldwork, this solidarity emerged in every labor conflict affecting the meat packers. For example, this solidarity was essential during the labor conflict over salary raises and subcontracting. The main activity the union organized during this conflict was a music festival and kitchen soup to raise awareness in the neighborhood of the problems that workers were facing. The list of supporting organizations included unions from the Northern Gran Buenos Aires, as well as neighborhood organizations of Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino.

But solidarity also happens the other way around, when meat packers join community struggles. Workers and union activists usually help with activities of the nearby kitchen soups, and provide them with meat and other foods for their daily operation. In addition, In April 2010 the union was supportive of a land occupation over that demanded social housing for community residents. This land occupation lasted around two months, and included the participation of meat packers in different activities organized by the takers. Moreover, the main organizer of the occupation was also a union representative at

the meat packing plant. This action challenged the political status quo in the neighborhood, and included actions of protests such as road blockades and the occupation of the mayor's offices. The solidarity of the meatpackers was essential to the success of these actions of protests.

Both unions at K-Foods and FR-Meat developed a strategy of grassroots solidarity that included the informal workers living in the nearby neighborhoods. The main difference is that the existence of a concentrated workforce in the case of the Frigorifico allowed more intense local solidarities. The union at K-Foods supplemented these thinner local solidarities with the development of a grassroots network that reached multiple cities in the NGBA region.

4.4 Appendix I: Documents and Newspaper Articles cited in Chapter 4

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Conclusions

There is an ongoing debate among labor scholars and activists around the world about the possibilities of organized labor as a force of resistance: Is the labor movement still capable of leading the struggles for social justice in a globalized world? (Moody 1997). The results that I presented in this dissertation suggests that the possibility of a new labor upsurge that confronts capital's offensive in the global south depends (once again) on the alliances that labor movements establish to broaden their constituency (Seidman 1994; French 2002, Milkman and Voss 2004).

As different authors have pointed out, the research agenda of labor studies needs to include the study of union strategies to broaden their constituency (Cornfield and Fletcher 2001). In the case of Argentina, a full understanding of contemporary labor revitalization needs to include an analysis of union solidarity strategies towards informal workers. In the study, I provide evidence that workers are not passive victims of labor-degrading policies but do have agency and are still fundamental in explaining strategies of resistance to the increasing inequality of global capitalism (Collins 2003; Milkman and Voss 2004). However, I also show that the intensity and scale of these strategies depends on class structural dynamics as well as on different variables shaping workers' collective action at the shop floor.

With regards to the class structure, in Chapter 2 of the dissertation I analyze the class character of labor informality in Argentina. In the chapter, I provide evidence that contradicts the standard hypothesis that the formal and the informal proletariat form two distinctive classes in contemporary Argentina. On the contrary, the evidence supports the idea that there are multiple structural connections between these two groups. In particular, around 50% of workers in Argentina have temporal or mediated links across the formal-informal boundary.

In addition, in the chapter I show evidence of a strong effect of temporal and mediated locations on the class self-identification of working class individuals. In more abstract terms, this means that the social interconnections in the lived experiences and self-understanding of workers are shaped not just by their instantaneous positions in the economy, but by their lives, which include their past work experience as well as their family ties across the formal-informal boundary. The broader argument in my dissertation is that interconnected character of informality allows for the emergence of solidarity strategies that aim to unite the formal and the informal working class in the framework of Argentine labor revitalization.

In chapters 3 and 4 of the dissertation, I test this hypothesis through a study of union strategies in three formal sector companies located in the city of Pacheco, Northern Gran Buenos Aires. The systematic comparison between the three unions has allowed for the identification of the key variables that explain variation in union's strategies, both within and beyond the workplace. In the workplace, this means organizing solidarity campaigns to unite standard and nonstandard workers. Beyond the workplace, this means that labor organizing should act together with community-based organizations that represent the livelihood struggles of informal workers.

Within the workplace, it is important to analyze how shop floor unions address the demands of different groups of nonstandard workers, such as temporary workers and subcontracted workers. These workers have lower salaries and less stability than standard workers. The most successful campaign revealed in this study was organized by subcontracted lift-truck drivers at K-Foods, who were able to change their labor contracts from nonstandard to standard after an activist campaign that began in 2005.

The success of this campaign was based on the strong associational power of the union and its democratic organization. This democratic union was able to create solidarity ties between standard and nonstandard workers and win standard contracts for the latter. In comparative perspective, the shop floor union at FR-Meat was also democratically organized, but it lacked the associational power of K-Foods' union. In this case, the union's campaigns for nonstandard workers won some of its demands, but it was confronted by the alliance of management and the corrupt regional union. In the case of V-Car, there was a strong union, but its hegemonic agreement with management led to the acceptance of nonstandard work in the factory.

On the other hand, this dissertation presented different union's strategies beyond the workplace. The union at FR-Meat is the one showing the most successful strategy of solidarity with community organizations from the surrounding neighborhoods of Las Tunas and Enrique Delfino. As a response to a factory regime that bases its domination both in the workplace and in the neighborhood, this grassroots democratic union was able to develop a strategy of solidarity with community organizations. The best example of this solidarity was the union's involvement in a land take over by informal workers of the Las Tunas neighborhood.

Similarly, K-Foods workers' union has developed some solidarity campaigns beyond the workplace in the past few years. In this case, the geographical focus of the campaigns is a broadly defined Northern Gran Buenos Aires region, which includes the surrounding neighborhoods but is not restricted to them. In this case, we should replace the notion of union-neighborhood relations with the idea of "union-community", which better captures the character of the extension of union strategies and worker lives/struggles beyond the workplace.

In spite of their differences, both unions developed a strategy of solidarity towards the informal workers living in the surrounding neighborhoods. The contrasting case is that of V-Car workers' union. Even if the factory is located in the same area as the other two, the combination of the relative dispersion of the workforce and a top-down bureaucratic union results in the complete absence of union activism in the neighborhoods surrounding the factory and the development of institutionalized relationships through established political organizations of the ruling Peronist party.

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