

A Troubled Collaboration: Cartoneros and the PRO Administrations in Buenos Aires

Ricardo A. Gutiérrez

ABSTRACT

Can popular organizations engage with the state in a lasting collaborative interaction that benefits their interests without being politically co-opted or captured? This article addresses this question by analyzing the interaction between *cartonero* organizations and the PRO administrations in Buenos Aires City between 2002 and 2018. It shows how *cartoneros* managed to prompt a change in the PRO's policies on recyclable waste collection. The article's main arguments are that popular organizations' opportunity to gain formal access to the state without losing their autonomy is related to the strategic orientations of both the popular organization and the ruling party, and that such a possibility increases when the popular organization is not part of the incumbent party coalition. The "troubled collaboration" between *cartoneros* and the PRO was possible due both to the *cartoneros'* combination of contentious and institutionalized actions and to an important change in the PRO's strategic orientation toward *cartoneros*.

Keywords: Popular organizations, state-society relations, *cartoneros*, municipal waste policies

Can popular organizations engage in a collaborative interaction with the state that benefits their interests without being politically co-opted or captured? How can such an interaction last over time? This article addresses these theoretical questions by analyzing a particular case of state-society interaction: that between *cartonero* organizations and the PRO administrations in the City of Buenos Aires.

Argentina's 2001–2 socioeconomic crisis increased and changed in many ways the activities of *cartoneros* (scavengers) in the City of Buenos Aires. Since then, *cartoneros* (also known as *cirujas*, scavengers, or *recuperadores urbanos*, urban recuperators) have searched the streets of the city's wealthier neighborhoods for recyclable materials to sell in the market.¹ In doing so, they have become the city's pioneers of recyclable waste collection but also have posed new challenges to local authorities. Even though it is hard to establish an accurate figure, the number of *cartoneros* working in the City of Buenos Aires by 2001 was estimated at forty thousand (Koehs 2004; Whitson 2011). As soon as 2002, the city government tried to deal with the

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explosion of *cartonero* activities by proposing separate collection programs as an instrument of “social incorporation” (Koehs 2004; Mozobancyk 2014), but no comprehensive program was put in motion until 2012.

At the same time, Mauricio Macri, future mayor of the City of Buenos Aires (2007–15), was emerging as an opposition leader.² In 2002, while the *porteño* legislature was discussing and passing a law that would acknowledge *cartoneros* as “urban recuperators” and declare them an essential part of municipal waste management, Macri stated that *cartoneros*’ activities were “criminal” and that they should be incarcerated. Yet ten years later, Mayor Macri created the most comprehensive recyclable waste collection program so far, executed by *cartonero* organizations.

Macri and the *cartoneros* could not be more unlikely partners (Suárez 2016). They came from contrasting social backgrounds: a successful business executive from a wealthy family versus unemployed people forced to collect discarded material to make a living. They held opposing views on the economy and the state. Macri and his party (*Propuesta Republicana*, or PRO) have been strong advocates of the promarket economy, while *cartoneros* developed over the years a “popular economy” view centered on cooperative and state forms of economic organization. In addition, Macri’s initial rejection of their activities as “criminal” provoked strong political resentment among *cartoneros*.

How is it possible that such unlikely partners ended up collaborating on the formalization and execution of a joint program, which is still in place? This article seeks to answer these questions and the theoretical questions formulated above by tracing the *cartonero*-PRO interaction back to the beginning of the municipal waste policy change process in 2002. The main arguments advanced in this article are that popular organizations’ opportunity to gain formal access to the state without losing their autonomy is related to the strategic orientations of both the popular organization and the ruling party, and that such a possibility increases when the popular organization is not part of the incumbent party coalition.

This article shows that the formalization and continuation of a “troubled collaboration” between *cartoneros* and the PRO was possible due both to *cartoneros*’ persistent combination of contentious and institutionalized actions all along the process and to an important change in the PRO’s strategic orientation toward *cartoneros*. Thanks to the persistence of those mixed tactics, *cartoneros* persuaded Macri and the PRO to pay more attention to their claims and were influential enough to reorient the PRO’s recycling policies in response to those claims. But this change was also favored by factors related to the PRO’s internal life. One was the “Buenos Aires Green City” umbrella framework, which included separate collection as a main component; and, above all, the divisions within the PRO that paved the way for a key ministerial change and a shift in the PRO’s strategic orientation toward *cartoneros*. Once the new policy was in action, *cartoneros* never became part of the ruling party and kept resorting to contentious tactics as a way to secure the continuation and expansion of that policy. In so doing, they managed to become a formal partner of a municipal management system (waste collection) without being co-opted or captured by the state.

Popular politics in Latin America has been the subject of vibrant research over the last decades. While early studies were framed within standard views of clientelism, social movements, and civil society, which tend to reduce popular politics to a single logic (either co-optation, contention, or self-organizing), more nuanced perspectives pervade recent work. This article seeks to contribute to this literature by analyzing a special case in which popular organizations collaborate with the state without involving themselves in patron-client relationships or becoming part of the state or the governing coalition. The analysis of this special case will help enlarge our understanding of popular politics by discussing the conditions under which a popular organization can collaborate with the state without losing its autonomy.

This article applies a qualitative process-tracing method based on the combination of several techniques. Tracing *cartonero*-PRO interaction back to 2001–2 allows for comparing both parties' reciprocal strategic orientations and changes through three different stages: between 2002 and 2007, when the PRO was an opposition party and *cartoneros* began to be recognized by the *porteño* government and legislature; between 2007 and 2010, the first years of the PRO administrations, when the PRO's stance toward *cartoneros* did not change substantially; and from 2010 on, when PRO policies on *cartoneros* and recyclable waste collection changed significantly.

Two major sources were surveyed between 2012 and 2017. The first was more than one hundred open and semistructured interviews with *porteño*, regional, and national public authorities; *cartonero* organizations, environmental organizations, professional associations, private firms, and scholars. The second was news on waste issues and *cartoneros* from local and regional newspapers. All interviews were conducted in different locations of Buenos Aires City and its suburbs. News was collected for the 2001–18 period from three major *porteño* newspapers: *Clarín*, *La Nación*, and *Página 12*. Additional news was collected through search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Zoo, and Gigablast. Complementary sources included official documents and statistics, organization websites, expert publications and reports, observant participation in official and civil society meetings, and visits to recyclable waste classification centers and treatment plants. The author especially benefited from his participation in the Zero Waste Law Follow-Up Commission between 2015 and 2018, which allowed for direct observation of the interaction between *cartoneros* and PRO officials.

UNPACKING POPULAR POLITICS

The arguments advanced in this article rest on recent revisions of the vast literature on society-state relations under the Latin American Third Wave of democratization, especially those studies that address popular politics. *Popular politics* refers here to the individual or collective action undertaken, outside the market and the family, by “groups of the lower strata of the income hierarchy” (Collier and Handlin 2009, 4) to pursue their interests as regards the provision of material benefits and public goods that they deem necessary for their subsistence. The article therefore uses the term *popular organization* to refer to low-income collective actors that pursue such interests, such as the *cartonero* organizations.

In examining the literature on Latin American popular politics, we can distinguish the early studies from the most recent literature. The early literature on popular politics tends to reduce the state-society interaction to a single logic: clientelistic exchange, contention, or self-organizing.

The literature on clientelism (widely applied to the Argentine case) focuses on the electoral arena and portrays popular sectors as clients of party brokers and patrons (e.g., Gay 1998; Auyero 2000; Levitsky 2003; Stokes et al. 2013). Even though the significance of the client-broker-patron exchange may go beyond the distribution of material resources (Auyero et al. 2009; Zarazaga 2014), this literature remains centered on the distribution of selective benefits in exchange for political support or the popular sectors' informal dependence on party actors (Post 2018).

On the opposite side, the social movement literature and the civil society approach tend to portray state and society as separate units (Abers and von Bülow 2011) and to see popular organizations as autonomous actors that either strive to create and preserve a space of autonomy outside the state (the civil society approach) or address the state mostly through contentious actions (the social movement approach) (Eckstein 1989; Collier and Handlin 2009, 27–29). From this dichotomy between state and society usually stems what J. H. Hellman dubbed the autonomy fetishism, according to which co-optation or subordination to the state are the only alternatives to civil society's or social movements' autonomy (quoted in Abers and Tatagiba 2015, 79).

These two autonomy views are present in the literature on Argentine popular politics. Early works on *piqueteros* define them as social movement organizations that reject party brokers and patrons and confront state authorities “on the street” to get satisfaction for their interests and demands.³ In this view, *piquetero* organizations transform themselves into something else (clients or party machines) when they start interacting with the state (Delamata 2004; Svampa and Pereyra 2005). Other works have argued instead that popular actors usually form community organizations that seek to solve public problems (mostly related to the provision of public services in their neighborhoods) autonomously from both the state and political parties (Forni 2002; Forni and Longo 2004).

In spite of their differences, the three approaches so far reviewed share two common premises: the relation between popular actors and the state follows a singular logic (be it clientelism, contention, or self-organizing), and collaboration with the state is opposed to organizational autonomy and concomitant to state co-optation or subordination. However, recent studies have shown that these premises do not stand, in light of research findings.

Some authors argue that the distinction between state and society is more blurred than what dichotomy views presuppose and that social actors interact and work with state actors of different sorts in multiple ways to gain political influence and see their claims transformed into state decisions (Evans 1997; Hochstetler and Keck 2007; Abers and von Bülow 2011; Rossi and von Bülow 2015). In the same vein, other scholars argue that most popular organizations do not specialize in a given mode of action or interaction but instead engage in a mix of strategies and

activities, and that involvement in strategic interactions with the state does not necessarily imply co-optation or subordination (Collier and Handlin 2009; Kapiszewski 2009; Rossi 2015).

Recent literature on Argentine popular politics leads to similar conclusions. Unlike the earlier works on clientelism, *piqueteros*, and community organizations, the new literature argues that popular organizations usually combine different strategies and forms of action in ways that cannot be apprehended by unidimensional approaches. Most recent studies on *piqueteros* and other popular organizations show that clientelistic and contentious politics must not be seen as opposing phenomena but as interacting dynamics, insofar as organizations strategically resort to both contentious tactics and clientelistic practices (Quirós 2008; Auyero et al. 2009; Lapegna 2013). A few studies on popular organizations, centered on urbanization and the provision of public services, show that those organizations collaborate with the state without getting involved in either clientelistic relationships or contentious actions (Forni et al. 2013). Some studies also address the “institutionalization” of *piquetero* organizations through both their involvement in policymaking and their incorporation into the governing coalition (Natalucci 2011; Perelmiter 2012; Rossi 2017).

One of the main issues under debate in this recent literature is the organizations’ autonomy. Some authors argue that when participation in policy implementation is associated with popular organizations’ incorporation into the governing coalition, this phenomenon cannot be analyzed merely through the lens of co-optation or loss of autonomy. But they recognize that incorporation into the governing coalition may bring forth transformations inside the organization (Perelmiter 2012) and also in the repertoire of action, with the progressive abandonment of mobilization and contentious tactics (Natalucci 2011).

This article seeks to shed new light on this debate by examining a special case of state–popular organization collaboration, one in which the participation in policy implementation (i.e., institutionalization) does not go hand-in-hand with incorporation into the governing coalition. A deep analysis of the *cartonero*-PRO interaction helps to provide a better understanding of what happens between state-society collaboration and popular organizations’ autonomy when the organizations remain politically independent from the state and the ruling party.

In sum, based on a dynamic view of society-state interactions, this article argues that popular organizations’ chance to gain formal access to the state without losing their autonomy is related to the strategic orientations of both the popular organization and the ruling party, and that such a possibility increases when the popular organization is not part of the incumbent party coalition. Given a field of possibilities, this article considers an organization to be autonomous when it pursues its own interests, chooses how to pursue them, and makes its own decisions about its internal life.

Popular organizations such as the *cartoneros* usually resort to different types of action to pursue their interests. Contention and institutionalized participation are not separate or antagonistic modes of action but distinctive tactics or tools that popular organizations (and social actors in general) use and combine to advance their

goals (Christel and Gutiérrez 2017). Moreover, state-oriented social actors (no matter their organizational nature and strategic repertoire) may take advantage of divisions and changes in state bureaucracies and political parties to obtain decisions favorable to their interests and goals. And when the latter occurs, that does not mean that social actors necessarily lose their autonomy or are co-opted by (or subordinated to) the state.

While the abandonment of contentious tactics may entail a loss of autonomy, a popular organization's possibility to obtain institutionalized access to the state without sacrificing autonomy is also related to the strategic orientation of the actor from above (the state or the ruling party), and increases when the popular organization is not part of the incumbent party or party coalition. When the popular organization remains independent from the incumbent party coalition, it retains greater space to choose what type of action to undertake and how to organize itself, which gives it greater freedom to resort to contentious action when it considers that appropriate or necessary. The use (or threat) of contentious action increases the ability to bring about a change in the strategic orientation of the actor from above. In turn, the changes in the strategic orientation of the actor from above may also be driven by factors such as the internal divisions of that actor, which offer the popular organization circumstantial allies or negotiators within the state willing to recognize their claims.

RECUPERATORS VS. OUTLAWS

Over the last two decades, municipal waste management has gained a prominent position among public concerns about the environment in Argentina. Three factors are highlighted by several studies to explain the high social and governmental relevance reached by waste issues: the skyrocketing of *cartoneros'* activities, the growing social claims against landfills, and the high incidence of waste management in municipal budgets (Schamber and Suárez 2007; Suárez 2016; Suárez and Schamber 2015).

As result of these mounting concerns, a new normative framework for waste management was discussed and passed at all government levels (national, provincial, and municipal). Central to the new normative was the incorporation of *cartoneros* (now referred to as *recuperadores urbanos*) into the formal municipal waste economy. Since the pioneer *porteño* Law 992 of 2002, an extended consensus has existed that the management of municipal waste is not just a technical-environmental issue but also a serious social problem related to labor and health.

Indeed, the *porteño* Law 992/02 became a benchmark for the social incorporation of *cartoneros* nationwide, as it was the first legal recognition that *cartoneros* were pioneers of recyclable waste collection in Argentina. Proposed by legislator Eduardo Valdez (Partido Justicialista, 2000–2003), Law 992/02 was a legislative response to the *cartoneros'* increasing mobilization and organization and the growing media attention to the issue (Koehs 2004; Whitson 2011). So put it a member of a non-governmental organization with long experience in recycling programs:

Law 992 was pushed by the situation of the city after the 2001 crisis, by the thousands of *cartoneros* who populated the city recovering garbage and the pressure from their organizations. (Fundación Avina member 2013).

At the turn of the century, *cartoneros* began a steady organizational development process, creating labor cooperatives and other kinds of associations (Villanova 2014). During 2001 and 2002, *cartonero* organizations actively participated in the discussion and formulation of Law 992/02, interacting in different spaces with the lawmakers who proposed and defended the bill (Koehs 2004). Some cooperative members recalled those years as follows:

The MTE [*Movimiento de Trabajadores Excluidos*] began to form in 2001. First it was five crazy activists, students, and we *cartoneros*. And we, *cartoneros*, cut bridges, took the city hall, chained ourselves in the Plaza de Mayo, all in our struggle for our jobs. Later, the MTE was finally formalized in 2004. (MTE leader 2017)

In 2001, 2002, the city government said there was a law that stated that we could not collect garbage because the garbage had an owner, it was private property. Then there arose the need to organize ourselves to fight for a law that would allow us to work, to continue to survive. There appeared some students, militants, lawyers who helped us. And we also mobilized. For instance, they would take our truck to the police station, we would warn each other and we all would go to the police station. Imagine hundreds in the police station, with trucks, with vans! We took the corners with the trucks, and then we all went down and called the commissary and said: look, you have us here, now you put us all in jail, because we're not leaving! (Amanecer de los Cartoneros cooperative member 2016)

Law 992/02 (known as the Urban Recuperators Program Law) was passed in December 2002 and promulgated by Mayor Aníbal Ibarra (Alianza FREPASO-UCR 2000–03, Fuerza Porteña 2003–05) in January 2003. Afterward, *cartonero* organizations and leaders participated with city government officials in a dialogue table in order to design the instruments necessary to implement the Urban Recuperators Program (PRU) created by the law. Even though it was unable to launch a sound recyclable waste collection program, the dialogue table did succeed in implanting some instruments, such as the registration campaign, legal assistance, and health care for *cartoneros* (Koehs 2004, 69–89).

Law 992/02 states that the urban hygiene service is a “public service” and recognizes *cartoneros* as “recycling material recuperators” or “urban recuperators,” who must be integrated as agents of municipal waste management. The law explicitly abolishes the situation of illegality that had affected *cartoneros'* activities in the City of Buenos Aires since 1977, when the municipal normative established that any form of collection outside the municipal services was illegal. It also mandates the city government to create the Recyclable Materials Recuperators Register and the Recycling Cooperatives and Small Firms Register, two important pieces for the “social incorporation” or formalization of *cartoneros*.

The PRU and the official recognition of *cartoneros* as urban recuperators were antithetical to Mauricio Macri's view on the issue. Macri was the son of a successful businessman (Franco Macri) and a successful businessman himself. After 2001, Macri started to build his political career from the newly created Fundación Creer y Crecer (Believing and Growing Foundation) and in 2003 formed his first political party, Compromiso para el Cambio (Commitment to Change). Between 2005 and 2007, Compromiso para el Cambio was part of the electoral Republican Proposal Alliance (Alianza Propuesta Republicana or PRO) and in 2008 changed its official name to Propuesta Republicana, PRO.

From its inception, Compromiso para el Cambio-PRO's worldview and programmatic line have been marked by the social background of its founders, who would become the core of the party: leaders of businesses and nongovernmental organizations (Vommaro 2015). Accordingly, the PRO has held a clear pro-market view of the state-society relationship and has proposed a "new politics" centered on the values of businesslike management, efficiency, and volunteerism (Morresi 2015).

On the opposite side, *cartonero* organizations have developed a "popular economy" view centered on cooperative forms of labor organization and the recognition of social rights for the excluded. They define themselves as both rightful workers and environmental promoters (Suárez 2016). As regards recyclable waste collection, *cartonero* organizations overtly reject any form of private administration, as stated in a 2012 National *Cartoneros* and Recuperators Federation document.

Our job is specialized in the recovering of dry [recyclable] solid waste *which only admits two forms of management: cooperative and state run, or a combination of both*. Recyclable waste belongs to *cartoneros*. We won it by fighting and it is our conquered right. *We will never accept that waste be privatized.* (FACCYR 2012, emphasis added)

In August 2002, while Law 992/02 was under discussion by the city legislature, mayoral candidate Mauricio Macri overtly expressed his rejection of *cartoneros'* activities in an interview in *La Nación*.

Interviewer: One of *porteños'* main concerns is *cartoneros*. What is your proposal regarding them?

Macri: A new environmental design. There is a crisis in waste management and *cirujeo* [scavenging] is absolute mayhem. To create cooperatives solves nothing. This is a million-peso business and *cartoneros* have a criminal behavior because they steal the garbage. Besides, they do not pay taxes, and the activity they perform is inhuman. In other societies, waste treatment is made in closed places, with equipment and with personnel hired for the job.

Interviewer: But you are speaking of an ideal society. What solution do you find for informal collection within the actual *porteño* reality?

Macri: Informal pickers cannot be on the street. We are going to take them out of the street.

Interviewer: How?

Macri: Applying the law. They are committing a crime. You must give them an alternative, like hiring some thousands to do waste separation inside processing plants, not on the street.

Interviewer: And those who would not quit the street?

Macri: I will incarcerate them. You cannot disrupt normal order with something that is a crime, because stealing garbage is as much a crime as robbing a person on the street corner. And besides, it is unhealthy. Therefore, I will call for a competition for thousands of people, and I will give them a job. (Rey 2002)

Macri's 2002 declarations to *La Nación* had a great impact, provoking wide rejection, especially among politicians from different parties and, obviously, *cartonero* organizations (Koehs 2004). According to a *cartonero* who formed a cooperative in the suburbs,

Macri said in the media that we were stealing the garbage, and we showed him that we do not steal from anyone but that what we provide to the population is a service to take care of the environment. (Reciclando Sueños cooperative member, 2013)

Thus, Macri's definition of *cartoneros* as outlaws marked the first years of (no) interaction between the PRO and *cartonero* organizations, which considered Macri and the PRO their major political adversaries.

WITH THE HELP OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS: ZERO WASTE TARGET

While Macri and his party maintained their resistance to recognizing the *cartoneros'* job as a "public service," important steps were taken between 2003 and 2007 in *cartoneros'* formalization process: the passing of the Zero Waste Law and the formal registering of *cartoneros* and their cooperatives. Nevertheless, *cartoneros'* main demand, the implementation of a sound recyclable waste collection program "with social inclusion," was not fulfilled during those years.

Taking advantage of Law 992/02, which set integrated solid waste management (ISWM) as the ultimate goal, Greenpeace and other environmental organizations proposed a bill to create the city's ISWM system. Law 1854, on integrated solid waste management (known as the Zero Waste Law), was passed in 2005 during the Ibarra administration. Law 1854/05 is to this day the central piece of the normative framework for solid waste management in the City of Buenos Aires. The law promotes the reducing, recycling, and reusing of waste; it establishes a timetable for reducing the disposal of waste in landfills—projecting the total prohibition of disposing "recyclable or usable" materials for 2020, hence the name Zero Waste Law; and it forbids all forms of combustion from waste generated in the city until the disposing of "recyclable or usable" materials is reduced to 25 percent of the waste disposed in 2004.

Also known as the Greenpeace Law, Law 1854/05 explicitly combines the ISWM model with the effective participation of urban recuperators in waste management. Building on Law 992/02, Law 1854/05 establishes a unique management system in which private firms and urban recuperators' cooperatives must participate

together, mandating that the latter would have priority in the process of collecting “recyclable solid urban waste” and in operating the “classification centers” (known as Green Centers) also created by the law (Article 43). According to some *cartonero* organizations, especially the MTE cooperatives, the inclusion of such a “priority right” would have been their main achievement during the law’s formulation process (Mozobancyk 2014, 169). But the MTE was not alone in highlighting such an achievement.

We were present in the making of Law 992, where we are considered public servants. We were also present in the Zero Waste Law and in many other instances of conversation with the government. (Cooperativa del Oeste member 2014)

The Zero Waste Law was very good, because for the first time it was seen that the garbage problem was an integral problem that went from the industry to the neighbor and the *cartonero*. Before, *cartoneros* were skewed or there was a superficial look to the problem. With the Zero Waste Law, an integral view emerged that allowed us to be recognized, which legalized us a lot and allowed us to move forward strongly. (Recuperadores Urbanos del Oeste cooperative member 2014).

Whereas it was proposed and advanced by environmental organizations, Law 1854/05 was instrumental to *cartoneros*’ interests. Environmental organizations advocated for environmental protection, while *cartoneros*’ main concern was (and still is) to have access to more and higher-quality recycling material so that they could get a better market price. Even though they were initially different, environmentalists’ and *cartoneros*’ concerns converged in one demand to the city government: the implementation of an extended separate collection program. A congressional aide who participated very actively in the drafting of the law described the differences and convergences between environmentalists’ and *cartoneros*’ ideas and interests as follows:

The environmentalists’ bill had nothing to do with what we wanted to do; they had copied a law from Europe, from other countries, where there was a fundamental difference, which was the social problem, the problem that involved the *cartoneros* and the collecting of trash as a livelihood. We took the El Ceibo cooperative’s model to put together the Zero Waste Law. But Greenpeace was not interested in *cartoneros*; they would tell us, “we are not interested in *cartoneros*.” They set disposition reduction goals but they did not tell how they were going to achieve those goals, and for us the answer was the work of *cartoneros*. And we [incumbent and leftist parties] collaborated a lot in the relationship between Greenpeace and *cartoneros*. We convinced Greenpeace that the only way its bill would be approved was with the inclusion of *cartoneros*. (2004–5 Congressional Aide 2017)

The same interviewee also described the PRO’s position during the debate.

The PRO did not want the law; they did not want any law. Like Greenpeace, they did not want *cartoneros*. And once we convinced Greenpeace to include *cartoneros*, PRO tried to block the bill. But they couldn’t, they saw the law would be approved anyway. (2004–5 Congressional Aide 2017)

From 2003 on, the city government tried to initiate different recyclable waste collection programs with the participation of *cartoneros*, but those programs did not have much success (Mozobancyk 2014). In 2003, the Ibarra administration created a first pilot program (*Bolsa Verde* or Green Bag program) to collect recyclable material door to door, but the program soon failed. His successor, Jorge Telerman (Fuerza Porteña, 2005–7), replaced the Green Bag program with another one based on containers, to which the neighbors had to take the recyclable materials (Sector Plan), but this program was also unsuccessful. Based on their policy programs and measures, both Ibarra and Telerman seemed to be more sympathetic to *cartoneros* than Mauricio Macri at the time. Nevertheless, *cartoneros'* participation in waste management (as mandated by Laws 992/02 and 1854/05) was properly formalized and extended only under the Macri administration.

In the meantime, other important steps for the formalization of *cartoneros* were taken under Telerman's short administration. In compliance with Laws 992/02 and 1854/05, in 2006 Telerman created the Recyclable Materials Recuperators Register (RUR) and the Recycling Cooperatives and Small Firms Register (REPyME). Later, these registers would become very important for the formal incorporation of *cartoneros* in waste management. Those *cartoneros* who wanted to participate in the recycling collection programs and the classification centers (Green Centers) established by Law 1854/05 had (and still have) both to enroll in the RUR and to form cooperatives that, in turn, had to be registered on the REPyME. Also in 2006, Telerman created the General Directorate of Recycling Policies (today part of the Ministry of Environment and Public Space). The directorate's attributions include running the RUR and the REPyME and dealing with everything related to *cartoneros'* participation in waste management. In practice, the directorate upgraded and substituted the Urban Recuperators Program created by Law 992/02, as a sign of the relevance that the formalization of *cartoneros'* activities was gaining on the governmental agenda.

During those years (2001–7) of growing formalization (from Law 992/02 to the Zero Waste Law to the RUR and the REPyME), *cartoneros* kept resorting to contentious actions, such as those described above, on many occasions. It is difficult to establish an exact number of protests carried out by *cartoneros*, since they were not always recorded by the media. According to a computation for the 2001–12 period (Villanova 2014), *cartoneros* carried out an annual average of 6 “direct actions” (mainly mobilizations, demonstrations, and street and railroad blockades); the years of higher activity were 2002 (10), 2008 (17), and 2009 (10). During 2008 and 2009, the recently legalized *cartonero* cooperatives, led by the MTE, strongly confronted the PRO administration, demanding compliance with the Zero Waste Law and the implementation of a sound recyclable waste collection service that they would manage.

SOCIAL CONFRONTATION AND STATE RELUCTANCE: THE FIRST YEARS OF THE PRO ADMINISTRATION

Mauricio Macri's administration was initially reluctant to legitimate *cartonero* activities or to expand the recycling programs, whereas *cartonero* cooperatives openly confronted the PRO's waste policies. But some cooperatives began to experiment with new ways of interacting with the city government while an important ministerial change was under way.

In 2007, Macri ran as the mayoral candidate of the Alianza Propuesta Republicana and defeated his main competitor, Daniel Fimus of the Frente para la Victoria (Front for the Victory) in the second round. In 2011 Macri was re-elected mayor, and in 2015 he won the national presidential elections on the Cambiemos (Let's Change) ticket, an electoral alliance among the PRO, the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), and other, minor parties. In the City of Buenos Aires, he was succeeded by his 2007–15 chief of staff, Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, who won the 2015 mayoral elections on the PRO ticket.

When Macri took office as mayor in 2007, the PRO had experienced some changes in its programmatic line. From 2005 on, the PRO addressed new issues as part of a strategy to capture a wider electorate among the middle classes. Whereas promarket values and policies remained at the core of the party's program, the new issues included postmaterial values, such as ecology (Vommaro and Morresi 2015). Ecological issues gained a proper place in the 2007 electoral campaign under the "Buenos Green City" slogan.

Green City is to this day an umbrella framework of the PRO administrations (City of Buenos Aires n.d.a.). By 2007, it included three main components: non-polluting transportation, green spaces, and recyclable waste collection. Green City could have offered a favorable frame for the PRO to change its policy toward *cartoneros'* participation in waste collection and recycling. Yet this would not happen until 2010. In the meantime, the PRO's reluctance to accept *cartoneros'* activities seems to have informed its first recycling policies.

The first years of the Macri administration (2007–11) saw no advance in the implementation of recyclable waste collection (Suárez 2016, 216–17). By 2010, there was just one program, which covered only 3 out of the more than 40 *porteño* neighborhoods. Throughout those years, both environmental organizations and *cartonero* cooperatives repeatedly called for the proper implementation of Law 1854/05 (especially regarding recyclable waste collection) and denounced the Macri administration's delays in implementation (see Greenpeace 2008; Fundación Ciudad 2008; Greenpeace et al. 2015). They also charged that the city government did not provide for the formation of the Zero Waste Law Follow-Up Commission, a multistakeholder commission mandated by Law 1854/05 and activated only in 2012.

Even though environmentalists and *cartoneros* never built a strong and permanent alliance (Mozobancyk 2014), their common critiques of the Macri administration led

them to become strategic partners at specific points during the process, such as the 2008–9 bid process to renew the general collection contracts with private firms.

In 2008, the Ministry of Environment and Public Space (headed by Juan Pablo Piccardo) convened a public hearing in the city legislature to discuss the specifications of the new bidding process for the general collection services, which was to open in 2009. During the preparatory meetings for the public hearing, *cartonero* organizations rejected an important change proposed in the bid specifications: the move from clean area payment to tonnage-based payment. Tonnage-based payment had been the subject of an important conflict between *cartoneros* and private collection firms before the passing of Law 992/02 because it led both parties to compete for the collection of the same waste. Law 992/92 had solved that conflict by establishing the clean area payment, by which private collection firms ceased to see *cartoneros* as their economic rivals.

Now *cartonero* organizations argued that the return to the tonnage-based payment would reintroduce the rivalry between them and the private firms, and that it was actually designed to minimize *cartoneros'* activities. Environmental organizations agreed with *cartonero* organizations on this issue, arguing that the tonnage-based payment would discourage recyclable waste collection because private firms would have an incentive to collect more nonseparated waste in order to make more money. Due to this opposition, the 2008 public hearing ended in failure, and the bid process had to be postponed until 2010, this time with the mediation of a protransparency NGO (Poder Ciudadano). Meanwhile, both *cartonero* organizations and, especially, the Ministry of Environment and Public Space underwent important changes.

One of the leading *cartonero* organizations opposing the 2008 bid specifications was the Movimiento de Trabajadores Excluidos (Excluded Workers' Movement, or MTE). The MTE was born in the southern suburb of Lomas de Zamora, and its members entered the city every day to collect recyclable materials, which they took back to their district. After the 2008 public hearing process, the MTE and the city government forged unprecedented linkages. MTE received from the city government trucks and other equipment, as well as monetary incentives for its members. A city government official described the new arrangement this way:

In 2009, the first contracts with cooperatives were signed. They would get more money, uniforms, and so on, and they also got a truck or a bus that they would use to collect, in replacement of the carts or the rickety trucks they were using. (Ministry of Environment and Public Space high official, 2014)

This became a new “governance model” that would later be replicated by other *cartonero* organizations (Suárez 2016), setting a precedent for the 2010–12 public competition for the recyclable waste collection service. Yet this new collaborative linkage with the PRO administration did not imply that the *cartoneros* would abandon contentious actions. Actually, the first MTE negotiations with the PRO administration inaugurated the strategy that, this article argues, has informed *cartoneros'* relationship with the PRO to this day: the combination of contentious and institutionalized forms of participation. The following excerpt from a 2009 MTE online

declaration illustrates the way MTE (and *cartoneros*) values the collaboration with the government at the same time that it criticizes its limitations.

On Monday, December 21, 2009, the Excluded Workers' Movement and the City of Buenos Aires *cartonero* organizations will march together to the City Hall and the House of Legislators to call for the observation of the constitutional mandate, Law 992, the Zero Waste Law, the human rights treaties, and the improvement promises made by the city government.

Acknowledging the important advances in the Recycling with Social Inclusion program made during the year, after almost a decade of permanent struggle for the implementation of recycling policies, more than three thousand *cartoneros* still are outside the program and the working conditions are far from optimal.

It is central that the recyclable waste collection and classification system be transferred to *cartoneros* and their cooperatives by law. This law should grant independence and stability to the Social Management of the Recyclable Waste Collection with Social Inclusion System.

During 2009, we cooperatives and *cartonero* organizations showed our capacity to work for and contribute to the accomplishment of the Zero Waste (and Zero Exclusion) targets, . . . [a list of achievements follows]

Nevertheless, a few days before the Christmas holidays, our uncertainty is desperate. Despite informal promises and talks, the city government has not officially decided on the continuation, expansion, and deepening of the Recycling with Social Inclusion program, nor has the Legislature passed the Recyclable Waste Collection Social Management law. We want to continue collaborating with the Zero Waste targets but under dignified working conditions, with social rights, and due recognition. (MTE 2009, emphasis added)

On December 21, five hundred *cartoneros* demonstrated in front of the House of Legislators. They demanded an increase of the monetary incentive paid by the government and the incorporation into the RUR of more than three thousand *cartoneros* who were still outside the program. The newly appointed minister of environment and public space, Diego Santilli, agreed to meet with the cooperatives' delegates the next day (*Página12* 2009).

OPENING THE PATH TO COLLABORATION

The PRO's reluctance to legitimate *cartoneros'* participation in waste collection subsided between 2010 and 2012, due to Santilli's appointment and an important change in the PRO's strategic orientation.⁴

After the failure of the 2008–9 bid process due to the opposition of environmentalists and *cartoneros*, in December 2009 Macri replaced Juan Pablo Piccardo with Diego Santilli, a PRO leader with a Peronist background. By 2007, the PRO contained five major factions, each coming from a different background: small right-wing parties, business, NGOs and think tanks, the UCR, and the Peronist or Justicialista Party (Vommaro and Morresi 2015). While business and NGO factions formed the party

core, Peronist leaders such as Santilli specialized in building linkages with poor neighborhoods and popular organizations, especially during electoral campaign periods.

Under Minister Santilli, the PRO administration reversed its reluctance to expand the recyclable waste collection service with the participation of *cartoneros*. With that strategic change, Santilli paved the way for a milestone in the collaboration between *cartonero* cooperatives and the city government: the public contest for the hiring of the Dry Fraction Urban Solid Waste Collection Service (henceforth, the Dry Fraction Service, *Servicio Fracción Secos*), open only to urban recycler cooperatives. The Dry Fraction Service would become the channel through which the Green City framework would finally link to *cartoneros'* activities.

The public competition process began in April 2010. The city government called two NGOs (Poder Ciudadano and Cambio Democrático) to prepare a public information hearing and to assist the cooperatives interested in applying for the public contest. According to one participant, Minister Santilli's decision to carry out a public contest meant that the "state finally recognized the legitimacy of *cartoneros*, that this actor had to be part" of the recyclable waste policy (Fundación Cambio Democrático member 2015).

To be eligible to apply, cooperatives had to be previously registered in the REPyME. The negotiations between the government and *cartonero* organizations around the definition and allocation of the service lasted for two years. The service was finally allotted to nine cooperatives in August 2012, but the corresponding contracts were not signed until January 2013, after a conflict between both parties about the installation of new containers for separate collection was settled.

Like his predecessor, Minister Santilli aimed to install "double containerization" as the mechanism for the collection of all waste: a container for "dry" (recyclable) waste and a container for "wet" (nonrecyclable) waste. The implementation of double containerization, considered a component of the Green City program, took more than three years from its announcement in 2009 to its initiation in 2012, within the framework of a new Urban Hygiene Master Plan. Yet urban recuperators rejected the new containers for recyclable materials ("green lid" containers) because they considered them too large and difficult to access the materials inside. The rejection of the green lid containers gained such magnitude that, on September 18, 2012, it set off a major *cartonero* mobilization.

More than six hundred urban recuperators marched today to the Ministry of Environment and Public Space, in repudiation of the installation of waste containers in the streets of the City of Buenos Aires. . . . From the beginning of the march, 9 de Julio Avenue became congested since the recuperators arrived in trucks and buses and parked them near the Obelisk. . . . Juan Grabois [MTE activist] explained that "we also come to demand that the city government comply with the agreement that it signed in 2009, in which it recognized the cooperatives of urban recuperators as responsible for the collection of recyclable waste." . . . The protesters maintain that the containers were placed to eliminate their labor source and demand compliance with the agreement through which the City of Buenos Aires grants them the collection of recyclable waste. (*Diario Popular* 2012; *La Nación* 2012; *Marcha* 2012)

As a direct result of the September 2012 mobilization, the city government and the cooperatives that won the public contest formed a “working table” to solve the conflict over the containers. Six months later, the government decided to withdraw the green lid containers and “reformulate” the recyclable waste collection system (Rocha 2013). It replaced the containers with bell-shaped containers (“green bells”) and agreed that the cooperatives would collect the materials from the green bells by themselves and would take them to the Green Centers, where they would classify and commercialize the recyclable materials on their own. *Cartonero* cooperatives considered the installation of the green bells a consequence

of our fight against the giant containers, the famous green bells came out of a decision jointly made by the cooperatives and the city government. (Reciclando Trabajo y Dignidad cooperative member 2014)

Once the conflict over the containers was solved, the city government signed a contract with each one of the cooperatives that won the public contest. Each cooperative was assigned 1 or 2 collection areas out of a total of 12. At the time, both Minister Santilli and urban recuperators acknowledged the public contest and the subsequent contracts as a major achievement and a key advance in the formal incorporation of *cartoneros*. Said Santilli:

[The public contest] offered the urban recuperators, grouped in cooperatives, the historic possibility of participating actively in this process of change, allowing [us] to value the work they have been developing for so many years. (Quoted in Mozobanczyk 2014, 135)

A city government official who worked at the ministry between 2008 and 2015 described that “process of change” as follows:

A public contest was held, 12 cooperatives won. The City of Buenos Aires now has 12 cooperatives that are in charge of the collection of these materials. In 2008 it was a lack of control and now there is planning. From 2008 to now, much has changed. (Ministry of Environment and Public Space high official 2014)

Cooperative members valued the Dry Fraction Service as well.

We have the feeling that progress has been made. Much less than what we would like, but we have made great progress in formalizing our job. I believe that today the *cartonero*, in one way or another, is recognized as another actor in the city. (Recuperadores Urbanos del Oeste cooperative member 2014)

The city of Buenos Aires’ *cartoneros* program is by far the best in Latin America in terms of rights. . . . It was not the initial policy of *Macrismo*. From the outset, *Macrismo* had a repressive policy for the sector. But through the organization and the resistance of the movement, this program came out. That’s why I tell you that this is the best program that exists and it is an achievement of the organizations. (MTE activist 2014)

THE CONSOLIDATION OF A TROUBLED COLLABORATION

A total of 12 cooperatives were formally incorporated in the Dry Fraction Service as of 2016: Alelí, Amanecer de los Cartoneros (MTE), Baires Cero Con, Cartoneros del Sur, Del Oeste, El Álamo, El Ceibo, El Trébol, Las Madreselvas, Reciclando Sueños, Reciclando Trabajo y Dignidad, and Recuperadores Urbanos del Oeste. According to 2017–18 official estimates, about 4,500 recuperators work in those cooperatives, who get the resources obtained through the selling of materials and, additionally, receive a monetary incentive from the government.⁵ They are also covered by personal accident insurance and are registered in a special social security program that allows them to have health coverage. In return, cooperative members must comply with a number of obligations, such as attendance, labor hygiene, and prohibition of child labor.

In addition to the Dry Fraction Service, separate collection gained greater scope, thanks to the Special Waste Generators Program, also mandated by Law 1854/05. Since 2008, materials collected from large generators and part of those collected from households have been sent to the Green Centers.

The creation of the Green Centers was another important outcome of the negotiations undertaken between *cartonero* organizations and the city government over a decade. Green Centers are plants or warehouses where cooperative workers, with the help of some carrying and compacting machines, manually select and classify the recyclable materials to sell them to the market (City of Buenos Aires n.d.b.). The idea of the Green Centers came out of the 2003 Dialogue Table in a proposal of a *cartonero* cooperative (Koehs 2004) and was later included in Law 1854/05 under the name Dry Urban Solid Waste Selection Centers. The first 2 centers were created in 2006 and 2007 under the Jorge Telerman administration, but most of them began work along with the Dry Fraction Service launched in 2012. As of 2017, there were 14 Green Centers at different points in the city. Green Centers are run by cooperatives, which select, classify, and sell recyclable materials collected through the Dry Fraction Service and the Special Generators Program.

To this day, urban recuperators' organizations uphold the Dry Fraction Service and the Green Centers as their main achievements in their struggle to be recognized as formal agents of dry waste collection and recycling (Reciclando Trabajo y Dignidad cooperative member 2014; Amanecer de los Cartoneros cooperative members 2016; MTE activists 2017). Perhaps more reluctantly, the city government also presents them as the central pieces for the formalization of *cartonero* activities (see quotations above).

Yet the relationship between formalized *cartoneros* and the PRO administration has not been free of troubles and conflicts. We saw already some instances of confrontation and contentious action, including the 2012 mobilization that speeded the completion of the public contest. Since 2014, urban recuperators have confronted the city government about what they consider an unjustifiable delay in extending separate collection to the entire city territory—a goal the city government

had promised to achieve in 2012 but has not yet attained (Baires Cero Con cooperative member 2014; MTE activists 2017; author's participant observation at the Zero Waste Law Follow-Up Commission meetings between 2015 and 2018).

Actually, urban recuperators have always held a suspicion that the city government wanted or preferred to transfer the recyclable waste collection service to private firms—and that for this reason, it did not extend the Dry Fraction Service after 2012. This suspicion intensified in 2016 with the impending renewal of the Dry Fraction Service contracts, which were to expire that December. In the first part of the year, urban recuperators began to complain that the new Horacio Rodríguez Larreta administration (PRO, 2015–19) was not willing to contact them to discuss the contracts' renewal.

On July 14, 2016, the 12 cooperatives participating in the Dry Fraction Service marched to the headquarters of the Ministry of Environment and Public Space (now headed by Edgardo Macchiavelli, after Santilli was elected national senator in 2013). There, a representative from each cooperative climbed up on a stage on a flatbed truck and spoke to their followers and to the officials listening through the ministry windows (direct observation made by the author). They defended their role as Dry Fraction Service workers and “environmental awareness raisers” (*concientizadores ambientales*), demanding to be called to discuss the new contracts, and threatened to continue protesting on the streets if the government did not answer their complaints.

Four days later, Ministry of Environment and Public Space authorities and cooperative representatives signed a memo of understanding through which they agreed that the Dry Fraction Service would remain in the hands of the 12 cooperatives and that 2 working tables would be set up, one to discuss the new public contest specifications and another to collect information on the service operation. Additionally, Dry Fraction Service contracts were extended until a new public contest could be completed.

In 2018, even though the new public contest had not yet been implemented, a new issue confronted the 12 cooperatives and environmental organizations: the discussion and passing of a law allowing for the installation of waste-to-energy (incineration) plants, formerly prohibited by the Zero Waste Law until disposal targets were attained (author's participant observation at 2018 Zero Waste Law Follow-Up Commission meetings). Urban recuperators and environmentalists obtained a restraining provision, and this new dispute, as of 2019, continues in the courts. In the meantime, the Dry Fraction Service (or the Recycling with Social Inclusion System, as *cartoneros* would call it) is still in place. The following excerpt from an interview with a cooperative member illustrates how *cartoneros* explicitly connect the achievement of the Dry Fraction Service with the combination of contentious and collaborative tactics.

To turn scavenging into a dignified job recognized by the city. We advanced a lot in that, because the wet fraction was separated from the dry fraction already in the bidding documents, and the cartonero was recognized as the worker who has to be in charge of the recyclable materials. The city started to invest in logistics, in the Green Centers, but there is still a lot to do in order to keep strengthening scavenging as a job; that is, for scavenging to become

a dignified job, and that is our priority. . . . *All this comes from mobilizations, turmoil, discussions, and debates with the city government; we have stripped everything from Macri, so that he pays attention to what we believe the City of Buenos Aires recycling policy must be.* (Recuperadores Urbanos del Oeste cooperative member 2014, emphasis added)

The strategic use of contentious tactics to guarantee the continuation and strengthening of formal collaboration is highlighted by the president of one of the 12 cooperatives participating in the Dry Fraction Service, during the July 2016 mobilization.

Therefore, in this way, I want to close with this: let's show that we are civilized, when we take off, let's take off peacefully. *Let's show that if we have to use force, we will do it, we will be there, will camp on the street. Compañeros*, I certainly want to thank all cooperatives present today, we are all present up on the stage, and we have a lot of people behind us supporting recycling. We are environmental awareness raisers, we do not know what else to invent for this to work. We do advertising campaigns for people to understand that household separation is good. But they [pointing to the ministry building] have to understand that nobody will stop us. *We will be on the street and will fight. Compañeros*, if they touch one of us, they will have to touch all of us. (Public speech by a cooperative president during the July 14, 2016 mobilization, observed and recorded by the author; emphasis added)

To the extent that they never renounced the use of contentious action and never became part of the ruling party, under the PRO administrations, *cartonero* organizations managed to engage in a formal collaboration with the city government and at the same time to preserve their organizational autonomy. To some, the transformation “from *cartoneros* to urban recuperators” may be seen as a way of “disciplining” or “subordinating” *cartoneros* (Whitson 2011; Sternberg 2013). But this interpretation is not supported by the evidence provided in this article and, perhaps more important, does not coincide with the way cooperative members valued policy instruments such as the Dry Fraction Service and the Green Centers, as well as their interaction with the city government in general. To them, those instruments were not disciplining mechanisms but major achievements that they accomplished after years of struggle, as the quotations in this work and all my interviews with cooperative members show.

CLOSING REMARKS

The opening lines of this article asked whether popular organizations can engage in a lasting formal collaboration with the state that is beneficial to their interests without being politically co-opted or captured. Through the analysis of the *cartonero*-PRO interaction, the article argued that such a collaboration is related to the strategic orientations of both the popular organization and the ruling party and that it increases when the popular organization is not part of the incumbent party coalition.

Throughout the article, I showed that the formalization and continuation of a formal collaboration between *cartoneros* and the PRO administrations was possible

due both to *cartoneros'* strategic use of complementary tactics and to the strategic changes within the PRO. *Cartoneros'* persistent combination of contentious and institutionalized participation all through the process got the PRO to pay attention to their claims and recognize the legitimacy of their organizations.

Cartoneros' claims were amplified and strengthened by environmental organizations' critiques of the PRO government. But the PRO's strategic change (from criminalization to formal collaboration) was also due to intraparty factors: above all, the divisions within the party and a related ministerial change that, at a given point in the process, led to a policy change favorable to *cartoneros'* interests and goals. The divisions within the PRO allowed for the appointment of a new environment and public space minister willing to negotiate with *cartonero* organizations. As result, the new minister paved the way for a milestone in the collaboration between *cartoneros* and the city government: the Dry Fraction Service, a case of troubled collaboration in which formal society-state collaboration combined with the persistent use of contentious tactics by the social partners involved.

As *cartonero* organizations never abandoned contentious tactics and neither side (either intentionally or unintentionally) ever tried to build a wider alliance or partnership beyond the joint program at stake, *cartonero* cooperatives managed to become a formal partner of a municipal management system without being co-opted by the state. This does not imply denying the asymmetry of power between popular organizations, on the one hand, and the state and the ruling party, on the other. Yet despite that asymmetry, cooperative members valued policy instruments such as the Dry Fraction Service and the Green Centers as major achievements that they extracted from the city government in response to their interests and claims. All through the process, *cartonero* cooperatives pursued their own interests and decided what type of action to take to advance them. Certainly, the cooperatives are not fully satisfied with the scope of the Dry Fraction Service, but they praise it as the most important milestone in the formal incorporation of *cartoneros*.

Thus, if the strategic use of complementary tactics is key for popular organizations to get state responses to their claims, this article's findings suggest that two other conditions are equally important to understand how popular organizations can engage in a formal interaction with the state without being politically co-opted or captured: the divisions within the ruling party or party coalition and the popular organizations' political independence from that party.

When important divisions exist within the ruling party or state bureaucracy, popular organizations can take advantage of them. In the face of constant pressure from popular organizations and their circumstantial allies (such as environmental organizations), divisions within the ruling party can favor changes in the government's staff and strategic orientation that are more permeable to the interests of those organizations. In turn, the possibility of this happening increases when the popular organizations remain politically independent from the ruling party or party coalition, which reduces the latter's capacity to subordinate the organizations to its own interests. When the popular organizations remain politically independent, they retain greater space to choose what type of action to undertake, which gives them

greater freedom to resort to contentious action when they consider it appropriate or necessary. The use (or threat) of contentious action increases the ability to bring about a change in the strategic orientation of the actor from above.

If nonincorporation into the governing party or coalition is an important condition for popular organizations to keep their autonomy while engaging in a formal collaboration with the state, this presupposes that a more politically or ideologically aligned ruling party could make the institutionalization-plus-autonomy outcome more difficult. The experience of the Argentine *piqueteros* may shed some light on this point. Between 2003 and 2015, several *piquetero* organizations became part of the national governing coalition (Frente para la Victoria) and progressively abandoned contentious tactics. From 2015 on, with a new party (PRO) in the presidency, *piquetero* organizations have seemed to follow the Buenos Aires *cartoneros*' path: they continue to get involved in institutionalized participation venues opened during the previous period but have resumed the strategic use of contention. Further research is needed to see whether the kind of troubled collaboration recounted in this article is followed by *piqueteros* and other popular organizations in Argentina and elsewhere, and under what conditions.

NOTES

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1. *Cartoneros* comes from *cartón*, Spanish for cardboard. Literally, it means cardboard pickers or collectors, but the term is extensively used to refer to all kinds of scavengers who collect discarded material from the trash bags deposited on the streets before those are collected by the municipal service trucks. Since 2002, *cartoneros* and *urban recuperators* have been used as synonyms, and this article will do so accordingly. Most *cartoneros* who work in the City of Buenos Aires live in surrounding provincial municipalities and enter the city to do their job daily.

2. Macri is currently president of Argentina (2015–19).

3. *Piqueteros* and *piquetero movement* refer to the unemployed workers' organizations that have emerged in Argentina since the mid-1990s. For an overview of the *piquetero* organizations and the interactions and divisions among them, see Rossi 2017.

4. Additionally, Buenos Aires City waste policies received a low rank in a 2010 international report of the Latin American Green City Index, conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010). This might have also led the PRO administration to pay more attention to recyclable waste policies.

5. Data provided to the author by the General Directorate of Recycling Policies, October 30, 2017, and confirmed through interviews with cooperatives. As of 2017, the total number of *cartoneros* working in the City of Buenos Aires streets was estimated at between 8,000 and 12,000 by different state and social sources interviewed.

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