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Introduction

On Friday August 14th 2015, CUT, the national union confederation in Brazil, and Forza Sindical, the second largest labor organization, issued a statement in the main Brazilian newspapers in which they made a bold call to defend democracy and PT President Dilma Rousseff “in a context of destabilizing attacks.” President Rousseff had just met that week with some of the Brazilian leading social activists, in a formal “Dialogo con os Movimientos Sociais” oriented to show their support in hard times. That same Friday, Ecuador witnessed one of the wildest strikes waged by portions of the labor movement in recent times. The protest day culminated with a demonstration of the indigenous movements in Quito that erupted into violence and police repression. In turbulent days, the PT government garnered the support of unions and social movements to thwart an offensive from the mainstream media, the judiciary and the political opposition that would eventually result in the President’s removal. Another progressive Latin American government, headed by Rafael Correa, which had expanded social policy and contested media control by traditional economic groups, nonetheless, clashed both rhetorically and in the streets with labor unions and indigenous social movements.

Of course, this contrasting picture of working class politics under the Latin American, post-neoliberal Left Turn is not limited to Brazil and Ecuador. In Argentina, Kirchnerismo in its heydays boasted the support of a variety of working class actors, ranging from middle-class and affluent “business unionists” to militants of pauperized community organizations of Greater Buenos Aires poorest areas. The Uruguayan Frente Amplio set the stage for a union labor market offensive very similar to what their labor counterparts at the opposite side of the River Plate were experiencing. However, independent or national social movements were absent from the political construction of the left in Uruguay. Alternative types of community organizations and social movements, on the other hand, had been at the center of the grassroots political mobilization sparked by the MAS in Bolivia and
initially by *Chavismo*. By contrast, unlike in Argentina and Brazil, the established labor movement in Venezuela not only opposed Chavez left-wing populist government, but took active part in the attempted coup of 2002.

In effect, though at a general level of neoliberal ideological repudiation or expansion of social policies many Latin American governments in the 2000s have been broadly similar, the coalitions with popular actors\(^1\) displayed a lot of variation. The main goal of this article is to understand and explain the varieties of relations between governments and the subaltern sectors during the post-neoliberal\(^2\) period in Latin America. The studies on popular politics in Latin America have undergone two broad paths in the last decade. One main strand of the literature has analyzed the return of leftist and national-popular parties and leaders to power in the context of a neoliberal backlash beginning in the late 1990s (Levitsky and Roberts 2011, De la Torre 2013b, Weyland et. al. 2010, Cameron and Hershberg 2010). A second group of scholars have theorized the types and institutional features of the “incorporation” of popular sectors in the third-wave democracies. These studies have investigated the new forms of organized popular participation (not necessarily restricted to left-wing governments) both at the national (Silva 2016, Collier and Handlin 2008, Rossi 2015) and local level (Goldfrank 2011, Goldfrank and Schrank 2009, Wampler 2010), and their implications for the future organization of the political economies.

The Left-Turn approach has analyzed primarily the types of political parties and the various policy dimensions of the new progressive governments. Yet the dilemmas, variations and asymmetries

\(^1\) Following Collier and Handlin (2009) I consider “popular actors” formal and informal wage-earners, as well as self-employed individuals in the lower strata, generally also part of the informal sector. Sometimes the literature, especially in Latin America, restricts the term “working-class” to the organized formal sector. However, as I am referring in general to the laboring classes as opposed to the propertied, managers and professional classes, I use the concepts of “popular sectors” and “working-class” interchangeably.

\(^2\) By “post-neoliberal governments” in Latin America I refer to those that remained in office for at least a complete term in the time-period of the 2000-15, when most countries had passed the bulk of market-oriented reforms, and the post-1998 world financial turmoil had started to erode the policy hegemony of the IMF and the World Bank.
of left-wing governments in cementing interest coalitions with both formal and/or informal popular sectors, i.e. unions and territorial associations or social movements, beyond the electoral realm, has been less systematically studied. The studies on the new forms of political participation have examined more closely interest coalitions with popular actors. However, they have mostly restricted their analysis to local politics, or focused on the national “incorporation” of new popular sectors. In this case, however, comparative approaches have mostly centered on the Andean countries in which the mobilization of traditionally excluded informal sectors has been, presumably, more intense. The question of the re-activation of traditional working-class actors such as unions or labor-based parties, especially in the Latin American Southern Cone, has been left undertheorized.

Thus, this study complements these general approaches in two ways. First, it aims to study the type of coalitions (electoral and organized interest-based) that have cemented the new left projects in Latin America, which may involve both informal and formal popular actors and intersect in social, labor and economic policies. These interest coalitions display wide policy and political variation even within a common progressive trajectory. Second, it compares national coalitions in the Southern Cone and Andean Latin American countries that tend to be analyzed separately. Generally speaking, Southern Cone countries are considered to have more relevant unions and more consolidated welfare states. Andean countries, by contrast, developed larger informal sectors and smaller welfare systems. Yet, all Latin American countries that underwent popular sector (re) activation after 2000 have both formal and informal popular sectors that can be politicized, and therefore a broader comparative exercise may be useful.

The article presents a series of conceptual tools that can help to understand the variations in government alliances with alternative popular constituencies in post neoliberal Latin America. I will argue that investigating the types of popular coalitions yields a heuristic apparatus that can travel across cases to compare and explain the political resurgence of subaltern sectors. The article contends
that the continent witnessed four types of popular sector coalitions in the post-neoliberal period: Electoral (Ecuador and Chile) Territorial Association-Based (Venezuela and Bolivia), Mixed (i.e. formed by both unions and informal sector based associations, Argentina and Brazil) and Union/Party-Based (Uruguay). It is worth stressing from the outset that in Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay left-wing governments also constructed electoral popular coalitions. Yet they combined their electoral popular appeal with the crafting of interest coalitions in the policy realm with at least some segment of the subaltern classes, or with organizations at both sides of the informal/formal divide. This essay attempts to explain the origins of these diverse trajectories. It argues that the structure of the labor market after neoliberalism, i.e. the size of the informal sector and the level of unemployment, should be complemented by defined political factors to assess the type of popular coalitions that would unfold. Interest coalitions with TAs are rooted in the political activation and alliances of informal sector-based organizations during the neoliberal struggles in the 1990s. At the same time, when traditional labor based-parties, forged in the XXth century before neoliberalism, led the Left-Turn governments, as in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, they crafted durable interest coalitions with the mainstream union movement.

The first section situates my study in relation to the “Left/National Popular Turn” and the “Incorporation” approaches that have dominated the literature on the political economy of the popular sectors in the last decade in Latin America. Next, I propose the idea of “variations in popular coalitions” and argue that the classical literature on parties’ core coalitions and a (modified) version of the Power Resource Theory applied to welfare politics in Western Europe can serve us to analyze working class re-activation in Latin America in the two main dimension of electoral and interest politics. Next, the article maps alternative paths to popular sector mobilization at both sides of the formal/informal divide in Latin America between 2000 and 2015, and offers an explanation for the different trajectories of countries.
The Theoretical Setting: Crafting Popular Coalitions in in Post-Neoliberal Latin America

The Left/Populist-Turn literature in Latin America has had two main vectors. It has tried to identify the type of progressive party or political leadership that was embodying the reaction to neoliberalism (see Levitsky and Roberts 2011, De La Torre 2013, Lanzaro 2008) and has analyzed the degree of policy moderation or radicalism in each government. In particular, the political economy of the Latin American Left/Populist Turn has largely been assessed under the general lens of “social-democrat vs populist” (Flores Macías 2012, Weyland 2011, Lanzaro 2008), the potentials of the commodity boom for redistribution (Murillo et.al 2011, Freytes 2015, Mazzuca 2013), or the determinants of social policies (Priebble 2013, Handlin 2012, Huber and Stephens 2012). Other works (Niedzwiecki 2014, Garay 2016) which employ a historical perspective not restricted to the New Left, have illuminated the role played by unions and social movements in social policy expansion in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. These studies have greatly expanded our knowledge on the more interventionist states and enlarged social policies that the progressive turn has brought about. Yet we still lack a general systematic assessment of the origins of different types of popular interest coalitions that has backed each left-wing or populist strategy, whether composed by unions, social movements or associations in the informal sector, or both.

The new incorporation literature has been more focused in analyzing the new forms of popular participation and organization in the context of post-neoliberal, fragmented working classes. In a seminal book (see below) Collier and Handlin (2009) have contrasted the logic of interest organization in the new community associations that flourished mostly in the informal sector with the traditional, union-based functional representation. These scholars and their co-authors have provided the first map of the new “urban associationalism” and its relationship to unions and parties in Latin America. Yet
they do not attempt to systematize its connection with national politics or left-wing governing coalitions. Silva (2016) and Moreno and Figueroa (2015), by contrast, focus on national coalitions with organized popular sectors in the post-neoliberal world. Silva conceptualizes “segmented incorporation” as the differential articulation of heterogeneous popular sectors to the political arena, “understood as the state, legislative institutions, political parties and policy” (p. 92). If labor-based parties were the key protagonists of the initial incorporation theorized by the Colliers (1991), the new state alliances are forged by the amalgamation of fragmented but organized informal social groups. Silva distinguishes three types of segmented incorporation: from below via organic mass mobilization party (Bolivia), state-led anticorporatist (Ecuador) and state-led of a new “socialist” type (Venezuela). They all implied the involvement or targeting of subaltern sectors by state policy, but differ in the conditions and timing of the incorporation process.

Silva’s analysis on the new forms of popular political organization in the continent is illuminating. It has the virtue of refocusing the discussion on the institutional features of coalitions between alternative types of subaltern social groups at the national level. Yet the approach may have two drawbacks. First, Silva restricts the empirical analysis to three Andean countries. In this way, each cell/type of incorporation has only one case, which might be methodologically problematic. It also leaves undertheorized the popular sector offensive in the Southern Cone of the region during the 2000s. Here more traditional working class actors such as historical labor-based parties and unions were also part of the new politicization. The second problem relates to the concept of “incorporation” itself as applied to the study of interest/popular politics in XXI th century Latin America. For Collier and Collier (1991) popular “incorporation” in the critical juncture of ISI displayed three essential features: the end of massive state repression, the gradual emergence of (contested) democratic regimes, and the state role in shaping the emergent labor movements.
Silva argues that the “substance” (p.97) of incorporation takes place under the new left governments post-2000. However, in Latin America massive and sustained state repression to popular actors has not been an option for years or decades and most (though perhaps not all) working class actors in the region were a legitimate part of politics in most countries since at least the early 1990s. For example, CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), the hegemonic indigenous movement in Ecuador was by any measure (representatives in Congress, participation in policy councils or national cabinets) more “incorporated” during the neoliberal era than after 2005 under the Correa presidency. Even the most rebellious groups, such as the MST in Brazil, or the organizations of the unemployed in Argentina, despite suffering episodes of violent state repression, were, by the early 2000s recognized as interlocutors by non-Left governments, and frequently became parts of policy councils. Not to mention the labor movement in countries like Venezuela, Argentina or Mexico which, unlike during the initial incorporation, were established political brokers and sometimes subordinated components of neoliberal coalitions (see Murillo 2001, Etchemendy 2011).

Assessing the Political (Re)Activation of Popular Actors in Latin America

This essay proposes to analyze the recent political activation of the lower strata in terms of alternative types of governmental coalitions with the formal and informal popular sector rather than under the lens of “incorporation”, a concept more associated to the idea of “new” actors in the political arena. In a now classic definition, Gibson (1996: 7, see also Luna 2014) identifies as a party’s “core constituency” as those sectors of society “that are most important to its political agenda and resources.” Gibson explains that most conservative’s parties or political movements are polyclass in nature and court diverse groups, and so tends to be the case in the popular parties/movements analyzed in this article. Yet, he argues that “the notion of core coalitions recognizes hierarchies.” (p.7). So the first
question to state is, after the neoliberal backlash, for what parties in government\(^3\) did the popular sectors become a *core* coalitional partner or constituency?

Furthermore, incumbent parties/movements may look at popular sectors as a constituency in a variety of ways. The popular sectors may emerge as the main social strata on which to base its electoral discursive appeals and support. In addition, left-wing parties may engage working class organizations, such unions or community-based movements, to negotiate and implement policies, and enhance the prospects for governability. Thus, in the line of the Power Resource Theory (PRT) applied to welfare state consolidation in Western Europe, one can explore the political process by which popular sectors individuals or organizations become main constituencies for governments in two spheres a) the electoral and b) the interest arenas. Classical PRT scholarship considers working class activation in these two general dimensions of participation in elections and legislatures, and industrial action and policy involvement by labor organizations.\(^4\) Indeed, the two dimensions of electoral and interest politics correspond roughly to the great divide posed by the classic literature on pluralism and corporatism in the 1970s and early 1980s.

The question is if, and how, *more fragmented* popular sectors in Latin America become, again, part of government coalitional strategies. In effect, the most central novelty with respect to the initial incorporation period at the economic-structural level is the demise of ISI, the broad sweep of recent market reforms, and the consequent trends in deregulation and working class informalization. Thus, in the interest intermediation arena, if labor unions, often allied with mass parties, were the hegemonic actors in the initial incorporation, now both labor unions and informal-sector nurtured territorial

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\(^3\) Gibson analysis considers parties in general, i.e. no matter if they are in power or not. Here I restrict my analysis to parties (or less institutionalized political movements) which hold state power.

\(^4\) See for example, Shalev and Korpi (1980: 32): “The concept of [working class] mobilization is a broad one, encompassing not only organization per se (such as membership in industrial and political agencies of class action), but also the generation of more informal types of support (e.g. voting)” Although for these scholars the idea of working-class power involve other features (i.e. class consciousness), it essentially refers to both the electoral and interest arena (see also Korpi 1983).
associations may represent popular sector individuals. Collier, Handlin and co-authors (2009) have studied most comprehensively the massive “urban associationalism” that has flourished throughout the region. They define these territorial associations as “organizations through which popular-sector groups seek to solve collective problems through society-centered strategies of provisioning (distributing goods, services, and information to the community and organizing community events) as well as capacity building (financing and creating other organizations or training leaders)” (2009a:11).5

Collier and Handlin (2009a, 2009b) discuss extensively the alternative incentives, logics and capacities of what they call the Union-Hub and the Association-Net. For our purpose, is enough to state that both operate in the popular representation interest arena in post-neoliberal Latin America. Interestingly, these scholars do not restrict the “politics” of territorial associations (TAs) to the mediation or “targeting” of the state (2009a:11). Any problem-solving community organization that engages a collectivity of individuals to bring some type of solution to social grievances is, in their view “political.” This essay seeks to explore further, when and how, those TAs can become national coalitional partners.

Finally, for our initial theoretical setting, it is useful to identify the dimensions or indicators of the alternatives types of popular coalitions. Electoral coalitions refer to the fact that governments target, both discursively and practically, the lower strata to obtain their main voting support in presidential and legislative elections. Hence, governments that foster “electoral popular coalitions” should elaborate a sustained political campaign or public opinion narrative in which the popular sectors are conceived to have distinctive and (to some extent) opposed interests to those of elites or more affluent social groups

5 Hence, popular sector associations encompass a broader category of community organizations than the standard definition of social movements that tend to operate through single-issue politics (unemployed, landless, institutional violence, or indigenous). However, in this essay I use the concept of TA and social movement interchangeably to refer to the informal sector-based associations.
Second, governments should take a disproportionate share of their votes from the lower strata of the population.

In the realm of interest groups, governments can engage working class organizations in three dimensions:

a) They can grant state positions to militants or leaders of labor unions or TAs.

b) They can foster the involvement of labor unions and TAs in the design and implementation of (generally social and/or labor) policies that benefit popular organizations or their constituencies, and induce their participation in government-sponsored policy councils.

c) They can promote, induce or actively tolerate unions and/or TAs’ collective action. The forms of direct action may vary from public opinion or electoral campaigns or demonstrations supporting the government and confronting elite or right-wing sectors, to measures specific to each sector such as occupations or road blockades in the case of social movements, and strikes in the case of labor.

Before proceeding to the empirical sections of this essay, some caveats are needed. First, just as in the PRT, popular organizing in the interest and electoral arenas does not imply revolution (but in essence reformist consolidation). Indeed, the restraint of direct action may be part of governments that overall have elevated working class interests to a different stage, especially when compared with the neoliberal period. Second, a general level of government-sponsored class activation does not deny that other internal cleavages operate within the popular sectors. In fact, the tensions between the interests of formal and unregistered workers, or those between tradable and non-tradable sectors in collective bargaining, are, in themselves, issues to explore within recent popular governing coalitions in Latin America. Finally, the three the dimensions of interest coalitions (state participation, policy inclusion and joint collective action) should be present to a minimum degree to code a case as positive. Indeed,
state participation of class organizations without the dimensions of policy inclusion and collective action might be a symbol of simple cooptation rather than of some degree of mobilization.

**Mapping Popular Coalitions in Post-Neoliberal Latin America**

Figure 1 below maps the scope of government-sponsored popular coalitions in Latin America along the theoretical lines just sketched. At first glance, the resulting popular mobilization “map” yields counterintuitive results. The grouping of countries diverges from the most common comparisons drawn by the New Left/Populist Turn literature. For example, Ecuador and Chile, frequently scored as examples of radical and moderate left governments in the 2000s (see Weyland 2011: 74), converge, however, in a purely electoral type of popular progressive coalition. Argentina under *Kirchnerismo* and Brazil under the PT have also been considered as polar examples of radical and more moderate left-wing policies, or populist and “social democrat” approaches (Lanzaro 2008). They present, however, very similar formats of interest group coalitions with the popular sectors. Moreover, if one considers the seminal work of Roberts (2013) on the social basis of party systems, countries with historical labor-mobilizing party systems (Bolivia, Chile) and those with elitist party systems (Venezuela, Ecuador), display, however, very similar popular interest coalitions in the 2000s, i.e. purely electoral in Chile and Ecuador, and TA based in Bolivia and Venezuela. The next sections describe in more detail and try to explain these popular mobilization patterns.
1-Absence of Popular Electoral or Interest Mobilization: Mexico, Colombia and Peru.

The first case are those governments who have not targeted the working class in any of the dimensions outlined above (electoral and interest in the dimensions of state participation, policy involvement or collective action) in a sustained way. Colombia under Uribe (2002-2010) and Santos (2010-present), Mexico under the PAN governments of Fox (2000-2006) and Calderón (2006-2012) and Peru under Toledo, García and Humala in the 2000s⁶ fall under this category. Their parties and

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⁶ Humala’s election in 2011 is admittedly a complicated case. He won the election as left-wing candidate with a more of a class-based discourse, especially in the run-off. But this quickly evaporated as he took power and reverted to traditional neoliberal policies.
governments have not issued any sort of consistent and sustained working class-based electoral or public opinion appeal, and they have not fostered any form of popular organization at a national scale in the interest arena.

2-Electoral Mobilization: Chile and Ecuador

The second group, constituted by Chile under the Concertación governments (2000-2015) and Ecuador under Correa (2005-2015), have promoted some degree of popular sector mobilization, but arguably only at the electoral and discursive/public opinion dimensions mentioned above. Both groups of governments have targeted the working class (though clearly in different ways) in the public opinion debate and in their quest to win elections, and in both cases these left-of-center governments tend to get, over time, disproportionally more votes in working-class areas. However, most scholars agree in that in Chile the Concertación in general, and the Socialist-headed governments in particular, have not encouraged further organizational mobilization, and have maintained cold relations with mainstream unions. Furthermore, the Concertación has not particularly encouraged, or engaged, grassroots organizations at the community level. The unions have pressed to reform a notoriously anti-union labor law at the onset of the Bachelet government without any success. Furthermore, the still relevant influence of the Communist Party in many unions has sowed distrust between the unions and the Socialist governments at least until the recent communist-backed Bachelet administration (see Garretón and Garretón 2010). Indeed, after 2010 the country witnessed a cycle of protests led by the student organizations, which also harbored labor, social (i.e. the end of the private pension system) and environment demands. The movement largely outflanked the Concertación and its center-left parties. In words of Roberts (2016: 126) this civil society mobilization has “articulated claims that found little expression in the mainstream party organizations that dominated electoral and policy-making arenas under the post 1990 democratic regime”
The Correa government is notorious for having unfriendly and adversarial relations with the most relevant unions and social movements. Tensions between the “productivist” approach of the Correa government and the more participatory and environmentalist stance of the left and (mostly indigenous) social movements started in the Constitutional Convention of 2007-8, and culminated in the resignation of Alberto Acosta, former close ally and President of the Convention. Thereafter, the relations between the government and social movements turned sour. By 2010 CONAIE, the most powerful indigenous organization, was joining forces with the right-wing opposition. Its President denounced the criminalization of social protest and the extractive policies in mining and petroleum against the consent of local communities. Becker (2013: 44) argues that “in addition to undercutting existing organizational efforts, Correa has not used his executive power to create new spaces for grassroots social movements” Unions for the most part contested policy exclusion. In particular, the left-wing teacher’s confederation became one of the most active opposition actors. Correa’s party PAIS remained essentially an electoral tool. De La Torre (2013a) coins the term tecnopopulismo to refer to the top-down, technocratic policymaking style of the Ecuatorian left-wing leader. In his words (2013b: 28), Correa’s government did not “organize the subaltern beyond elections.”

3-Electoral and Territorial Association Interest Mobilization: Venezuela and Bolivia

The Chávez governments (1998-2013) in Venezuela and Evo Morales (2005-2015) in Bolivia not only articulated a general class-based discourse in the public and electoral spheres, but stimulated the mobilization of a wide array of community organizations and social movements mostly among the informal poor of urban and rural areas. There is no question that the informal poor have been the target of Chávez’ policies and his main constituency for political support, to the point that Collier and

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7 For this period see the excellent analysis of Ospina Peralta (2009)
Handlin (2009c: 318-322) suggest the possibility of a partisan associational Neocorporatism. Grassroots organization promoted by Chavismo witnessed a series of waves and forms, starting with the Circulos Bolivarianos early on, and continuing with worker’s cooperatives, the Misiones and Consejos Comunales. The regime also sponsored territorial urban associations in specific policy areas such as the Technical Water Roundtables and Urban Land Committees. The Misiones provide a variety of social services outside the line-Ministries. The Communal Councils are neighborhood organizations that distribute resources for development projects and public works in communities (see Ellner 2011: 429). Both developed important linkages to TAs at the local level. Though the local TAs working with Communal Councils can be (formally) independent, councils need to adhere and follow the Ley de Consejos Comunales to get resources and state access. Box 1 summarizes informal-sector mobilization under the Chávez governments along the dimensions presented above.

Box 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venezuela: Territorial Associations (TAs) Coalitions in the Interest Arena</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1-State Participation:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- TA leader Roland Denis as Vice-Minister of Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- TA members linked to the creation of Ministry for the Communal Economy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2-Policy Inclusion/Government-Sponsored Councils with Organized Interests</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Missions in charge of Social Policy that work closely with TAs in barrios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Program of Workers Cooperatives carry out community projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Development of Communal Councils, which scale to the national state (2006), and administer public works and housing at the local level.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3-Collective Action (main examples)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- TAs protagonists of the countermobilizations to thwart the 2002 Coup and, the 2002-3 general strike.</td>
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8 These successive waves are well described in Ellner (2008) and specially (2011).
Of course, though some pre-existing community-based TAs joined *Chavismo*, mobilization and political construction has largely occurred “from above.” In the peak of its grassroots mobilization after 2006, according to Ellner (2011:424) *Chavismo* could boast 60,000 worker’s cooperatives in the *barrios*, and 30,000 Community Councils in underprivileged communities. Community organizations mushroomed initially outside the *Chavista* electoral parties but not autonomous from the government, and were progressively aligned under the PSUV aegis. Ellner (2008: 192) points out the tensions between the grassroots (more developed initially) and the more statist approach that followed. It seems clear, however, that the statist approach increasingly prevailed between the beginning of Chavez’s third presidency in 2007 and his death in 2013. A more radicalized, “productivist” and statist economic policy (including widespread nationalizations), the first budget cuts for social programmes, and the consolidation of the PSUV as the umbrella organization of all *Chavista* groups (Ellner 2011: 447, 2009: 126-27), all narrowed the space for bottom-up grassroots organization. The key general point for my argument is, however, that Chávez promoted popular organization essentially among the *informal* popular sectors, and that this mobilization included (especially circa 1998-2007) territorial, community-group activism that were external to Chavez embryonic parties.

Bolivia is the second case in which a post-neoliberal government has built strong coalitions in the informal interest arena. The two main axis of this alliance have been the indigenous movements (in particular the coca growers) and the urban associations of El Alto in the outskirts of La Paz. In other words, unlike in Venezuela and Argentina (and similar to Brazil) interest coalitions with informal popular actors in Bolivia were *both* urban and rural. Despite the obvious concentration of leadership in Morales, organized and territorially-based social movements⁹ played a role in government probably unmatched in the Latin American Left-Turn. The appointments of Abel Mamani, President of the

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⁹ In this study I consider rural unions and coca growers that formed the MAS more a social movement than a traditional labor organization of wage-earners in a firm, as most peasants are in fact informal and/or self-employed workers.
Federation of Neighborhood Councils of El Alto (FEJUVE) as Minister of Water, Nemesia Achacollo from Federation of Peasant Women Bartolina Sisa (FMCBBS) as Minister of Rural Development, and Walter Villarroel from the National Federation of Cooperative Mining (FENCOMIN) are just three diverse examples, but leaders of rural unions and social movements initially staffed important areas of government.10

In addition to the negotiation of state positions, the coalition with informal popular actors crystallized in two defined moments during Morales’ initial years. First, in 2006 the most important indigenous organizations, among them the Single Confederation of Indigenous workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB), the Confederation of Setttlers (CSCB), the FMCBBS, and the lowland peasants of CIDOB coalesced into the Unity Pact. Their goal was to support the MAS project for Constitutional Reform in that same year. Indeed, the proposal formally presented by the MAS at the Constitutional Assembly was first elevated by the Unity Pact to Morales, though it was later amended in the negotiations. Subsequently, the government sponsored the creation of CONALCAM (Coordination for National Change) in 2007, which became an instance to coordinate the interplay of social movements, the Executive and the MAS legislative branch. Unlike the Unity Pact, which essentially cemented the alliance with more traditional indigenous movements, in 2008 CONALCAM also incorporated key urban territorial associations such as cooperative workers and neighborhood councils.11 Mayorga (2011:28) argues that COCALCAM in essence articulated “diverse sectors around high-aggregation demands”, especially those related to the passing of the new constitution. However, some organizations, such as CSUTCB (the traditional “corporatist” peasant organization born out of the 1952 revolution) or the coca unions remained more tied to the core of Morales leadership. Some others like

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10 See, for example Do alto 2011 and Mangini 2007.
11 See Mayorga (2011: 25), Suazo (2010: 129-30), Anria (2013). Incidentally, the relation of Evo with the more traditional unions of miners and teachers that formed the historical backbone of the national labor confederation COB was cooler.
CONAMAQ (a federation of “ayllus”, i.e. predominantly aimara and quechua base organizations that split from CSTUCB in the late 1990s on ethnic-based grounds) or the lowland peasants of CIDOB had a more pragmatic relation.

Box 2

**Bolivia: Territorial Associations (TAs) Coalitions in the Interest Arena**

1- **State Participation (examples):**
   - Abel Mamani (FEJUVE) Minister of Water
   - Nemesia Achacollo (FMCBBS) Minister of Rural Development
   - Walter Villagra (FENCOMIN) Minister of Mining

2- **Policy Inclusion/Government-Sponsored Councils with Organized Interests**
   - Crafting of the Constitutional Project in the Pact of Unity
   - Discussion of Regional Policy and Strategies vis-à-vis secessionist groups in CONALCAM (Coordination for Change).

3- **Collective Action (main examples)**
   - TAs key in the demonstrations that blocked Congress in support of the passing of non-contributory pension program *Renta Dignidad* in 2007.
   - TAs protagonists of the counter-mobilizations to pass the new Constitution and thwart secessionist groups in the Eastern provinces in 2008-9.

Finally, in both Venezuela and Bolivia social movements were at the forefront of collective action specially during key political battles—the third dimension of popular sector mobilization. *Chavista* grassroots urban movements and the Bolivarian Circles of the time played a central role in the counter-demonstrations that—along with the decisive support of the military—converged to Miraflores government house and brought Chavez back to power in 2002 (Roberts 2006: 142). They also staged an explicit support in the two-months general strike waged by the opposition in December 2002-January 2003. In Bolivia, in the context of the Unity Pact, indigenous social movements carried out important demonstrations to support the constitutional project and the social policy expansion of *Renta Dignidad* (Anria and Niedzwiecki 2016: 321-322). Likewise, in 2008 the MAS leadership organized a
big march of the CONALCAM organizations to the eastern provinces to confront right-wing groups that threatened with secession.

4-Electoral and Mixed (Labor Unions and Territorial Associations) Interest Mobilization: Argentina and Brazil

Argentina and Brazil in the 2000s constitute the two cases in which we find not only electoral working class mobilization, but also interest politics activation in both areas of the post-neoliberal class divide: formal and informal. Kirchnerismo established from the outset an odd double alliance with mainstream and traditionally corporatist unions, and a significant portion of urban social movements that operated outside the PJ machine politics. The labor movement witnessed an unlikely comeback after its subordination in the neoliberal years. A labor lawyer that had historically advised key unions was named Minister of Labor, and union and union-linked officials staffed the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Health in areas in which union interests were at stake. Most importantly, the labor movement played a pivotal role in the re-launching of sector-wide, state-oriented collective bargaining and tripartite or bipartite minimum-income councils for the private sector in general, and for teachers, rural, and domestic workers (Etchemendy and Collier 2007). This labor market offensive was backed by laws and decrees (drafted in consultation with the labor movement) that put in place the institutional architecture for this resurgence in centralized collective bargaining. The government also set up twelve tripartite sectoral councils through which the state, sectoral chambers and unions delivered resources for the skill formation of workers.

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12 In Argentina unions control workers’ health insurance, the obras sociales. Union-linked officials were appointed as head of the state office that regulates the system and channels subsidies to unions.
TA leaders from organizations such as the Federation of Land and Housing (FTV), Movimiento Evita (ME), Barrios de Pie (BP) the Tupac Amaru Neighborhood Organization (TA), National Federation of Work Cooperatives (CNCT) and others were also included in government (see Box 3) and participated in the formulations of social policy, especially in the areas of non-contributory...
pensions, and housing (Rossi 2015, Garay 2016). These allied TAs were beneficiaries, and became part of the boards overseeing implementation of programs that financed workers’ cooperatives in both the Ministry of Social Development and Labor. In sum, defined policy areas served as main coalitional fulcrum in these interest politics coalitions with popular actors: labor policy/collective bargaining with the mainstream unions of the CGT, education policy and teachers national wage council with the left-wing union confederation CTA (Argentine Workers Central, a group of mostly public sector unions that broke with the CGT in the 1990s), and cooperative programs essentially cemented the alliance with the organizations of unemployed, informal workers. Box 3 summarizes this organizational mobilization under the Kirchners.

In Brazil the PT government also established initial interest coalitions with the largest popular organizations: CUT (Workers Unique Central) and CONTAG (National Confederation of Rural Workers) in the formal sector, and the MST (Landless Workers’ Movement), and the Housing Movement mostly based in the informal popular sector. Gómez Bruera (2015) has examined how the PT used state positions and public policy involvement to cement an alliance with these social actors. Lula appointed prominent leaders of the main workers national confederation CUT as Ministers in diverse areas including Labor and Social Security in his first administration (Box 4). Union-linked labor ministers pushed forward the policy of systematic increase in the minimum wage, a key mechanism for social redistribution under the PT government (Schipanis 2017).
CONTAG (national rural union) and MST (landless workers) also occupied several positions in the Minister of Rural Development and the Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCRA) (see Box 4). Both ministries implemented programs that benefited their social movement constituencies, in particular the National Programme for the Invigoration of Family Agriculture (PRONAF) delivered by the Minister
of Rural Development, which was staffed by CONTAG in key areas (Box 4). The expansion of PRONAF under Lula was massive, and scholars argue that it became an import source of funding for the MST (Gómez Bruera 2015: 587, see also Branford 2010: 424). Likewise, an MST linked-official also led the National Programe for Education and Land Reform, which had a fivefold budget increase under Lula. The MST was also actively involved in the first version of Lula’s Land Reform project in 2003-4, crafted by the prestigious agrarian specialist and PT founder Plínio Sampaio in consultation with social movements and the rural unions (Branford 2010: 419-421). Likewise, the MTST (Workers’ Homeless Movement), a housing social movement based in San Pablo, participated in the Ministry for Cities and in the housing program *Minha Casa, Minha Vida*. Of course, it is difficult to measure the degree of social movement inclusion in the PT administrations as many activists wear double hats as members of party and unions or social movements (see Gómez Bruera 20015: 508). But there is no question that labor movement and territorial associations leaders played a relevant and unprecedented role in the national executive offices of their respective areas, and in policy implementation.

In sum, in both Argentina and Brazil unions and informal economy-based social movements were included in the government coalition. Social actors used this platform to (at least initially) push mobilization and advance programmatic goals to some extent. In Argentina, the government ostensibly backed union strike mobilization in during the collective bargaining resurgence of 2003-7. Land occupations and strike activity also increased remarkably in the first years of the Lula administration (Branford 2010: 418). Furthermore, as in Bolivia and Venezuela, progressive governments in Argentina and Brazil sought the backing of these organized class actors in electoral contests and major political disputes with right-wing sectors. Both Argentine major unions and social movements were active in the pro-government countermobilizations against the lock-out organized by business rural organizations in 2008. In Brazil, unions and social movements publicly backed Lula’s reelection in 2006. They also supported Dilma in the streets since 2014 in order to counter the impeachment process.
5-Electoral and Union/Party Interest Mobilization: Uruguay

Uruguay is an atypical case. After 2005, both Tabaré and Mujica FA (Broad Front) governments set the stage for a union labor market offensive only comparable to Argentina 2003-2015 in Latin America. Sector-wide bargaining and minimum wage councils were put in place for private, public sector and rural workers and the Ministries of Labor and Health were staffed with union-linked officials. As in Argentina, the FA government voted in Congress a new institutional frame for collective bargaining in consultation with unions that was strongly rejected by the business sector. On the other hand, Frente Amplio, unlike the Concertación in Chile, is a mass-organic party and that deploys deep organizational roots and linkages among the informal poor that go beyond electoral campaigns (see Levitsky and Roberts 2011, Luna 2014: 249, Álvarez Rivadulla 2017), and include grassroots alliances with neighborhood and shantytowns associations, squatter organizations and the like. The difference with the TAs mobilization countries is, however, that those local associations lack any relevant autonomous voice outside the party. In other words, informal popular sector urban demands in Uruguay are mediated by the party community linkages. Social movements that possess a certain national impact and autonomous demand-making vis-à-vis the government (such as the MST in Brazil, Tupamaros in Venezuela or the Piqueteros in Argentina) are nonexistent.

Origins of Alternative Paths to Popular-Sector Coalitions in Latin America

The precedent section has systematized alternative patterns of popular coalitions in the largest Latin American countries during the post-neoliberal period. I emphasized the crystallization of alternative interest coalitions with organized actors that operated on both the formal and informal economy, particularly in the initial years of progressive governments. Of course, these alliances were
far from being stable and mutated frequently—especially in a continent with a low tradition of interest politics institutionalization. In Bolivia, for example, the direct inclusion of social movement leaders at the cabinet level circa 2005-7 slowly faded as Morales relied more on MAS political and intellectual cadres. Indeed, CONMAQ and CIDOB (as opposed the more traditional indigenous unions and the coca growers) left the formal government alliance in 2011 after the police repression of a march against the construction of a road in a national park. The government also entered in a virulent conflict with the mining cooperatives that culminated in the assassination of the Vice Minister of Interior in 2016. In Venezuela, the alliances with urban TAs soon took a top-down corporatist form which severely reduced the space for social movement autonomy. In Brazil, the relations of Lula with the MST cooled after the original project for land reform drafted in consultation with the rural workers’ organizations was largely water-downed and implemented very slowly. In Argentina, however, the alliance with the territorial social movements strengthened with time (particularly under Cristina Kirchner) yet the powerful teamster union broke with the government in 2012.

Overall, progressive governments did not appoint social actors’ representatives in key policy areas (such as the Presidency, Ministry of Economy or Finance) but in those more related to the economic roles of specific organizations (i.e. labor, social, housing or rural policy). Naturally, the awarding of state positions and policy inclusion of social actors did not always mean success in their programmatic goals. Yet in the countries in which governments crafted the most solid interest coalitions with unions and/or informal economy-based organizations (Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay), only in very few cases did popular economic actors broke with incumbent authorities and passed to the opposition. Most allied unions and TAs supported the left-wing governments in their reelection attempts. For the informal economy-based urban and rural organizations (such as the indigenous movements in Bolivia, the MST in Brazil, the organizations of the unemployed in Argentina or the grassroots community groups in Venezuela), historical victims of
policy exclusion and national and local government repression, the new environment of non or low national repression, and access to state positions and resources, constituted a considerable payoff.

The first divide is, of course, that between countries in which popular coalitions (either purely electoral or electoral and interest-based) unfolded in the post neoliberal era, or not. A comprehensive explanation on why Mexico, Peru and Colombia remained “outside” the post-neoliberal Left Turn in Latin America in the 2000s is too complex for the scope of this article. Suffice is to say than in these three countries unions and demanding territorial associations suffered varied forms of undemocratic and direct violent state repression during the neoliberal 1990s. The rest of the article offers a general explanation of the origins of the alternative patterns of popular coalitions in Latin America depicted in Figure 1.

**The Structural Dimension: Size of Informal Sector and Unemployment**

The first and perhaps most obvious structural factor that may affect the coalitional strategies of progressive governments regarding working-class actors is the size of the formal/informal sector. A straightforward initial hypothesis would propose that in countries with higher levels of working class formalization and unionization, left-of-center governments that need to secure popular support will reach out the labor movement. In countries with lower levels of formalization, the left will recur more to TA-led mobilization.

The next Graph presents data on levels of formalization (left axis, measured as % adult population that does not pay social security taxes) and unemployment (right axis) when pro-working class governments took power.
The graph indicates that the first part of the hypothesis is more plausible: union mobilization is carried out in countries which have preserved higher formal economies. Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay display some degree of union mobilization and are countries of moderate informality for regional standards. We find no union mobilization under the Left-Turn in countries with high levels of informality. Although probably very basic, this variable seems to explain more than other structural factors, such as prior union power (which in Bolivia, for example, one could argue, was historically high) or unemployment. In effect, these data would suggest that higher levels of initial unemployment (for example in Argentina in Uruguay) do not preclude union mobilization and, conversely, lower levels of unemployment (for example in the Andean countries) do not favor it. This is entirely logic:
what matters for union mobilization in a region like Latin America, more than if workers are employed or not, is if they are registered and can therefore be more easily organized.

Venezuela and Chile, with moderate and low levels of informal economy, are of course outliers in this initial structural explanation. Politics enters the picture. The absence of union mobilization under the center-left coalition in Chile, in the context of a small informal labor force, cannot be understood without considering the massive assault of the Pinochet dictatorship on the labor movement, and its legacy of institutional and market weakness. The labor movement was just too fragmented and feeble to become an attractive coalitional partner for the Concertación. Likewise, in Venezuela, the mainstream union movement was entirely tied to the Punto Fijo system, and was therefore from the outset an unlikely companion for an outsider like Chavez. In sum, moderate to low levels of formalization in the economy seems to be a necessary, though not sufficient, structural condition for strong government-union coalitions under the Left-Turn.

The second part of this general structural hypothesis, however, is not consistent: interest coalitions with TAs occur with both high and moderate levels of informal economies. Countries with high levels of informality that should induce, in principle, possible coalitions with associations that organize this broad portion of the working class, such as Ecuador (or Peru if it is initially considered part of the Left Turn) have witnessed no government-sponsored TA activation. Conversely, we find TAs coalitions in countries with moderate levels of informality, such as Venezuela, Brazil or Argentina. Informal sector-based social movement mobilization seems to be unrelated to this more structural variable, and driven by more political and historical reasons.
The Political Dimension: The Trajectory of TAs in the Anti-Neoliberal Struggle and the Resilience of Labor-Based Parties

Territorial Association: Political Activation and Alliances in the Anti-Neoliberal Struggle

A more systematic explanation of popular coalitions in the post-neoliberal period should complement the structure of the labor market just analyzed with a political dimension, in the case of both formal and informal popular actors. This essay argues that the trajectory of informal sector-based organizations in the neoliberal era, in particular the political activation of relevant social movements and their alliances prior to Left Turn, help explain eventual TA interest coalitions with progressive governments. All the countries in which new Left-Turn leaders formed alliances with TAs witnessed high levels of political activation of popular informal sectors or the unemployed against pro-market governments during the 1990s, which largely sidelined the established party system. This mobilization was manifested in diverse types of “contentious politics” (marches, road blockades, riots) typical of popular sectors that operate outside the formal economy and often on the margins of the political system. Unfortunately, there are no general data on “contention” comparable to the statistics that measure collective action and strike activity for the formal sector. Yet, few social movement analysts and country specialists of Latin America would dispute that in Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador and Brazil informal sector-based TAs were key in the waves of anti-neoliberal protests prior to the Left-Turn. Indeed, in the most comprehensive study of anti-neoliberal contention in the region, Silva (2009) codes Argentina, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador as countries of high contention in which various organized informal-sector based groups confronted neoliberalism in the streets and roads during the 1990s and early 2000s, as opposed to the no-conflict cases of Peru and Chile.
My argument is that, though contention is the starting point, the alliances that played out in the struggles against market reforms also shaped eventual TA coalitions in the post-neoliberal period (Figure 2).

Figure 2

![Diagram of Political Activation and Alliances of Informal Sector-Based Popular Territorial Associations (TA) under Neoliberalism (1990-2000/5)]

In Argentina the social movements of the unemployed, some of which would join the Kirchners’ governments, were active in the unrest that led to the fall of the governments of De La Rúa (1999-01) and Duhalde (2000-2) (see Svampa and Pereyra 2003, Garay 2007). Likewise, Silva (2009: 221) notes that, after the urban rebellion known as Caracazo (1989) and its reverberations, “a second
wave of anti-neoliberal contention gripped Venezuela during the Caldera (1994-98) presidency”,
embodied by public sector unions, students and “neighborhood associations.” In the same vein, Lopez
Maya (2005: 98) points out that during the all the 1990s contention in Venezuela was high. Yet those
protests which she defines as “confrontational” rose remarkably in the second half of the 1990s, and
that the overwhelming majority of these protests were motivated by socioeconomic concerns. Unlike in
Argentina, where contention was clearly staged by larger organized social movements, in Venezuela
smaller urban groups (such as the Tupamaros of western Caracas) were an important, but not unique,
ingredient of these general anti-neoliberal protests. In both cases though, there is no formal or
consolidated general alliances between the rebellious TAs and chavismo/kirchnerismo prior to their
access to government.

It is well established in the literature that the MAS rode the cycle of popular protests led by
indigenous movements and urban-based TAs that swept the country after 2000, and resulted in the
resignation of two presidents: Sanchez the Lozada in the Gas War of 2003, and Mesa in the turmoil of
“regional” party of the coca growers’ Federations of the Chapare region in 1998-9, the MAS soon
reached out other indigenous organizations to form a party of peasant unions. After 2002, and in the
midst of the social dislocations that began with the “Water War” in 2000 in Cochabamba, the MAS
sought to penetrate the cities through a new discursive appeal (more nationalist and less “ethnic”) and a
formal alliance with urban popular organizations, especially those of EL Alto in the outskirts of La Paz
(Anria 2013: 32). Both groups, the original peasant unions that by 2000 had consolidated the, in their
terms, “instrumento político” (i. e. the “political instrument” or party), and the new urban grassroots

For this “decentralized” character of the urban protests in pre-Chavez Venezuela, see Silva (2009: 223) and Salamanca
(1999). For the convergence of the community urban movements such as Tupamaros and others with Chavismo since the
mid to late 1990s see Ciccariello’s (2013) We Created Chavez and Fernandes’ (2010) Who can stop the Drums?
associations of El Alto such as FEJUVE and COR, would form the backbone of the government-sponsored interest coalitions after 2005 described above. In Brazil, the largest social movement of Latin America, the informal-sector based MST, launched the most important contention cycle in its history in the 1995-2000 period, largely triggered by the violent state repression and massacres of Corumbiara (1995) and Eldorado dos Carajás (1996). For the first time the MST, born in Rio Grande do Sul, became active in the North East. CONTAG, the massive union which also organizes informal rural workers, supported many of these struggles. Land invasions increased markedly in this period (Carter 2010: 194-5, Ondetti 2006: 47-8). The Cardoso government reacted and stepped up its program of agrarian reform and land distribution. Although the MST was founded separately from the PT— unlike the CUT whose leaders were core party cadres—they shared base-level electoral and social activism with the party, which backed these struggles for agrarian reform (Carter 2010: 205).

In sum, the party-based social movements’ alliances coalesced prior to the left governments in Bolivia’s MAS and in Brazil’s PT, in contexts of high informal popular sector’s politicization. By contrast, in Venezuela and Argentina activated informal sector movements (in these cases mostly urban) and emerging political leaders shared a discourse of neoliberal repudiation, but TAs converged with Kirchnerismo and Chavismo more decisively when these governments took power. In all these cases, however, left incumbents knew that interest coalitions with activated informal sector-based social movements were important to a) safeguard governability in contexts of important prior mobilization and b) garner support for future political battles against non-elected power holders such as the economic elite and the mainstream media.

Ecuador stands out as a deviant case in this trajectory. From the massive upheaval that blocked roads and commercial transport in 1990s, to the riots that ousted presidents Bucaram in 1997 and Mahuad in 2000, the indigenous movement led by CONAIE became a key player in the cycles of contention 1990-02. At the same time, however, in 1996 CONAIE launched its political party,
Pachakutik, which enjoyed considerable success. Thus, the indigenous movement in Ecuador was arguably the most powerful and institutionalized of the indigenous/informal sector-based movements analyzed in this study during the neoliberal 1990s (Yashar 2005, Van Cott 2005). It was represented in national councils for development (Bowen 2011) and Congress, appointed Ministers initially in the Bucaram government, and participated actively in the constitutional convention of 1998 (Van Cott: 2005: 125-6). However its political alliances would jeopardize its future as a viable coalitional partner in the post-neoliberal world. First, CONAIE leaders participated in the coup against Mahuad in January 2000 in coalition with a sector of army officials, which for many tainted the democratic credentials of the indigenous movement. Second, and most crucially, in 2002 CONAIE-Pachakutik established an electoral front with Lucio Gutiérrez (their prior ally in the 2000 coup) and became a central part of his government. CONAIE-Pachakutik negotiated key cabinet positions—the Ministers of Interior, Agriculture, Education, Foreign Relations and Tourism (Van Cott 2005: 136). The alliance lasted only 6 months and Pachakutik left the government when the first austerity measures started. However, by the time Gutiérrez himself was toppled by popular protests in 2006 (which now largely sidelined the indigenous movement) CONAIE’s legitimacy has been seriously tarnished. The damage to CONAIE-Pachakutik provoked by its failed participation in governments during the neoliberal era, in particular under Gutiérrez, cannot be overstated.14

In short, seen with a comparative lens, two factors help explain the absence of a Left government-TA interest coalition in Ecuador despite the centrality of the informal-sector based CONAIE in the cycles of anti-neoliberal contention. First, unlike the rural social movements in Brazil and Bolivia, CONAIE never built an enduring alliance with an urban-based political party or relevant TA—indeed by 2002 it fell back into an “ethnic public agenda” which hindered its prospects in the

14 See Ospina Peralta: (2009: 199). Ramírez Gallegos (2010) writes that CONAIE “was the hegemonic actor in the popular camp until its participation in the government of Gutiérrez” (p. 87).
coastal provinces (Ramirez Gallegos 2010: 88). Second, unlike politically activated TAs in Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil, which remained external actors to the state prior to the Left-Turn, CONAIE became part of national alliances and governments during the neoliberal era. Thus, it was largely seen as part of the discredited political class in Ecuador after the fall of Gutiérrez and associated to the years of political and economic instability.¹⁵

Finally, informal sector-based national anti-neoliberal contention was absent in the cases of Chile and Uruguay in the 1990s, where no TA-government interest coalitions would take shape under the Left-Turn. There is an abundant literature that describes how in Chile a robust social movement of the urban poor in the poblaciones, which led the protests against Pinochet in the 1980s, became later encapsulated and demobilized by the Concertation during the 1990s.¹⁶ They were just not relevant actors in the 2000s, especially when the first government headed by the Socialists took power. Likewise, popular organizational atomization was even more pronounced in the rural sector after radical neoliberal reforms (Kurtz 2004).

In Uruguay independent national social movements never coalesced outside the networks of the left-wing FA during the neoliberal 1990s. A large informal sector-based squatter movement did unfold in the Montevideo area during that period, and peaked in 1990 and 1994-5 amidst a wave of land invasions. In the most comprehensive study on the topic, Álvarez Rivadulla (2017) shows that the squatter movement was in fact channeled and mediated by the political parties, especially the FA. She argues that the fact that FA started to compete for the informal poor votes and won the city of Montevideo after 1989, catalyzed the wave of land seizures. Most of these invasions were, however,

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¹⁵ In words of a leader of a rival organization FEINE, people were dissatisfied with CONAIES’s “ethnocentrism” (i.e. incapacity to reach urban sectors) and “alliance with neoliberal parties” (quoted in Van Cott 2005: 138).

¹⁶ See for example Hipsher 1994, Schneider 1995 among others
brokered by activists of the FA factions, especially the MPP\textsuperscript{17}, Communists and Socialists, who actually negotiated the land settlements with the city government. The movement largely waned when the FA took office in 2005 (Álvarez Rivadulla 2017: 13, 39, 140-45). Unlike in Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil or Bolivia, these TAs never challenged the neoliberal order at a national level or bypassed the party system.

**Old Habits Die Hard: Government-Union Interest Coalitions and Labor-Based Parties**

When traditional labor based-parties led the Left-Turn, as in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, governments crafted interest coalitions with the mainstream union movement, denoted by state participation, policy inclusion and joint collective action. In the three cases these party-labor alliances have been forged before the neoliberal period. The hegemonic or main labor confederation in each country, the CGT in Argentina, the CUT in Brazil and the PIT-CNT in Uruguay had been historical allies of the Peronist Party, the PT and the FA respectively. Although, especially in Argentina and Uruguay, the labor movement had grown more autonomous from the party during the 1990s (see Levitsky 2003, Luna 2014: 234), important institutional ties and ideological identifications remained in place. In Brazil, the PT grew out of union militants (who would eventually form the CUT) in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the leadership of both organizations practically overlapped. In both Brazil and Uruguay the bonds between the labor movement and the party solidified in opposition to neoliberalism during the 1990s. In Argentina, mainstream unions were far from having the weight they had once in the party. Yet most CGT and CTA leaders identified themselves as Peronists, and unions are still part of the life of the Peronist party at the local/district level.

\textsuperscript{17} The MPP, the most radical faction of the FA, was formed by former guerrilla members of Tupamaros. Its leader Jorge Zalbalza was particularly active in the squatter movement, see Álvarez Rivadulla (2017: 141-2)
Thus, unlike in the case of TAs whose government alliances are more ad-hoc with both established (Peronism or the PT) or new political movements (chavismo or the MAS), in the case of labor unions the type of party that commanded the Left-Turn is more decisive (see Levitsky and Roberts 2011: 12-13). Historically more institutionalized alliances between a popular party and the labor movement explain more the emergence of government–union coalitions than a prior period of political activation. Typically, anti-neoliberal contention in Latin America was mostly led by social movements and not by unions, which were the main victims of deregulation, formal sector shrinking and layoffs. However, in nations where the formal sector is still moderately high (see Graph 1 above) and the hegemonic or majoritarian labor movement had historical roots in the Left-Turn parties, mainstream unions became an important coalition partner to administer governability. Argentina and Uruguay in practice established neo-corporatist, state-oriented and centralized income policies. They run a more expansive economic and monetary policy than Chile, Bolivia or Brazil, for which union cooperation was essential. In Brazil the PT-CUT coalition sponsored systematic increases in the minimum wage as its main income policy. No other country in the Left Turn had comparable involvement of the labor movement in the national governing coalitions.

Concluding Remarks: Bridging the Formal/Informal Divide?

This essay has attempted to systematize and explain the origins of alternative types of governmental coalitions with working class actors both formal and informal, a topic scarcely explored in the comparative political economy of post-neoliberal Latin America. It has also strived to compare Southern Cone and Andean countries that are often grouped separately. Borrowing indicators from the PRT elaborated for advanced countries (adapted to the Latin American reality of a more fragmented working class) I have assessed the occurrence of popular sector coalitions in the electoral sphere, and in the interest arena, which involved formal and informal sectors in the sub-dimensions of state participation, public policy inclusion, and joint collective action.
Overall, the Latin American post-neoliberal experience seems to confirm a basic tenet of the Power Resource Theory: the countries in which electoral coalitions were complemented with some degree of mobilization in the interest realm pushed socio-economic redistribution more to both segments of formal and informal popular sectors. In the first place, Garay (2016) argues social movement coalitions, composed by both associations of informal workers and social movement unions, were drivers (and partners) of what she terms an inclusive social policy (i.e. with more coverage and benefits) in Argentina and Brazil, as opposed to the restrictive social policy found in Chile, Perú or Mexico. One could argue that social policy has also been quite inclusionary in Bolivia and Venezuela, which established interest coalitions with informal popular TAs (Handlin 2012, Anria and Niedzwiecki 2015). Likewise, in all interest mobilization cases social policies have been more participatory. By contrast the social policy approach in Chile, Mexico and Peru has been more technocratic and eschewed social movement’s empowerment (Garay 2016). Ecuador, where social policy has been at the same time quite inclusive and technocratic (i.e. not mediated by social organizations in any way) stands again as an exception.¹⁸

Second, the “mixed” cases of Argentina and Brazil, plus Uruguay, in which formal and informal sectors popular organization was channeled by unions, TAs and (in the case of Uruguay) a mass organic party like the FA, present more combined benefits for the popular sectors across the formal and informal divide. These cases deployed economic and institutional improvements for the formal working class unmatched in the rest of the Latin American cases—through state-oriented centralized collective bargaining in Argentina and Uruguay, and through the rise of the minimum wage in Brazil (see Schipani 2017). Simultaneously, they have also developed quite expansive policies for the informal sector, i.e the flagship CCT programs in each country *Bolsa Familia* (Brazil), *Asignación*

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¹⁸ Ecuador’s *Bono de Desarrollo Humano* (BDH) program, which includes both non-contributory pensions and a CCT for households, ranked first both in terms of spending as a % of GDP, and % of population covered in Latin America in 2010 (Rinehart and McGuire 2016: 5).
Universal por Hijo (Argentina) and PANES (Uruguay), plus other antipoverty programs such as non-contributory pensions and those directed to worker’s cooperatives. In other words, under these progressive governments we find no insider-outsider tradeoff in the labor market: in comparative perspective, the countries with more union empowerment have been at the same time, among the most generous in their benefits catered to the informal working class. Political organization and coalitions have countered popular sector fragmentation and the classical insider-outsider dilemma posed by the economics literature.

After 2015, different types of democratic reversals in Venezuela and Brazil threaten the social policy improvements and working-class empowerment experienced during the 2000s in those nations. In Argentina a new democratic right-wing government has implemented an orthodox monetary adjustment but has been unwilling (and sometimes unable) to dismantle the labor institutions (for example sectoral collective bargaining and the minimum wage council) and social policy legacies of the previous period. In Bolivia and Uruguay left-wing governments still navigate more hostile political and economic waters. It remains to be seen how much of the architecture put in place by the electoral and interest popular coalitions explained in this article remains in place when the left tide is receding in the continent.

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