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Struggle for Agency in Contemporary Argentinean Schools

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This chapter will reflect on what agency looks like when it is taken up by families at public, state supported schools. In doing this, a tension between two different sets of ideas: *education as a right* versus *education as a commodity* becomes apparent. When education is conceived of as a right, the guiding principle is *equal education for all*. This line of thought was prominent in Argentina over several decades, and the country had been known for its high literacy rates, high school attendance and high graduation rates. A different orientation has been pushed forward for more than two decades now, and has sought to equate families to consumers, and to frame education as being bought and sold within the market economy. This chapter argues that this logic is tied to the discourse on the benefits of globalization, which in Argentina was overtly taken up during the 90s, yet it was foregrounded prior to that decade, and still prevails. In the midst of this ideological conflict over education, there was the economic crisis of 2001, which has deepened and inflated the divide between those who believe that education is a fundamental right, and those who believe in free market economics. Therefore, to survive economic crises through education one must bridge this divide, and reconcile the rights of individuals to be educated with prevailing market conditions.

Argentina, Global Capitalism and Education

Argentina has had an intensely volatile political landscape over the last 35 years. During 1976-1983 a Military Regime abused political power and perpetrated murders, torture and the violation of human rights at a state-organized level. It was also during that time that Argentina's foreign debt increased, and those monies were used to subsidize projects taken up by the upper-class economic sector. The results were high rates of unemployment, high levels of violence, and a gap in cultural and political life, because of the loss of a generation in the repression of 76-83. A clear orientation towards equating public policy with the capacity of *some* to maximize *their* profits was implemented, orienting national economic policies towards the interest of international capitalism.

After this regime, President Alfonsín (1983-1989) was elected by democratic vote. His mandate was plagued by the tensions inherited from the recent past and ended in a deep crisis. National elections were brought forward, and President Menem won the seat in 1989. During his campaign, Menem made it a point of using his rhetoric to establish the notion that his would be a process of radical change (*reforma*), and that Argentina would become part of the First World wealth and ways of doing things, while at the same time, promising jobs and stability for all. Elected by vote, Menem governed the

country during two consecutive periods, 1989-1994, and 1994-1998. While Menem's first and second Presidencies aligned Argentina with hegemonic transnational capitalist values and practices, his promises were mostly unfulfilled.

An orientation towards the foundation of a *new order* characterized governmental discourse in all areas of policy-making (economic, health, education, etc.). In Education, "The Reform" became the every-day idiom at use to name the changes implemented; it worked at different yet complementary levels: it meant changes associated with legal instruments, and changes associated to discourses and practices at schools. *The Reform* became used as a placeholder, and it made common sense: "reforming is for the best since it is change that looks into the future, and the future is related to free market relationships, globalization and becoming a First World Nation". In this line of thought, the Reform successfully installed a conception of schools as isolated, "management-type" units, associated with efficiency and with providing a *service* (Pérez and Alonso Bra, 1997). It also meant that, in educational matters, the discourse linked to choice, in turn tied to efficiency, achieved a prominent role during the 90s. For example, Cardini (2005) has studied the initiative for Charter Schools in the Province of San Luis, Argentina, and has concluded that it is an example of

"the many attempts to restructure and deregulate state schooling that have characterised the educational policy arena during the last decades in many different countries. In the Argentine context, this policy (...) was the first attempt by a provincial government in the country to undertake an educational policy, aimed at enhancing market flexibility. It also sought to encourage privatisation and competition within state provision – all reforms which are generally associated with global policy trends."

During Menem's administration, the national government's discourse worked hard on two aspects: 1) to install the idea that these changes occurred democratically (by the passing of laws in Congress) and 2) to insist on that they were indeed significant and enlightened modifications (and thus the need to adopt the discourse related to "new foundation for the best"). These two aspects were very important at that time, since the memory of the Military Regime, 1976-1983, when democracy was nothing but a dream, and Congress did not exist, was still fresh. Thus any discourse that sought to be associated with change would be best received if it were done through the constitutional channels available. Educational Policies associated with The Reform's conceptual turn affected everyday processes at public schools for over a decade; the Reform's rationale, tied to the discourse of privatization, globalization, and capitalism, is still present today.

Normative Aspects of the Reform

The laws that have framed the normative aspects of the Reform may seem, at first glance, contradictory in that one places power in the hands of local decision-making structures, and the second one affirms the opposite. Law #24.049 ("*Transferencia a las Provincias y a la Municipalidad de Buenos Aires de*

servicios educativos”, i.e., Transference of Educational Services to Provinces and to the City of Buenos Aires) mandated that educational services be transferred from national to provincial jurisdiction, thus establishing what was called a process of de-centralizing education, a process similar to that of other Latin American countries in the same decade (México in 1992; Bolivia in 1994; Colombia in 1993, for example, according to Rivas, 2004). Several analysts of this decentralizing process have pointed out that it was “de centralizing with no resources to make decentralizing possible”, the hallmark of Menem’s presidential rule in several policy areas (see for example, Smulovitz and Clemente, 2004).

Law #24.195 (“*Ley Federal de Educación*”, i.e. Federal Education Law) replaced Law 1420, which dated from 1884. This Law, passed during April 1993, established that it would be the National State the decision-making locus on mandated curricula, on formulating goals, and on creating evaluation (testing) systems to measure their attainability. The National State was also the one who created compensatory policy measures to support specific processes in certain provincial jurisdictions. Therefore it can be said that the movement was in the opposite direction: decision-making power, and resources to implement these decisions, went from the local to the central state. As pointed out by Rivas (2004):

“The transference of educational services to the Provinces could be interpreted as a way to retain the macro-decision power, and to relegate to the Provinces an administrative role. In this way, the rationale underlying these changes is in the first place, a political one, perhaps economic, and educational as well—but probably in the last place. And this process can be said to exist during the XIX and XX centuries, so that it is hard to answer whether a National Educational System existed (or exists) at all.” (p. 58, Rivas 2004, my translation).

The Reform Process and Beyond

A deep economic crisis took place in Argentina between 1999 and 2002 (with its peak in 2001), and a new administration was elected (Kirchner, 2003-2007 and Fernández de Kirchner, 2008-2011). The scenario has henceforth changed. For example, specifically in Educational policy, a new National Educational, Law, # 26.206, passed in 2006, and the educational budget was increased.

However, the grounds for the fundamental tension between the notion of *education as a commodity* and *education as a right* are still present. This tension is visible in the social discourse (Angenot, 1999) and it is continually assumed by two different positions at the larger political arena: those who speak for a push for “privatizing” the educational system, and conceptualizing it as a commodity in a market economy, versus those who assume a discourse arguing for deepening the meaning of education as a public affair, and as a right to which all should have access¹. Thus, an analysis of the discursive practices at the larger societal level shows that explicit connections between “private” as “what is best” (or “private better than public”) were and are being constantly made. This tension is identifiable in three tendencies still at play, defended by several sectors of the Argentinean population (e.g., policy-makers

who are lobbying for the privatization of all educational services; upper class sectors who attend private schools; some confessional sectors):

- a) Progressive restriction in resources to the public educational system (that dramatically contrast with resources allotted to the private system see for example Rivas, 2010).
- b) Orientation to conceptualizing education as a service and a commodity, instead of viewing it as a right (Cardozo, 2009; Rodríguez, 2000).
- c) Pressure towards administrative efficiency and results (e.g., testing), as more important than sustaining long term, supportive educational contexts for students and families (Pérez and Alonso Brá op.cit.).

In order to reflect on these issues, this chapter addresses the ways in which agency was taken up by families at public schools. The analysis focuses on two different yet complementary levels (school everyday life and societal larger arena) and on two different points in time and geographical locations. On the one hand, I interpret data from five middle and high schools in the City of San Pedro, a city of 50,000 inhabitants in the Province of Jujuy (Northwest area of Argentina). I show how a participatory action research project, taking place during 2005-2008, brought together teachers, administrators, students, and their families, to reflect and act upon their everyday patterns of communication, and how their capacity to reflect allowed them to discuss other issues, not anticipated yet very important. On the other hand, I discuss data from a process in which a self-organized group of families from different elementary public schools in the City of Buenos Aires have taken up their right to challenge current educational policies in the period running from 2009-2011. I write this article as an informed member of the two projects, although my role was different in each of them².

Families, schools, challenges and agency building

Schools in the North West of Argentina

The action-research project in Jujuy was geographically located in the area of the Valley³. The original focus was on the communicative patterns amongst families, students, teachers, administrators and other school personnel. The guiding assumption was that schools were not open enough to acknowledging different communicative and cultural styles. Thus, some of the tensions associated with school everyday life could be looked at from a communicative perspective. Some of the teachers participating in this project had been documenting school life prior to formulating this project, because they had been working with me to understand their own practice. There was a need, however, as they stated it, to collaborate amongst more teachers, and to include families and students in the process of reflection and understanding of school life. For all these reasons, when an open call for proposals was made by the National Ministry of Education to support in-school projects aimed at promoting meaningful change, we met with participants from 5 different schools and discussed the core ideas to design a project called "Communicating for Inclusion". We were selected as one of the winning projects.

Participation was voluntary, yet for those who decided to be part of the project, funds were available to support commuting (e.g., to meetings, to conduct observations, or to participate in other project activities) and basic research needs (e.g., pens, notebooks, xeroxing, audiotapes, tapes, batteries). Other funds were used to hire a specialist to document some of school everyday life interactions on video, produce some clips which were to be discussed during project meetings, and to teach students who wanted to learn, how to use video to document school life.

Cycles of data collection and analysis were interwoven. Workshops open to teachers, administrators, other school personnel and researchers were undertaken during the first 18 months. The topics discussed were:

- everyday communicative patterns amongst students;
- different codes (e.g., colloquial, classroom talk, family-teacher interaction) used at school;
- perceptions about who uses what code, when and why;
- ways of documenting and understanding school everyday talk;
- different kinds of talk according to different spaces at school (e.g., talk overheard at the entrance, talk when adults seemed not to be regarded as audience, use of formal language for everyday greetings at the courtyard when students and teachers saluted the flag).

Some of the conclusions that we arrived at were that many students didn't differentiate all the codes used at school, and that the majority of the adults at the schools (teachers, administrators, support personnel) didn't understand the different kinds of languages used by students. Moreover, they considered their repertoires poor, without understanding that there were several linguistic registers at play (Heras and Martínez, 2006; Heras, 2008). Some teachers, worried about sexist language codes used by male students to denigrate female students, deepened in the study of these language patterns, and concluded that, as it was, school every day life and organizational patterns didn't foster any kind of reflection on these interactions, and was silently supporting a discourse that devalued women. These lines of work were taken up by some of the participants to continue their work (see, e.g., Martínez y Peinado, 2010; García, 2010).

During the last 18 months of the project, we conducted a series of workshops oriented to work with families and students on some of these findings, and on opening up discussion to other topics that they might have found relevant. In these workshops, three issues were highlighted:

- communication amongst schools and families was not as open nor fluent as it could be, thus creating a series of tensions which could be avoided;
- families did not quite understand many of the difficulties related to teachers as workers (and the workshops helped clarify some but left some stated as questions);
- the school buildings were deteriorated and families, teachers, administrators and students were worried about it, but did not know what to do.

It was in this context that we undertook a 6-week workshop for students to teach them how to use audio-visuals to document school life, specifically focusing on aspects related to space and to the buildings, since it was of their interest. A pattern clearly emerged: the buildings were deteriorated, and the material conditions of school everyday life were, to say the least, challenging. All participants paid attention to this issue, and thus they produced field notes, video-clips, as well as some sketches and drawings. I quote the field-notes taken by one of the teachers that illustrate connections between the state of the buildings, educational policy, and how the changes in economic policies affected education:

“The building where the school (he refers to what used to be the School of Arts) is located in a house that used to be an old mansion owned by a sugar cane plantation owner. Several different and unruly constructions were annexed to it over time [field notes describe extensively and in detail all the different buildings and spaces adjacent to the main house]. I reflect on what these buildings mean, who they house, what the educational changes were so that today we have co habiting in the same building several different educational tracks which are in turned housed in the same building and super imposed, so to speak. A progressive process of poverty has stricken the local population due to the national economic policies along the 1990s, i.e., neoliberal orientation and fiscal reduction. The once locally prestigious School of Arts is now empty since several families that once upon a time could afford this type of education for their children can no longer do so. Additionally, state resources to support the building were more and more scarce. The building deteriorated but paradoxically annexed other constructions. Since the Reform established a period in which changes had to be made, and tracks were to be implemented, the School of Art changed its curriculum and opened up to receive students who now ended their junior high school (a new track established by the Reform) and attended three years of high school at the newly opened Humanities and Social Studies track, housed also at the School of Arts. Thus in the same space/logic cohabited the high school students (3 years of schooling), the School of Arts students (5 years of schooling, equivalent to junior and high school), and sharing some of the space, also a school for mentally disabled students, which had no place to function and was assigned here.” (My translation of RM field notes. His field note taking process started in 2003 and continued until the present, since this teacher is one of the ones that has pursued his own line of research).

Documenting the state of the buildings led to several actions:

1. Pictures and video footage were examined and a process of editing them started to construct audiovisual narratives by the students (with the help of one researcher and several teachers and administrators).
2. A line of interpretation emerged by which recent historical policy decisions were interrogated and questions about whose responsibility it was to attend to this issues were stated.

3. Families gathered and decided to petition the authorities for decent buildings (by presenting their findings on the local news, by organizing daily meetings at the school entrance, and by signing a petition to the school administration first, and to the provincial administration later on).
4. The authorities were at the beginning not open to discussing these issues with families or students, and this was also documented and communicated by the students and their families.
5. Important questions were posed, such as: by virtue of whose decisions or why were the buildings in such a state? Who was to be asked about these specifics, and how could these be transformed? What was the specific history behind each of the buildings, and why were they now in such reduced condition? Participants established some connections between these issues and some of the main findings that had been discussed during the first 18 months of the project. Some of these questions and reasoning reached the local media (television), and thus visibility.

In this manner, a project that initially focused on communicative patterns, by virtue of interpreting the links between communication and space, turned as a springboard to make visible some (not so explicit) relationships between change in public policy, infrastructure, and a need for change.

An analysis conducted by some of the teachers and the students revealed the link between the changes in national educational policies and the physical space, as follows:

- Schools used to be managed nationally, but they became to be provincial due to Law #24.049. This meant that resources had to come out of provincial budgets, which were not well enough resourced to support this change.

Coupled with the fact that:

- The reform process, due to Law #24.195, established changes in mandated curricula and tracking. Thus there was a period (from 1994 on) in which several schools had to implement different tracks co-habiting in the same school space/building/system.

Therefore:

- The buildings started to deteriorate severely, and by 2003 (10 years of the Reform process) most of them were in a very poor state.
- Buildings that once housed only one educational track housed several, which caused a series of administrative, spatial and schedule-like problems.

As a result of the process described above, families and students organized and promoted direct action by which they asked teachers to teach on the street, to show that they were not going to expose anyone to the health-hazard posed by unstable roofs, walls or other dilapidated building structures; after a month of more or less direct confrontation, the Provincial authorities agreed that a special budget plan was to be designed in order to meet at least some of the demands⁴.

Some important links were established across different levels of context, and these connections provided the local community with keys to understanding processes that otherwise remained obscure. Agency, as the capacity to see oneself as a full participant in a process, and thus to see oneself (be that

individual or collective) as capable of acting differently than it had been done or expected, was taken up because it was identified as a right.

The ability to learn how to pose simple questions at the right time is one of the most important learning experiences coming out of this process. For example, what are the long-term effects of public policy decisions on students and teachers every day school life? What do reforms look like, specifically? These are questions perhaps all actors should have in mind when participating in the processes in which they are a part (be it in their role as politician, policy maker, teacher, administrator, student, or other). This is a perspective taken up by researchers, most commonly post-factum (for example, the area of analysis known as anthropology of public policy takes this stance). Less common however is that it is applied to processes while they unveil. In educational processes is more common that teachers or administrators, or even students (by their representative bodies such as Unions or Student Body Committees) take action and see their right to do so. It is less common that families do that.

I have shown how a line of inquiry that started by asking about every day communicative patterns at schools led a thinking process by which participants sought to understand the crises in that they perceived their schools to be. I end this section by pointing out that different results were achieved, at different levels, which show that when diverse roles come together, a capacity to see themselves as key actors may develop. Therefore, the results of this process affect differently at different roles, but all participants acted as full members of an educational *community*:

- by virtue of the joint participation some of these schools became eligible to receive funds to help with infrastructure;
- families were seen as key actors in local educational matters;
- students and teachers became aware of the possibilities associated with documenting and discussing school every day life with other participants (policy makers, other teachers and administrators, families and researchers);
- teachers and administrators continued a process of learning how to do research, guided by their own questions and purposes.

Families and schools in Buenos Aires City

*Familias por la escuela pública*⁵ is a self-organized group of families from very many different elementary public schools in the City of Buenos Aires. Since we gathered in 2009, we have agreed upon three core issues that guide our voluntary work. These are that:

- 1) the educational budget is set accordingly to guarantee that all children in the City of Buenos Aires are provided the right to be educated;
- 2) all schools access equal conditions, not only infrastructure (e.g., buildings, resources, etc.) but also the quality of their educational process;

3) all teachers should work under dignifying conditions (not only a salary according to their work, but also that they are treated in a non authoritarian way and that they are allowed the right to critically reflect upon their working conditions).

These three core principles were discussed at the beginning of our spontaneous gatherings, during the long teacher strike that took place in the months of March and April 2009, the beginning of that academic year. At that point, teachers agreed to boycott schools by calling strikes by what they termed the “surprise-factor tactic”. It meant that during the first week, for instance, they would not attend schools during a Monday, the next week during a Tuesday and a Wednesday, and so forth, but without prior announcement (thus the families and governmental authorities did not know when teachers would indeed attend schools). There are around 14 teacher unions to which teachers belong in the City of Buenos Aires, and often their tactics differ and their strength is debilitated. During the beginning of 2009 school year the unions cooperated and the strike was massive. Several families gathered to discuss the matter, in a spontaneous way, at the school entrances. We then started a process of connecting across schools in the city, because the majority of us were in favor of supporting teachers in their demands, yet the consequences for our children and our family life were severe.

The City of Buenos Aires is the Capital of Argentina, and an urban setting with 3 million inhabitants; it is governed by a neoliberal administration (led by Mauricio Macri, Chief Executive, and leader of the PRO political party). In the area of educational policy, this administration has augmented the breach between funding for public versus private education (in favor of private education). It has also divided school districts along lines of “richness and poverty”, and has been selective as to supporting the north area of the City over the south area (the reader may guess that the north area is indeed richer compared to the south). Thus, this was the context in which, fuelled by the need to take a position towards the teacher strike, the families that gathered and discussed what to do, took those three already mentioned issues as our program for reflection and action.

Another issue has come to our attention since we started the process, one that has not been turned into a guiding principle, but that we take into account by reaffirming our presence. The issue is that of challenging the mechanisms installed by the current administration to create a climate of persecution and fear, trying to set up an ambiance of guilt (“*por algo será...*”, the favorite statement during the Military Dictatorship and a well known witch hunting strategy) amongst teachers, families, students and administrators for taking up the right to participate in discussing public policy. For example, during the year of 2009, I participated in putting together a big open meeting in an open public recreational space called Parque Centenario. The meeting was called to discuss amongst whomever wanted to participate what were the most salient lines of educational public policy at place. In order to organize the gathering, we designed and xeroxed fliers to invite people. We asked the school Principal Administrator if those could be handed out to families at the school door or else by sending them home in students communication notebooks (each student has a notebook where all communications to families are sent). The administrator agreed to both ways of spreading the news. During that week, she received an

“unofficial” (termed as such) visit by the Vice Minister of the City of Buenos Aires (note the high rank officer that the government sent...) to admonish her that she had broken the law by virtue of communicating via the notebooks this gathering of families to discuss educational policies. The administrator asked the Vice Minister to make her visit official, and to state in writing her admonishment so that she could be able to respond to it. The Vice Minister refused but advised the school administrator to “keep an eye on those two *subversive* mothers at her school”, one of which is writing this chapter. Note the language used, i.e., *subversive* is a key term in Argentinean politics since it was used by the Military Dictatorship to label participatory practices.

We interpreted these events as tactics for instilling fear, and well calculated, since the visit took place during a special date: it was during the day in which all administrators who were applying for promotion were not going to be at their schools because they only had that day to comply with all the administrative steps towards filing their applications. This, of course, was information known to the Vice Minister, as it was also known to her that the Principal Administrator would be at her school since she could not ask for promotion because she was retiring that same year. The Principal called us (the two *subversive* mothers) to tell us what had happened and offered her explanation of why she had been visited that day: so that the other administrators would not be witnesses of the threat.

In this context, for families to gather, discuss and promote actions that critically reflect upon public policy, and that challenge the current administration, is a major step.

Since our creation we have:

- collected 4,000 signatures backing up a list of demands that were presented in 2010 before the City Representatives so that they commit to actively defending the three issues at the core of our work: 1) budget according to the needs; 2) high quality schooling for all; 3) good working conditions for teachers. This set of demands was signed by citizens (we collected the signatures on the streets for over a period of 6 months) and was also endorsed by other groups (such as ONG and other self-organized groups of parents);
- demanded that the City Representatives be informed before discussing the 2011 budget (a process that took place during September to November 2010) by addressing a set of items that we presented before them to be taken into account (e.g., the differences we found between areas of the city, the fact that even if a certain budget was allotted to education the government failed to use it in 2009 and re assigned a portion to other areas, etc.);
- filed a law suit (which was decided in our favor) to stop the deviation of funds originally assigned to education and reassigned to other government areas during 2010;
- organized several open meetings to discuss public policies openly (we usually gather at open public recreational spaces and we invite the people present at the moment to join us gathering round and speaking publicly, in an assembly type of gathering);
- participated in demonstrations in support of public education and in support of human rights.

In this process it seems crucial that we have taken up the right to think critically upon current educational policies, and to act accordingly. This means that we have proposed a set of actions that in our eyes would be in the best interest of what state public policy is supposedly designed to do: provide equal access; guarantee the right of being educated to all students and their families; push forward the idea (and the practice) that discussing public matters publicly is a healthy practice.

As a group, we do not pretend to represent all families in state-managed, public elementary schools, and we reaffirm the status of each participant as direct family participants. This logic of practice has been termed *asamblearia* that stands for direct, non-representative, and action driven by constant developing analysis type of participation (Fernández, 2007). From this perspective, no one represents anybody else, yet as families that are building up this process, we see ourselves entitled to propose and carry on actions. We see ourselves as full participants.

Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

Families who claimed a voice in favor of their children's education may be interpreted amidst a (maybe schematic, but real) push-pull, which in turn defines what counts as education during economic crises, and described as follows: on the one hand, education can be considered as a public matter, and as equity and access for all. Everybody has the right to be educated, and thus, quality schooling for all is the main goal of this position. This means that public policies, public monies and transparency of decision-making processes are the core guiding principles of this line of thought and action. In this scenario, families are full participants, and it is legitimate to gather, discuss, analyze, interpret public policy and act accordingly.

On the other hand, education can be considered as a commodity, and as such, is sold and bought on the market. In this view, public policies may be manipulated at the benefit of sectors that, by virtue of their resources, may make their voices heard using "legal" channels in illegitimate ways. In this line of thought, only some do become full participants, and anyone challenging this view is subject of being prosecuted.

As true as this portrayal may be, it is still schematic and does not account for all shades of opinion in real life. Matters can become more complex to analyze, and in fact they tend to remain not accessibly for many. However, when families are faced with day-to-day situations they cannot understand, nor seem to change, some actions may indeed lead to an unexpected path. For example, taking up action and regaining confidence in their voice has proven to be a significant challenge to the *status quo*, as it was discussed in the North West schools. Or else, a challenge posed by another sector (e.g., teachers calling a strike) may be a loud wake up call to families that otherwise would not have reflected on their positions about teachers rights, families rights or the combination of the two.

At some points, however hard families may try, it is not in their hands to change the course of action. Yet if they were aware that they want to play a role in the educational arena, what are the lessons learned from the experiences analyzed in this chapter about agency in schools?

- Establish connections amongst layers of context that seem to be unrelated yet prove to add to understanding the picture seems key. These connections may come from different sources, and what seems to be crucial is a space/time where/when to sharing them.
- Keep in mind that starting with an analysis of what may look as more simple issues may lead to more specific —yet complex ones that can be addressed by specific data gathering and analysis, when resources are provided (e.g. an action research project, others) or when circumstances push for voicing un answered, puzzling questions become at the forefront (e.g. what position to take in regards to a teacher strike).
- Keep the focus on “what these policy measures will look like” at school everyday life when planning, promoting and/or discussing policy changes.
- Establish connections amongst worldwide tendencies and local issues that are affected by them.
- Lastly, and very important: keep in mind that locally enacted actions have also lessons to teach, since history is what women and men do, everyday. In this way, we may survive future economic crises through education.

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¹ These different and oppositional logics have been analyzed by the news press, e.g. Tiempo. This is a process not only taking place in Western Societies but also in other nations with different traditions, such as China or Japan, see Tobin (2009: 225-242).

² In Jujuy I was one of the researchers, and didn't have a role as a family member or as a teacher; in Buenos Aires I participate as the mother of two children who attend public, state funded elementary school, and am a full member of the self-organized group of families. Along the process, I use my professional skills to document and reflect on our practice.

³ Jujuy is a small size Province, yet very rich in geographic and cultural differences in its four areas: the Valley, the Yungas, the Quebrada and the Puna. The largest cities are in the Valley area.

⁴ It is interesting to note is that this process took place between 2005-2008, pre announcing a similar one that took place later on in Buenos Aires in approximately 28 schools from different neighbors of the City, and ended when (3 months later, after an intense boycott to the city administration in 2010) the City Ministry of Education signed an agreement with students and families to devote monies to take care of deteriorated buildings, a process that is yet to be completed, and over which the struggle continues.

⁵ <http://www.familiasylaescuela.org.ar/>