

The trajectory of the Argentine plastic metallurgical industry (IMPA). Political disputes in the development of his conception of social enterprise

Summary

The Argentine Plastic Metallurgical Industry (IMPA) is located in the Almagro neighborhood, the geographic center of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (Querandies Street, 4290), in a manufacturing plant with 20 thousand square meters of surface.¹ IMPA is a company recovered since 1998 and currently employs fifty workers in aluminum processing. A recovered company is a failed capitalist company that becomes managed by its workers.²

In Argentina, there are 367 Companies Recovered by their Workers (ERTs), employing 15,948 people.³ The objective of this text is to analyze the trajectory of the IMPA factory, in the development of those characteristics that make up its business conception through its history. For this, we address the four stages of IMPA's history, as a private, state-owned, cooperative and recovered company, highlighting the political disputes in which the factory is involved and the political-productive strategies deployed in each context. We are interested in pointing out how the construction of the current business concept of IMPA has been gestated, which today calls itself a "social company".

Our research is based on the ethnographic work carried out in IMPA (2010-2015), which has enabled us to reorganize a memory about the recent history of IMPA, from the perspective of its own protagonists. With this reconstruction of IMPA's trajectory, we will show how its history, through each of its four stages (private, state-owned, cooperative and recovered company), reflects the different socioeconomic and political processes that the Argentine industry is going through over almost a century.

Abstract

The Industria Metalúrgica Plástica Argentina (IMPA) is located in the neighborhood of Almagro, the geographical center of the city of Buenos Aires (Querandies Street, 4290), in a 20 thousand square meter manufacturing plant.¹ IMPA has been a recovered company since 1998 and currently employs fifty workers in aluminum processing. A recovered company is a failed capitalist enterprise that becomes managed by its workers.² In Argentina, there are 367 Companies Recovered by their Workers (ERTs), employing 15,948 people (Open Faculty Program, 2016). The present text aims to analyze the trajectory of the IMPA factory, in the development of those characteristics that shape its entrepreneurial conception throughout its history. To do so, we address the four stages of IMPA's history, as a private, state-owned, cooperative and recovered company, highlighting the political disputes in which the factory is involved and the political-productive strategies deployed in each context. We are interested in pointing out how the construction of the current business conception of IMPA, which nowadays calls itself a "social enterprise", has taken shape. Our research is based on the ethnographic work carried out at IMPA (2010-2015), which has enabled us to reorganize a memory of IMPA's recent history, from the perspective of its own protagonists. With this reconstruction of IMPA's trajectory, we will show how its history, through each of its four stages (private company, state-owned company, cooperative and recovered factory).

Keywords: trajectory, enterprise, political

The development stages of IMPA: historical memory in its current identity

The history of IMPA reflects the different socioeconomic, political and cultural stages through which Argentina has gone through over almost a century.¹ Founded as a private company, the first Peronist

¹The factory produces disposable corrugated aluminum trays for the sale of perishable goods from the food industry and for domestic use; collapsible rigid containers for the cosmetic, medicinal and chemical industries; and aluminum

government nationalized it and Frondizi transformed it into a cooperative (but with a rigid internal hierarchy), until it was recovered by its workers in 1998.^{2,4}

"foil" in rolls for home or industrial use, with the capacity to print by heat sealing for the presentation of products of great use and demand by the food industry, such as alfajores containers (Open Faculty Program, s/ f, "Guide to Recovered Companies").

²We take as a referential basis on the stages of IMPA the narrative published in three editions of the "IMPA Museum Magazine" (2013, 2014 and 2016), since this publication is disseminated as a chronicle legitimized by the workers

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Ramón Rodrigues Ramalho

Center for Labor Studies and Research (CEIL) of the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), of the Argentine Nation

Correspondence: Ramón Rodrigues Ramalho (CEIL/ CONICET), Center for Labor Studies and Research (CEIL) of the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), of the Argentine Nation, Email ramon.rodrigues.ramalho@gmail.com

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When addressing the trajectory of IMPA, we are interested in pointing out how the construction of the current business conception of IMPA has been gestated, which today calls itself a “social company”.³

Our research is based on ethnographic fieldwork^{5,6} carried out over a period of three years (2011-2015) at the IMPA manufacturing plant, that emblematic recovered Buenos Aires company, located in the center of the political disputes over the recovery of companies in Argentina.⁴ The participant observation made possible the apprehension of daily situations, during the repeated “face to face” meetings with the referents of IMPA and other social organizations installed in this manufacturing plant, complemented by semi-structured interviews, enabling us to carry out a recollection of the history of IMPA, from the perspective of their own protagonists.

1st stage: private company (1928 – 1944)

IMPA arises in 1928 by the successive association of different national capitals.⁵ In the context of “import substitution” (between the wars), favorable to the development of local industries, its partners pursue a rapid commercial expansion through productive diversification, going from manufacturing tin containers to bicycles and military weapons for the government. This period of “technological experimentation” is exemplified by the production of the “IMPA plane” (a single-engine wooden single-manned aircraft).

In barely fifteen years the company went from a small workshop with twenty workers, to having four thousand employees divided among four locations, with close to eight thousand clients “... from cotillion stores, to Colgate, Odol, Bayer, Bonafide, Aerolíneas Argentinas”.^{6,7} Labor conflicts are also present at that time, having its peak in the Metallurgical Strike of 1942.

To align itself with the government policy of the time, in 1943 IMPA adopted the motto “An industry at the service of the Fatherland”, receiving that same year the visit of Perón (together with the president of the Argentine Industrial Union) a few days after having assumed the position of Secretary of Labor and Welfare, and then, in 1944, the visit of Eva Perón.⁷

From that first stage there is a proud memory of exemplifying a company founded with national capital, modeled on the entrepreneurial enthusiasm of its founders, based on taking risks from an “internal market” approach of opportunities. This successful development drive highlights the ability of the national industry to develop, without neglecting the well-being of its workers.

³In IMPA, currently, various social organizations are installed, part of its policy regarding the consideration of recovered companies as “social companies”, whose social function exceeds the generation of income for its members. Among these social organizations are the Bachillerado Popular-IMPA, BarricadaTV, the IMPA Cultural Center, the IMPA Labor Museum and the IMPA Workers University, whose foundation the author of this text has participated in.

⁴Regarding the way of referencing ethnographic records, we first highlight the context in which the quote in question occurs, then the date and source of the record, as follows: *Meeting at IMPA, November 2, 2012, Field Record*.

⁵At the end of the '20s, José Mario Sueiro and Roberto Lienau formed a small workshop on Querandies street. In 1940, “Lienau, Sueiro y Grech SRL” was created, which in 1941 assumed the name of “IMPA SA”.⁸

⁶Within his Fordist vision, at the Almagro headquarters there is a School-Factory, medical and dental offices and canteens, all free services including the provision of medicines, even before the laws of Peronism.

⁷There is still a metal sign at the main entrance to the factory with the figure of Eva Perón, in homage to her visit to the factory.

2nd stage: state company (1945 – 1960)

Another pride in the memory of IMPA consists of having been part of the national industrialization policy carried out during the first government of Perón (1945-1955). That decade frames the historical moment of conformation of the “Peronist” social imaginary of self-valorization of the worker identity, which we have mentioned.

The “nationalization” of IMPA in 1945, as well as of other companies declared of “public utility” by the State, fulfills the strategic purpose of counteracting the hegemonic claims of the United States over the region.⁸ As an internal industrial development policy, the state conglomerate of companies of the so-called “DINIE group” (National Directorate of State Companies) is articulated. The importance given by Perón to IMPA and the visit of Eva Perón to the factory, highlighting the distribution by the Evita Foundation of the esteemed Ñandú bicycles, nationally made from design to final assembly, are one of the main brands that are awarded to that stage (“Empresa Estatal”).⁹ Likewise, the expropriation through the legal figure of the “public utility” of the plant is a symbolic element that transcends to the present time. In short, the pride of being a national company stems from an independent development impulse, even against the interests of the United States, also fulfilling a social function symbolized by the donations of the Ñandú.

3rd stage: cooperative company (1961 – 1997)

In 1961, the government of Arturo Frondizi decreed the closure of IMPA, as part of its policy of restructuring public companies, as well as privatizing the companies of the “DINIE group”. The opposition of the workers, including their own union, manages to transform it into the “IMPA Cooperativa Limitada de Trabajo y Consumo”. But, the company becomes a cooperative only formally, functioning similar to a capitalist Enterprise.^{10, 18}

This is the only case of a DINIE group company that survives without returning to its original owners. Subsumed in a liberal economic context and without state protection, the company fails to recover the clientele or the production of its beginnings. In addition, the creation of Aluar in 1970, a mixed company for the production of aluminum, means disproportionate competition. Even so, IMPA came to be distinguished with business mentions in the 70s.⁹ The pictures with those mentions are visible on the walls of the administrative rooms of the factory.

⁸The international accusation of “Nazi spy” that fell on Fritz Mandl - a new shareholder who had bought 50% of the factory from Lienau's widow - pressured the government of Juan Domingo Perón to nationalize the company, appointing José Mario himself Sueiro as its General Administrator. IMPA became part of DINIE on January 31, 1950 (“Empresa Estatal”, Siedl, A. and Ricatti, R.).

⁹The Evita Foundation carries out various social works, from the construction of schools and hospitals to the distribution of toys to children, including the delivery of Ñandú bicycles. IMPA's participation in the project to create the “Pulqui”, a high-tech military aircraft, for which IMPA manufactures some parts, also stands out.¹

¹⁰The union preferred that it continue as a private company or that compensation be paid. The union delegates of IMPA want it to remain nationalized, but the government imposes cooperatives as a solution. Despite the continuity of the factory, a part of its delegates are dismissed and compensated. The reminiscent part fails to reverse the establishment of a top-down chain of command, undermining its cooperative nature. It is also argued that, already coming from “strong hands” (the founder Sueiro, the State), its verticalist tradition has made it easier for factory control to settle in a few hands.⁷

Regarding the discipline of the labor force, we emphasize that its "Internal Regulations for Worker Personnel" prohibits (Art. 15) "talking" or "distracting the attention of other workers", stating that "contact" must "...limit exclusively [...] to matters related to the same work," being "causal for dismissal" any form of collective expression ("conversations, harangues or speeches").¹¹

Even under these conditions, Marcelo Castillo recalls that an important event in the training of his workers consisted of the "takeover" and assembly of 1983, to claim late payments but also changes in the Board of Directors, especially with respect to its authoritarian conduct. For Castillo, this episode constitutes in itself the "first recovery" of the factory, due to the importance attributed to it as a previous repertoire for the recovery of 1998 (Castillo, interview with the author).

In short, the worker's resistance against his threat of extinction against Frondizi and the union stands out from that period; the awards received in the 70s, despite the competition from Aluar; the silencing of the expression of the workers; and the assembly of 83.

4th stage: recovered company (1998 to the present).

At the end of the '80s and during the '90s, IMPA went through a productive crisis, and then a hollowing out induced by its Board of directors, which culminates in a call for creditors in 1997, paving the way for recovery.

Recovered in 1998, from its beginnings IMPA adopts the open factory concept, holding a community opening project.¹² The residents of the neighborhood are summoned to multiple non-factory activities that take place in their facilities, which are transformed according to these new uses: meetings, fairs, theatrical and photographic performances, among other activities related to culture, are held. Education and health.⁴

Rise of the conception of the social enterprise (1999-2005)

The mopes, the CC and the opposition of Aluar

From the opening of the factory and the accompaniment of other forms of collective organization of the working class, from meetings held in IMPA, the "MOPES", Popular Movement of Social Economy, emerged in 1999. It is made up of a series of cooperative experiences, such as the aforementioned Quilmes housing cooperative, a mutual located in "Villa 21", a cooperative in Marcos Paz, a cooperative in Campichuelo, among others.¹⁰ That experience, the following year, led to the formation of the MNER.¹¹

¹¹"This modality of censorship, fragmentation and isolation of the workers left its mark [...] In IMPA, as Amalia, who worked in the cooperative in 1976, says: 'here we didn't have problems with the payment, but you couldn't even talk to your partner, let alone less than politics.' [...] Oracio Campos also remembers that period at IMPA: 'If you complained about something, they marked you. And when I entered they told me: here you have to come to work; if there is a strike you still have to come. Even if he's late, he's coming. And I remember that one day of unemployment I came the same... walking from Lanús I came. [...] Julia joined IMPA in 1982, in the printing, doorknob production sector. [...] the cooperative, as they recall, was only a cooperative 'on paper' since the assemblies were agreed upon by the directors and there was no possibility of dissent [...] if any of the workers expressed it, they were – as they recall – 'marked' and eventually ended up being left out of the factory.'¹¹

¹²"The IMPA cooperative opened its facilities, from the very moment of the occupation, to different groups and individuals so that they could develop their cultural activities."¹¹

At the end of 1999, the CC-IMPA was founded, based on the social capital derived from the "halo" of support for the ERTs. They are incorporated into IMPA's strategy as a way of developing a "cultural policy" based on the creation of a cooperative space for the dissemination of the arts. It incorporates a discourse in which art, rather than something "enclosed in a gallery for a few", must be accessible to the entire population.¹ Frieria¹² describes many activities that are carried out in IMPA, through the articulation of the CC with various theater groups and social organizations, even from abroad. At that time, IMPA became known as "La Fábrica Ciudad Cultural."¹³

Within IMPA, the CC begins to establish a "culture of coexistence" between workers and artists, which marks the factory to this day. This exchange modifies the work environment and generates an artistic sensitization in the workers: "Sharing lunch hours and spaces [...] filleting an associate's house number on a piece of aluminum; artistically signaling sectors of the factory..." – or as in the case of the worker who could see figures projected on the materials with which he works: "this worker had fun looking for figures and then he showed them to me, he shared them..."¹³

The members of the CC also support other social organizations, taking part in mobilizations, events and in the recovery of different companies. They participate in these social conflicts, with the installation of artistic training "workshops" and theatrical shows.

The activities of the CC promote a dissemination of the factory that exceeds the expectations of its protagonists.¹⁴ This strengthens the perception that IMPA can function as a focus for self-management as a possible solution to social problems:

We never thought that we were going to have such a great success by having the Cultural Center, because that is what gives visibility to the conflict, we found out later. Not because we had designed it that way... luck also runs. [...] We found out that it was a unique experience in the world, of manual workers with a Cultural Center creating culture. Then that exploded, because everyone came to see us. In fact it was a strange thing, even the enemy newspapers, such as La Nación, on a Sunday, published eight pages in their magazine with the reality of IMPA. It was no longer the same to remove 40, 50 workers than everything that was inside here."¹⁴

Anchored in the success of the CC, complaints are also publicized against the Argentine Central Bank (BCA) and the electricity company, accusing them of an institutional action aimed at making the self-management experience in IMPA fail ("Empresa Recuperada").

In the year 2000, MOPES began to expand its contacts to other experiences of cooperatives in crisis.¹¹ From this development, in that same year the MNER emerged, as E. Murúa recalls:

With the 2001 crisis, in all the meetings [of MOPES] we had to discuss the recovery of companies, [...] we almost did not give importance to the colleagues who came from another type of experience [...] They said 'and about housing? when we talk?', because one company went bankrupt every week, every two days, they didn't finish talking about one, another appeared. [...] where

¹³At its peak, it offered "45 workshops in which 400 people participated."¹³

¹⁴"...in Querandies and Rawson there is what seems to be the only active factory in the world that has housed a cultural center for a year. The cultural center is called La Fábrica Ciudad Cultural, it has more than thirty workshops (trapeze, effort dance, voice, body expression, Argentine dances, acting training in improvisation, instrument construction, drawing, ceramic, filleting) [...] In the year 2000, 70 shows were held at IMPA. One of them, 3 EX, was considered one of the most interesting theatrical productions of the year."¹⁴

the discussion of making the MNER came from, with the objective of being in solidarity with all the workers who were in conflict, of taking our proposal to all the workers, and seeing what possibility there is of generating public policy for the sector. [...] The solidarity economy movement ended up being the MNER, and by its own logic the displaced compañeros continued to have relations with each organization, but no longer a joint policy [for cooperativism]. The dynamic made it so.”¹⁰

In the political-legal aspect, IMPA's pioneering is considered a factor of disadvantage compared to the situation of other ERTs, since in 1998 the set of formal and informal rules that characterizes the road to recovery did not yet exist. The factory is not facing a bankruptcy request from the previous company, but in a bankruptcy, which implies paying off the inherited debt (more than eight million dollars divided into installments of 160 thousand pesos per year).^{1,15}

In terms of production, IMPA faces unequal competition with the company Aluar, which has a monopoly over the aluminum chain in Argentina. Taking advantage of this, Aluar usually refuses to sell raw material (laminated paper) to IMPA. When not, it requires you to make full payment at the time of delivery (“cash payment”), while the conventional thing is that it be made sixty days after delivery.^{10,16}

To counteract this situation, its workers discover a method to recycle scrap metal that allows IMPA to produce its own raw material, with the same quality, and at only 60% of the price charged by Aluar. However, many former IMPA workers began to join the factory in search of employment, beyond the existence of a productive demand that justifies this absorption of additional labor force. Thus, its body of associates goes from the initial close to forty, in 1998, reaching more than one hundred and sixty in 2005:

We always believe that solidarity is superior to competition, and we have incorporated more workers into our company than we needed because we prioritize the identity of the worker, we know that a guy without a job becomes demoralized, that he loses respect from the family, from his wife and children...¹

On the political scene, in November 2001, the IMPA workers made a public alert, through *Impacto Magazine*,^{15,17} regarding the serious situation in which the country finds itself: “We denounce that Argentina is at war [...] our country fulfills the role of spearhead to deindustrialize the Cone South. And for that they need a weak Argentina, without industry, without added value” (p. 3).

Although without premeditating the subsequent events, on December 11, 2001, the IMPA workers, with another three hundred people, staged a “cut” of the streets surrounding the National Congress. They position the factory truck on Rivadavia street and dispose of the flammable waste from the production process on it. Armed with this scenario, they enter Congress demanding that politicians cancel

¹⁵Its recovery could not take advantage of the political climate of crisis of representation generated after 2001, facilitating votes in the local or national legislature regarding the provisional ownership of the company.

¹⁶The IMPA referents denounced that “...the [state] subsidies were not granted homogeneously [...] which created conditions so that one after another [...] the main companies in the aluminum market (Kiesa, Camea, Refinería de Metales Uboldi, etc.) [...] were absorbed by Aluar [...] [and the] financial suffocation of the former undisputed leader in the aluminum market until the irruption of Aluar: IMPA.”²¹

¹⁷*Impacto Magazine* is an internal publication of the company, existing since the late 1960s but with intermittent appearance.¹ The editions that we use in the Thesis are written by the leaders of IMPA, Murúa and Robledo,¹⁵ on behalf of all their workers.

their vacations and continue legislating, to suspend all judicial executions, because already that week, they denounced, the chain of payments between companies had been cut. “They repressed us, some compañeros went to the hospital but it was a battle that helped us to strengthen ourselves.”¹⁰

Julia, an IMPA worker, remembers it this way: ‘we decided to go in the trucks and cross them in the streets so that they would listen to us; but the trucks also had aluminum foil that we make here and to attract attention we set them on fire. A bunch of firefighters came and we filled everything with smoke; but hey, a week later there were already a lot of people who wanted to set everything on fire.’¹

The role of IMPA in other company recoveries (2002-2004)

According to Murúa,¹⁰ for the year 2002 IMPA became an “axis from which companies are recovering”, due to its outstanding performance for the success of many recovery processes that begin to emerge. The workers of IMPA intend to promote the greatest number of recoveries possible, with which they gamble in assisting countless labor disputes, offering the scarce resources of their factory to do so.

The recovery of the Chilavert graph, in 2002, has a direct relationship with the experience of MOPES, articulated from IMPA. Chilavert workers participate in MOPES and come into contact with those of IMPA about a year before the company goes bankrupt.

Chilavert I don't think he would have recovered without IMPA. In fact, we told them to take the factory. I already knew Placido, we went with the IMPA lawyer, Kravetz, and we began to work for the expropriation.¹⁰

...it seemed like a utopia or a dream when we got together with Murúa, with the colleagues from IMPA, from the faculties that came and made us endure.”¹

The MVH Cooperativa Metalúrgica is another example of the determined intervention of IMPA, by holding an event to contribute funds during the 2002 resistance. But, mainly, to promote the transfer of machinery that MVH workers come to find in another workshop, as a maneuver by the employer to open a new Company.¹⁸

We see a similar behavior in the recovery of the ERT “Global” in 2003. The employer moved the machinery to another workshop, where the workers set up a tent to pressure the trustee and the bankruptcy judge to grant them their usufruct. Without hesitation, IMPA members proceed to return the machines to their original location. This is how Murúa relates it:

...the compañeros had been suffering for a long time. They had made an enormous effort to discover where the machines that the boss had stolen were [...] they call me and I go on Tuesday and I say that on Friday we are going to look for the machines. And the guys from Global [think]:

‘I’ve been there [in the tent] for three months and this guy comes to me and says that after two days he comes to get the machines, is he crazy?’ I put the IMPA truck, we rented a bus, we put people from all the recovered companies, we broke the padlocks and we broke the factory door.

¹⁸A worker recounts that they went to work and came across the sign: “Closed until further notice” [...] We were alone, we needed someone to sponsor us and that person was Mr. Eduardo Murúa, he and the IMPA colleagues They said they were going to accompany us to move the machines. It only took a week and we have obtained vans and trucks to do it...”¹

That was spectacular! We put the truck in, we put the machines in and the gray came... but it was January, legal holidays, so no court order was going to come.¹⁰

The IMPA and MNER referents show a similar disposition in the recovery of the IMECC cardiovascular clinic, located in the Centennial Park of CABA. Regarding this episode, Murúa¹⁰ recounts:

...half past six in the morning... Fabio calls me, who later was at the Bauen: 'Come on, because people here don't want to come in.' I tell Barroca, a colleague from IMPA who is no longer here: 'You stand next to the door and when I arrive, you break the door!' I arrive, I'm not even going to ask, I go directly and break the door. We broke the door and it was beautiful. All the workers came in, left and sat down at their jobs, they were all scared, but then the gray hair went away and they recovered... But the compañeras didn't want to go in at that moment.

The recovery of the Bauen hotel gains decisive contours when its workers, already laid off, meet at IMPA, the meeting point of the MNER at that time.

...we entered through the garage, it was boarded up in front. But the 'Bauen Suite' was open. Thirty guys entered through the parking lot, through the lowering of the cars. The guy there [watchman] didn't know what to do and the Bauen's partner told us where the door was. The one who gets in first is a guy from Chilavert, we broke the glass and he jumped through the glass and was able to open the door. On the third floor it was decided to take over, against the lawyer's will, of everyone. The only one who wanted to drink was me. But also with strategy:

on [the avenues] Callao and Corrientes there was a deputy in case the gray came and Kravetz was already in court to speak with the judge. That day I wanted to take the gray, but people resist it. [...] [Luis] Zamora was there too, and he said to me: 'Why don't you leave? Because they're coming to look for you.' I said, 'Well, let them come looking for me...'. I have many processes for usurpation, because every time the gray hair comes, he writes down who entered.¹⁰

On this aptitude for action we see the story of Edith, a reference of the ERT Cefomar:

...just like Eduardo Murúa, who carries a mark for each recovered factory, because he put his body into it and allows us to dream [...] we know that this is not a commitment to production, but rather to be supportive, to educate, to provide centers of health and activities to the community, as in IMPA.¹

This IMPA brand can also be found in the former Ghelco, today the ERT Vieytes. After three days at the factory gate, to prevent its emptying, the idea of self-management germinates in its workers, strengthened when the members of IMPA appear: "...when we had contact with the IMPA colleagues they helped us to start working with the expropriation project."¹

By then, the MNER referents also begin to glimpse articulations beyond Argentine territory. They establish political contacts with ERTs from other countries and seek to find other ways to avoid Aluar's competition.

At the end of 2002 and beginning of 2003, after the MNER was formed, two of its main leaders, Eduardo Murúa (president) and José Abelli (vice president) [...] held meetings with the Brazilian ANTAEG and the CUT [...] Around the same time, the emergence of around twenty ERT in Uruguay is known in Argentina, which are inserted in

the eastern trade union center, the PIT-CNT. [...] These first contacts are the basis of an international policy of the ERT movement.¹⁶

Gestation of the financial crisis in IMPA (2003)

In 2003, IMPA's financial situation began to suffer a setback, starting a crisis that would erupt two years later. Aluar's conduct, aimed at financially wearing down IMPA, is felt more seriously. At the same time, the economic improvement experienced by the country as of that year, raises the demand and the price of metallic waste, reducing its comparative advantage with the recycling process.

...when there were more jobs, the price of aluminum, as it is an international price, could not move, but the price of recycling does move, because there is more demand for aluminum scrap, and there you lose a difference [...] All [ERTs] are recovering and IMPA cannot recover [financially]. That means that salaries cannot be raised much [as was the case in other recoveries].¹⁰

Faced with this situation, IMPA's strategy consists of, on the one hand, publicly denouncing the state of "economic siege"¹¹ imposed by the monopolies on national companies, in collusion with the newly elected national government.¹⁹

In this context, Luis Caro, already split from the MNER, seeks to establish himself as the most suitable interlocutor for the national government, as we can see during an act at the Casa Rosada, in which the creation of a special line of credit for the ERTs. The MNER rejects the invitation, although it appears at the event to disseminate its proposal for public policies for the sector. In addition to N. Kirchner, the following appear in this act:

...the head of [Banco] Nación, Felisa Miceli; that of Social Development, Alicia Kirchner; the Minister of Labor, Carlos Tomada [...] In the audience, the majority were workers from the Caro wing [...] who celebrated the news [...] among them Brukman, Ghelco and La Baskonia. There were also representatives of Fecootra and the Yaguané refrigerator. [...] The MNER distributed some folders and withdrew. [...] Eduardo Murúa decided not to participate because he considers that 'the measures presented by the Government are insufficient and do not represent a clear public policy for the recovery of employment'.¹⁷

In 2004, President Néstor Kirchner received IMPA leaders, despite two incidents that occurred that same year.²⁰ In that meeting, which took place on October 12, the MNER reaffirmed its proposal to recover jobs through the reactivation of inactive industrial facilities in the country. According to Murúa, Néstor promises agility in the enactment of an expropriation law for the ERTs and in the creation of an initial investment fund for the recovery of companies. This is how Eduardo Murúa relates it:

¹⁹Robledo¹ denounced in 2003 the "restructuring of the central policies of the colonial regime" with the payment of the external debt and the credit policies of the BCA that, he argues, maintain a position "against the [national] industry since the dictatorship." He admits that many popular sectors have hope in the national government, but affirms that he "does not have and will not have public policies for the sector" and that his institutions are looking for a way to "contain" the growth of misery, rather than solve it definitively.

²⁰During the presidential opening speech of the ordinary sessions of the National Congress, Murúa throws flyers ("butterflies") into the air demanding an expropriation law for the ERTs.¹⁰ The MNER, together with other social organizations, in defense of consumer rights, is also involved in incidents that prevent a public hearing on the increase in the gas consumption rate from being held, since its holding is a legal budget for it to be carried out. the increase ("The gas hearing was suspended," 2004).

We show [Kirchner] how much it costs the State to create a job and how much it costs with the method that we did: 25 times cheaper, with twine and everything the State puts up to recover. [...] I tell [Murúa to Kirchner]: 'If you take this method, we as an organization will disappear [with the recovery of employment]. What we want is a State policy to recover employment' [...] [Kirchner told Murúa]: 'Eduardo, don't worry about the [expropriation] law, talk to Alberto or Eduardo [sic], that's quick thing, I make you vote the law. With respect to the working capital fund, don't worry, the money will be there.' We left the meeting for the press conference to explain how it went. We said that Nestor was engaged. That we were going to work starting next week to build public policies for the sector. That was on October 10 or 12, 2004. In April 2005 there was nothing. Not a meeting, not 10 pesos.¹⁰

Despite the first fracture of the MNER (2003), IMPA continues to develop its concept of social enterprise, strengthening, for example, its relations with the neighborhood.²¹

Likewise, negotiations began to create a school in the plant. The Popular High Schools (BPs) movement was in full swing at that time, with the emergence of several popular schools in deprived neighborhoods and even in the headquarters of some unions.¹⁸

At the crossroads between this development and the success achieved with the dissemination of CC, leaders of the Cooperativa de Educadores e Investigadores Populares (CEIP), such as Roberto Elizalde, propose to install a BP for youth and adults for IMPA workers.²² The intention is to make this movement converge in opposition to "educational exclusion", with the proposal raised by the MNER to create their own pedagogical and care spaces within the ERTs.¹

We [the BP] did it because we at IMPA, the MNER, the CEIP always say that social organizations need their own training and that companies belong to the people and to all those who fight.¹

The need to organize baccalaureates (popular schools) in our factories expresses our vocation to build true social enterprises [...] we are not only [...] the expression of an emergency situation. We are convinced of being part of the new forms that the structuring of the new society will have...¹⁸

In 2004, with its foundation, the BP-IMPA began to disseminate the educational modality proposed by the MNER: to develop "educational practices for community insertion" through the articulation between popular educators and the new social processes of organization of the popular field.¹ In 2004, some BPs obtained scholarships for all their CABA students, a conquest preceded "...by mobilizations of the schools together with the workers of the recovered factories (especially of IMPA)."¹⁸

²¹To act as a link between IMPA and the residents, the association "Vecinos de IMPA" was formed, and later the "Friends of IMPA Retirees Center", from groups that had been defining themselves as "Friends of IMPA", such as the "Plaza Almagro Popular Assembly" and a neighborhood association of retirees on Bartolomé Miter street. This Center organizes walks, trips, and cultural activities for its members, claiming the rights of retirees. In 2008, this organization became nucleated around the IMPA Health Center (CeSAC 23).⁴

²²The CEIP is made up of the following Popular High Schools for Youth and Adults: IMPA, Maderera Córdoba, Chilavert, Paulo Freire, 1° de Mayo, Raíces, 19 de Diciembre, El Cañón, Agustín Tosco and Piletones (Sol del Sur).¹⁹

Crisis of the conception of social enterprise (2005-2008)

The pigüe episode (2004-5): crisis among the leadership of the MNER

If, on the one hand, the social recognition of the ERTs movement is growing, being received by the first rank of the national government, on the other hand, the internal differences are accentuating regarding their way of conducting. Between 2004 and 2005 a relevant episode occurred for the fracture between the leadership of the MNER, during the recovery of two exGatic plants, one in San Martín and another in Pigüe. After the recovery of the first, smaller one, the situation in Pigüe is more complicated. This is how Murúa relates about the recovery of the former Gatic San Martín.¹⁰

'San Martín' didn't matter that much to them, they gave it to me before [the expropriation]. I took a court here, to put pressure on the judge, then they sent [the judicial file] to another judge, I beat the other. The judge was under pressure from the State not to break [the San Martín plant]. It had been in an employer's 'lock out' for six months, in cessation of payments, and the judge did not break it. I told him: 'Break it! and give me continuity'. He said no, I closed the door on him, and said 'Well, until I get bankrupt I'm not leaving here.' Kravetz was in there and he said: 'We're going to jail! This is going to end badly, it's a federal crime, you're locking up a judge...'. The people from San Martín and Pigüe below, all shouting. I go out onto the judge's balcony, bitching and the judge says, not angry but with disappointment: 'Murúa, are you bitching at me?'

To reactivate the Pigüe plant, the Kirchner government announces the creation of an investment fund through a business group. According to Murúa,¹⁰ part of the leadership of the MNER understands that the only favorable solution for the workers is to negotiate with this business group the use of a fraction of the plant to install a small production cooperative. In disagreement, Murúa tries to denounce the intention of the State as a maneuver to privatize the company, and thus pressure the government to negotiate a better solution for the workers. A part of the MNER distributes numerous flyers ("butterflies") in CABA, with the inscription "Kirchner=Menem. Gatic case".²³

There was Tomada in the Labor Ministry, De Vido in the Planning Ministry, saying that a billion dollars were being invested for the [business] group in a fund, and the governor of the Province, Solá, all sitting with the businessmen declaring that Gatic was reopened by their hands. [...] Abelli and Kravetz, as they see the government's decision, go and try to negotiate with the guys a little thing for Pigüe: the businessmen kept the big plant and gave [the workers] a little place here to make a shoe [...] They [Abelli and Kravetz] think that we are not going to win over the businessmen or the government, and they try to negotiate a way out, something for the workers. And I alone in Pigüe, alone in the back, and those negotiating me! [...] There the government sees that there is a weakness, that there is a sector that is trying to negotiate a way out and the government is trying to break it. [...] The only way out I have is for the government to realize that they are going to die with me. I make 100 thousand butterflies come out that say 'Kirchner = Menem', because there was a lot of the issue of the delivery of worker's rights, in the Gatic case.

²³"Murúa is sure that this led the movement led by Caro to obtain benefits, such as the immediate lowering of light, which were denied to IMPA."

The cumpas flyered the entire Congress, Ministry of Labor, the Casa Rosada. The worst thing that could happen to [the government] at that time was for the workers to hear that they were the same as Menen. That's where they targeted me.¹⁰ in the Gatic case. The cumpas flyered the entire Congress, Ministry of Labor, the Casa Rosada. The worst thing that could happen to [the government] at that time was for the workers to hear that they were the same as Menen. That's where they targeted me,¹⁰ in the Gatic case. The cumpas flyered the entire Congress, Ministry of Labor, the Casa Rosada. The worst thing that could happen to [the government] at that time was for the workers to hear that they were the same as Menen. That's where they targeted me.¹⁰

Although the Pigüe plant has finally been fully recovered by the workers, forming the "Pigüe Textiles Cooperative", this episode marks the central turning point in the MNER, to be consummated with the fracture within IMPA.

Strategies against financial suffocation (within IMPA, with Aluar and the government)

2005 is the year in which IMPA is fractured. This marks a watershed in the movement of ERTs, from the dispersion generated by its successive internal fractures.

In the second four-month period of 2004, the drop in IMPA's profitability already reached worrying magnitudes and in 2005 the financial asphyxiation of the factory reached its maximum point.²⁰

Even in these circumstances, and despite being away from IMPA for close to a year (for accompanying MNER activities, such as the process in Pigüe), Murúa¹⁰ proposes that workers reduce their own retirements to thus form a fund investment, although this highlights the contrast of its situation with the financial improvement in other ERTs.

But Murúa and Robledo¹⁵ disagree on how to face the payment of the fees related to the bankruptcy. Murúa proposes to decree the bankruptcy of IMPA, to pressure politically for an expropriation law that thus separates the previous debt from the current management. Robledo prefers not to break negotiations with creditors, a position that prevails.

In turn, the IMPA referents resume the complaints against Aluar's monopolistic actions, but now emphasizing its links with the national government.²⁴ Although within the MNER the divergence regarding the support that should be given to Kirchnerism is sharpening, they are still seeking to formalize this complaint. To broaden its dissemination, it is presented on behalf of an investment fund made up of four members of the human rights organization known as "HIJOS" (2017).²⁵

²⁴IMPA referents affirm that in 2001 the group "FATE-Aluar" fled \$210 million dollars abroad while in 2005 it received \$450 million pesos in state subsidies. According to Avalos,¹ the complaint constitutes "...a historical investigation never carried out [...] the only reconstruction of monopoly actions in Argentina, which compiles 40 years of violation of competition law."

²⁵"CHILDREN" is the acronym for "Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence", a group founded in 1995 to restore the identity of family members kidnapped during the military regime (1976-1983). In this case, as these four members of HIJOS have invested their compensation in favor of IMPA (paid from the State for having been appropriated during the dictatorship), we want to add to the IMPA complaint against Aluar, the social and symbolic capital that it contains that organization in front of the Argentine population.

Based on the open negotiations, the monopoly grants a credit to IMPA, advancing raw material. Loan of about twenty tons (value similar to the annual quota of the bankruptcy), which Murúa admits receiving without having as a priority to settle it later. With this, it is possible to give a "moment of oxygen" to the "financial health" of IMPA.¹⁰

Stimulated by the negotiations with the government, Robledo focuses on preparing a project that makes the granting of the promised credits legally viable, while Murúa is absorbed in the activities of conducting the MNER. This fosters concerns on the part of the IMPA workers, because they feel the attention paid by their leaders to the factory is insufficient, at a time of financial crisis.

When the talks with the national government prove to be without effect, the workers decide to establish a "struggle plan" to pressure, through various mobilizations, a meeting with government authorities with the intention of publicly committing them to promote a solution favorable to IMPA. In this context, on March 3, 2005, the episode known as "the takeover of the Casa Rosada" took place.

The government announces for that day the launch of its foreign debt policy, known as the "debt bond swap." The IMPA workers decide in assembly not to withdraw from the vicinity of the government house without an explicit commitment from the national Executive. Again, the 160 workers leave with their Ford F600 truck filled with flammable aluminum waste, in front of which a hundred policemen with armored tanks position themselves.²¹ The IMPA workers receive an agenda that same day, but Murúa, Robledo and Kravetz come face to face with a new interlocutor, the President's private secretary, Juan Bontempo, with which the entire route traveled previously is reproduced in a few moments:

After the explanation of the situation on one side, the reiteration of the other's favorable political will but without any concrete commitment, although the government indicates that the IMPA request, now restricted to three hundred thousand pesos, is a viable amount to be granted. When Bontempo signals the end of the meeting, Murúa declares that he will not leave office without a commitment from the government.¹⁰

With Murúa and Robledo still inside the government house (while the IMPA workers remain in the vicinity), a fraction of the MNER communicated to the officials of the national Executive that they did not agree with the measure of force perpetrated. Likewise, they do not know Murúa as president of the MNER, which will be publicized a few days later in a note signed by José Abelli, Jorge Córdoba and a series of ERTs favorable to supporting Kirchnerism.²⁶

Weakened, Robledo and Murúa accept the government's proposal for a new meeting and decide to leave the Casa Rosada at dawn on March 4. Murúa considers it a political mistake to have left the Casa Rosada office at that time, due to the lack of a concrete commitment and the anticipation that the episode would be disseminated among

²⁶This is how Murúa¹ relates it: "In the middle of this they had called Abelli, everyone in favor of the government... to say that I had decided that alone, that it was not a decision of the movement, detaching itself, instead of showing solidarity [...] calling Parrilli to say they had nothing to do with it. This weakened me, that his people call you to say that they have nothing to do with it." I who also writes from a point of view situated in IMPA, considers that: "...both Murúa and other fellow members of the MNER and IMPA, limited themselves to obeying the mandate of the workers that in the IMPA assembly had decided 'not to leave the pink house until they have a favorable solution for the 170 IMPA workers.'

the media. All in all, he understands that the perception that spreads among the workers about the government's indisposition towards the IMPA leaders is even more serious.

For the second meeting, IMPA appears together with other social actors as a means to strengthen its position. However, the government's proposal on that occasion appears to Murúa to be a political trap, with which he suddenly decides to close the meeting.²⁷

This episode reinforces the divergences between the workers by consolidating the notion that the national government will not grant any value to IMPA, while its current leadership lasts. In this context, Robledo decides to retire from IMPA, due to exhaustion and assuming that his presence constitutes an obstacle to a negotiated solution in favor of the factory. Murúa proceeds to denounce the lack of political will of the national Executive to support the ERTs in general,²⁸ and then the intention of the national government to weaken the conception that IMPA embodies in the movement of recuperated.²⁹

Despite everything, by March 2005, a reorganization in IMPA's production process increases the added value of the work on its final product. With this, Murúa once again proposes the creation of his own investment fund, in the same value of the subsidy offered by the government, freezing withdrawals to save all the surplus achieved with this productive improvement. Although the proposed conditions seem harsh, Murúa affirms that a vast majority of workers (70%, according to him) still supports this measure.¹⁰

The fracture of IMPA: opposition offensive and the change of its leadership

In this context, Murúa points out that the national government articulates with Luis Caro an intervention in IMPA, seeking to sharpen internal tensions in order to force a change in its leadership. An indication of external interference in the factory, still secretive, are the repeated requests for "informative meetings" by a group of associates. Its coordinated action is what would allow us to assume the existence of some prior instruction, in the sense of hindering and stressing internal decision-making.

That is where Caro begins to act with a sector of the government. They say that the money will be there, but that Murúa and Robledo¹⁵ do more politics than solution, because we went from 40 workers in 1998 to 164 [in 2005] in the worst crisis in history, and that is why this situation existed. [...] They asked for a briefing over and over again, [...] They try to win us over at the briefings. But we always ended up winning them ourselves. [...] In the informative meetings the only ones who had proposals were us. Bad news, but with proposals.¹⁰

In March 2005, Murúa participated in a meeting in Venezuela, since the government of that country was interested in the Argentine experience in the recovery of factories, an opportunity in which the export of laminated paper to Argentina by the Venezuelan state company "Alcasa" was also glimpsed. " (CVG Aluminio del Caroní), which in turn is experiencing severe financial difficulties.^{1,30} The

²⁷Participating in the meeting were Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize winner (in 1980), the national deputy Francisco "Barba" Gutiérrez (former leader of the UOM-Quilmes) and Carlos Neri (former national deputy).²⁰

²⁸"The workers have the State against us. Eduardo Murúa, from IMPA."²¹

²⁹"They are attacking a project. The IMPA crisis, according to Murúa."²⁰

³⁰On that occasion, Murúa strengthened ties with companies recovered from Brazil, and received a positive signal from the Venezuelan labor minister, María C. Iglesias, regarding the proposal to hold a continental meeting of ERTs in Caracas. Immediately afterwards, he also found out in Uruguay the

following month, Murúa has an appointment with President Chávez, so his opponents can foresee his absence from the factory.³¹

Eduardo Murúa made several visits to Venezuela during 2005, even participating in meetings with President Chávez himself, and the call matured in meetings with the recovered Uruguayans, the Venezuelans and a sector of Brazilian workers [...] a group of about twenty known factories as Occupied Factories, among which were large companies from southern Brazil.¹⁶

Before returning to Venezuela, as of April 10, episodes of theft of materials occur at IMPA, generating a series of tense assemblies to clarify what happened. Although he does not believe that there are political motivations in these episodes, Murúa believes that part of the workers, fearful of dismissal with justification (for having stolen materials from the factory), take advantage of the internal crisis to "politicize" this attitude.²⁰

With Murúa in Venezuelan territory, on April 14, Luis Caro burst into the IMPA plant at the head of some twenty associates, plunging it into an internal political crisis. Aware of the situation, Murúa sent a letter from Venezuela to the IMPA workers, in which he reiterated his political provisions, stating that "...if we cannot reach an agreement with the bank [Río], [...] enemies not only of IMPA, but also of our homeland [...] we will solve it in the street, together, with the unity that we always have in difficult moments."¹¹

Caro is accused in that episode of replicating a conduct put into practice during the financial crisis and political fracture in the recovered Yaguané meat processing plant, in 2004:

The procedure was similar to the one that is now being tried at IMPA: Yaguané was going through a serious production crisis and Caro had secretly made contact with an internal group from the refrigerator, opposed to the management that until then had led the destinies of the company. Since the conflict that led to its recovery in the hands of the workers. At the least expected moment, Caro had appeared in Yaguané with a proposal based on economic efficiency and the supposed high income of the MNFRT cooperatives. [...] He passed in Yaguané, in the Almirante Brown Shipyard, in Sasetru. [...] the reality is that such confrontations have only taken place in the companies recovered thanks to the intervention of Luis Caro.

On April 22, 2005, the episode that marks the fracture among IMPA workers occurs. About thirty workers occupy the plant facilities in the morning. A minority group, but considerably well articulated and determined. The nearly ninety cooperative members who disapprove of this conduct decide to retire from the plant. In the afternoon, they decide to re-enter the factory. But the group inside the plant activates the police, who clash with those who try to enter it, a fact that results in injuries and arrests.

Murúa comments that among the workers Not all of those who retire from the plant agree with their positions in the leadership of IMPA, but they disapprove even more of the behavior of the other cooperative members. This is how he narrates that episode:¹⁰

In the middle of that, Caro says that he has money [from the Bank] of the Nation. Desperate people... wanted to accept the money [...] until they grabbed 25, 30% [of the associates] and they took over the factory. They don't want to let me in. At 08:00 in the morning they

necessary machinery for the technological reconversion of IMPA.²⁰

³¹On April 17, Murúa is interviewed by President Chávez in the 219th episode of the radio and television program "Hello President".²²

close the gate with the workers inside. Ours do not dare to fight until the blows. I tell them to stay inside. They say: 'No, we want to be with you!' Ninety guys walking out the door, these thirty that were with Caro half-bullying them, and the promise from the government that they were going to give money. In the afternoon we want to go in and the 'gray' shits us. They called the 'cana', we did everything the same and they shit on us with sticks. We threw stones, we broke the head of the commissioner and the sub-commissioner. They broke my head. Others were prisoners.¹⁰

From then on, the associates prevented from accessing the plant camp at its doors, while the others remain permanently inside. While Caro seeks a negotiation with the judge in question, Murúa confronts him, condemning him for considering that his conduct is favoring one side of the dispute.

Meanwhile, INAES officials are present inside the factory. For Murúa there is a clear political intention in his actions, aimed at favoring a change in the management of IMPA: "...the INAES was already inside and had made arrangements with a lot [of workers], saying this: 'We are going to put the twine!, but if those come out...' Already in this case they said 'to Murúa' [if Murúa leaves IMPA]."^{10,32}

In these circumstances, the workers' assembly is held that marks a change in the management of IMPA. Even in such conditions we can contrast, from Murúa's story, the different strategies in dispute within the ERT movement:

The INAES intervenes, it is resolved that there will be an assembly [...] We are going to the election. We said that we had to lower the salary by 10%, to maintain the structure; and they promised more salary, that the government was going to put money. And we lost 84 to 67. They also won with fraud, with the 'little pieces', because if you can't come [on the day of the vote], then you can vote like that.¹⁰

Shortly after, on April 28, a statement headed by Abelli and signed by various ERTs was published, ignoring Murúa as president of the MNER and condemning the actions of Luis Caro. From this statement, we highlight:

...We want to make public that a majority group of companies does not recognize compañero Eduardo Murúa as president of the movement [...] Knowing the crisis, a nefarious character makes an appearance, the lawyer Luis Caro [...] he arrived promising 'magic solutions' [...] which unfortunately caught on with a group of comrades fed up with their own political direction.²³

Defeated, Murúa retires from leading IMPA the following week, without ceasing to denounce the political persecution of which he feels he is a victim.³³ Once control of the Cooperative has been gained, the hegemonic group proceeds to expel the main referents of its rival group.²⁴ We can appreciate the traumatic way in which this change in management is carried out in the account of Ramiro Gómez, from the "Manos" Serigraphic Cooperative, until then installed in the IMPA plant:

³²In a press release (from May 2005), Murúa affirms that Patricio Griffin, the then president of INAES, had previously told him, in the presence of Secretary Oscar Parrilli and legislator Diego Kravetz: "I am going to work so that IMPA-MNER They don't get anything from the government." Murúa also notes, in this statement, the presence at the factory of the former IMPA lawyer, accused of collusion with the emptying prior to the recovery ("The MNER denounces the National Government" [Press release]).²³

³³In May, Murúa filed a complaint before the Federal Litigation Court, demanding that the judge order the cessation of his political persecution by the National Executive Power ("The MNER denounces the National Government").²³

...things were getting heavy at IMPA, there wasn't much more to do, Guillermo [Robledo] and Sebastián [Maissa] were gone and finally I was the last to leave. I remember that that day they came to push me out, some of the women workers surrounded me and hugged me so they wouldn't take me out, but finally they pushed me out and in the end I had to leave. [...] what happened was really ugly.¹

Murúa and Robledo's reading of this event highlights that the dispute in IMPA is crossed by the persistence of a salaried subjectivity among the cooperative members:

It doesn't matter who wins, they [the workers] want to preserve the job. There is a group of colleagues who have a political project and another who prefers to keep their job at the cost of anything. [...] We wanted the comrades to understand what government policy decisions, central bank regulations, and so on, meant. Unfortunately, many colleagues after seven years come, work, find out how much they get and leave. This is the reality of all companies and we never fight with reality.²⁰

In turn, this event reveals indications of an intervention by the national government in the political disputes between the groups of ERTs. It seems to have had an impact in the sense of weakening its more activist or combative line of conduct, in favor of moderate perceptions and less apt to disruptive actions or that engender "autonomization" processes, as we have seen.

In reality, the intervention seemed calculated to fulfill that purpose, straddling an economic-productive crisis that afflicts IMPA. [...] The national government, based on the frontal opposition of some MNER leaders (based on the null real support received up to now), seems to have decided to play the MNFRT card to buy tranquility and support, and the variable of defining itself for or against the government has divided and divided the MNER, like many other popular organizations. In the case of IMPA, the hand of some sector of the government in favor of the sector represented by Caro seems clear, from the retention of subsidies and credits until there is no change in the management of the cooperative. [...] if IMPA becomes part of the MNFRT.²⁴

Even so, the clash between training strategies seems to only enable a precarious hegemony independent of the current type of leadership. So much so that, despite this articulated maneuver between the government, part of the IMPA workers and Luis Caro, the MNFRT cannot immediately assume the political-administrative leadership of IMPA, which falls to a kind of provisional Council made up of a group of workers supervised by the INAES.³⁴

The Caracas meeting: rise and fall of an international articulation between ERTs

The ostensible confrontation between the leaders of the ERT groups, came to generate, at that time, even a certain confusion regarding which faction of the MNER represents each Company.³⁵ Despite this scenario, the organization of the ERTs meeting in Caracas, which still has the support of the Venezuelan government, has not been abandoned.

³⁴In January 2006 (Guerrero, May 25) a voting assembly was held for the IMPA Board of Directors. Murúa is still presenting himself in the elections, being defeated by him and also by Caro's list. The so-called "independents" (probably led by INAES) emerge victorious.

³⁵We can perceive the level of conflict and confusion within the MNER from a press release, issued by the Murúa faction, announcing his new visit to Venezuela to prepare the South American meeting of recovered in Caracas. The response unleashed by Abelli's group once again ignores Murúa as its president. But, both factions appear advocating the representativeness of the same ERTs, if we look at who subscribes at the end of each press release.²⁵

However, the national government undertakes a new political attack, which, although it is clearly aimed at stopping the IMPA complaint against Aluar, indicates a maneuver aimed at preventing the aforementioned meeting from taking place, which consists of undermining the prestige of Murúa with the Venezuelan government.³⁶

Despite these political disputes, in October 2005 the 1st Latin American Meeting of Recovered Companies took place, known as the "Caracas Meeting". More than two hundred South American ERTs meet and its main meaning is the international (self) recognition of the importance of the phenomenon of business recovery and its organizational potential.¹⁶

If we take these adverse conditions as a basis, we can consider that the completion of the Event already means success. Above all, considering that between its two support pillars, one focuses on the "strength" of the Argentine movement of ERTs at this time. The other pillar, and its main unifying aspect, is the expectation of financial support from the Venezuelan government, such as the possibility of access to adequate credits and business agreements with that country.

This occasion also marks the main opportunity for the creation of an international "coordination mechanism" between the ERTs, with which the exchange of training as well as products, raw materials and technology is envisioned. In the political aspect, it is proposed to "Demand that the union organizations assume as their own [...] the recovery and reactivation of the companies, assuming [...] the nationalization, workers' control and the emancipation of work..."³⁷

However, the failure of the Encounter is due to its few aftereffects. The long-awaited impulse for the ERTs cannot overcome organizational and political obstacles, due to the multiple interests at stake. The Venezuelan government wants to launch a co-management program to recover its companies with difficulty or failures, while the ERTs yearn for economic agreements between them and the governments of each country. The large presence of Argentine ERTs ends up exposing the fracture within the movement, since the confrontation between sectors of the MNER is in full swing, expressing their differences "loudly". While the delegations of Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela are present with the first echelon of their governments, Kirchnerism, in turn,

Mined in its two pillars, namely, the weight of the large Argentine delegation and the expectation of financing from the Bolivarian government, the Meeting does not achieve perennial results, showing itself more as a flash in the pan.

Although the Meeting marks a moment in which ERTs workers manage to perceive the breadth and potential of the phenomenon of the recovery of companies in the continent, it also demonstrates the magnitude of a wasted opportunity to develop this sector of the economy.

³⁶We perceive this prestige in the words of Hugo Chavéz when interviewing Murúa: "...Eduardo 'Vasco' Murúa, leader of this process that is historic and exemplary, factories and companies recovered by their workers, a history, a guide without a boss..."²²

³⁷These aspirations are reflected in a document called the "Caracas Commitment", in which the central objective is announced to "build an instrument" for the "defense of employment" based on the "...reactivation of all those companies that intend to be transferred, whether they are bankrupt or that threaten mass layoffs [...] under the leadership of the State and the leadership of the workers [...] based on collective and/or public ownership."¹ The discourse of the document also extends to the "defense of popular conquests" in "against oppressive imperialism." Thus we see that in the content of the document the line of conduct embodied by the MNER fraction led by Murúa still prevails.

Return to the social enterprise: the "cultural city factory" (2008 until today)

IMPA's "second" recovery (2008)

At the end of 2007, IMPA finds itself again subsumed in financial, legal and political problems. Summoned by the workers, Murúa rejoined his leadership on August 6, 2007. But, with the return of the leadership that embodies the concept of social enterprise, the political attacks also resumed.

When the cooperative members propose to reduce the fees paid to the bankruptcy trustee, a conflict arises with the trustee, complicating the legal situation of IMPA.³⁸ In the case of IMPA, according to Avalos,¹ the trustee with the previous address charged a figure as fees "...that escaped the reality of the costs that the cooperative could handle.

[...] When the council changed in August, they offered him \$5,000 per month [...] De Benedetti [the trustee] did not accept the offer and turned against the workers" (p. 91). On December 4, 2007, the three-phase power supply to the IMPA plant was interrupted, with which its associates had to rent a generator to avoid paralyzing production.

In turn, the judiciary also produces its onslaught, which continues to this day. At the beginning of April 2008, the workers stopped a first eviction attempt, renegotiating with the bankruptcy creditors the pending installments.³⁹ However, two creditors filed for bankruptcy of the cooperative, conduct marked by suspicion of political induction.

Immediately after the acceptance of the request, the bankruptcy judge orders the eviction of the plant, a previous step for its legal liquidation. On April 15, 2008, the IMPA workers were again evicted from the plant.

The next day, the image from 1998 was repeated: workers on the street and the police inside the factory. [...] but among the laughter that usually saves them in anguishing moments, they joked: 'if they were going to send us out on the streets, at least they would have done it in summer, always this rain and this cold, and we here shitting ourselves with hunger, with work and without being able to do it'.¹

Other social organizations, recovered companies and neighbors join the doors of IMPA. But, a fierce police repression is unleashed, causing dozens of people to be injured and another dozen arrested by the police. As usual, the "endurance" begins, setting up a camp at the gates of the factory. Until, in an assembly, the workers decide to enter the factory the next day, using force if necessary. However, this same day the judge ordered the withdrawal of the police apparatus.

On April 22, 2008, almost ten years after that May 22, 1998, the workers once again assumed control of the plant, thus marking the "second" recovery of IMPA. Marcelo Castillo, with more than 20 years in the cooperative, has held the presidency ever since.⁴⁰

³⁸In a bankruptcy or bankruptcy, the trustee is in charge of liquidating the assets and liabilities of the debtor. He has all the powers of an administrator over the estate that is going to be liquidated. Thus, the liquidator's indisposition can facilitate the structuring of rulings unfavorable to the insolvent company.

³⁹The workers deliver those agreements to the court on April 11. "The judge told Murúa that there would be no problems and told him 'stay calm... I'll solve it.' Murúa and other colleagues traveled to Brazil to agree with Brazilian investors on the production of aerosol containers in Argentina."¹

⁴⁰The new leadership seems not to proceed to expel its opponents, if we see that in the new Council there is an associate who also appears in the previous direction.

Although “re-recovered”, IMPA is still in bankruptcy (and without current supply of three-phase energy). With this, the strategy based on articulating the bankruptcy request of the factory with its legal expropriation is reactivated, that is to say: decree bankruptcy and enact a law that declares the public utility of the plant, granting its usufruct to the workers. Thus, some deputies present a temporary expropriation bill (for two years) in the Buenos Aires Legislature, to be voted on December 4, 2008.

On this day, production at IMPA is about to come to a standstill. The climate among the workers is tense. Faced with urgency, they must know how to combine production tasks with those of militancy.

...the factory had to stop because the rented generator set would be withdrawn for 24 hours by the contracted company, with the promise of bringing it back. [...] In a framework of heated discussion, the workers decided to stay a few more hours to get the production out [...] And in this framework it was time to go to the Buenos Aires Legislature, with the feeling that this time the law would be dealt with, and favorably sanctioned.¹

Moments before the vote, the workers are still publicizing a communiqué demanding the expropriation. The Buenos Aires Legislature sanctioned that day the Transitory Expropriation Law with a favorable opinion to the “declaration of public utility to the real estate of the IMPA factory”.^{1,41}

However, in 2009 the aforementioned Expropriation Law was declared unconstitutional, opening the possibility of an eviction (IMPA, 2009).⁴² The workers summon and receive the support of other popular organizations and ERTs, and at the same time seek to delegitimize the judge, publicizing their connections with the real estate business (IMPA, 2010; ACOSUR, 2009). They also appeal for a new opinion, although without a favorable conclusion.²⁶

All in all, this adversity unifies the IMPA workers, since the perception that it is necessary to demonstrate the social nature of the plant, as a way of ratifying its public utility, became unanimous at that time. Thus, the concept of social enterprise is consolidated among IMPA workers.⁴³

Conclusion

In general, we can consider that the Argentine ERTs have shown that their workers have the conditions to take over the management of companies, recovering work in very adverse conditions and against all odds. In the case of IMPA, with the consolidation of its conception as a social enterprise, sociocultural and educational projects are revived at its plant, at the same time that debates are encouraged and a more openly anti-capitalist discourse is pronounced. The factory is renamed IMPA, The “Cultural City Factory”.

⁴¹For Murúa, political pressure constitutes the central element of this conquest: “...there was no other way to resolve the conflict without violence, since they knew of our decision to resist with our lives any eviction attempt, [which] was reflected in the affirmative vote of the 51 City legislators who were present.”⁷¹

⁴²The newspaper *Página 12* reports it this way: “Without waiting for the deadlines established by law, a judge ordered that the expropriation of the company 'violates the right to property' of the creditors. The workers, in a state of assembly and hunger strike, will appeal the ruling.”²⁷

⁴³Even so, the meanings attributed to the factory are disparate. During a visit to IMPA by students from the Ernesto Guevara Normal School, Horacio, one of its most combative workers, tells them that he only works at IMPA because he has no other job option (Carla Cabrera, August 2011, Conversation with the teacher, Register field).

The “IMPA Cultural Center” redevelops its policy of accessibility to cultural devices, such as theater or music recitals, and artistic training, with the offer of various “workshops” (music, theater, painting, photography, etc.). In addition to the nearly twenty-five artistic workshops offered permanently during the period in which we have a field record, a space is also conditioned that becomes the “Nora Cortiñas Theater”, exhibiting at least two theatrical performances per week. Two groups of dramaturgical production are also installed in IMPA, the Sanitary Theater of Operations and the Impacto Teatral.

With the return of the Popular High School to IMPA (BP-IMPA), three years after leaving the factory facilities due to the fracture in 2005, the strategy articulated between the MNER and the Cooperativa de Educadores e Investigadores Populares (CEIP) is consolidated.). It is proposed to install in each ERT a BP for young people and adults with orientation in cooperative management and micro-enterprises.¹

La BarricadaTV Noticiero Popular (BTV) is a self-managed organization for the production of television content. In addition to producing his own debate and interview programs, he also does the press coverage of mobilizations of groups from the popular field and of events at IMPA. His political proposal is based on expanding the dissemination of popular field media content. It wants to foster a new subjectivity capable of shaping a shared notion on how to build a political project of the popular field and what would correspond to the “social change” that is longed for.

The “IMPA Museum of Work” arises in 2012 from the articulation between teachers and students of the UBA with the factory workers.⁴⁴ Its announced objectives are, on the one hand, to preserve the material heritage of IMPA and tell its history, that of its workers and its relations with the neighborhood. On the other hand, it also has the pronounced objective of linking itself to the needs of IMPA in avoiding eviction, by ratifying the public utility of the plant.

Even in extremely disadvantageous conditions, the training strategy deployed by IMPA, despite all the difficulties and political disputes faced, shows that it has been able to allow the recovery of jobs in this and other companies, as it has also allowed thousands of students who complete their primary and secondary studies, as well as the access of thousands of other people to artistic training and cultural equipment, to radio and television information media, in addition to promoting the development of other cooperatives that use their plant as the headquarters of their ventures. IMPA is a company that has gone further than could be imagined, even by some of its own workers, and that still shows a lot of thread on the reel.^{28,29}

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares there are no conflicts of interest.

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