

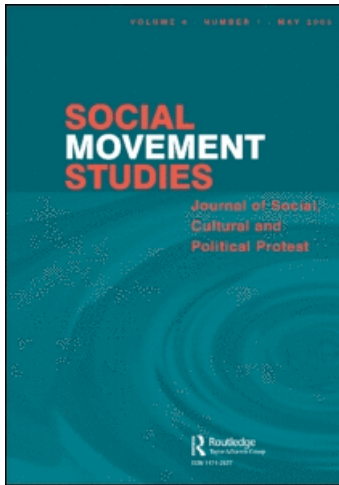
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Responding to Disaster: Two Logics of Demands and the Politics of Hybridity

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ABSTRACT *Two similar disastrous fires struck concert venues in the USA (The Station, 2003) and Argentina (República Cromañón, 2004). We explore similarities and contrasts in public responses to these tragedies to better understand two patterns of collective action. One pattern ('insider') revolves around the deployment of forms of action and organization aimed at working within the constraints and opportunities already available or easily attainable within prevailing institutional arrangements. The other ('outsider') involves a reliance on forms of action and organization that seek to gain leverage by challenging prevailing institutions, often by way of protest, direct action, and the threat to disrupt existing arrangements. These 'insider' and 'outsider' patterns bear the imprint of accumulated repertoires of action and organization, are very often in tension, and involve trade-offs that participants in civil society organizations constantly weigh in considering alternative courses of action. Moreover, choices between the 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies are made vis-à-vis complex arrays of constraints and opportunities embodied in prevailing institutional arrangements. We also argue that pure 'insider' and 'outsider' patterns constitute theoretical constructs or ideal types, and that neither the 'insider' nor the 'outsider' modes of mobilization are inherently superior to one another in ensuring greater wellbeing or a stronger civil society. Moreover, in the actual terrain of collective action, such as in the two situations at hand, most often we find that actors deploy complex combinations of strategies, to constitute 'hybrid' modes of mobilization. To further illustrate this point, we briefly discuss populism as a form of mobilization that ultimately combines both 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies, and is in fact defined by a conflictive relationship between both sets of strategies.*

KEY WORDS: Mobilization, disasters, insiders, outsiders, populism

Two similar disasters struck the USA in 2003 and Argentina in 2004. During rock concerts in overcrowded clubs (The Station in West Warwick, Rhode Island, and República Cromañón in Buenos Aires), fireworks ignited unsafe insulation materials, resulting in raging fires. In both situations, locked exit doors, rapidly spreading fires, toxic fumes, and lack of adequate protection systems combined to produce large numbers of deaths (100 in the USA, 194 in Argentina). In both cases, survivors and friends and families of those killed subsequently initiated actions to identify and punish those responsible for the

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tragedies, but there have been stark contrasts in the courses of collective action pursued by the relevant actors in each situation. While injured parties in the Rhode Island fire channeled demands through the formal legal system, survivors and families of the victims in Buenos Aires followed a more confrontational style of mobilization, with actions that included frequent street blockades, demonstrations, and the political impeachment of public officials (such as the city's mayor).

We critically explore the two sets of responses to better understand two patterns of collective action. One pattern ('insider') revolves around the deployment of forms of action and organization aimed at working within the constraints and opportunities already available or easily attainable within prevailing institutional arrangements. The other ('outsider') relies on forms of action and organization that seek to gain leverage by challenging prevailing institutions, often by way of protest, direct action, and the threat to disrupt the existing arrangements. These 'insider' and 'outsider' patterns bear the imprint of accumulated repertoires of action and organization, are very often in tension, and involve trade-offs that participants in civil society organizations constantly weigh in considering alternative courses of action. Moreover, choices between the 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies are made vis-à-vis complex arrays of constraints and opportunities embodied in prevailing institutional arrangements.

On the other hand, pure 'insider' and 'outsider' patterns constitute theoretical constructs. In the actual terrain of collective action, most often we find complex combinations of strategies that constitute 'hybrid' modes of mobilization (we illustrate this point by briefly discussing populism as a form of mobilization that ultimately combines both 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies, and is in fact defined by a conflictive relationship between both sets of strategies). Finally, we argue that neither the 'insider' nor the 'outsider' modes of mobilization are inherently superior to one another in ensuring greater wellbeing or a stronger civil society.

The Station and Cromañón Fires

We begin with an overview of the relevant events. On 20 February 2003, in West Warwick, Rhode Island, only minutes after the rock band 'Great White' had begun playing at The Station, fireworks used by the group sent sparks flying towards the sound-insulating foam. The foam ignited and flames spread rapidly. When the concertgoers tried to escape, they found that emergency exit doors were either locked or blocked with equipment. One hundred people died in the fire: among them were patrons and employees, and Ty Longley, the band's guitarist. Over 200 others suffered injuries and suffocation.

On 30 December 2004 the rock band 'Callejeros' took to the stage in a Buenos Aires club named 'República Cromañón'.¹ Before the show, the owner of the club had warned a crowd of over 4,000 people (in a hall that was authorized to receive just over 1,000) that they shouldn't light flares – a common ritual – because the sound-insulating materials were flammable. Only six minutes into the show, someone in the audience lit up a flare.² In less than ten minutes, the polyurethane foam was in flames and a poisonous black smoke spread throughout the club. Patrons, employees and musicians found that the only emergency door was locked. One hundred and ninety-four people, most of them teenagers, died from smoke inhalation, and over 400 were injured.

Both tragedies have striking similarities.³ In both instances, injured parties and observers attributed responsibility for the large numbers of victims to negligent or criminal

managerial decisions: overselling of tickets, use of flammable sound insulation materials and locked emergency doors. In both cases, the rock bands were blamed for either encouraging or engaging in the use of pyrotechnics in a closed space. In both situations, public officials are alleged to have overlooked public safety violations. In both cases, friends and families of the victims, along with other civil society organizations, engaged in actions of protest and demanded not only punishment but also general safety reforms. Yet the ways in which the protests and demands were channeled in each case, the forms and venues chosen for mobilization, have differed in significant ways.

In news reports of the aftermath of The Station fire, injured parties have mobilized primarily around the criminal investigation and trial. A Grand Jury was formed a few days after the fire.⁴ The criminal investigation focused on the club owners, the brothers Jeffrey and Michael Derderian, and the members of Great White (including the manager of the band). Ten months after the disaster, the Grand Jury indicted the two owners of the club and the band manager (who set off the fireworks that started the fire). At the beginning of the investigation, the jury seemed to contemplate the possibility of indicting some county security and fire department officials, on the grounds that the venue had been authorized to function even with clear security hazards, but these criminal indictments were not pursued.

Many of the survivors and the relatives of the deceased were not satisfied with the criminal indictments (four family members demonstrated in front of the office of the Attorney General in May 2004 to call for more indictments).⁵ Several thought that the city officer who had signed the permit for the club also should have been indicted. A group of 146 survivors and relatives initiated a civil action against forty-three individuals who they thought were equally responsible. They sued, among others, the owners and the manager of the rock band, a fire inspector of West Warwick, the insurers of the club, the firms that had produced the polyurethane foam, the beer company Anheuser Busch that had sponsored the event, and many others. A judge dismissed several of these charges (such as those leveled against insurers, the former state fire marshal, and the State of Rhode Island), but survivors and relatives re-filed a 249-page revised suit in February 2006 listing ninety-seven defendants, including those who had been dismissed earlier by a judge. This civil lawsuit is expected to advance very slowly.

The criminal trials culminated in plea-bargaining agreements. In February 2006, Daniel Biechele, former Great White tour manager, pled guilty to 100 counts of involuntary manslaughter. While the prosecutor in the case called for a ten-year sentence, and the defense for community service with no jail time, the presiding judge, Frances J. Darigan Jr, sentenced Biechele to fifteen years in prison, with eleven years suspended. Immediately before imposing the sentence, Judge Darigan acknowledged 'it is not within the power of this or any court to fashion a sentence reflective of the enormity of this tragedy', and concluded his remarks by stating:

Robert F. Kennedy quoted the great Greek poet Aeschylus, when he said, 'Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, and against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.' That may be all that anyone so touched by this loss can expect to look forward to in the future.

The proceedings against the owners of The Station had a similar outcome. Jeffrey and Michael Derderian initially pleaded not guilty to 200 counts of involuntary manslaughter

(later reduced to 100 counts), but in September 2006 changed their pleas to '*nolo contendere*' (or 'no contest', equivalent to a plea of guilty in Rhode Island). The judge accepted these pleas over the objection of Rhode Island's Attorney General, indicating that by doing so he was seeking to avoid a difficult and potentially costly trial whose conduct could 'further traumatize and victimize not only the loved ones of the deceased and the survivors of the fire, but the general public as well'.⁶ Michael Derderian was sentenced to fifteen years in prison but required to serve four (with three years' probation after his release), while Jeffrey Derderian was given a ten-year suspended sentence and required to perform 500 hours of community service.⁷

Many families of the victims responded to these sentences by expressing grief and anger. After the Biechele sentencing, the father of one victim indicated: 'a hundred people dead and it's like a slap on the wrist. It's not fair.'⁸ In the sentencing of the Derderian brothers, a mother stated: 'I can no longer pledge allegiance to a flag that has no guarantee of liberty and justice for all. I was born an American citizen. Now I wish I could give that citizenship back', and a brother of a victim said: 'I feel that we are being victimized again by the people who are supposed to uphold the law.'⁹ The reaction against the plea agreements reflected not merely disagreement over the relative severity of the sentences but also the distress of many families of the victims over what they considered to be the premature conclusion of a proceeding they had hoped would elucidate more fully who was responsible for the tragedy. As indicated by another mother during the proceedings: 'we followed the rules and were betrayed by all the rules that were supposed to protect all of us'.¹⁰ Several families have indicated they will support a Republican candidate for Attorney General who has promised to advance further the investigation of criminal responsibilities for the fire.

In Argentina, the Cromañón tragedy was met with public grief and anger. The disaster claimed the largest number of victims of any non-natural tragedy in Argentine history, and most of the victims were teenagers or very young. The police investigation quickly implicated the owner of Cromañón, Omar Chabán (who was arrested the day after the fire and indicted the following week), as well as the rock band and its manager.

The anger of many of those affected by the tragedy, however, focused on the action of the government of the city of Buenos Aires. Families and the media revealed that the club was functioning with an invalid permit, and that in fact most of the clubs and discos of the city were using flammable materials, to have invalid or locked emergency doors, and to lack fire hydrants.

These accusations were accompanied by massive rallies, some of them mobilizing over 100,000 people. The fire, its causes, the life stories of the teenagers who died in it and the perceived incompetence of the government were the most salient news feature in the national and local media for weeks, including a special Sunday magazine of the largest-circulation newspaper (*Clarín*). The Argentine President, Nestor Kirchner, received the relatives. The Archbishop of Buenos Aires offered a mass at the National Cathedral for the families and survivors.

Politically, the mobilizations had the force of a hurricane. The week after the tragedy, the Secretary of Public Security of the local government was forced to resign, along with all of his subordinates. Then, the mayor of Buenos Aires – Anibal Ibarra – was subjected to a ten-hour interpellation in the legislature, carried out among the shouts and protests of the families. The fallout of the Cromañón fire dominated the local politics of the city of Buenos Aires for the next year, and crippled the mayor's administration. After a protracted

process of impeachment, Mayor Ibarra was voted out of office in March 2006 by the Buenos Aires legislature. The deputy mayor, Jorge Telerman, was sworn into office one week later. However, in August 2006, Ibarra was deemed not responsible for the fire by one of the judges in charge of the criminal investigation.¹¹

Since the fire, parents and families have engaged in a protracted legal and public fight with judges, officials and elected representatives, among other things, to keep nightclub owner Omar Chabán in prison without bail, and to prevent Callejeros from performing in public again.

While concerns about public officials and politicians were also present in Rhode Island, these issues never acquired the salience they had in the city of Buenos Aires. Immediately after the fire, the Rhode Island Senate moved quickly to adopt stringent fire safety laws, and publicly acknowledged the role of the tragedy in moving the legislators to action. The Rhode Island Governor, Donald L. Carcieri, developed close contacts with the survivors and families of the victims, and subsequently appeared at virtually every major commemorative event of the tragedy. After the September 2006 sentencing of the Derderian brothers, Governor Carcieri echoed many of the families' criticisms of the sentences, indicating, 'nobody who witnessed today's emotional testimony could believe that the punishment fit the crime. I am saddened that the legal process produced this decidedly incomplete result', and adding that 'I am very disappointed that this deal for the Derderians will undermine our ability to get at the truth of what happened that awful night.'¹²

Besides state agencies, support for survivors and families of the victims immediately after the fire at The Station was channeled through existing non-governmental organizations (NGOs), most importantly, the United Way of Rhode Island, but also many local business, church, school and neighborhood organizations. But sensing that many affected by the fire were 'falling through the cracks of current relief efforts', survivors and family members in 2004 created 'The Station Family Fund' (SFF) as a charitable organization registered under the Internal Revenue Service, to help channel resources to those in need (in 2006 the organization expanded its mission to work with local state agencies to promote fire safety and prevention programs and initiatives).¹³ Another organization, 'The Station Fire Memorial Foundation', was created to promote the construction of a memorial.¹⁴ A few years after the fire, however, some participants in these organizations have indicated that collective efforts among those affected by the event have weakened.¹⁵

The friends and families of the victims of the Cromañón tragedy organized themselves into several groups; the most salient among them are 'Familias por la Vida', 'Víctimas de la violencia social en la Argentina (Avisar)', 'Que no se repita' and 'Articulación de Familiares, Sobrevivientes y Amigos de las Víctimas de Cromañón'. Compared to the Rhode Island situation, these friends and families have engaged in broader and somewhat more fragmented actions. Some have emphasized lobbying the judges of the case, the municipal government and legislature, and meeting with the President and representatives of the Church. Others have extended their criticisms beyond Mayor Ibarra to the Kirchner administration.¹⁶ Some have focused on organizing public rallies and keeping the topic active in the media. Others have used even more direct confrontation (such as threatening the use of violence) to pressure public officials investigating the fire or public figures perceived to be supporting Mayor Ibarra.¹⁷

Besides formal organizational efforts, soon after the fires friends and families of the victims transformed the sites of both The Station and Cromañón tragedies into informal

shrines.¹⁸ At The Station site in Rhode Island, an unidentified woman staked 100 crosses into the ground a few months after the fire.¹⁹ Eventually, the crosses were painted lavender and names were written on several of them. Commemorative objects (among others, pictures, teddy bears, rosary beads, angel statuettes, balloons, pizza boxes, a few beer bottles, poems, ‘and even a pumpkin’) were placed around the crosses.²⁰ One of the most prevalent symbols were images of a butterfly. Families keep the informal shrine clear of weeds and snow, and regularly mow the lawn. While most objects express the families’ grief, researchers Richard Gould and Randy Scott have noticed that at key moments a few relatives of the victims have placed, across the street and separate from the informal shrine, hand-made signs attacking public officials deemed responsible for criminal negligence in their failure to ‘spot the dangerous foam on the club walls in their inspections’.²¹ Chairs and benches have been placed near the crosses, and are used by relatives and friends when visiting the site.

The street where Cromañón is located in Buenos Aires has been blocked at one end by an informal memorial constructed by survivors and families of the victims (see Figure 1). This is the location from which commemorative marches have been initiated. As one approached the informal memorial in 2006, a large piece of graffiti in a planter box in front of the site stated ‘Justice, stop lying!’ (‘¡Justicia, basta de mentir!’). In the floor, on the pavement, another piece of graffiti stated: ‘The angels ask for justice from heaven’ (‘Los ángeles piden justicia desde el cielo’). Dozens of sneakers hung from street lampposts and telephone wires: during the fire and the subsequent melee the shoes of victims seem to have slipped from their feet, and around the city of Buenos Aires in the days after the disaster, sneakers hanging from cables and trees became ubiquitous. At the site itself, two rows of plastic benches had been placed in front of a plastic tent so people could sit at the memorial.



Figure 1. The Cromañón memorials. *Source:* Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and María Esperanza Casullo.

In this informal memorial, the inside of a plastic tent has been covered with multiple objects evoking the disappeared: pictures of the dead; flags and shirts of soccer clubs; flowers; candles; religious images; beer and wine bottles; rock CDs; rosaries; packets of cigarettes; written notes; little toys; teddy bears; an image of the Gauchito Gil (a social bandit who upon his death at the hands of police authorities became a popular religious figure); and many other diverse objects (see Figure 2 for a small sample). In their diversity, these objects convey a powerful sense of the magnitude of human loss entailed by the tragedy. By their very coexistence, objects belonging to different symbolic orders – religious, political, personal, cultural and recreational – end up conveying meanings that exceed the significance of the individual parts.

Right next to the plastic tent stands a formal memorial: at its entrance, a large sign reads, under the image of a tennis shoe and inscribed on a representation of the Argentine national flag: ‘in memory of the 194 angels massacred in Cromañón. We will keep on asking for justice and truth so they can rest in the peace they deserve’ (‘En memoria de los 194 ángeles masacrados en Cromañón. Seguimos pidiendo justicia y verdad para que descansen en la paz que se merecen’) (see Figure 1). The government of the city of Buenos Aires donated a piece of land adjacent to the site of the fire and built a small park there, with benches, memorial images and flowers. This site is well kept and a police agent has been deployed at a small station in the back of the formal memorial (see Figure 3). The formal site has frequent visitors; however, the informal shrine built by relatives and friends of the victims is clearly the focus of attention.

In both the formal and informal memorials, the single most repeated word in signs and graffiti is ‘Justice!’ (‘¡Justicia!’). Figure 4 shows various banners hanging in the formal memorial. On the upper left side, a sign written on an Argentine flag reads: ‘They were Callejeros who risked their life for other Callejeros, and that is not done by anyone.



Figure 2. Source: Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and María Esperanza Casullo.



Figure 3. The municipal memorial. *Source:* Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and María Esperanza Casullo.

Only by someone who is somewhat of an angel. Julito I don't forget you. Justice. Pablo F. (Lugano).' Below, another states: 'Liz and Lucas. They are here. Never forget always resist. Let the idea be the sun, that the miracle not change and be the truth.' On the upper right-hand side of the picture, another sign on a flag reads: 'Justice for our Callejeros. 194 souls. Never forget 30-12-04.'



Figure 4. Banners. *Source:* Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and María Esperanza Casullo.

flags, the authors of the inscriptions simultaneously challenge political authorities while affirming the ideal of a shared nationality, a common identity, or a common cause. This particular form of inscription, in fact, insinuates that through their actions, political authorities have committed ‘treason’, not against a particular group but against the entire Argentine political community.

Similar statements abound in the informal memorial, particularly the words ‘justice’ and ‘never forget’, but in both the formal and informal memorials there are also more direct attacks on public authorities. For example, in Figure 5, the picture of a dead youngster reads ‘killed by Ibarra [the mayor of Buenos Aires], Chabán (the owner of the nightclub) and their accomplices’, while a logo to the left of the picture reads ‘Cromañón – don’t let it be repeated’, ‘they massacred the future’ (partially hidden in the figure), and ‘our children dead by the corruption of the city’s government’. These impeaching statements stand side-by-side with the multiple objects through which the deceased are remembered.

Finally, in both the official and informal sites, broader political accusations are placed side-by-side with very personal statements. In Figure 6, for example, a whisky bottle stands next to a sandbox where people leave cigarettes they have smoked at the memorial (‘with’ those being remembered). The message in the whisky bottle reads ‘choked-up by the liquors blowing embers in your Heart – Indio’ (‘atragantado por los licores soplando brasas en tu Corazón – Indio’).

The development of the Cromañón remembrance sites, though spontaneous in many of their features, was not entirely random. To the attentive eye, they show distinctive patterns in their conformation – the constant hybridization of materials and meanings, the intersection of the private and public orders, the affirmation of the individuality of the victims combined with a constant appeal to collective identities. This complexity and



Figure 5. ‘Asesinado por Ibarra’. *Source:* Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and María Esperanza Casullo.

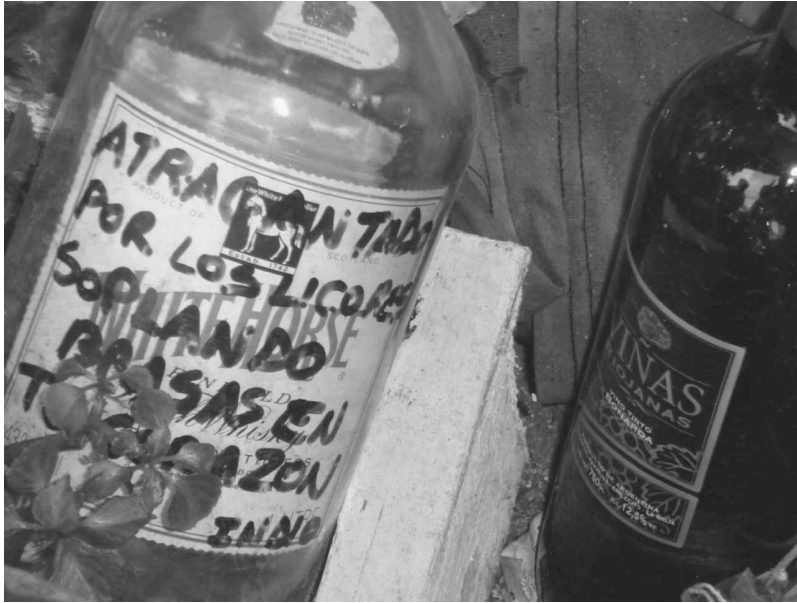


Figure 6. 'Soplando brasas en tu corazón'. *Source:* Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and María Esperanza Casullo.

diversity of layers of meanings echo broader aspects of the prevailing forms of action and organization by families and friends of the victims.

A few months after the fire at The Station, the band Great White performed in Los Angeles, indicating this was done to commemorate their lead guitarist and raise money for those affected by the tragedy (the band maintains a website – see <http://www.mistabone.com>). Following their initial meeting after the fire, the band went on tour, offering a share of profits to survivors. A record company reissued one of the band's old albums, renaming it 'Burning house of love' (the band issued a statement criticizing the reissue and called on fans to boycott the new version of the album). In the past two years, individual members have been in and out of the band and therapy. They have recently announced that they are reuniting to produce a new record and go on tour (members of the band are still charged in the civil suit being pursued by families in Rhode Island.)

In Argentina, Callejeros was unable to play in a live concert until 21 September 2006 – before that date, families of those killed in the Cromañón fire were able to mobilize and prevent several efforts by the group to offer concerts (the group did produce a CD in 2006). The 21 September 2006 concert (attended by over 20,000 people) required a major political decision, authorizing the event, by the Governor of the province of Córdoba and the mayor of the city of Córdoba. Some families affected by the Cromañón fire attended the concert and indicated that they felt closure through the event; other families strongly criticized the group, holding it partly responsible for the fire.

Two Logics of Demands: Insiders and Outsiders

While there are strong similarities in both situations, the reactions to the tragedies were channeled differently. In Rhode Island, the survivors and families of the victims pursued

justice primarily through established legal channels (in criminal and civil suits), tended to use formal non-profit organizations to seek emotional and material support, and engaged in some political lobbying to redress particular and more general security concerns. The survivors and relatives attend commemorative events and the legal proceedings in progress, but generally avoid any effort to 'politicize' their grief, and pronouncements against public authorities are generally absent from their discourse.²² Demands were focused on the improvement of public efficiency and especially on the reform of the codes of fire security, which was achieved. The effort to establish wider responsibilities – on the part of the local security supervisors, the insurance company and others – were pursued mainly through a civil suit. Beyond the commemorative events, there are no massive rallies or demonstrations recorded in the media.

In Argentina, the demands of the survivors and families of the victims included a more openly anti-systemic posture, calling for nothing less than widespread political change. The survivors and families of the victims, and their supporters, interpreted the fire as the consequence of a deep failure of the government bureaucracy and the political system. While the focus of the anger was the municipal government of Buenos Aires, the Argentine President, Néstor Kirchner, was forced to meet with the families several times, and the federal government moved quickly to offer legal assistance and engaged in other forms of damage control. At the local government level, the pressure of the relatives was relentless, advocating for a radical transformation of the structures of the municipal government and for the enforcement of political responsibility through the impeachment of the mayor. The preferred means of collective action were mobilizations in the streets of Buenos Aires, pickets in front of the houses of local government officials, and disruption of the city's legislature sessions. They also demonstrated repeatedly in front of the houses of the owner of Cromañón and of the judges that had freed him on bail.

For the most part, aggrieved parties read the Cromañón tragedy as a proof of the scope and depth of the systemic crisis of the political and bureaucratic capacities of the Argentine state. From the very beginning there were suspicions of corrupt relations between the owner, the police, and the municipal inspectors: the families believed that the only reason why the club was still operating in such precarious conditions was because of bribes distributed by the owner to policemen, firefighters, and municipal hazard-control inspectors. The families demanded nothing less than a complete transformation of the municipal organs of control and the impeachment of the mayor. The actions of the relatives, survivors, and other civil society actors were massive, public and politically aggressive. They continued to be so even after it became evident that the criminal investigation was being advanced in a timely manner.

The speed with which massive mobilizations and protest actions were organized, and the parallel construction of a coherent political anti-systemic discourse, speak of the prior existence of a latent repertoire of forms and discourses for social activism that are easily accessible through widespread informal networks. In this regard, the Cromañón activists appear to have tapped into informal yet important accumulated repertoires of symbols, experiences and discourses that proved to be successful in the past (ranging from labor mobilization in the golden ages of Peronism, to human rights mobilizations by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo during the 1976–83 dictatorship and its aftermath, to the intense mobilization around the 2001 crisis). The Cromañón mobilizations have been path-dependent, drawing on an 'internal opportunity structure'.

Table 1. Responses to The Station and Cromañón

	The Station	Cromañón
Legal System	Pursuit of legal claims through civil and criminal courts	Pursuit of legal claims through civil and criminal courts
Broader political demands	Use of institutional bureaucratic channels (e.g. lobbying) to enhance safety and fire security	Impeachment of the mayor Use of institutional bureaucratic channels Simultaneous use of mass mobilization and protest, to demand safer conditions, eliminate corruption, and impeach the Buenos Aires mayor
Memorials	Informal and formal sites. Signs engaging in political protest are physically separate from the main memorials	Informal and formal sites. In both, presence of strong political demands and accusations directed against corruption in government The imagery mixes references to a rock and roll mystique, to soccer, to the neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, and to popular religiosity
Internet	The sites are established primarily as personal memorials	There are sites that operate as personal memorials and sites with protests. Many sites of leftist organizations have references to the tragedy
Type of discourse	Discourse focusing on local and state conditions Prevalence of 'insider' logic	Discourse focusing on private–public and local–national links Prevalence of 'outsider' logic

Drawing on this opportunity structure, civil society organizations in Argentina can quickly and coherently draw upon a series of narratives that link the private with the public, and the local with the national or the global. The most important narrative connects insecurity, on the one hand, and a perceived crisis or decadence of state capabilities, brought about by the collusion of neo-liberal reforms, widespread corruption, and a culture of *impunidad* or lack of accountability (although the extent to which each of these elements is emphasized has varied considerably among various actors, serving to signal their broader political stance). All these elements certainly appear as a central feature of the Cromañón mobilizations (as manifested, for example, in the different allusions to justice – such as '¡Justicia, basta de mentir!' or 'Los ángeles piden justicia desde el cielo' – and impeachments of public officials – 'Nuestros hijos muertos por la corrupción del Gobierno de la Ciudad' – found in the Cromañón memorials).

Ready-to-use repertoires are important political facilitators, but they also function as constraints. They pre-condition, in a sense, how civil society organizations will tend to react in the face of a critical contingency. In some instances, existing repertoires channel demands through the court systems and lobbying (with public demonstrations used primarily as a last resort); in others, they move social activism towards strategies that stress mass mobilization and political activism.

By focusing on the forms of organization and mobilization that prevailed in response to The Station and Cromañón tragedies, we can discern two clearly distinct patterns for the protests that characterized each of the two situations (summarized in Table 1).

Table 2. ‘Insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ in civil society

	Insiders	Outsiders
Aims	Opportunities for access to states and markets and/or possibilities for autonomy facilitate pursuit of collective interest with gradual reform of existing institutional arrangements	Blockage of access to existing institutional arrangements leads social movements and other forms of civil society association to challenge states and/or markets
Organizational structures	Privilege the development of formal mechanisms of internal organization that in turn facilitate interaction with states, markets and international networks. Pursuit of legal recognition	Relatively greater reliance on a closer and more direct relationship between the leadership and constituency of these movements. Greater tensions in the adoption of more bureaucratic organizational arrangements, as these tend to undermine the more mobilizational features
Collective action repertoire	The maintenance of the organization through time is a priority Strategies of cooperation and collaboration ‘Organizational capital’ accumulated in the form of legal, technical or specialized knowledge and networks of connection with actors within the state and the market	Strategies of confrontation, contestation and mobilization Priority on accumulation of forces and systemic transformation ‘Organizational capital’ accumulated in the form of a repertoire of forms of protest and mobilization, number of people ready to be mobilized and a network of connections with other movements
Discourse	Laclau’s logic of difference: differentiated demands Use of a language of technical/legal efficiency: legitimacy through knowledge	Laclau’s logic of equivalence: popular demands Use of a language of solidarity and reparation: legitimacy through (popular) representation

In Rhode Island, civil society activism followed an ‘insider’ pattern – strategies centered on obtaining a response to demands inside the existent legal-bureaucratic institutions, that focus on measures such as lobbying and advocacy, that do not resort primarily to protests, and can be engaged by the state and other agencies in collaborative efforts.²³ In the Cromañón case, on the other hand, social mobilization and organization adopted more ‘outsider’ strategies, centered on ‘exercis[ing] external pressure, articulating their demands in a more explicit manner and often against governmental positions’.

These ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ patterns (see Table 2) exist in a relation of complex exclusion and co-definition. From a synchronic, systemic perspective, they can be perceived as complementary (e.g. anti-authoritarian struggles in Argentina have been advanced most effectively through a division of labor of sorts between ‘insider’ NGOs and ‘outsider’ groups, generating political pressure through broad mobilizations and confrontational strategies). From a diachronic perspective, crossing over between

'outsider' and 'insider' strategies is part and parcel of the very life cycle of social movements and organizations (Tarrow, 1988; D'Anieri *et al.*, 1990; Kitschelt, 1993; Staggenborg & Meyer, 1996; Staggenborg, 1998).²⁴

Of course, as indicated by Korzeniewicz and Smith (2004), whether an organization adopts an 'insider' or 'outsider' posture is not always easy to ascertain: what is perceived as participation by some may be construed as contestation by others; organizations and/or movements might shift their strategies over time or even seek to implement both strategies simultaneously; and the appropriate boundaries might differ depending on the particular universe of organizations and networks that is observed for contrast and comparison. Finally, 'social movements and collective actors are not always neat, rational, and unitary: rather, they contain and express a multiplicity of meanings, varying according to context and historical conjuncture' (Jelín, 1997, p. 80). In short,

the labels of 'outsiders' and 'insiders' refer to a spectrum of positions regarding the choice of the extent to which organizations and networks should make use of or seek to change the rules and procedures that characterize existing institutional arrangements. At one end of the spectrum, organizations and networks aim to function within established rules and procedures. At the other end of the spectrum, organizations and networks reject all established rules and procedures. In fact, few organizations and networks can be found at either end of the spectrum, as most adopt practices that seek to both use and transform existing arrangements. Also, some organizations and networks begin in one equilibrium between the two sets of strategies, but later evolve to a different equilibrium. (Korzeniewicz & Smith, 2001, p. 9)

The particular equilibria reached by different social movements respond not only to the 'internal opportunity structure' mentioned above but also to a broader 'political opportunity structure', that is, the degree to which the state and other political actors are perceived to be willing to engage in collaboration, dialogue or response (Tarrow, 1988; Brand, 1990). For example, in some instances but not others, there are openings through which actors within the political system or the state can effectively reach out to social actors and incorporate them in a more or less institutional manner, in a process that some might describe as 'being inclusive and reaching out' to society and others as 'co-opting civil society'.

In certain equilibria the state is perceived as open to collaboration with civil society organizations and actively seeks input from them, and more groups and movements will tend to choose the types of strategies labeled here as 'insider', further reinforcing a sense that the state is open to collaboration. Insiders in such situations are generally adept at developing the types of resources needed to participate in what Laclau (2005) refers to as the 'piecemeal engineering' that is generally at work within existing institutional arrangements. For example, insiders tend to (or need to) become highly fluent in the language of bureaucratic politics. The ability to gain access to mechanisms engaged in such 'piecemeal engineering' is indicative of successful mobilization by 'insiders', albeit that states also might have strong incentives to provide support, including material resources, to societal actors possessing specialized expertise or the capacity to oversee, participate and/or self-monitor the policy implementation process.

On the other hand, if mobilized actors perceive the state to be closed to the possibility of interaction with the civil society organizations, or if the incentives for such interaction are

low (e.g. in the context of a severe economic and fiscal crisis, as was the case in Argentina), 'outsider' strategies might appear more attractive. These 'outsider' strategies are often framed within what Laclau (2005) denominates a populist discourse (dichotomizing the political field in two antagonistic camps – articulated as a relation of 'us' versus 'them' – through the use of 'floating signifiers' – loaded with emotional and affective connotations, but vague enough to be defined in several different ways). Populist mobilization brings coherence to a variety of social groups by gathering them around such potent but polysemic ideas as 'social justice', 'the common man', or 'civil rights'.²⁵ The strong presence of emotions and affects and the vagueness of the guiding goals are inseparable, and indeed necessary, for populist mobilizations (the potency of populism lies precisely in this capacity for expressing and bringing to the public space the claims of a variety of groups and actors and to do so in ways that contain and express not only ideas but also feelings and emotions). But in these features resides also the tendency towards instability: the unity of the different claims is always provisional, generating tensions from within as different sectors seek to impose their own definition of the relevant 'floating signifiers' (in this case, for example, the different definitions of 'justice' by which the relevant actors assess the outcome of Cromañón).

In fact, such a description of the characteristics of populist discourse closely resembles Max Weber's description of the 'routinization of charisma'. For Weber (1958, pp. 248, 253), charismatic and bureaucratic authority are closely related, for '[b]y its very nature, the existence of charismatic authority is specifically unstable', and '[i]t is the fate of charisma, whenever it comes into permanent institutions of a community, to give way to powers of tradition or of rational socialization'. From such a perspective, even the most successful charismatic movements bring forth their own demise by mutating into bureaucratic/rational apparatus engaged in the game of political administration. In turn, the growth of rational-bureaucratic capacity has as its counterpart a growing presence of 'insiders', civil society actors that provide interlocutors to authorities, generate many of the specific demands that shape policy making, and are constitutive of the very fabric through which the capacity of institutions (state-based or otherwise) is projected. At the same time, however, the growth of political inclusion has had as its own counterpart the strategic intervention of 'outsiders', civil society actors that challenge exclusion and constitute new identities upon which political representation is extended.²⁶

In The Station/Great White case, the course of action pursued by the families of the victims moved primarily within the legal system – initially, preparing for the Grand Jury, later the criminal trial, eventually the far-reaching civil lawsuit – and public mobilization was very limited. Perhaps this was because a measure of trust on the ability of the legal system to deliver justice limited the need to resort to alternative means for exercising political pressure. Simultaneously, prior experiences of association, or the lack thereof, might have constrained the ability to mobilize or raise demands outside existing institutional mechanisms.

In the Cromañón case, the perceived opportunities and constraints have been rather the inverse. Even though the legal process appeared to be moving at a reasonably fast pace, families and organizations remained skeptical about the real effectiveness of the Argentine court system. As indicated above, such attitudes drew on broader perceptions: the citizenship has been often very skeptical of the neutrality, expediency and even legitimacy of the legal processes of Argentina. Judges have been perceived to be very permeable to pressures coming from the executive power, political parties, or just public opinion.

In many cases, civil society activism is deemed necessary to keep the process going and to minimize the chances of dubious rulings.

Motivated by mistrust, many mobilized groups in Argentina see themselves today as the watchdogs of justice and fighters against the perpetual threat of impunity. This has helped foster habits of strong and active contestation, and results such as the eventual impeachment of the mayor of Buenos Aires attest both to the effectiveness of these strategies of mobilization and (thus) produce further incentives for adopting similar strategies in the future. Contestation produces results. This civil society activism, however, also tends to focus on single issues, and to see negotiation and compromise as negative features. Such a pattern of mobilization might simultaneously increase pressures on state agencies to respond to social demands, while constraining the capacity of state agencies to organize this response in a sustained manner.

Of course, this characterization of the prevalence of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in The Station and Cromañón situations should be understood as a way of synthesizing major differences in the patterns of mobilization that have characterized each situation, rather than as a dichotomy that neatly separates both sets of circumstances. In Buenos Aires, formal legal mechanisms (and insider strategies) have been used by survivors and the friends and families of victims, while in Rhode Island there have been instances in which the affected parties resorted to more 'outsider' strategies (e.g. the placement of some signs attacking public officials in West Warwick or the – albeit small – demonstrations organized by some of the families of the victims at The Station).²⁷

In this respect, we should underline that the equilibrium attained by actors in their use of 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies in fact represents complex historical hybrid creations. At any point in time, these hybrids embody the new, entirely *sui generis* political repertoires that are constantly being both recreated and created anew.²⁸ Such hybridity defies neat either/or categorical distinctions that hold only as an abstract ideal.

Moreover, processes of collective mobilization and civil society activism should be understood in historical terms. Time and place matter. The configuration of civil society, at any given time and in each given place, is the result of both long historical processes and of the structure of constraints and opportunities of the present.

In this sense, the contrast between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' is not intended to distinguish between more rational or less rational 'societies': actual circumstance often involves considerable hybridity between both modes of action and organization, and the shape of these hybrids is constantly changing over time. Hopefully, however, the heuristic distinction is useful in recognizing and outlining the tensions resulting from opting among these strategies, and allows us to pose productive questions about change in patterns of social mobilization and political conflict. For example, a closer look into the differences between the strategies employed by survivors and families in Rhode Island and Buenos Aires allows us to shed light on the logics of what we have called populist mobilization.²⁹ Our findings are certainly preliminary, but the venue for research opened here (focusing on something akin to the micro-politics of populist mobilization) is worth exploring further.

Conclusion: Imprints of Collective Action and Discourse Repertoires

Existing frames and models of collective action constrain as much as they enable. In the Cromañón case, protests were successful in shaking the political system but also tended to follow an episodic pattern, alternating outbursts of energy with apathy and rapid

disillusionment. Contentious mobilizations that follow a populist logic, such as the one formed by relatives and families of the victims, allow for the inclusion and the emotional expression of very different perspectives: in the Cromañón experience, we have seen that though the common banner is 'justice', those mobilized have different definitions of what justice means – a group of parents has sought to prevent Callejeros from ever playing again, another group has supported the rock band; some families are relying on the existing legal system, while a few have shifted towards an 'eye for an eye' definition of justice and have made violent threats against judges, politicians and the musicians; young survivors or teenage friends of the victims focus on remembering the departed and stressing their commitment to the rock mystique of *el aguante*. While engaged in a common mobilization, within the broad range of responses the alternative options are always in tension among themselves.

This tension is very much at the core of populist mobilization (or of what Max Weber characterized as the instability of charismatic authority). The tension might be resolved by moving populist mobilization towards a process of rationalization: for example, some 'outsiders' might become 'insiders' (by transforming the movement into a formal NGOs or by developing a political party or organization). Characteristically, such moves towards rationalization on the part of social movements very often cause their splintering, as the relatively more 'outsider' elements denounce the perceived 'selling out' or 'politicization' of the 'insiders'. These tensions sometimes prevent social movements from undergoing a full transition towards rationalization altogether.

On the other hand, we do not mean to suggest that rationalization of populist mobilization by its transformation into more bureaucratized, institutional organizations should be embraced as a panacea. 'Rational' institutions often develop their own imperviousness to unanticipated circumstances, and might be highly resistant to change and criticism. Additionally, 'rational' or 'institutional' strategies often lack the important capacity to answer to emotional and affective needs (in these tragedies, for example, the need to publicly mourn the dead and express anger and sorrow by publicly establishing responsibilities and punishment). The system of courts and laws is designed precisely with the intention of excluding such emotions and to concentrate on facts. In such contexts, populist mobilization might serve as a means for promoting deeper change and/or to provide a (otherwise absent) venue for the expression of affections. Rather than embracing either populist mobilization or rational/institutional panaceas, relevant actors might gravitate towards hybrids that combine populist and institutional strategies of mobilization.

Of course, facing tragedies such as those of the The Station or Cromañón, neither of the two logics, nor any hybrid combination thereof, is likely to 'solve' the pain and anguish of the survivors or their families and friends: such feelings entail a 'pain which cannot forget', as quoted on the whisky bottle left by Indio at the Cromañón memorial.

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Notes

1. Callejeros was one of the most important exponents of so-called 'neighborhood rock' ('rock barrial'), vindicating the working-class neighborhoods of Buenos Aires with songs that underscore similarities and

- strong loyalties between the band and its followers. Concerts are the most central feature for bands like Callejeros, and they are usually very raucous, with people standing in line for several hours, dancing, drinking, lighting flares and often fighting.
2. Some survivors claim that the flares were brought into the club by the band.
 3. Local news stations in Providence decided not to broadcast the images of Cromañón because of disturbing similarities between the two disasters.
 4. The information in the following paragraphs has been extracted from the articles published in *The Providence Journal*. Available at www.projo.com (accessed December 2001).
 5. See <http://www.projo.com/extra/2003/stationfire/archive/projo-20040513agprotestx.1b9b6c3f4.html>
 6. Judge Darigan's letter to the families is available at <http://www.projo.com/extra/2003/stationfire/pdf/20060921dariganletter.pdf>
 7. 'Families look to civil fight after nightclub owners sentenced', *The Advocate* (Connecticut), 30 September 2006.
 8. 'Biechele gets 4 years in jail', *The Providence Journal*, 11 May 2006.
 9. 'Sentencing in deadly nightclub fire only adds to anguish of victims and kin', *The New York Times*, 30 September 2006, p. A8. The sentencing was 'so turbulent that the judge abruptly recessed the proceedings at one point to defuse the tensions in the room' (<http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/0929nightclubfire29-on.html>). In cutting off remarks deemed negative, the judge indicated that 'the hearing wasn't an opportunity for a diatribe against the proceeding' (<http://www.projo.com/digitalbulletin/content/projo-20060929-families.2c3c5cd1.html>).
 10. <http://www.projo.com/digitalbulletin/content/projo-20060929-families.2c3c5cd1.html>
 11. A group of thirty families rallied against the decision by judge María Angélica Crotto, and the main door of the municipal government was burned during the demonstrations (allegedly, by a Molotov cocktail thrown against it by some of the families). In 2006, Judge Crotto denounced being physically threatened by some of the families of the Cromañón victims dissatisfied with her investigation (<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2006/08/08/sociedad/s-03001.htm>).
 12. http://www.beloblog.com/projo_blogs/newsblog/archives/2006/09/29/
 13. See <http://www.stationfamilyfund.org>
 14. See <http://www.stationfirememorialfoundation.org>
 15. In 2004, around 1,500 people gathered to commemorate the event: by 2006, their numbers had dropped to around 300. By the 2006 commemoration of the tragedy, the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Victims' Advocacy and Support Center indicated 'it seems you [have] become more isolated. Where did everybody go?' (http://www.projo.com/extra/2003/stationfire/archive/projo_20060220_sfir20.86f7e6f.html).
 16. As in the attacks on 'este gobierno que dice ser progresista y tiene a ex menemistas y cavallistas en sus filas' (<http://www.lospibesdecromagnon.org.ar/spip.php?article62>).
 17. For example, when speaking at a conference, Estela de Carlotto, President of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, one of the oldest and most respected human rights organizations, was attacked with eggs by a few families of the Cromañón victims who accused her of signing a petition supporting Mayor Ibarra (<http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/subnotas/54522-18260-2005-08-02.html>). The attack was later repudiated by several of the organizations representing the families of the victims.
 18. In both cases, a number of websites have been constructed to commemorate the victims and/or provide a forum for survivors and relatives. See, for example, [www.cromagnon.meti2.com.ar] and [www.stationfirememorialfoundation.org]
 19. The description of the spontaneous shrine at the site of The Station is from the work carried out by Professor Richard Gould (Brown University) and Randi Scott (a volunteer with Forensic Archeology Recovery). This work is described in Boutilier (2005).
 20. http://www.projo.com/extra/2003/stationfire/content/projo_20061001fire1.31530c8.html and Boutilier (2005).
 21. http://www.projo.com/extra/2003/stationfire/content/projo_20061001fire1.31530c8.html
 22. See, for example, the declarations of the Rhode Island Governor on the second anniversary of The Station tragedy.
 23. See Korzeniewicz and Casullo (2006).
 24. As indicated by Tarrow (1989, p. 317), as protest cycles came to an end, participants in social movements tended to shift to more institutionalized roles.
 25. Thus, for example, in the first joint statement by the families and friends of the Cromañón victims, they argued that:

todo el pueblo, todos, somos sobrevivientes. Sobrevivientes a sucesivas formas de muerte, desde el acontecer cotidiano que nos muestra pobreza, analfabetismo, desnutrición galopante, falta de escuelas adecuadas, deserción escolar, violencia institucional y doméstica – sin agotar el listado –; y violencia empresarial e institucional, que tiene hitos en nuestra historia, como por ejemplo el accionar represivo de la dictadura militar, los crímenes del gatillo fácil, el atentado a la AMIA, entre muchos otros. (<http://www.lospibesdecromagnon.org.ar/spip.php?article1>)

See also <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/sociedad/3-53133-2005-07-01.html>

26. Weber's analysis of the routinization of charisma highlights a key feature of populist movements that is largely absent from Laclau's analysis. Unlike openly revolutionary movements, populist movements often seek to combine 'outsider' and 'insider' strategies. 'Outsider' postures are often used to gain useful leverage in order to alter 'insider' relations of strength. The leadership of the movement has a key role in deploying and combining the two types of mobilization. This dual nature causes the movement to be both very effective and highly unstable at the same time.
27. We do not intend to suggest that Argentina and the USA follow opposite paths of collective organization. There are certainly important instances of social movements adopting 'insider' strategies in Argentina (e.g. labor organizations through the twentieth century or *piqueteros* more recently) and 'outsider' strategies in the USA (e.g. the civil rights movement in the twentieth century or the Seattle protesters more recently).
28. As indicated by Sidney Mintz (1996, p. 38) in his discussion of the emergence of Caribbean food, the [...] new cultures are usually described in somewhat misleading fashion as 'mixed' or 'blended.' They are, in fact, *sui generis* – neither African nor European, but Afro-American. Their accurate characterization must take many different factors into account, to escape from literal, mechanical, two-plus-two or coffee-and-cream analogies.
See also Schavelson (2000).
29. The analysis of populist mobilization is often abstract in nature (Conniff, 1982; Rancière, 1999; Laclau, 2005) and does not delve into the way in which populist politics is construed as a day-to-day activity.

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