

"Bringing Militancy to Management": An Approach to the Relationship between Activism and Government Employment during the Cristina Fernández de Kirchner Administration in Argentina

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between employment in public administration and militant commitment, which is understood as that which the actors themselves define as "militant management." To this end, an analysis is presented of three groups created within three Argentine ministries that adopted "Kirchnerist" ideology: La graN maKro (The Great Makro), the Juventud de Obras Públicas, and the Corriente de Libertación Nacional. The article explores the conditions of possibility and principal characteristics of this activism as well as the guidelines for admission, continuing membership, and promotion – both within the groups and within government entities – and the way that this type of militancy is articulated with expert, professional and academic capital as well as the capital constituted by the militants themselves.

Keywords: Activism, expert knowledge, militant careers, state.

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Acronyms

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| ANSES | National Social Security Administration (Administración Nacional de la Seguridad Social) |
| CDR | Territorial Reference Centers (Centros de Referencia Territorial) |
| CIC | Community Integration Centers (Centros Integradores Comunitarios) |
| CLACSO | Latin American Council of Social Sciences (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales) |
| CONICET | National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas) |
| DINAJU | National Office for Youth (Dirección Nacional de Juventud) |
| FPV | Front for Victory (Frente para la Victoria) |
| FREPASO | Front for a Country in Solidarity (Frente País Solidario) |
| FUBA | Argentine University Federation (Federación Universitaria Argentina) |
| INDEC | National Institute of Statistics and Census (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos) |
| JOP | Public Works Youth (Juventud de Obras Públicas) |
| JP | Peronist Youth (Juventud Peronista) |
| Kolina | National Liberation Front (Corriente de Liberación Nacional) |
| PRO | Republican Project (Propuesta Republicana) |

INTRODUCTION

This study explores some of the characteristics of activism during the era of Kirchnerism in Argentina, and in particular, the relationships that are constructed between militant commitment and government employment.¹ To this end, the study analyzes what "militancy" defined in terms of "militant management"² signifies and refers in particular to the way that this militancy has been configured from the first term of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007–2011) inside collectives that define their militant activities as "by," "for" or "from within" the state.

In order to achieve these objectives, it is indispensable to briefly discuss the policies of the government of Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007), who achieved a legitimacy of exercise³ based on the construction of a type of leadership that articulated the functioning of institutional political life with a mobilizing dynamic. In effect, Kirchner retrieved and enshrined a set of demands and slogans that arose from the crucial processes of mobilization that took place before he took office; that is, during the cycle of protests known as the "crisis of 2001" after the year they took place. In addition, he promoted alliances with different groups – defined based on the concept of transversality – which, in some cases, favored the integration of their leaders into the electoral slates of the Frente para la Victoria (FPV),⁴ and, in other cases, their incorporation in areas of the government related to the respective activist knowledge. One example is the incorporation of leaders of organizations of the unemployed who had considerable militant experience in the poor neighborhoods in the Province of Buenos Aires. They were invited to work in areas of government such as the National Office of Community Assistance (Dirección Nacional de Asistencia Comunitaria) of the Ministry of Social Development, the Secretariat of Social Organizations (Secretaría de Organizaciones Sociales) of the same ministry, and the Sub-Secretariat of Lands for Social Habitat (Subsecretaría de Tierras para el Hábitat Social) of the Secretariat for Public Works of the Ministry of Planning. These and other incorporations into the administration illustrate, on the one hand, the legitimation of the militant capital of the activists and, on the other, the process of reconversion of their knowledge into the activities of the

1. This study opts to use both terms interchangeably to refer to forms of affiliation and participation in groups. However, the term "militancy" is part of the repertoire of notions utilized by the actors themselves at the same time as it is a subject of debate among them.

2. Quotation marks are used to indicate terms or expressions used by the actors.

3. He won the presidency with 22% of the votes when former president Carlos Menem, who had obtained 24%, resigned his candidacy before the *ballotage* or runoff election between the two candidates could be held.

4. This political space emerged in 2003 to accompany the candidacy of Néstor Kirchner. It includes the Partido Justicialista, Frente Grande, Partido Intransigente, Partido Comunista Congreso Extraordinario and the Partido de la Victoria, among others.

state, which increased the government's repertoire of activities and allowed the state to put itself forward as one more space for "militancy." At the same time, the activists re-defined their activities in terms of "bringing militancy into the state" ["militar el Estado"] (Perelmiter 2010).

According to some analysts, this period of greater acceptance of the incorporation of leaders of social movements, as well as of some of their demands, decreased somewhat with the slow reconstruction of the underpinnings of Kirchner's policies (Boyanovsky Bazán 2010). Nevertheless, according to the hypothesis proposed in this article, the mobilizing aspect of policy discussed above was maintained over time and also has been one of the distinctive characteristics of the two administrations of Cristina Fernández (2007-2011 and 2011-2015). Of course, there have been important changes and adjustments from the previous period and some of these are mentioned below.

In the first place, Kirchnerism banked not just on alliances but on the construction of its own spaces of organization and militancy; that is, spaces whose stamp of origin and principal characteristics were related to affiliation to Kirchnerism.

Second, and concomitantly with the preceding point, there was a thematization of "youth," which was read and interpreted by the leadership as a space of political vacancy and a condition for generational change within Kirchnerism as a political space. In addition, a set of processes can be observed in which one can recognize that the category of "youth" has been converted into a source of prestige and stands out in the universe of militant relations. Such processes include the creation or revitalization of groups in which the category of "youth" appears as a principal criteria of public self-definition, to the point of being incorporated in the names of collectives or of objectivity among the principal characteristics of their members; the promotion of "young" candidates to near the top of electoral lists; and, finally, the rewriting of the history of some groups stressing their "youthful" aspect (Vázquez 2014). These processes are especially accentuated in the spectrum of Kirchnerist organizations, to the point that the largest and most publically known "youth" organization – La Cámpora – is recognized as the principal pro-government organization. In addition, there are other groups of importance, such as those that define themselves in relation to the emblematic Juventud Peronista (JP),⁵ such as JP Evita, JP Descamisados and JP Peronismo Militante.

5. Created in the late 1950s, after the overthrow of the second government of Juan Domingo Perón (1952-1955) and the subsequent outlawing of the Peronista movement. It played a central role during the 1970s as part of what was known as "revolutionary Peronism."

Third, the various "youth" groups inside Kirchnerism are taking part in a redefinition of the term "militancy" through which they articulate a series of actions, positions, and forms of commitment that – seen from outside this universe of relations – may turn out to be different from one other and heterogeneous. Commitment is described in relation to the momentum linked to a "militancy" which is "territorial,"⁶ "student" (on the high school or university levels), "cultural"⁷ and with "bringing militancy to government"; that is, with a manner of processing militant commitments in relation to employment in the government.⁸ In relation to the latter, these are experiences in which the causes for which one participates and the way this participation is carried out is strictly linked with the government entity – and even the thematic area – in which an organization's members work. Thus, not only has an understanding of how activism is related to the work of the state become established and a form of public management developed based on values that are recognized as "militant," but, in addition, a form of processing the commitments that involve the state as an object of the actions of activists has also been determined. In sum, the activists define themselves as "militants of management" and the repertoire of actions they undertake include tasks carried out "in," "from within," and "for" the state.

This article proposes an exploration of the properties and characteristics of the latter type of militant commitment through an analysis of three organizations that developed inside different government entities during 2010 and 2011: La *graN maKro*⁹ created in the Ministry of Economy and Public Finances; Public Works Youth (*Juventud de Obras Públicas, JOP*), formed inside the Secretariat of Public Works of the Ministry of Federal Planning, Public Investment and Services; and the National Liberation Front (*Corriente de Liberación Nacional, Kolina*),¹⁰

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6. A type of activism whose principal sphere of action is the *barrio*: one is a militant in the *barrio* and for the *barrio*. Activities are related to the desire to engage in solidarity activities; support for schools; political education; recreational workshops; pamphleteering; signing up beneficiaries of public policies; activities in support of candidates of the FPV on the local, municipal, provincial and/or national levels; painting slogans; and support for protest mobilizations or expressions of support, and other activities.
 7. Linked to the production of ideas and arguments visibilizing and legitimizing certain government actions. "Cultural militancy" manifests itself in pro-government newspapers – or supplements inside these papers – and, fundamentally, in political blogs, social networks, and other resources in the "virtual sphere" through which the construction of a "media counterculture" is promoted. This form of militancy is complementary to other militant actions (such as student or neighborhood activities) or as a center of militant actions within the so-called "cultural battle."
 8. These types of commitment are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are broad outlines, on the basis of which militant practices are organized whether within a single group – for example, the largest and most extensive collectives throughout the country, such as *La Cámpora* – or in different groups of "youth" activists which focus specifically on one form or another of militant participation.
 9. The activists use upper case letters to highlight the initials of the first and last name of Néstor Kirchner in the name of their group.
 10. In the acronym of the group, the letter "c" of "corriente" has been changed for the letter "k" which symbolizes both the figure of Néstor Kirchner as well as the group's commitment to Kirchnerism.

created within the Ministry of Social Development. The analysis concentrates on the following: the careers of the militants belonging to these organizations – who are, at the same time, employees of the government entities where the groups were formed; the characteristics of their activism; the principles governing entry into, continuing membership, and promotion within organizations; and the manner in which this activism puts into play diverse types of capital and knowledge (social, bureaucratic, professional, academic, and others) which are then reconverted in through individuals performance as "militants of management."¹¹

This article draws on the results of a larger study carried out in 2011–2013 and is primarily based on in-depth interviews of militants and government employees, observations of participants in activities promoted by the aforementioned collectives and the government bodies in which they are inserted, and on the analysis of sources and documents.

1. ECONOMIC EXPERTISE, UNIVERSITY AND THE STATE: AN ANALYSIS OF ACTIVISM IN LA GRAN MAKRO

La graN maKro was created in 2011 by a group of young professional economists who were, at the same time, employees in different departments of the Ministry of Economy. In addition to having studied economics at national universities, these activists work as undergraduate and graduate professors in these same universities. Their areas of specialization – in the ministry and in universities – and their activities as militants were similar; that is, their knowledge of economics constituted capital that was susceptible to be reconverted from the world of work and academia to the field of politics and vice versa. Without going any further, they described militancy in relation to practices such as "studying, conceptualizing and disseminating the strategic guidelines of the economic model in our country, starting on May 25, 2003"¹² (La graN maKro 2011). Thus, working in the Ministry of Economy, studying and being educated as an economist, and being a militant who disseminates ideas defending the "Kirchnerist economic model" are, in their eyes, practices which are all linked together.

11. The promotion of this type of activism has led to accusatory interpretations aimed at Kirchnerism and its principal organizations. Despite the fact that this article concentrates specifically on these groups, it is worth noting that confluence between militant and labor practices in government management exists in political organizations across the political spectrum, specifically, in those cases in which there is also participation in government activities on the municipal and provincial levels. The main difference is that "militant management" represents a watchword and a public demand in contrast to other political spaces such as socialist management on the provincial level (in the Province of Santa Fe) and the Republican Proposal (Propuesta Republicana, PRO), a center-right party that has governed the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires since 2007.

12. The date Néstor Kirchner was inaugurated as president. Translation by *Apuntes*.

1.1. "Academics," "professionals," and "militants"

The activists affirm that the terrain of their militancy is the "cultural battle"¹³ and therefore one of the principal activities of this group is participation in talks, organization of conferences and debates in universities, and even public debates in the mass media in which they deal with questions such as what is "the economy?" in general, and what characterizes a "heterodox economy" in particular.

According to the point of view of the activists, being recognized as having a "technocratic"¹⁴ profile and especially, as "independent economists," professors or university researchers allows them to engage in activities that are rarely carried out by other Kirchnerist groups. To this end, not only are academic and professional resources valuable, but so too is a communicational style that, according to the activists, is different from that of other Kirchnerist groups and which renders them legitimate interlocutors. It is noteworthy that members of the group participate in televised political programs during which they promote their views and debate with government officials – or ex-officials – regarding relevant economic topics and also engage supporters of parties or groups opposed to Kirchnerism.

The distinctive profile of La graN maKro thus has to do with a repertoire of militant actions linked to "communicating," "disseminating," and "debating" positions based on a specialized knowledge of economics, through which its activists make explicit their support for current government policies at the same time as they provide motives and reasons aimed at mobilizing more adherents. According to the head of the group's Communications Area:

The message is always included that there is a group – who are economists – who are knowledgeable, who have studied, who have [economic] models, and that there is another group – which would be, in this case, the government – who are un-knowledgeable, who apply short-term, "band-aid" solutions, because they do not have the slightest idea about how [the economy] works. When in reality things are not like this, in reality, you have a particular vision, different, that is more Keynesian if you will, more heterodox. So I think that to debate with these guys, to show people that on the other side **there is another vision**, this is important. (Interview with Lucio Marques; author's emphasis; translation by *Apuntes*.)

13. This term is used by different groups that, as indicated above, are oriented toward a type of activism that is less articulated with a barrio-oriented conception of this term and whose goal is to develop the production of ideas and arguments that explain and legitimize the actions of the government.

14. Translator's note: in Argentina, people who are specialists with university degrees and participate in politics or government are referred to as "técnicos." Since the word "technician" in English implies skilled labor, "technocrat" is used in this translation to refer to "técnicos."

The technical and professional character of this organization allows its members not only to define the specificities of their commitment, but also to describe the differences inside the larger universe of militants. For instance, according to the testimony of one its principal members, La graN maKro "does not dispute territorial spaces, it is a transversal, professional" (interview with Lucio Marques; translation by *Apuntes*). Thus we can see that these activists base the legitimacy of their positions and their debates with other technocrats, specialists and intellectual peers (even if these are opponents of the government) on principles that demonstrate their character as experts in the field of economics.

These activists not only aspire to be recognized inside the world of the militants, but also look to gain legitimacy as "professionals" and experts in the academic sphere. This is evidenced in their participation in academic conferences and events, their work as professors on the undergraduate level and in graduate specialization programs, and their efforts to promote a current of economic analysis within various national universities.

It is interesting to note that activists' efforts to construct their own space on the basis of recognition of "militant" values that are linked to the defense of an economic perspective is sometimes perceived by their professional and academic peers as illegitimate, since their work in the field of economics is interpreted as "political." One example of this is the rejection and opposition by the presidency of the Universidad Nacional de la Plata to the proposal of La graN maKro to organize a conference of Heterodox Economic Youth. University officials read this as a "political conference" rather than a legitimately academic activity.¹⁵ Despite the resistance of the university authorities, the activity did take place and served as the space where the organization was launched. Participants included the then Minister of the Economy and the current Vice-President of the country, Amado Boudou; the Vice-Minister of the Economy and current FPV deputy, Roberto Feletti; the Minister of Economy of Buenos Aires, Alejandro Arlía; the then Secretary of Finances and later Minister of the Economy, Hernán Lorenzino; the Sub-Secretary for Economic Coordination, Alejandro Robba, among others. The meeting had several central themes, including the presentation of an academic proposal to reform the curriculum in the field of economics, and a debate about the economic changes introduced by Kirchnerism as well as the way that these policies modified the "subordination of politics to the market economy."

1.2. "Technocrats," "youth" and "militants"

The principal self-definition of the group can also be seen in the establishment of an activist profile of "youth" and "technocrats" in relation to the work they carried out as employees

15 As this example illustrates, the disqualification was not associated with support for a "heterodox" interpretation of the economy but rather had to do with the fact that it was associated with a "militant" defense of the government's economic model.

of the Ministry of Economy. According to the testimony of one activist, the creation of La graN maKro had to do with the identification of:

[...] many younger people in the Ministry [of Economy], many youth who did not have experience as militants but were – to some degree – enthusiastic, felt an **identification on a technical basis** with the economic policies that the government was implementing, which manifested itself in a need to **go beyond the technocratic contribution** they could make there and to give just a little more. And therefore, well, we looked for a way to open the door or create a bridge so that these people, could have a space to **develop their incipient militant vocation** [because they] didn't have a space at the time. Because we are not talking about people who had a background in militancy, their *leitmotiv* was not in going to a march, "banca en la plaza"¹⁶ or "militar en un local."¹⁷ Because of this, sometimes they ask us why don't we join La Cámpora or in what way are we different... Essentially in this, right?, that we are not a grassroots group nor do we have any pretensions of becoming one but rather want to give militant value to the technocratic work that we are able to do. (Interview with Martina Enriquez; author's emphasis; translation by *Apuntes*)

This observation is interesting, first, because of the manner in which the gestation of political commitment is themed in this militant universe. As indicated in the quote, it is about "youth" but not any youth – "youth" that are also "technocrats"¹⁸ and who generally do not have prior experience as militants and who support Kirchnerism because of a "militant vocation" that results from their "identification with the technocratic."

This starting point allows us to sketch new differences between what it means "to be a militant" inside Kirchnerism in this group and in other "Kirchnerista" and "youth" groups. Specifically, self-definition as a "professional" group and the development of a type of

16. Translator's note: this is an Argentine slang expression. "La plaza" refers to the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, where the executive mansion of the president of Argentina is located. It is a space with symbolic relevance as the most important area in the city for social protest and political action. Thus "banca" refers to expressing support, and "banca en la plaza" means going to one of the most symbolic spaces of political power to manifest support for the government.

17. Translator's note: this is an Argentine expression that refers to a physical space where a political group functions in a barrio or territorial space.

18. The majority of "youth" groups that are made up of nonprofessionals define youth as lasting until 30. This is similar to the government which defines this category in its public policies (according to which youth is defined as the age group from 15 to 29 years of age). It is interesting that the organization under discussion also specifies an age group, but it includes people up to 40. This is evident from the professional profiles of its members and its activism, which assigns value to academic training and work experience in management. Thus, this cut-off age symbolizes the importance of reinterpreting the category of "youth" in light of experience as an "expert" or a "technocrat."

activism based on a repertoire of specific knowledge linked to a university education and to work in the economic areas of government¹⁹ are claimed as the principal political capital and defining characteristics of a group such as La *graN maKro*. At the same time, these characteristics allow their activists to distinguish themselves from "political" organizations – such as La *Cámpora* or *Kolina* – whose activities are not only associated with territorial activism, but are also characterized in relation to another repertoire of militant actions such as, for example, "going to a march," "banca en la Plaza de Mayo" or "militar en el local." At the same time, the profile of the activists and the repertoire of militant actions are referred to in order to point out other differences. For example, within the universe of employees of the ministry, those who work "without" political commitment are dismissed as "mere technocrats."

As can be concluded from the ideas discussed above, this experience illustrates a particular configuration between the figure of the "technocrat" and the "militant." In general terms, we can say that during the decade of the 1990s, the figure of the expert was used to invoke a kind of neutrality based on specialized knowledge of a subject – in this case, economics – that was legitimized in decision-making based on scientific knowledge, which went beyond an ideological-political position (Camou 1997; Heredia 2011). The relationship between these two positions was modified to some degree with the processes that began with the administration of Néstor Kirchner, who – as mentioned above – called upon the leaders of various groups to work in government. This process also allowed the resignification of the figure of the "militant" in relation to work as an official or employee; this figure is set against that of the "expert," but is legitimized, following Perelmiter (2010), in a kind of counter-bureaucratic ethos. In this manner, the "militant," whose legitimacy was constructed on the basis of his/her activity in the *barrio*, is converted – by way of her/his work in the governmental sphere – into a bridge between the "territory"²⁰ and the state. In the case of La *graN maKro*, it can be seen that the activists legitimate themselves as such concurrently with their work as government employees.²¹ Their academic, professional or bureaucratic credentials are the principal resource of a form of commitment that they define as "technocratic." This is how this form of activism, associated with expert knowledge of economics, defines its principal

19. It could be argued that this relationship between academic knowledge, professional practice, and "militancy" even transcends work for the government. While all the activists currently work in the Ministry of the Economy, many stress the importance of their having worked in the private sector, where they gained know-how and knowledge that turned out to be vital for their role as militants. For instance, a member of the group with one of the highest public profiles refers to his work in the financial sector as providing part of the expertise which he calls on in his work as an activist.

20. Translator's note: this is an Argentine term which refers to the *barrio*(s).

21. Although, as noted above, there are types of expertise and resources in play, specifically: experience as militants in party politics, membership in the academic community, experience in the private sector, etc.

"militant" responsibility: to publicize reasons – technically and academically based – why the policies of the Kirchnerist government should be supported.

1.3. The relations between social, political and bureaucratic capital

Earlier, I alluded to the launching of La graN maKro at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata and the participation of the principal government officials involved in economic policies. This illustrates the social capital that was mobilized to promote this organization. The activation of this set of connections reproduces, on the one hand, labor and political relations constructed through the work of the Ministry of the Economy. This becomes clear when we observe that the government officials invited to this event were the supervisors of the activists in the various departments in which they worked, and that the two principal leaders were, at the time the organization was created, the Sub-Secretary of Economic Coordination²² and the Vice-Minister of the Economy.²³

On the other hand, these relations are based on a history of relationships that go beyond the Ministry of the Economy and were developed in the articulation between the three universes mentioned previously: the academic, the sphere of work, and militancy. As noted, various national universities (among others, those in Buenos Aires, La Plata, Moreno and San Martín) are spaces through which these activists move and in which they engage in common activities related to academic training, research, and teaching. For example, two of the principal leaders of the organization studied public accounting at the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires and one of them was the director of the Professional Certification in Economics Program of the Universidad de Morón, in which other activists from the organization teach.

In terms of trajectories as militants, a number of the activists were members of the Broad Front (Partido Frente Grande), created in 1993 and part of the FPV since 2003.²⁴ The fact that these activists belong to the same party reveals that there exists a common space for political socialization among the militants which, in addition, permits the reconstruction of common experiences in the governmental workplace, specifically during the adminis-

22. Alejandro Robba held this post from 2009 to 2011. Previously, he held other supervisory posts in the ministry as well as in the National Bank of Argentina, INDEC, the Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Commerce and Worship, and the Central Bank of Argentina.

23. Roberto Feletti was named to this post in 2009, when Amado Boudou became Minister of the Economy. He left in 2011 to take his seat as a national deputy for the Province of Buenos Aires from the FPV. Previously, he held other high positions including: president of the Banco Ciudad, Minister of Infrastructure and Planning of the City, Vice-President of the National Bank and Secretary for Economic Policy of the Ministry of the Economy, among others.

24. The Broad Front was created by a group of Peronist leaders who opposed the policies of the then president Carlos Menem (1989-1995, 1995-1999).

tration of Aníbal Ibarra²⁵ as the head of the government of Buenos Aires (2000-2003 and 2003-2006). Moreover, belonging to the Broad Front means that various activists participated in university groups, such as the Collective for University Transformation (Colectivo para la Transformación Universitaria) in the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires, during their undergraduate and graduate studies and as professors. Thus, not only do some activists have experience in militancy at universities, but this can lead to leadership roles for them, as in 2001, for example, when they participated in the presidency of the Argentine University Federation (Federación Universitaria Argentina, FUBA).

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the relationship between activism and management was initiated before group members went to work at the Ministry of the Economy and even before they committed to Kirchnerism. This demonstrates the artificiality of the widely-publicized analyses that claim Kirchnerism symbolizes a "return to politics" by youth. In general terms, this perspective assumes that before Kirchnerism, activism was primarily associated with "resistance" (in the streets or barrios) or was a characteristic of "autonomous" spaces; that is, those where participants proclaimed their independence from institutionalized politics. These forms of participation are contrasted with those that currently exist, which are principally characterized as a "return to politics," understood as a kind of re-enchantment with formal politics, institutional and party-oriented.

At the same time, the analysis of the forms of activism employed by the group under discussion offers an interesting perspective that demonstrates the need to qualify those arguments that publically stigmatize Kirchnerista youth groups, specifically in relation to opinions that these are a kind of "paid militancy," in which the principal objective of group members is to obtain jobs in government. The analysis of activism based on the experience of La graN maKro reveals a more complex and dense panorama of relations and ways of constructing "militant management" which challenge dichotomous and reductionist interpretations. On the one hand, this analysis shows that some of the members and leaders have prior experiences as militants in which the relationship between public management and activism was already in play. On the other hand, it was found that there are members who lack experience as militants and join the group as a result of an affinity to the academic approach taken, based on the type of professional and academic training they received.

25. He belonged to FREPASO, a confederation of parties created in 1994 and made up of the Broad Front, the Open Political Party for Social Integrity (Partido Política Abierta para la Integridad Social, PAIS) and the Popular Socialist Party, among others.

2. THE YOUTH OF (THE SECRETARY OF) PUBLIC WORKS: THE JOP

The JOP was created towards the end of 2010 in the Secretariat of Public Works of the Ministry of Federal Planning, Public Investment and Services. It publically recognizes itself as a "youth" group. The majority of its members work in this secretariat under José López, one the principal collaborators of Minister Julio de Vido. Among the Kirchnerist group, JOP was in the limelight and received considerable recognition in 2011, but later its role began to diminish.²⁵

2.1. Between university training and political training

Among the members of JOP, one can find evidence of previous militancy, especially in university student groups. This link to university activism is not only the result of the prior experiences of activists, but also with contemporary relations with La Vallese, a group within the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires with which the JOP has close links. Even when they are recognized as organizations that are independent of each other, it is interesting to note that there is a significant presence of activists from this university group in the Secretariat of Public Works and in JOP, in particular: what the activists define as an "organic" presence. In effect, the leaders of JOP recognize that they entered the ministry as "militants." According to the perception of one its principal leaders, "We took this on as militants, we came as militants to work in the public sector as part of a political project. But our militancy was focused strictly on management." (Interview with Ricardo Gómez; translation by *Apuntes*).

The relationship between activism, government employment, and the university finds expression in different ways. First, the activists in a university student group recognize the work of the state as part of knowledge that is "necessary" for militants. In this sense, the fact that some of the members of the university group are officials or employees of the state not only represents militant capital but is also a – political – educational experience linked to the goal of the group, which is to "win over the state" ("ganar el estado"²⁷).

Second, there is a series of academic topics that are valued as militant capital for work for the state. In effect, the placement of activists in the Secretariat of Public Works occurs through the Department of the Press and Institutional Relations, whose principal activity is to carry out educational activities in order to disseminate and publicize the activities undertaken by the Secretariat of Public Works. According to the testimony of the activists,

26. As we will see later, in contrast to the two other groups, the types of activities carried out by JOP led to its playing a leading role during the period leading up to the presidential and legislative elections.

27. Translator's note: this is an Argentine expression used by the political actors themselves.

those who work in this department are expected to be students or university graduates in the fields of Social Communication, Sociology, and Political Science, because it is assumed that these graduates possess the skills and competencies necessary for the department's work. The activists stress the importance of hiring graduates in these fields because, in addition to their tasks related to communications, this should guarantee results that toe the "political line." Competency in this "political line," however, does not appear to be so much the result of academic training as, fundamentally, of militant practice. In addition to having studied the subjects mentioned above, those engaged in media activities are activists of JOP.

Thus, as in the case of La graN maKro, there is a relationship between employees' academic studies, their area of work, and the militant practices they carry out in public management. The issues mentioned reveal the activism in both spaces – the university and the state – and the relationships between both areas, expressed in the movements and displacements among their members, which puts into play interesting articulations among social, bureaucratic, academic, and militant capital.

2.2. Between work and militancy: tying together meanings

The JOP concentrates on three types of militant tasks: working for the state "in a militant way," training state employees to be "militants," and to "be militant" in publicizing the actions carried out by the government department in which they work.

In relation to the first task, they refer to doing their work in a "committed" way: doing it as a "vocation," with "responsibility," and "passion," working "long hours" irrespective of established working hours, "committing to the public sector," being "efficient," "bringing the state closer to the barrios," etc. It is clear that the descriptions by the activists regarding this type of work are characterized by an altruistic and selfless rhetoric which is habitually used in the universe of militants to describe political commitment.²⁸ A metaphor utilized by these and other "militants in management" – as we will see below in the case of Kolina – has to do with the idea of "becoming aware" that "behind each dossier there is a family," an expression that is repeated frequently to express the value held by an administrative action when it involves someone's needs.

The self-definition of professional duties as part of a militant's commitment also becomes a criteria that differentiates them from other government employees, who are viewed as

28. It could also be interpreted that part of this altruistic language transcends the militant universe and is similar to values, such as the disinterested dedication to the public good, upheld by government functionaries. According to Bourdieu (2007), the state plays a central role in the construction of official representations about itself as being the source and monopoly-holder of universality and of serving the public interest, especially in the bureaucratic sphere.

being part of the "traditional public payroll" or "ñoquis."²⁹ This enables an understanding of interesting paradoxes concerning the systems of classification related to the relationship between work and activism. For example, the term "ñoqui" is used by activists in an accusatory manner to refer to all those who are government employees but do not work; that is, those who use certain prerogatives that a government job allots them in order to work as little as possible. The counterpoint to this would be precisely the "militants of management," who define themselves on the basis of carrying out their work with "militant" commitment which transcends formal job obligations. On the other hand, there are also many government employees who refer in the same terms and in the same accusatory manner to employees who define themselves as "militants," calling them, again, "ñoquis," and noting, for example, that they have similar systems of exemption that permit absences from work when they attend "militant" actions, events, or other types of activities.

The activists in this group thematize their condition as "militants in management" in relation to certain labels or stigmatizations that are sometimes applied to them or to other groups. According to the testimony of a militant:

The idea is not to open a subsidiary³⁰ and fill it with all the *compañeros*. The idea is that, if someone gets a job in government, that she/he be prepared. I **don't want to bad mouth other political organizations but we also don't want to throw ñoquis into government jobs**. The idea is to have this more institutional guy, not someone ephemeral, nor a loudmouth, nor a ñoqui. The idea is to prepare and take people from the universities to create the organization that in the future can and will have a chance to run the government. And the *compañeros* that already have a chance to work in the government, who are already more prepared, in the future will be those who will orient us on government work. (Interview with Luciano Wainer; author's emphasis; translation by *Apuntes*).

The criticism contained in this excerpt is shared and reproduced among JOP activists to differentiate themselves from other organizations that also engage in "militancy in the state." This is why they emphasize the relationship between work and training, the fact that they are experts, their academic knowledge, and the "requirements" and the "responsibility"

29. Using the term "ñoqui" as an insult took on special significance in Argentina during the 1990s, when there was a profound crisis and delegitimization of government workers. It is a term that is habitually used outside the universe of militants to refer to different situations associated with public sector employment, such as not going to work, working only some days a week, working fewer hours than required, going to work but not doing anything, or working with little dedication.

30. The term "subsidiary" ("sucursal") is related to a strain of public discourse criticizing some groups, in particular the youth group that is most identified with Kirchnerism – La Cámpora – which is accused of promoting entry into the government just to "have a government post."

which are conditions for "good" militancy in management. On the other hand, this training not only appears as a guarantee of their practicing good "management" but also as a task to be carried out, which is part of "militant" work with the "technocratic cadres" of the ministry so that they are transformed into "political cadres."

In this sense, these strategies of self-definition consecrate their work, as well as their learning and expert knowledge, as a condition of working and being militants in the state based on principles that are professionally, morally, and politically based.

Inside this universe of relationships, another "militant" task is communication and publicizing of government policies and the principal public works carried out during the Kirchnerist administrations. For JOP activists, the state, or more precisely a ministry or a secretariat – in addition to being a scenario in which encounters among militants and their socialization takes place – is the principal motive and object of their "militant" activities. They associate the latter with the promotion and dissemination of the work carried out by the Ministry of Planning. Thus, just like the activities of La gran maKro, JOP's primary militant activities consist of disseminating, through pamphlets and publications,³¹ and participation in talks in barrios, municipalities, and political organizations, information on government investment in public works. In general terms, these presentations provide organized information about the growth of the budget for infrastructure, investment and the number of housing units, schools, universities, roads and highways built (overall and in the barrio or municipality where the talk is being given), construction of water works, etc.

In the following section, I explore some of the established meanings related to this militancy, as observed through the lens of the activity during which JOP was formally launched.

2.3. The First National Encounter of Youth in Public Management (El Primer Encuentro Nacional de Jóvenes de la Gestión Pública)

On April 1-3, 2011, the First National Encounter of Youth in Public Management was held. "Young workers in public management" were invited, that is, employees of national, provincial, and municipal governments who were "up to 40 years of age." The conference included activities such as panels with government officials and activists, visits to large

31. One example is the contribution of JOP activists to the book *Tres Banderas, una gran Argentina. El modelo social, político y económico que transforma el país*, published by the Instituto de Estudios y Formación Política Gestar, of the Partido Justicialista, in 2011. The book states that the principal accomplishments of Kirchnerism are organized around three banners: "social justice," "economic independence," and "political sovereignty."

infrastructural public works projects,³² and "collective audiences" during which officials from different government bodies and ministries (including the ministries of the Economy, Industry, Labor, Social Development, and Justice, among others) talked with audience members about programs and actions carried out in their various spheres. The event took place in three public buildings (the National High School of Buenos Aires, the National Office of Highways, and the Office of the Cabinet of Ministers) and was attended by thousands of participants.

There are a number of aspects connected with this event that are of interest in understanding the character of JOP and the types of membership it includes. First, participation in this event constituted a part of the training promoted by JOP, specifically because one of JOP's purposes is to socialize and publicize a specific conception about working for the state that is associated with values such as "dedication," "convictions" and a "vocation for service," among others, which have been mentioned above. It becomes relevant, in this sense, that the individuals who participated in this event as speakers and were recognized in their dual capacity as leaders in Kirchnerist youth groups and as public officials. The most illustrative example of this was the participation in the opening ceremonies of the Secretary General of La Cámpora, who was then also Sub-Secretary for Institutional Reform and Strengthening of Democracy in the Office of the Cabinet of Ministers. In his presentation, he explicitly referred to the dual condition of being an activist and a government official, at the same time as he emphasized and praised the value of militancy "in management."

There are no technocrats or *compañeros* in management on the one hand and territorial militants on the other; **they are the same thing**: the *compañero* who is advocating and defending the project in the territory is in some way constructing the correlation of forces so that the person in government can later – through the political will of our president and those responsible for the project – have the possibility of advancing and carrying out plans so that, I repeat, social justice is advanced and we come closer to [achieving] the happiness of the people. Thus, I think... *compañeros* ... with all humility, I will never consider myself, **I am not a technocrat, I will always consider myself a militant** and I understand that therein lies, I think, the root of everything. Néstor Kirchner was a militant, a great leader, an exceptional political cadre, but fundamentally a militant. **The [current] president is a militant and has a tremendous capacity for management. But fundamentally the president is a militant.** (Larroque 2011; author's emphasis; translation by *Apuntes*).

32. The works visited were: the Villa Palito housing complex, the Atucha II Nuclear Power Plant, the El Cruce Interregional Hospital and a space which has an important symbolic meaning: the former Mechanical School of the Navy, which was a clandestine detention center during the last military government, and which became "A Space for Memory" (Espacio de la Memoria) in 2004, during the administration of Néstor Kirchner.

Second, just as in the launching of La graN maKro, participants in this event included high-ranking officials from various ministries. It was the Minister of Federal Planning himself who opened the event, while other participants included officials from the ministries of the Economy, Industry, Labor, Social Development and Justice, as well as the National Social Security Administration (ANSES) and the Secretariat of Culture. One of the central activities of the conference were the "collective audiences," i.e. presentations by government officials describing and sharing information about the principal activities and programs of the government entity where they worked, and which they were representing at the conference.

The purpose, as well as analyzing the value of communication between government employees and high-ranking government officials, was to create bridges between different areas and levels of government through the construction of personal social networks that would affect or facilitate the governmental work of the participants. The event was also conceived of as a space for training in which the participants could gain a clearer understanding of the institutional organization of different government entities, responsibilities or areas of work, linkages, etc. In fact, one of the materials provided to participants was a pamphlet that included a flowchart of the national government administration. Similarly to the results of a study by Marifil (2011), one can conclude that the capacity to mobilize the state structure is viewed as valuable and as a militant activity that should be developed, while suggesting that personal relationships are valuable vis-à-vis institutional mechanisms in order to resolve an issue or problem that may arise within the state.

Third, the conference permits us to understand how the question of "youth" is defined by the JOP, which, as noted, explicitly set an age limit on participation: "youth up to the age of 40 who work in national, provincial or municipal government. Also young legislators and leaders of youth spaces"³³ (JOP 2011a). In this sense, there is a similarity with La graN maKro which was created, as mentioned above, with the idea of bringing together "sub-40 young economists."³⁴

However, "youth" also appears a principle of commitment to a cause. According to the principal leader of JOP: "We are working a great deal in the area of youth in management because we have noticed that this way we can bring together more *compañeros*" (Interview with Lucrecia Soni).³⁵ In this sense, it can be understood why and how JOP not only

33. Translation by *Apuntes*.

34. Translation by *Apuntes*.

35. Translation by *Apuntes*. The activists value having the "sponsorship" and the participation of top officials of the National Office for Youth (DINAJU), whose head also participated in a panel that launched the

accepts but stresses the presence of activists who are "over 40" but who participate because "they identify with the youth and the project." These examples demonstrate that "youth" appears and is established as a category, as a principle of identification and mobilization of adherents rather than an age limit or a description of a time of life. This interpretation coincides with analyses in other studies (Vázquez 2012, 2013a, 2013b) that point to the fact that "youth" is viewed as a militant cause in which Kirchnerism has been strongly involved since 2010.

"Youth" is also seen by these militants as a space that is vacant, as a space to be taken over. As indicated above, the period before elections was one variable that was considered when organizing the conference and officially launching JOP. For example, the official announcement highlights the importance of holding the conference in "a year of such importance for the consolidation of the national and peoples' project" and emphasizes the importance of "generating spaces for encounters, promoting cooperation, and creating a network of young government employees,"³⁶ among other objectives (JOP 2011b).

3. "THE ALICIA ASSOCIATION" ("LA AGRUPACIÓN ALICIA"): RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE ACTIVISION IN KOLINA

Kolina was created in mid 2010 through the efforts of the Minister of Social Development, Alicia Kirchner, the sister of Néstor Kirchner. It is a national group that forms part of the FPV for electoral purposes. In comparison to the groups analyzed previously, this one is organized in a very different way; it has organized national, provincial and municipal groups and different fronts such as a student front and a labor front. However, Kolina is not only different because of its internal organization, but because it has a much larger number of activists and members. Despite this, it possesses an interesting similarity to the other two groups analyzed here in that it developed within – and as part of – public sector space. In effect, it defines itself as a "political organization" that has as one of its principal centers the Ministry of Social Development, while its principal promoter and main leader is, at the same time, the head of this ministry. Moreover, its militants share a way of understanding commitment that links them directly to government work. Still, their tasks as militants are not exclusively linked with government activities, which form part of a broader range of militant activities.

conference, because it is a case of the highest sectoral entity dealing with youth sponsoring an activity that defines and recognizes itself as pertaining to "management youth" ["jóvenes de la gestión"]. Through this example, we can see a dimension of the enshrining of youth: the militant cause is put into play by means of government institutions and measures and by the officials involved.

36. Translation by *Apuntes*.

As can be seen, in the other cases analyzed, personal and workplace networks are central to understanding the way in which "political" commitments are processed in organizations. It has already been demonstrated how relationships with supervisors, who are at the same time leaders of political leaders of organizations, are brought into play. The point that needs to be made is that labor, personal, and political loyalties tend to be intertwined and it is within this framework that one can gain an understanding of the interesting logics of the way that this type of activism works. This is particularly important when analyzing "militancy" in Kolina – "the Alicia Association" as it is referred to by activists.

The relations between management and activism take on specific characteristics in this organization since this is the only one of the three cases in which one can identify a correlation between the type of job held and the public identification of its officials as members of an organization; as a result of the positions they hold within the organizational structure of the ministry, it is assumed that "they must be from Kolina." This also supposes that there is a correlation between an individual's position in the administrative hierarchy and his/her role in the "organic" of the organization. One example is the Director of the National Office for Youth (DINAJU) who holds the highest position in the sector dealing with youth and has, in the "organic" structure of Kolina, a role that has as its principal objective the articulation of – and with – political youth organizations.

Identification with Kolina does not depend solely on the type of office that is held, but also on a set of characteristics of the institutional area where the person works.³⁷ According to the interviewees, it is not the same thing to work in a government entity that has existed for many years, even before its incorporation into the Ministry of Social Development, than it is to work in a recently created body. The same can be said in relation to the type of area in which one works, assuming that certain government measures are recognized as "achievements of Kirchnerism." It is in areas that produce such measures than one can observe the presence of activists, members or sympathizers of the organization led by the Minister of Social Development. Another of the variables that makes it possible to understand the logic of membership is when a person is named or promoted to a certain position, especially if it is high-ranking. While an ethnographic project was being carried out by a department of the Ministry of Social Development, changes in affiliation were observed among some of the employees who had belonged to other organizations and, as result of their participation

37. As will be discussed below, recent changes involving militants from other organizations entering into other areas of the Ministry of Social Development, have created a crisis in the principle of constructing relationships and hierarchical positions within Kolina. However, these processes are so new that their future impact cannot yet be evaluated.

in this project, began to identify themselves as Kolina activists. Thus, a government position both conditions and is conditioned by loyalties – personal and political – to which employees "respond."

The centrality of government management in the construction of affiliations in this political space often results in participation in the organization not necessarily being interpreted as something separate or different from the job itself. In an interview carried out with an official who is also responsible for the federal affairs of Kolina, he replied the following when asked to define or characterize the type of militancy he has engaged in:

I am a militant in management. We work twelve hours day here, in management... and in the territory in the workshops we have organized [in reference to ministerial work]. No, unfortunately, in terms of barrio militancy, no, I don't have time. We are militants in management. (Interview with Danilo Carroz; author's emphasis; translation by *Apuntes*.)

Previously, reference was made to the way that groups – such as unemployed workers – are integrated into the state when their militants are given certain responsibilities or positions in areas of government that are generally related to the type of knowledge the militants have developed through their previous experiences as militants in barrios. In these cases, as noted above, the militants are invited to "elevate to the state" ("subir al Estado") their political commitment and the knowledge they accumulated through their experiences in the barrios so that they become a kind of bridge between the two spaces. The Ministry of Social Development is one of the government spaces in which the presence of activists from such groups is most evident; some of them continue in their posts in specific areas of government to this day.

The type of activism that is established in this new group is characterized by another logic of functioning. On the one hand, the legitimate militant is constructed within the group and in relation to tasks that are carried out, fundamentally, inside the ministry.³⁸ On the other hand, the relationship of the militants to the barrio is mainly transmitted institutionally; that is, access to the barrios is mediated by government mechanisms created in recent years with the objective of creating an institutionality on the local level that guarantees greater "territorial" presence or incidence, which reflects, according to Perelmiter (2011), a

38. It should be clarified that in these forms of militancies, work in management is not enough to be recognized as a militant. In other words, management tasks are added to others such as: writing in newspapers or magazines, giving interviews on behalf of the organization, participating in public and political activities – even when not a speaker, participating in talks organized by other organizations when invited, etc.

strategy of territorialization of social assistance policies.³⁹ According to an interview with a ministry official, with the creation of Kolina, there was a change in strategy based on "the political decision to construct territory through the framework of management" (interview with Diego García; translation by *Apuntes*). Thus, the definition of "militancy" is primarily based on work for the government and the "barrio" – or the "territory" – as spaces which are accessed by or the object of actions by the ministry. For this reason, according to Kolina activists, one can be a "militant in the barrio" while doing work such as surveys, workshops, and training on behalf of the area of government where one works.⁴⁰ This conceptualization demonstrates that "militancy in management" does not necessarily imply a break with "barrio work," although it does imply a modification of the methods and forms of access, mediated by affiliation with the state "for which" and "from which" one works.

As suggested by Perelmiter (2010, 2011), in movements constructed in the barrio and before a person enters the governmental sphere, the center of activities is associated with the barrio. In the barrio, a person acquires capital in the form of relationships as well as political and moral capital which prepares him/her to work "in the state" in the name of the group which the person represents "in the barrio."

Militancy in Kolina constitutes another form of constructing relations and militant legitimacy among those who lack militant experience, in general, and barrio militant experience in particular;⁴¹ that is, those that lack legitimacy of origin can construct this legitimacy through the militant experience of their parents and relatives. Thus, someone who has a

39. The territorial structure referred to is based on the development of Territorial Reference Centers (Centros de Referencia Territorial, CDR), Communal Integration Centers (Centros Integradores Comunitarios, CIC) and territorial promoters. The CDR were created between 2006 and 2007 with the purpose of developing the coordination of programs provided the Ministry of Social Development in their respective territories. For this purpose, offices were created which depend on each of the provincial capitals. The CIC are multiple-use halls built in barrios with vulnerable populations where various types of Ministry of Development programs are provided. The Program of Promoters for Social Change (Programa Promotores para el Cambio Social) was created in 2004 with the objective of augmenting community participation and organization through – or in relation to – the implementation of social policies.

40. Something similar can be seen among the militants of La *graN* *maKro* and the JOP when they go – as activists and government officials – to give a talk in a barrio or municipality where they utilize part of their repertoire of militant strategies in order to disseminate economic ideas or information about public works.

41. It is worth noting that there are disputes between organizations that grew out of barrio militancy and entered the state and those that were established in direct relation to management. In youth groups, this is visible in the tensions that exist among the militants of La *Cámpora* and the *Movimiento Evita* or, more precisely, its youth wing, the *JP Evita*, which accuse the former of lacking experience in barrio militancy. Despite the fact that the youth wing was only established recently, the fact that they registered "within *Evita*" – a collective that was established as the *Movement of Unemployed Workers* in the mid 1990s – is claimed as providing legitimacy for their own militancy. Now, if we analyze militant trajectories, it can be seen that many activists of La *Cámpora* have previous experience as militants. At

last name that reminds others of the militancy of the 1970s has capital which is greatly appreciated in this universe of relationships and is an inexhaustible source of militant legitimacy. For example, the Secretary General of Kolina, who is a principal figure in the youth space in this organization, is the son of a mother and father who were detained and disappeared. On the other hand, militant legitimacy can be constructed through job performance. As research on other empirical fields has shown (Vecchioli 2005), academic, professional, and technical credentials are means by which one can overcome an illegitimacy of origin on the basis of a set of skills that provide competency and recognition to someone who aspires to be a "militant" in a space within the government.

Thus, work in the Ministry of Social Development can be one's first "militant" experience, in which commitment develops as an extension of a way of approaching or understanding one's work, in a way similar to that in La *graN maKro*, as previously discussed. In this sense, it is interesting that the experiences cited by some activists as the foundational basis of their political commitment, and in relation to which they position their careers as militants, are actions or activities carried out when they worked at the ministry. For example, Marianela Cáceres, head of a department of the Ministry of Social Development, alluded to how she was affected by her participation – as a worker – in a program implemented in a northern province of the country, for which she had to move to this locality for several months. She cites this experience as the foundational basis of her commitment as a "militant in management."

Finally, the development of militancy linked with their jobs is viewed by activists as an interesting way of bringing together different affiliations and interests in development within the same activity. In other words, activism in management allows the bringing together of different roles and activities in which the militants are involved. One person explains that:

When I started to work here [in the Ministry of Social Development], I found that I was exercising my profession and experiencing what mobilized me the most, which was to work in the *barrio*, work with the people. Work, but linked with the concrete tools of public policy. To design.... And this, in addition at the national level, was like a dream. (Interview with Marianela Cáceres; translation by *Apuntes*)

Thus, as this testimony indicates, academic training in the social sciences, more specifically here in political science, becomes compatible with work as a professional and the promotion

the same time, of the members of JP Evita, not all started out as *barrio* militants. The interesting thing about this dispute is not related to whether the group was formed recently or developed during previous "struggles," but rather the discovery of the values to which they appeal in these confrontations and how, using these, they strive to legitimize and compete for a legitimate position in the political arena.

of "committed" practice in the government through which previous commitments – "the barrio," "the people" – are resignified, but this time through the design and execution of public policies. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that this link between "militancy" and "management" permits bureaucratic-administrative tasks to be resignified in heroic and altruistic terms, at the same time as – following Morresi and Vommaro (2011: 21) – militants that defend good causes are legitimized in the dominant position of experts.

3.1. "Militancy in management" and the management of militancy

In addition to "militant management" or "militancy in management," one can observe that through activism and participation in Kolina and in the aforementioned ministry, these can be enshrined by means of the implementation of public policies.

As result of public policy mapping we know that the Ministry of Social Development implements the largest number of youth-centered policies, with 25% of such policies administered by this ministry (Vázquez and Núñez 2013a, 2013b).⁴² In addition, it is the institutional space in which the two highest-ranking agencies that deal with youth on the national level are located: the DINAJU and the National Council of Youth (Consejo Federal de Juventud). In these two agencies, not only is there a large presence of employees who are also Kolina activists, but these activists participate in the design of policies for youth, one of whose principal objectives is the promotion of participation and political commitment. One example is the promotion of "We organize in order to transform" ("Organizarnos para transformar"), a type of action designed in 2010 by two activists⁴³ and formalized in October 2011 in a gathering of more than 3,000 youth at the previously-mentioned former Mechanical School of the Navy. This line of action consists in organizing conferences and workshops with students from high schools with the purpose of providing advisement and accompanying them in the creation – or consolidation – of student centers in their respective educational institutions.

The latter reveals that in addition to the presence of activists in government management, a vocabulary and repertoire of actions that are articulated with what is a "militant project" are being incorporated into the public state discourse. This can be seen, for example, in the definition of youth participation as an objective to be accomplished in the implementation of youth-related public policies, as indicated above. It is also evident in the objectification of a way of understanding the state that not only provides employment for activists, groups

42. It is followed by the ministries of Industry and Education and the Office the Cabinet of Ministers, which promote 14%, 11% and 8% of youth policies, respectively.

43. They were activists from the La C mpora group. It should be noted that, at that time, Kolina was a marginal group.

or militant projects, but also participates in the promotion of a "militant" project, as is illustrated below in a quote from an official document:

The current situation requires the implementation of a model of integral management that **links militant management with politics**, without the possibility of considering one without the other. In this way, youth policies will promote the advancement and construction of a model of a country that is more inclusive and compassionate [...]. In order to achieve this, it must be kept in mind that youth are different now than a decade ago and they need **the state** to design tools that are in accordance with the changes in era in which they are living. Militant commitment, when taking on the transformation of the state, has a direct impact on the logic of management and, thus, on the results of the policies implemented and the processes of popular organizations. (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de la Nación and Unesco 2011; translation by Apuntes)

In accordance with this document, the stress is on the importance of the consolidation of "youth political organizations that accompany and foster the definition and implementation of policies for the construction of 'the public sphere' [understood as belonging to everyone and being shared] together with the government and the state" and contributes to "other youth groups that do not belong to political organizations having the possibility to learn about, disseminate, and assert their rights as citizens in each space, place, and organization"⁴⁴ (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de la Nación and Unesco 2011).

Thus the participative dimension is not only evident in the design of public policies but also in the conception of institutions, whose role is seen by activists as interrelated with the promotion and the encouragement of participation by "youth." One example is the creation of the Federal Council for Youth (Consejo Federal de Juventud) in DINAJU, whose principal mission is to coordinate interjurisdictional work on youth policies and strengthen and increase "the participation of youth and of youth organizations" (Honorable Congreso de la Nación 2007).⁴⁵ Similarly, its Secretary in 2010 emphasized that: "We are convinced that youth want to participate in politics and want to be protagonists in different ways. Our task is to provide the channels and put them at the disposition of the state"⁴⁶ (Piedra Libre 2010).

In relation to the latter, it is important to recognize the importance of having been part of the two most important institutional areas related to youth on the national level for the advancement of the careers of the activists. In fact, the highest authorities in these institutions were some of the most best-known activists in the Kirchnerist "youth" organiza-

44. Translation by *Apuntes*.

45. Translation by *Apuntes*.

46. Translation by *Apuntes*.

tions. An emblematic case is Juan Cabandié, a current member of the National Executive Committee (Mesa Nacional de Conducción) of La Cámpara. In 2004, Cabandié "recovered his identity"; that is, through a DNA analysis he discovered that he was a child of parents who were detained and disappeared during the last military dictatorship. Months later he participated, together with Néstor Kirchner – then president of the country – in an activity of "recovery" of the School of Mechanics of the Navy, which, as indicated previously, was converted into a Space for Memory. At this activity, during which Cabandié gave an emotional speech about his personal history and the process of "recovering his identity," he met the Minister of Social Development, who days later invited him to work in DINAJU in her ministry. Later, between 2006 and 2007, Cabandié was the executive secretary of the Federal Council of Youth (Consejo Federal de Juventud). Cabandié's militant activity then found expression in legislative activity and he was a legislator of the city of Buenos Aires between 2007 and 2013. Currently, he is a national deputy for Buenos Aires, for the FPV, as he had been previously.

Another example worth noting is that of Andrés Lablunda, the current Secretary General of Kolina, who has held government positions since 2003: first in the Council for the Coordination of Social Policies (a department of the Presidency of Argentina, under the supervision of the Minister of Social Development, Alicia Kirchner) and later in the Ministry of Social Development where he was the head of the Federal Council for Youth after it was formally established, from 2008 to 2010. Currently, he is the coordinator of the National Institute of Associativism and Social Economy of the Ministry of Social Development.

In both cases, we can see that in working for the government, the experience and the knowledge related to public management constitute political capital for the development of the respective careers of militants. In other words, work experience and militant trajectories become articulated with each other and provide feedback, improving performance in each area and, in addition, promoting career advancement. This can be clearly observed in the case of these and other activists with distinguished careers as militants.⁴⁷

47. The cases of two national directors of DINAJU, Mariano Cascallares (2002–2006) and Mariana Gras (2006–2010) are also examples of successful work and militants careers. Cascallares, after leaving DINAJU, was the National Director for the Promotion of Commercialization, Sub-Secretary for Operative Coordination of the Ministry of Social Development of the Province of Buenos Aires, manager of Decentralized Benefits (Prestaciones Descentralizadas), Sub-Director of Administration and Sub-Director of Benefits of ANSES. In 2013, he was a candidate for a position on the city council of the Municipality of Admiral Brown for the FPV and currently is the President of the Institute of Social Welfare of the Province of Buenos Aires. In the case of Mariana Gras, after she left DINAJU in 2010 she became President of the National Council of Women, an institution that is under the Office of the Cabinet of Ministers. In addition, in contrast to Cascallares, Mariana Gras is a member of Kolina.

We can see that the state modifies the conception of militant projects; for example, the resignification of "barrio" – which is no longer a space for militancy but an object of militancy through public policies. At the same time, it is modified by "militant management" as can be seen both in the design of participative public policies and in the way that the institutions themselves have the effect of promoting of militant careers.

The ideas discussed in this section serve to demonstrate the importance of the Ministry of Social Development as a sphere for "militancy in management"; the way that from within "militant" management – in groups such as Kolina – there is collaboration in the establishment of participation and assessment of "youth" as a value and a cause for which it is worthwhile to "work" as well as "militating in" and "from within" the public sphere.

In relation to the latter, it is important to note that DINAJU was recently disbanded – at the end of the February 2014. Its work was taken over by a new institution, the "Sub-Secretary of Youth."⁴⁸ This change was not simply due to a restructuring of the organization of the government, but was how a months-long dispute between Kolina and La Cámpora was resolved institutionally. The disbanding of DINAJU and the changes in personnel were a reflection of the loss of power of the former organization while La Cámpora militants became the top-ranking officials in the new institutional structure.⁴⁹

This process demonstrates how the state – and certain management areas in particular – are seen by activists as spaces to occupy and dispute. This aspect makes it possible to understand how and why the main Kirchnerist "youth" organization – La Cámpora – wants to have its own activists as officials inside the institutional space which has the highest hierarchy in relation to the treatment and officialization of "youth" through measures undertaken by the state.

It is also important to note that this dispute within the Ministry of Social Development may introduce some modifications and changes in the forms of construction of affiliations and participation inside Kolina. However, given that these changes are very recent, it is too soon to draw any conclusions.⁵⁰

48. Within this institution, a new Office of Youth (Dirección de Juventud) and National Office of Territorial Coordination of Youth (Dirección Nacional de Coordinación Territorial de Juventud) were created.

49. Rodrigo Rodríguez – an important La Cámpora cadre – was named the Secretary of Organization and Community Communication and Facundo Tignanelli, head of La Cámpora in the district of La Matanza and Secretary of Organization of the Province of Buenos Aires, was named Sub-Secretary for Youth.

50. The dispute in question arose regarding a very specific area and, for now, there is no evidence of anything similar in other areas of the Ministry of Social Development. However, as mentioned, organizations that were part of this ministry in the first stage of Kirchnerism continue to exist within the ministry.

4. FINAL WORDS

This article seeks to describe some of the properties of activism in groups whose distinctive characteristics have to do with the manner in which they are articulated with public management. In the organizations discussed, the state represents a space of work and militant socialization, in the framework of which groups and collectives are formed with attributes that are strongly interwoven with government work and what is considered as a "manner" of working. The name of JOP (Public Works Youth) illustrates this to the extent that its name includes a reference to an area of work. It is this that allows us to understand that way that labor and personal relations are resignified in political terms, illustrated in the fact that its leaders are its principal points of reference in this sense.

In addition, the importance of the state can be noted because it is an object of this militancy. In other words, the kind of activism analyzed here not only takes place "in" or "from within" the state, but the state is also the center where these militant actions take place. In this sense, on the one hand, communication and dissemination are the principal tasks and activities carried out on the state level that are taken on "militantly" whether they have to do with economic issues as is the case with activists from La graN maKro or public works, as is the case of JOP. On the other hand, the construction of relations between workers and officials in different areas of the state are promoted "militantly" as JOP proposed in the "First National Encounter of Youth in Public Management" and, also, there is an effort to promote the construction of political affiliations among workers and technocrats who, in addition to working, recognize the performance of their tasks in "militant" terms. It is this that makes the transference of the principal area of action and militant legitimation from the barrio to the state intelligible. In addition, the state is converted into a space "to be occupied" by militants, something that can be observed in the configuration of the meaning of "militant management" in general as well as in the disputes among different organizations that have a presence in spaces within the state that are considered as "valuable" for the promotion of "militant management" and for the officialization of youth as "militant youth."

Activism "in," "from," and "for" the state involves the development of a way of working that the actors define as "committed" and that is the center of a repertoire of militant actions. At the same time, it demonstrates the value that expert knowledge has in the construction of these forms of affiliation, since militant knowledge, per se, is integrated with specific technical skills related to the design and implementation of participatory mechanisms. In addition, the knowledge related to work in different areas of the state (ministries, secretariats and municipalities, among others) is turned into a kind of capital

(bureaucratic, professional) that is reconverted in the field of politics at the same time as it informs other types of know-how such as academic and militant knowledge.

This article has proposed an approach to analyzing the transformations of the patterns of commitment and militancy in Argentina today, referring to central issues such as the area of the "barrio" and of the "state" as scenarios of political action. More concretely, this study has provided an approximation that illustrates the manner in which the frontiers and meanings of activism and politics are resignified – or expanded – when they involve practices, discourses, and representations linked to "militant work" in public management. At the same time, it has endeavored to recognize some of the principles that are involved in the construction of new bases of political legitimacy, in which a combination of academic, work-related, and social capitals permits both entry into politics by those who lack militant experiences and the development of ascending militant careers.

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51. The names of the interviewees have been changed to preserve anonymity.