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Struggling to Learn, Learning to Struggle: Strategy and Structure in the 2010-11 University of Puerto Rico Student Strike

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STRUGGLING TO LEARN, LEARNING TO STRUGGLE:
STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE IN THE 2010-11 UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
STUDENT STRIKE

by

JOSÉ A. LAGUARTA RAMÍREZ

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New Yoek.

2016

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

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by

José A. Laguarta Ramírez

Advisor: Susan L. Woodward

From April 2010 to March 2011, the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) underwent a two-phase strike sequence against neoliberal austerity measures. Altogether, that process resulted in the eventual concession of all of the students' main demands, an unprecedented feat at the UPR, and a rare one in Puerto Rican history in general. In this dissertation I seek to cast light on this improbable event by examining, first, how neoliberalization patterned and contoured the choices facing the century-old UPR student movement. Second, I explore how interactions within the movement, including the framing contest among leadership teams and their interaction with the movement grassroots, affected the way in which those decisions were made. Focusing on a political cadre organization, the Union of Socialist Youths (UJS), which has been involved in the UPR since the mid-1970s, I conducted targeted, semi-structured interviews with members of the UJS, several of whom were first-generation working-class students first drawn to the movement by the on campus "movement building" activities of political cadre. Complementing my own critical participant observation with these interviews, as well as archival and documentary research, I built a reflexive, extended case study based on a reiterated problem-solving or learning process model. In summary, without arguing causation, I show that: 1) reforms implemented by administrators named by both governing parties since 1981 constitute a more or less coherent repertoire consistent with neoliberalization; 2) debates within the UPR student movement around critical switchpoints before and during the 2010-11 strike revolved around an apparent tradeoff between militant "pressure" and mass appeal, aspects of which are made salient by neoliberalizing repertoires (a recurring combination of strategic dilemmas that I call the "neoliberal dilemma"); 3) the UJS and other cadre organizations intervened in these debates in ways that strengthened the strategic capacity of the movement as a whole; and 4) the 2010-11 UPR strike is in turn part of a longer problem-solving sequence extending back to at least 1981, which in turn is part of the longer trajectory of the nested UPR student movement field, and the broader trajectory of resistance to colonial capitalism in Puerto Rico.

Keywords: cadre organizations, framing contest, leadership teams, learning, neoliberalization, reiterated problem-solving, strategic capacity, student movements, tactical repertoires, University of Puerto Rico

*Para Aníbal y Usmaíl,
sembradores de ausubo y de guayacán.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has truly been a collective endeavor, even as responsibility for its mistakes, flaws, and shortcomings is entirely mine. I wish to thank, first and foremost, my interviewees and the entire membership of the *Unión de Juventudes Socialistas* and *Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores*, for their openness and enthusiasm towards this project. Too many crucial voices were left out of this narrative as a result of circumstances beyond anyone's control, but if this work serves as a catalyst for future documentation and research into little known actors, areas, and aspects of Puerto Rico's politics of resistance, I am proud to leave my grain of sand.

I wish to give special recognition to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Susan L. Woodward, for her amazing patience, persistent encouragement, and unmeasurably valuable insights throughout this long and often rocky journey. We made it! Likewise, my other committee members, Dr. Vincent Boudreau and Dr. Frances Fox Piven, have been constant sources of inspiration and enlightenment. My sincere appreciation for everyone at the Department of Political Science, and The Graduate Center in general, who made this voyage easier and more pleasant during my many years there. Special mention is due to the Association of Latino and Latin American Students (AELLA), whose office was the birthing room of the proposal that later became this dissertation, and the Politics and Protest Workshop, where I received incredibly fruitful advice, as well as encouragement. Dr. John Krinsky, in particular, was a tremendous help in thinking through a number of conceptual and theoretical impasses. My gratitude goes as well to Dr. María Pérez y González, and everyone at the Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies at Brooklyn College, for their understanding and flexibility.

Among the many people who contributed, in one way or another, Francisco Fortuño and Shadia Almasri threw their labor into the ring, helping out with the transcription of the interviews.

Without their work, the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible. As my partner and co-conspirator, Shadia's unrelenting love, support, and incomprehensible tolerance for my worst possible sides, arriving at a critical "switchpoint" in my own life, have without a doubt been the breath that has kept me going. Likewise, I couldn't have done it without the loving encouragement and support (often having to take material form) of my parents and the rest of my extended family.

I would also like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Pedro Julio Serrano, Lucy Cruz, Reinaldo Rodríguez, Fátima Santana, Rafael Zúñiga, Antonio Carmona, Gustavo Rivera, Christopher Malone, and Nahomi Galindo, all of whom provided direly needed support, in one form or another, at different stages of this process. In addition to all those whom I have mentioned, countless conversations and interactions with countless friends and comrades have nurtured this project over the years, too many to mention. You know who you are.

Finally, this dissertation was completed thanks to the generous financial support that I received from several sources. Among them, I was fortunate enough to enrich my analytical framework as a graduate student fellow for the academic year 2014-2015 at the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics. My thanks to everyone who participated in the seminar, and especially Drs. Ruth Gilmore, Mary Taylor, Peter Hitchcock, and David Harvey, for the wonderful opportunity. I also benefited, throughout the course of my graduate studies, from two Doctoral Student Research Grants, a Dissertation Year Fellowship, and a Dean K. Harrison Award from the Office of Educational Opportunity and Diversity. I am deeply grateful for all of them.

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List of Acronyms

APPU	<i>Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios</i> Puerto Rican University Professors' Association
AUPE	<i>Asociación de Universitarios Pro-Estadidad</i> University Pro-Statehood Association
BEOG	Basic Educational Opportunity Grant
CA	<i>Comité de Acción</i> Action Committee
CAL	<i>Comandos Armados de Liberación</i> Armed Liberation Commandoes
CAED	<i>Comité de Acción de Estudiantes de Derecho</i> Law Students' Action Committee
CEFI	<i>Comité para el Estudio de las Finanzas Institucionales</i> Committee for the Study of Institutional Finances
CCAUM	<i>Comité Contra el Alza Uniforme en la Matrícula</i> Committee Against the Uniform Tuition Increase
CCHD	<i>Comité Contra la Homofobia y el Discrimen</i> Committee Against Homophobia and Discrimination
CEDEP	<i>Comité en Defensa de la Educación Pública</i> Committee in Defense of Public Education
CES	<i>Consejo de Educación Superior</i> Council on Higher Education
CGT	<i>Confederación General de Trabajadores</i> Workers' General Confederation
CNN	<i>Comité Negociador Nacional</i> National Negotiating Committee
COFINA	<i>Corporación del Fondo de Interés Apremiante</i>

Urgent Interest Fund Corporation (Puerto Rico Sales Tax Financing Corporation)

COPRODE	<i>Comité Pro Derecho al Estudio</i> Pro-Right to Study Committee
CRA	Credit Rating Agency
CRE	<i>Comité de Representación Estudiantil</i> Student Representation Committee
CUCA	<i>Comité Unido Contra el Alza</i> United Committee Against the Hike
FAU	<i>Frente Anticomunista Universitario</i> University Anti-communist Front
FLT	<i>Federación Libre de Trabajadores</i> Workers' Free Federation
FMPR	<i>Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico</i> Puerto Rico Teachers' Federation
FNEP	<i>Federación Nacional de Estudiantes Puertorriqueños</i> National Federation of Puerto Rican Students
FUPI	<i>Federación de Universitarios Pro-Independencia</i> Federation of Pro-Independence University Students
GDB	Government Development Bank
HEEND	<i>Hermandad de Empleados Exentos No Docentes</i> Brotherhood of Exempt, Non-Doctent Employees
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
IVU	<i>Impuesto a las Ventas y Uso</i> Tax on Sales and Use
JIU	<i>Juventud Independentista Universitaria</i> University <i>Independentista</i> Youth

J23	<i>Juventud del 23 de Septiembre</i> September 23rd Youth
MPI	<i>Movimiento Pro Independencia</i> Pro-Independence Movement
MSA	Middle States Association
MSP	<i>Movimiento Socialista Popular</i> Popular Socialist Movement
MST	<i>Movimiento Socialista de Trabajadores</i> Workers' Socialist Movement
OSI	<i>Organización Socialista Internacional</i> International Socialist Organization
PIP	<i>Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño</i> Puerto Rican Independence Party
PNP	<i>Partido Nuevo Progresista</i> New Progressive Party
PSP	<i>Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño</i> Puerto Rican Socialist Party
PSR	<i>Partido Socialista Revolucionario</i> Socialist Revolutionary Party
PPD	<i>Partido Popular Democrático</i> Popular Democratic Party
PPT	Political Process Theory
PRIDCO	Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
S&P	Standard and Poor's Financial Services
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

UPR *Universidad de Puerto Rico*
University of Puerto Rico

UJS *Unión de Juventudes Socialistas*
Union of Socialist Youths

Chapter 1. Introduction

As the sun rose on Wednesday, April 21, 2010, two hundred students, most covering their faces with t-shirts or kerchiefs, some brandishing makeshift shields, approached the main vehicular access gate to the flagship campus of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) at Río Piedras, and chained it shut after a brief scuffle with security guards. Marching alongside in my Puerto Rican Association of University Professors (APPU) t-shirt, I had no idea what to expect in the coming days or weeks. Would the university administration use the police to force the gates back open and hold classes, as it had done in 1981? Would it bet on time and tensions within the student body to wear down the strikers, as it had in 1992 and 2005? And how would the students respond to any number of possible scenarios? The only certainty seemed to be that to stand even a glimmer of a chance, the strikers would first need to bring a recalcitrant administration to the negotiating table, which presented itself as no small feat following sixteen months of protests and public debate that failed to stay the government's resolve to impose a neoliberal agenda of austerity. Little did anyone imagine that we were witnessing the start of a months-long, two-phase process that would involve all 11 campuses, and eventually result in the concession, at least temporarily, of every one of the movements' main demands—an unprecedented feat at the UPR, with very few parallels in Puerto Rican history.

Navigating the Unknown Island

They told me there were no more unknown islands, and that, even if there were, they wouldn't drag themselves away from the comforts of home and the good life they have on board passenger ships to set off on ocean-bound adventures, searching for the impossible, as though we were still in the days when the sea was obscure. And what did you tell them? That the sea is always obscure. And didn't you tell them about the unknown island? How could I talk to them about an unknown island, if I do not know one? But you are sure it exists. As sure as I am that the sea is obscure.

—José Saramago, “The Tale of the Unknown Island” (1998)

¿Qué hacen los puertorriqueños, que no se rebelan?
—Ramón E. Betances (cited in Ojeda and Estrade 2000: 96)¹

How did this happen? Puerto Rico was an unlikely flashpoint among the student rebellions that erupted around the world between 2009 and 2011 (Solomon and Palmieri 2011), predating and perhaps foreshadowing the broader popular uprisings against neoliberalism and financial hegemony that took shape in the so-called Arab Spring, the Southern European “Movements of the Squares,” and Occupy Wall Street (Rosa 2015; Lynn Rosario 2013). A territorial possession of the United States since 1898, the islands² of Puerto Rico are an enduring formal colony in a postcolonial world, whose politics of resistance are an enigma even to its inhabitants, where national liberation has proved elusive and the political left remains small and fragmented (although visible and often influential). Furthermore, the two parties that have alternated dominance of the local party system for at least five decades have openly embraced a neoliberal agenda since at least the late 1980s, increasingly narrowing policy differences and setting off a wave of privatizations, often coerced or enticed by U.S. federal legislation. In 2009, a right-wing administration swept into office, laying off tens of thousands of public employees in an alleged effort to avoid a further downgrade of the colony’s credit rating. After more than a year of widespread uproar but little if any real resistance, the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike and its eventual outcomes were all the more unexpected, not least to its participants.

¹ “What are the Puerto Ricans doing, that they don’t rebel?” (my trans.). These words were allegedly pronounced on his deathbed by Betances, the intellectual leader of the failed 1868 Lares Rebellion against Spanish rule in Puerto Rico and longtime representative of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in Europe, frustrated by the relative ease with which U.S. troops occupied the island.

² The territory today comprised by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, ceded by Spain through the Treaty of Paris of 1898 and declared “unincorporated” by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1901, included, in addition to the main island of Puerto Rico, the inhabited island municipalities of Vieques (est. 1843) and Culebra (est. 1880), and a number of uninhabited cays and islets.

The goal of this dissertation is not to establish generalizable causal relationships between the outcomes of the 2010-11 strike and any of the innumerable variables at play within Puerto Rico, the UPR, or the student movement. Rather, by using the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike as an extended case study, I sought to explore how interactions among movement actors, and between the movement and other actors, shape the decisions faced by contentious urban social movements at every step, and the ways in which those decisions are made, ultimately influencing those outcomes. Embarking from what I already knew, I asked myself two questions: How has the neoliberal context affected the choices facing the century-old student movement at the UPR? How did interactions among different actors within that movement lead to specific ways of addressing and making those decisions in the 2010-11 student strike? What I've increasingly come to realize is that, not only are the two never clearly separable (something that social movement scholars have increasingly emphasized, as I discuss below), but *neoliberalization* as both interaction and process that shapes movement choices is best understood not just in terms of the actions of other players that constrain or enable them, but of the patterns that emerge within the dilemmas that movements face and must continually "solve."

My argument is not, therefore, that neoliberalism makes a certain set of tactics and frames more or less available, as my original first question suggests, and that certain kinds of internal interaction then lead to certain decisions, producing certain outcomes, as a straightforward path-dependency model might hold. I have adopted a more nuanced version of path-dependency where multiple and variegated decisions shape each other over time (Lin 2015; Haydu 1998). In this view, the outcomes of internally diverse and contradictory movements are not determined by the application of any particular tactical repertoire (by either movements or their opponents), but arrived at through often contentious deliberation and problem-solving that in turn raises new

dilemmas, including recurring ones that cannot be permanently resolved, at least in the short term. Empirically, this makes a difference, because the focus is not on “proving” causal relations external to the movement, but on dilemmas, debates, and decisions within the movement itself. Broader, longer-term, contextual processes such as neoliberalization, which at an institutional level may respond to or be part of even broader (national³ and transnational) processes, do not so much create new dilemmas as reassemble preexisting problems faced by actors within specific arenas. As I discuss below and in later chapters, neoliberalization at the UPR has tended to intensify a combination of traditional strategic dilemmas, which together emerge within movement debates as its central *recurring dilemma*: an apparent tradeoff between public appeal and effective pressure.

Strategic dilemmas are perceived and addressed through complex interactions among movement participants with very diverse degrees and types of motivation, knowledge, and prior experience. My findings show that a significant portion of first-time activists who participated in the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike were acutely aware of the neoliberal dilemma, as a result of which many were in turn attracted to the four-decades old leftist group on which I focused the attention of my fieldwork and interviews, the Union of Socialist Youths (UJS), student wing of the Socialist Movement of Workers (MST). I argue that contrary to a certain conventional wisdom that “leaderless movements” are the future (see for example Castells 2012), tight-knit, highly committed cadre organizations such as the UJS played a crucial role in helping the broader movement navigate the contradictory climates of neoliberalization, not just by providing much-needed experience, skills, and resources, but also by acting as a *leadership team* among several contending to influence how participants understood and addressed dilemmas. In synthesis, I found

³ For the purposes of this dissertation, “national” refers to the broader social context of Puerto Rico, beyond the institutional arena of the UPR, except where expressly noted. I use “local” or “colonial” wherever necessary to refer to Puerto Rico in relation to U.S. actors and arenas, and “federal” or “metropolitan” to the latter in relation to the former.

that overall, the UJS helped increase the movement's *strategic capacity* by promoting tactical flexibility and framing diversity, keeping “on the table” tactics (including the strike itself) and identity frames that might otherwise have been discarded or neglected, through decision-making and other processes that were by and large democratic, horizontal, and transparent.

Literature Review

My research speaks to four broad bodies of theoretical and empirical literature: 1) social movement studies in general; 2) educational ideology and practices in capitalist social formations; 3) neoliberalism and popular responses to it; and 4) historical and political-economic narratives on Puerto Rico in the twentieth century, including the UPR and its student movement. I will briefly discuss each in turn, before specifying in the following sections the ways in which this dissertation contributes to the conversation.

Social Movements

There are three broad debates within social movement studies that I have sought to address here. The first of these focuses on the applicability of theoretical concepts and models across culturally dissimilar and unevenly developed regions. Two decades ago, Vincent Boudreau sketched a strategy for extending political process theory (PPT) to protest movements in the global periphery or “South”. Instead of treating concepts developed in and for core or “Northern” countries, like “political opportunity,” as a relatively fixed set of independent variables, Boudreau argued that “different combinations of macro-political structure and social need will elevate one collective strategy over others,” (Boudreau 1996: 183-184). Thus, for example, “open and attentive State institutions can create opportunities for *demonstration* even as a society's impoverishment produces demands for *direct action*” (*Ibid*; emphasis in the original). Consequently, empirical research has shown that protest “mobilizes not primarily when the inactive decide to act, but when

existing social networks respond to changing political conditions in ways that allow them to ally with one another behind a program of action” (Boudreau 2001: 167), particularly, although not exclusively, in the highly stratified and repressive “developing” societies of the world periphery (see also, for example Alimi 2009; Boudreau 2009; and Almeida 2008).

A second contested issue area in the study of social movements that I engage with is the theoretical problem of accommodating human agency and structural constraints, and how these factors are operationalized in the analysis. As the long-standing dominant paradigm in social movement theory, PPT tended to emphasize elements of the “political opportunity structure” as independent variables (see for example Tarrow 1998)⁴ over factors related to human agency, resulting in research that assumed long-standing grievances as given (Jasper 2011: 15), neglecting much of the subjective work that movement actors do (Polletta and Jasper: 2001: 284). Taking a cue from “new social movement” theory (for a summary, see Buechler 1995) – critics have instead insisted on a focus on actor-centered variables, including culture and identity (Polletta 2004), emotions (Gould 2009), and strategy (Ganz 2009). In recent years, a revised version of PPT has emerged that attempts to address some of these concerns by focusing on the “dynamics of contention” and specifying the smaller conceptual units or “mechanisms” that make up political processes, rather than broad structures (McAdam, et al. 2001; Aminzade, et al. 2001). Debate remains, however, with some authors insisting on salvaging political opportunities as independent variables (Meyer 2004; Meyer and Minkoff 2004), and others insisting on scrapping them

⁴ Thus, although authors in the PPT tradition always recognized organization (“mobilizing structures”), identities and solidarities (“frames”), and tactical repertoires as variables alongside political opportunities and constraints (Tarrow 1998: 20), in practice, research tended to focus almost exclusively on the external factors that explained movement emergence. Of the four classic PPT dimensions of opportunity/constraint first identified by Douglas McAdam (1982), three – the relative openness or closure of the political system, the stability or instability of elite alignments, and the presence or absence of elite allies – reflect the regime’s “pull” (opportunities), only one – the State’s capacity and propensity for repression – its ability to repel, and none reflect movements’ own capacities.

altogether in favor of a view of *strategic interactions* between actors (“players”) and their contexts (“arenas”) (Jasper 2011).

James Jasper, among others, has argued convincingly that “for complex strategic interactions, we may even need to abandon multivariate models that try to specify independent and dependent variables” (2011: 17). As Jasper points out, in much recent empirical research on both Northern (see for example Ramos 2008) and Southern movements (see for example Araj and Brym 2010), the most important “political opportunities” in fact end up comprising other variables, such as resources or other actor's choices. By instead focusing first on actors’ strategic choices, Jasper argues, scholars can “build up” from the micro- to the macro-foundations of political action in order to understand how “structured arenas” shape those choices (2004: 4). These choices are responses to challenges or *dilemmas* consisting of “two or more options, each with a long list of risks, costs, and potential benefits . . . [in which often] there is simply no single right answer,” (Jasper 2006: 1). However, choices don’t simple “solve” dilemmas, they pose new ones, and sometimes lead to situations where old dilemmas re-emerge down the line. Using Taiwan’s anti-corruption movement (the “Reds”) as a case study, Yu-Sheng Lin has distinguished between the latter (“contingent” dilemmas), and the former (“recurring” dilemmas), as intertwined within a “reactive sequence” of problem-solving, where choices altering the movement’s external and internal dynamics followed a curve that continually led back to the former (2015: 294-295). Conceiving the Reds’ inability to break away from Taiwan’s traditional bipolar political structure as the recurrent dilemma in his case study, Lin argues that “making a strategic choice is an interactive process between structure and agency” (*Ibid.*: 293).

Broad and long-term political and economic contexts therefore continue to matter, even to Jasper (see for example 2011: 20, 27), perhaps more than his strategic vocabulary seems to imply.

As Boudreau notes, “movements that arise in industrial slums behave differently from those in middle-class suburbs or preindustrial agrarian villages” (1996: 177-178). However, if traditional PPT’s understanding of structure was too rigid, more recent research “makes only weak and relatively unsystematic connection between macroeconomic conditions and political opportunity” (Flacks 2004: 139). Such concerns, initially central to social movement studies (Schwartz 1988 [1976]; Piven and Cloward 1979 [1977]; Tilly 1978), have long been relegated to the study of revolutions, to which they are thought to be more relevant (see for example Goodwin 2001; Skocpol 1979).⁵ These lacunae have prompted a renewed interest among some social movement scholars in Marxist analysis, leading to recent studies that attempt to surmount the earlier weaknesses of Marxism and the broader structuralist tradition by emphasizing political concepts such as ideology, hegemony, contradiction, and struggle in the construction of social movement (see for example Barker et al. 2013). Drawing on the work of Charles Tilly and Marc Steinberg, for example, John Krinsky has suggested that ruling-class “governance” strategies (such as neoliberalism) can be understood as more or less coherent interactive *repertoires* “because the performances that compose them accrete over time, growing out of historically available resources” (2013: 113-115). Others have suggested understanding such repertoires as “social movements from above” (Nilsen and Cox 2014; see also Sklair 1997).

A third problem raised by social movement research that I seek to address is the question of organizations and their relationship to other participants within broader movements. Organizations were seen as an important variable by the early resource mobilization scholarship

⁵ While much of this may have to do with Northern bias in case selection, there is no reason why the study of non-revolutionary social movement cases, North or South, should necessarily shun structural concerns. Much-heralded notions about the advent of a “social movement society” (Meyer and Tarrow 1998), “post-materialist values” (Inglehart 1997), or “post-citizenship” movements (Jasper 2011:27) really address specific types of movements that emerge under specific macro-historical political and economic conditions. Reified and abstracted from these conditions, such concepts lose their analytical power.

(see for example Gamson 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977) that was either replaced or absorbed by PPT as it evolved into the dominant social movement paradigm. Among other advantages, organizations were thought to help overcome the classic “free-rider” dilemma—in which potential movement actors receive all of the rewards of movement success regardless of whether they incur the costs of participation— by offering selective incentives to members (Olson 1965). As PPT veered away from such “rational” cost-benefit calculations, organizations faded into the political opportunity structure, and their subjective work vanished or appeared less crucial. Other scholars, heeding the warnings of elite theory regarding the “iron cage of oligarchy,” leveled a different set of arguments against organization-centric research that upheld the benefits of large, bureaucratic mass-membership organizations uncritically (Piven and Cloward 1979 [1977]). Today, organizations remain conspicuously absent from much movement theorizing—a lack reflected in dominant media as well as activist narratives eager to mark their distance from “Leninism”— even when the presence of organizations working within movements is crucial (see, for example, Alcañiz and Scheier 2008; Slocum and Rhoads 2008).⁶

Piven and Cloward argued that smaller, tight-knit groups of highly committed “cadre” were best suited to mobilizing resource “poor” constituents while avoiding the oligarchic pitfalls of mass bureaucracies, among other reasons, because they were more tactically flexible and ideologically cohesive (1984: 595-597). Scholars focusing on Southern movements,⁷ such as

⁶ Personal experience and general knowledge (among movement participants and attentive observers) also reveal the active presence and occasional prominence of these groups and their members in practically every mass “leaderless” movement that has captured headlines in the past few years: *Anticapitalistas* in Spain, Communists and others in Greece and Chile, Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt, and radical micro-sects of every stripe (from anarchists and “autonomists” to trotskyists and maoists) in the U.S. Occupy movement.

⁷ While it may be that higher levels of repression in non-democratic or semi-authoritarian contexts make revolutionary (often self-professedly Leninist) modes of organizing more prominent and relevant, there is no reason to suppose these actors can’t or don’t have a relevant (if perhaps different) role to play in less repressive Northern contexts. As Boudreau points out, the late Charles Tilly himself once rejected distinctions between protest and revolution because they “prejudge the intentions and political positions of the actors” (1996: 182) – indeed, personal

Boudreau, have paid the most attention to interactions between what some scholars call *cadre organizations* and other movement participants. Their research shows how at key moments, and not without contradictions and problems, cadre can help link grassroots activists focused on local issues to broader, longer term national or regional frames of collective identity (Boudreau 2001; see also Rutten 2003). Even within Northern contexts (the U.S. feminist and student anti-Apartheid solidarity movements, for example), however, scholars have highlighted the importance of interactions among political micro-cohorts generations (Whittier 1995) as well as group activities (Hirsch 1990) for recruitment, identity-building, and sustaining loyalty. Focusing on his own experience with traditional, mass-membership organizations in the context of farm workers in the U.S. southwest in the 1960s and 1970s, Marshall Ganz emphasizes the role of “leadership teams” in developing “strategic capacity” (2009: 10). These are all mechanisms that require some degree of organization, and while they do not always depend on (and may conflict with) formal organization, they consist of precisely the kind of work that dedicated cadre, if flexible and attentive enough to grassroots needs, are best suited for.

Education, Ideology, Capitalism

This dissertation also necessarily seeks to engage with the theoretical and empirical literature on the relationship between capitalism and educational institutions, as well as theories of critical pedagogical practice relevant to social movement framing processes. As a result of the character and trajectory of “capitalism” as a concept, both bodies of literature derive strongly from the broad Marxian academic tradition, although the first also draws a good deal from sociological power structure and network analysis (see for example Grace 2007 [1984]) as well as post-structural theory (see for example Slaughter and Rhoads 2009), while both have been greatly enriched by

experience suggests that many social movement actors identify as “revolutionary” while being well aware that the immediate conditions of their struggles are anything but.

postcolonial, feminist, and critical race theories (see for example Lipman 2011; hooks 1994). While Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote little on the subject of schools and education as such, they famously insisted in *The German Ideology* that “[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas,” meaning that “[t]he individuals composing the ruling class . . . rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and *regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age*” (1932; my emphasis).

There are two distinct arguments here as to the source of the ideological dominance of the ruling class: 1) the class that controls the “means of material production” also controls the “means of mental production” (e.g., leisure time for intellectual speculation, ownership/control over and access to media and educational institutions); and 2) “[t]he ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas” (Marx and Engels 1932).⁸ Later strands of Marxist theory on educational institutions and processes have been defined largely by which of the two is emphasized. Antonio Gramsci, for example, argued that a ruling class established its hegemony by acquiring not just control over the political and repressive organs of the state, but also “moral and intellectual” leadership over subaltern classes through the institutions of civil society (1971: 181-182), among which the school plays a preeminent role (*Ibid.*: 258). It is able to do in large part as a result of its control and ownership over what Marx and Engels call “the means of material production” —or, more specifically, “because of its position and function in the world of production” (*Ibid.*: 12). It

⁸ Less discussed in the context of education theory, but equally relevant in terms of the political (class) analysis of specific educational policies within a capitalist context, is Marx and Engels’s critique of Lassallean educational reform proposals (in the “Gotha Program”), where they lambast calls for “free” higher education as merely “defraying the cost of education of the upper classes from the general tax receipts”; argue for “technical schools (theoretical and practical)” to complement the general “elementary” education of the working class; and insist on distinguishing support state financing and regulation of public schools (“as is done in the United States”!) from government (or church) “influence” on schools, which revolutionaries should resist (1999 [1970]). These arguments have been directly influential on the position of a segment of the UPR student movement, led by the UJS, in favor of “income-adjusted” or sliding scale tuition, against others’ preference for universal free tuition (see, for example, UJS 2005).

is important to recall, however, that Gramsci also believed that consciousness was inherently contradictory, so that the potential for resistance is always latent in subaltern classes’ “good sense,” which coexists with hegemonic “common sense” (*Ibid.*: 328).

Louis Althusser, in contrast, formulated a stance much closer to the second proposition, wherein what is crucial is not so much who controls the channels through which ideas are disseminated, but that ideologies have “material existence” insofar as it is only ever in and through them that humans act out the lived, material relationships of their existence— ideology “interpellates” individuals as subjects (Althusser 2014 [1995]: loc. 4335-5152).⁹ In this view, schools are less a distribution channel for dominant ideas, than sites for the reproduction of dominant relations. Althusser referred to such sites as ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), with schools replacing the feudal church in this respect as the dominant ISAs of the modern capitalist state (2014 [1995]: loc. 3752). In synthesis, through not just the teaching of “ideas” but also practice (rituals, hierarchies, rules, rewards, punishments, and spatial and temporal structures), capitalist schools mold a captive audience of schoolchildren from all classes (not without variations) into “good” subjects corresponding to the different positions within the hierarchies of the capitalist work force and class structure (*Ibid.*: locs. 1721, 3809).

In application, the distance between the strands of Marxian education theory have been narrow. Gramsci’s theory of hegemony was especially influential on the works of British Marxist scholars of culture and class formation (Thompson 1963; Williams 1962), and later the Cultural Studies school (Hall 1980; Willis 1981). Other Marxist-influenced scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, who preferred to do without the concept of ideology altogether, nonetheless argued that educational institutions reproduce and legitimize class inequalities by linking individual “success”

⁹ All e-book locations (loc.) cited correspond AZW (Kindle) files as displayed on a second generation (2013) Nexus 7 tablet.

to cultural capital and ruling class “habitus,” which lower class students tend to lack (1977; 1974). In the United States, where there has always been greater resistance to the notion that an economic ruling class controls the state or public education, scholars examining the renewed stratification of the educational system after the 1970s found a useful framework in structural explanations (Apple 2004 [1979]; Bowles and Gintis 2011 [1976]; Anyon 1980). Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, for example, argued in terms very similar to both Althusser and Bourdieu that the school system in the U.S. helped integrate young people into capitalist production through what they called the “correspondence principle” by replicating the “discipline . . . type of demeanor, modes of self-presentation, self-image . . . social-class identifications . . . [and] hierarchical division of labor” (2011 [1976]: 131) required in the capitalist workplace.¹⁰ Citing their own and others’ empirical research, the authors insist that the open character of the U.S. school system does not reflect its role in screening cognitive skills, but rather in reproducing a “technocratic-meritocratic” ideology meant to legitimate inequalities by placing responsibility for “success” and “failure” uniquely on the individual (*Ibid.*: 102-124).¹¹

Since the advent of neoliberalism, a great deal of attention has been focused on gauging its impact on all levels of educational institutions around the world (see for example Giroux 2014; Bale and Knopp 2012; Compton and Weiner 2008; Rhoads and Torres 2006). On the one hand, privatization and austerity policies seem to undermine the privileged role once held by schools and universities, leading some to argue that they have been replaced by “the economy” itself as the predominant ISA of our time (see for example Žižek 2010: 91). On the other, the sorting and

¹⁰ “Correspondence” here refers to the parallel between hierarchies of authority at school and workplace, not between educational attainment and eventual social class.

¹¹ Structuralist approaches to the ideological role of educational institutions such as these have often been criticized for being too “deterministic” or “functionalist.” In fact, as Bowles and Gintis knew well (2011 [1976]: 12-13) the relationship between capitalism and education is dynamic and dialectical, thoroughly immersed in and driven by interacting practices, projects and resistances of all kinds (Knopp 2012: 24-27).

legitimation functions identified by earlier scholars seem to persist, albeit under rapidly changing conditions (Lipman 2011; Russom 2012; Weiner 2003). Some scholars have examined this shift within higher education in the U.S. in terms of the mechanisms through which networks of university administrators, employees, and students are disciplined into accepting and promoting the logic of “academic capitalism.” Slaughter and Rhoads, for example, focus on academic capitalism as a disciplinary regime that is continually produced by networks of actors, including corporations, the neoliberal state, and universities —be they public, private nonprofit, or (increasingly) for-profit— that link them to the “new economy” (2010 [2004]). Following in the sociological tradition of tracing “interlocking directorates” at diverse levels of public and private “governance” (see for example Mann 1986; Useem 1984; Domhoff 1967), empirical research has shown the decisive role in this process of corporate executives on the boards of universities and other “nonprofit” arenas that shape education policy (Mathies and Slaughter 2013).

A major source of inspiration for critical educators seeking strategies and alternatives to neoliberalism has been the life and work of Paulo Freire (see for example Giroux 2011; Apple 2003; MacLaren 2000). Freire’s “Hegelian” re-reading of Marx led to a “pedagogy of liberation” whereby the learner (“educand”) teaches him/herself through active practice facilitated by an educator, a process that he contrasted to the prevailing concept of “banking education” whereby an authority figure “deposits” knowledge in the forms of facts in the learner’s head (2005 [1975]). Himself actively involved in revolutionary politics (see for example Freire 2016 [1978]), Freire’s method of self-education/emancipation paralleled his vision of the development of revolutionary consciousness. While his theories have often been contrasted to a certain caricature of

“Leninism,”¹² the self-avowedly Leninist educational theories of Lev Vygotsky (1978; see also Au 2007) suggest a far greater theoretical proximity in the roles of revolutionary cadre and Freire’s educator than often suggested. Vygotsky understood learning as an inherently social process of interacting with the world and other people in it that entails internalizing representations of material relationships, mediated by language and other culturally and socially available tools that are provided by “capable peers” (1978).¹³ Colin Barker and John Krinsky have recently proposed adapting a model based on Vygotsky’s ideas to social movement learning (2009),¹⁴ a theoretical move that is consistent with Ganz’s notion of strategic capacity, as well as Lin’s view of movement strategy as “reiterated problem-solving.”

Neoliberalization and its Discontents

A third broad area of theoretical and empirical literature that I engage with is that which grounds the well-known postulates of neoclassical economic theory among a concrete set of practices and the political actors, institutions, and movements that have implemented them, which altogether form the complex widely regarded as scholars today as neoliberalism.¹⁵ Foremost in this effort have been geographers, critical political economists, sociologists, and international relations

¹² V. I. Lenin has long been credited with the doubtful honor of introducing into Marxism the idea that revolutionary consciousness can only be brought to the working class “from without,” based on his arguments in *What is to be Done?* (1961 [1902]). For a thorough discussion and refutation of this caricature, see Lih 2008.

¹³ “More capable” should not in any way be read here as implying any inherent moral, cultural, or intellectual superiority, but precisely what Ganz means by the relationship between leadership and strategic capacity. In significant ways, capacity is acquired through experience, although it is never strictly reducible to age or experience. Although Vygotsky’s main focus was on the development of personality in children, learning in his account was a life-long process.

¹⁴ The model, known as “Cultural-Historical Activities Theory,” was developed by Vygotsky’s collaborator, A. N. Leontiev (for sources and a thorough discussion of CHAT, see Barker and Krinsky 2009).

¹⁵ Commonly associated with the privatization of state enterprises and services, trade, tax, and pension system liberalization, and deregulation of labor and financial markets, among other forms of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2003), neoliberal policies and practices were spread around the world in the 1980s by the disciplinary conditionalities imposed on debtor nations by International Financial Institutions, and was embraced as gospel by political and economic elites following the “Washington Consensus” of the 1980s and 1990s (for a historical summary, see Nilsen and Cox 2014: 137-141).

scholars inspired by Marx and Gramsci, who have linked the “globalization” of capital accumulation to the emergence of a “transnational capitalist class” (led by financial capital), a reconfigured state increasingly subjected to transnational governance regimes controlled by private “gatekeepers,” and the hegemonic consolidation of neoliberal “common sense” around the world (see for example Duménil and Levy 2011; Harvey 2005; Robinson 2004; Sklair 2001; Sassen 2000; Gill 1995; Cox 1987). In synthesis, the resulting political and economic project consists of the “rolling back” of the Keynesian/Fordist “class compromise” of the mid twentieth century,¹⁶ as well as the “rolling out” of policies that more closely resemble market mechanisms (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). A good deal of the empirical research that has examined the impact of neoliberalism on social structures and movements has focused on Latin America (Silva 2009; Stahler-Sholk, et al. 2008; Johnston and Almeida 2006; Portes and Hoffman 2003; Madrid 2003; Eckstein 2001 [1990]).

Ubiquitous crises since the mid-1990s have led to widespread questioning of the wisdom and efficiency of neoliberal prescriptions,¹⁷ and presented opportunities for movements from below to challenge its dominance at various levels throughout the world.¹⁸ However, these built-in crises have often served as opportunities for neoliberal managers to further extend the reach of capital into heretofore public or protected arenas (Hoogvelt 2001; Pilger 2003; Klein 2007). Faced

¹⁶ Przeworski and Wallerstein, among others, argued from a rational-choice influenced “analytical Marxist” perspective that at a given point in social and economic development, compromise was preferable to costly and uncertain conflict for both labor and capital (1982). Today, however, as Erik Olin Wright has noted, “in spite of . . . emergent possibilities, in general the capitalist class and its political allies resist these options [that might reestablish compromise] . . . Even in Europe where the old forms of class compromise had been institutionalized in the most progressive manner, there is little sympathy by capitalists for efforts at reconstructing class compromises around new forms of working-class associational power” (2000: 104).

¹⁷ In addition to Marxian scholars, well-known neo-Keynesian economists who have challenged the basic assumptions of neoliberalism (see for example Piketty 2013; Herndon, et al. 2013; Krugman 2012; Stiglitz 2002).

¹⁸ Most famously in Latin America, where the “pink tide” swept left-of-center governments into office on the tails of popular social movements during the first decade of the twenty-first century (see for example Petras and Veltmeyer 2005, 2011; Prevost, et al. 2012; Webber and Carr 2012).

with crisis, neoliberal actors have declared new injections of capital as the remedy, demanding further neoliberal policies such as cutbacks and other austerity measures. Critics have argued that neoliberal common sense, which obscures the roots of crisis in capital accumulation itself (Nilsen and Cox 2014: 70-72; see also Harvey 2005: 2-3), is reproduced and enforced through disciplinary mechanisms operated by transnational “gatekeepers” such as Credit Rating Agencies (CRAs) and their local intermediaries (Sinclair 2005; Hackworth 2002; Sassen 2000), which internalize a consumer/debtor ideology (Lazzarato 2012; Sklair 2001) that folds together the coercive and consensual elements of hegemony through the individualization of risk and guilt.¹⁹ At the same time, neoliberal “winners” are insulated from accountability (Aalbers 2013), while the militarization of policing and surveillance of excluded populations reinforces this discipline (Wacquant 2009).

In part because these mechanisms are so pervasive (and the policies they serve so unpopular), unlike in previous epochal shifts, it is often difficult to identify neoliberalism with specific political actors (neoliberals seldom wear the label). Here, Gramsci’s notion of “passive revolution” is useful, allowing seemingly distinct and even opposed historical events—for example, a populist upsurge and a subsequent period of restoration²⁰—to be seen as part of the same continuum wherein the “shifting sands” of hegemony provide opportunities for reorganizing state identity and social relations in ways that are consistent with capital accumulation (Morton

¹⁹ Although “debt” as an economic relationship has been around much longer than capitalism as a mode of production (see for example Graeber 2011), it has been “conceived and programmed as the strategic heart of neoliberal politics” (Lazzarato 2012: 25) from the onset. In addition to the limits on spending or wholesale privatization of public assets on which access to loans and credit are typically conditioned, debt service, required to secure access to further credit/debt, siphons off public resources from cash-starved economies, de facto turning every citizen of debtor states into a debtor. In this sense at least, “Debt . . . also functions as a mechanism for the production and ‘government’ of collective and individual subjectivities” (Lazzarato 2012: 29).

²⁰ In Gramsci’s classic example, it was the Italian *Risorgimento*. For Adam Morton, it is the Mexican Revolution (2011).

2011; see also Nilsen and Cox 2014). To contextualize “neoliberalism” in such ways helps shift the focus onto “actually existing neoliberalism” (Brenner and Theodore 2002). As numerous scholars have pointed out, neoliberal practices do not follow a straightforward pattern, but have evolved and adapted in the attempt to indefinitely delay any reckoning with the permanent crises of late capitalism (Krippner 2011; Sklair 2001: 299). Contemporary governance schemes often include, alongside profit-oriented neoliberal strategies, neostatist, neocommunitarian, and neocorporatist ones (Krinsky and Simonet 2011; Jessop 2002), often in ways that enable and legitimize the encroaching logic of profit and capital (Muehlebach 2012; Boltanski and Chiapello 2006). These insights reveal neoliberalization more clearly as process and relation, rather than a self-contained object or a one shot deal. In this view, what is important when evaluating its influence on movement choices is whether shifting dilemmas correspond, in a generally coherent way, to the major tendencies of neoliberalization within a specific arena, not an ideal type of “pure” neoliberalism.

There are at least four overarching transnational processes that accompany neoliberalization today, which shape the general contours of interactions that take place within local arenas. Intimately related to the *transnationalization* of capital circuits underlying neoliberal “globalization” is *financialization* —the becoming hegemonic of financial capital through the integration of monetary, banking, and financial systems (Lazzarato 2012: 23; see also Krippner 2011; Germain 1997). Following the demise of the Bretton Woods international banking system in 1971, the combined effect of the “shock” of 1979, increasing restraints on governments’ ability to ease public debt by coining money,²¹ and the elimination of legal barriers protecting productive

²¹ The doubling of nominal rates (interest rates upon repayment), which had been trending downward, ordered by Paul Volcker as head of the Federal Reserve is referred to as the “shock” of 1979 (see Harvey 2005; Duménil and Lévy 2004). This measure was purportedly intended to lower inflation rates caused by “excess” credit in the U.S. economy; instead, it merely drew investment away from goods and services into the suddenly more lucrative

assets from investment markets has resulted in the penetration of every moment and aspect of the productive process by financial capital. A third, related process, is *securitization*, the possibility of transforming debt into tradable securities on the financial market. Securitization has made central and local (“municipal”) government bonds, including higher yielding “high risk” bonds, attractive to investors, and especially financial managers (Lazzarato 2012: 21-22), turning sovereign debt into one of the main sources of foreign direct investment for peripheral as well as core economies (Biglasier and DeRouen 2007). A final process is the consolidation of a transnational *governance regime* based on oversight by private entities, such as CRAs, and the emulation of U.S. property law (Sassen 2000; Sinclair 2005).

The literature on Latin America suggests that these processes shape three major variables whose specific interactions affect the choices facing social movement actors, as can be seen in the “IMF riots” that shook Latin America and much of the world periphery during the 1990s and early 2000s: debt burden, urbanization, and the strength of organized labor (Walton 2001 [1989]: 315-316). This relationship can be summarized in terms of three general tendencies. First, the bargaining power of traditional labor and other organizations within existing structures of intermediation is weakened and fragmented by the new-found mobility and flexibility of capital (Eckstein 2006: 9-16; Murillo 2001: 4; Moody 1997: 180-200). Mass unemployment raises the specter of easy replacement, raising the general cost of protest and leaving public sector workers as the remaining segment of organized labor likely to protest the threat posed by privatization and deregulation (Eckstein 2006: 15). Second, non-workplace arenas for class struggle open up among the new urban poor and working classes (Eckstein 2006: 27-40), and potential allies or opponents

financial sphere (Krippner 2011: 103). It also drove up public debt, which in conjunction with central bank “autonomy” (barring the use of monetary mechanisms to alleviate debt), pushed states and other public entities further into dependence on financial markets (Lazzarato 2012: 26).

appear among new urban “middle” sectors (e.g., self-employed professionals; management; small businessowners) with their own agendas, resources, frames, and tactical preferences (Moody 1997: 208). Third, traditional political opportunities close as heavily indebted states become less responsive to popular demands (Robinson 1996: 48-61, 339-345) and former allies become “disciplined” into accepting neoliberal orthodoxy (Murillo 2001: 3-5), while decision-making power shifts even further away from local arenas and towards international financial institutions and other transnational actors (Eckstein 2006: 8-9).

Puerto Rico and its Student Movements

Finally, but by no means least important, this dissertation will address the broader literature on the political economy and social history of Puerto Rico during the twentieth century, as well as that on the UPR and its student movement. A significant amount of work by Puerto Rican authors has examined the “development strategies” pursued by both the local colonial authorities and the federal U.S. government in Puerto Rico during the second half of the twentieth century (see for example Dietz 2003; Padín 2003; Pantojas-García 1990; Dietz 1987). Others have explored the interaction between structural shifts at the metropolitan level and the formation of political coalitions at the local level to reveal the linkages between dominant interests that produced specific strategies at different times during the twentieth century (Ayala and Bernabe 2007; Grosfoguel 2003; Villaronga 2004). There is consensus among the more structurally oriented scholars that the strategy pursued since at least the 1950s has sought development through export-oriented, free-trade policies that fully integrated Puerto Rico’s dependent economy to the U.S. market, and that the continuation of said policies (or the avoidance of alternatives) is at least partially responsible for the stagnation and increasing debt burden that set on when the colony began to lose its “competitive advantage” to other countries in the region in the post-Bretton Woods era. A more

contentious point has been the degree to which this path was externally imposed or the result of resistance by local elites to populist plans at a time when metropolitan elites were open to tolerating a more active role for the local colonial state (see for example Padín 2003: 285). As I discuss in Chapter 3, my theoretical framework (summarized below) suggests a more integrated process of interaction whereby internal and external actors coalesced and mutually reinforced each other in the context of shifting transnational patterns of capital accumulation.

In the case of the UPR, narratives of its history, by and large, have tended to consist of “great man” narratives only slightly nuanced by considerations of the effects of party politics and student radicalism. Some of the most thorough accounts of institutional transformation were produced before the 1970s (Osuna 1975 [1949]; Nieves Falcón 1965) and follow more or less traditional narratives about Puerto Rico’s political development and specifically the quarter-century rise and evolution of Popular Democratic Party (PPD) hegemony. Contributions to a recent volume commemorating the UPR centennial (Álvarez Curbelo, ed. 2005) provide valuable documentation of key figures and events that marked each decade since its founding in 1903, but their analytical insight is marred by self-celebratory acceptance of institutional myth. Other recent accounts (see for example Irizarry 2004; Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004; Ramos Rodríguez, et al. 2008) examine changes in fiscal policy and policing at the UPR in terms of demographic and electoral shifts, in a somewhat positivistic and superficial manner. In contrast, the scarce critical authors who attribute the same policies to the rise of neoliberalism or “academic capitalism” at the UPR (Vélez Cardona 2014; Rosario Luna 2014; Rosario Luna 2009; Vélez Cardona 2008; Vélez Cardona 2002) focus primarily on tracing the implementation of specific policies rather than the underlying economic and political dynamics that constitute this “rise.”

Similarly, studies of Puerto Rico's student movement during the first half of the twentieth century by Puerto Rican authors have focused largely on the elite, male-dominated, nationalist organizations that tended to dominate oppositional student politics (Picó 1985a; Picó 1985b; Navarro 2000; Reynolds 1989), despite some attention to structural factors, as well as to class and gender. In 1964-1965, U.S. political scientist Arthur Liebman conducted a survey-based study of the politics of Puerto Rican students (1970). Liebman's findings echo those of Seymour Martin Lipset and others close to modernization theory, who argued that students in developing countries were essentially conservative (see for example Lipset, ed. 1967). Focusing an entire chapter on student radicals from the Federation of Pro-Independence University students (FUPI), Liebman viewed the *fupistas'* insistent radicalism in terms of "deviance" explained largely by socio-psychological factors. Later works attempted to analyze the violent events of 1970-1971 (Rodríguez Graciani 1972; Nieves Falcón, et al. 1971) and those surrounding the 1981 strike (Nieves Falcón, et al. 1982; Picó, et al. 1981) in terms of shifts in demographic patterns and local political arrangements, especially the end of PPD electoral hegemony in 1968. More recently, authors close to the FUPI have produced compelling accounts of that organization's involvement in labor struggles of the era (Cruz Crespo 2014; Agosto 2009) and perception in the mainstream media (Surillo 2006). Others have produced historical accounts of the broader student anti-militaristic movement (Yudkin Suliveres, ed., 2005; Paraliticci 1998). None of these studies, however, attempted to engage the theoretical and empirical literature on social movements.

In contrast, the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike has generated some work, primarily by graduate students (some of whom participated in and conducted their fieldwork during the process), which does approach the event in terms of social movement dynamics. These authors have focused primarily on highly publicized aspects of the strike, such as the relatively high level of repression

with which the administration and government responded, the juridical strategies pursued by a small sector of the student movement, portrayals of the movement by government and media and movement attempts to create alternatives, daily life within the student encampments during the first phase of the strike, the strike's pedagogical and participatory aspects, and the "creative" and performative character of that first phase (Rosa 2015; Rosario 2015; Everhart 2014; Atilés-Osoria 2013; Rosario 2013; Everhart 2012; Stanchich, ed. 2012; Atilés-Osoria and Whyte 2011). Some reference to "neoliberalism" is made, but little effort appears to have been made either at unpacking that concept in terms of broader relations and processes, or at examining the strategic interactions and problem-solving dynamics underlying movement choices. There is little critical examination of dominant narratives about the imperative to adapt tactics to the demands of mass-mediated "public opinion." Likewise, although differences within the movement are acknowledged and discussed in the context of well-known strike anecdotes, such as the identity of the different "gates" (Rosa 2015; Everhart 2012; Laguarda 2011a), the dynamics of debate and decision-making have yet to be explored in any significant depth. Organizations appear as incidental actors within a largely spontaneous process whose "official" identity (that produced for external consumption) is largely taken at face value.

Notes on Methodology and Case Selection

Situating Myself

The primary research technique that I have sought to deploy in this study is participant observation or ethnography—more specifically, *critical* ethnography, whereby I have not remained distant or neutral with regard to the "field," but rather situate myself as subject within a lived domain (see for example Madison 2005; Noblit, et al. 2004; Carspacken, ed. 1996). One of the crucial prerequisites of this technique is that the ethnographer must make explicit his or her own

implication and position with regard to the power relations that produce his or her narrative (see for example Haraway 1988; Kobayashi 2001). Like Alessandra Rosa and Melissa Lynn Rosario, who have published doctoral dissertations on the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, I witnessed and actively participated in at least part of the strike firsthand. In my case, participation was largely in a supportive role, as a member of both the APPU and the MST. Unlike Rosa and Rosario, I did not become involved in the movement as a result of, or with the intention to conduct, fieldwork. Having placed my graduate studies in political science on hiatus since the end of 2006, and returned to the UPR to finish my Law studies (which I had started back in 2001), it was rather my personal and political involvement and continuing relationship with the student movement (I graduated in May 2009) that sparked my interest in adopting it as the object of a future dissertation. From the beginning, I have conceived this project as part of a *pedagogical* effort, in the spirit of Freire and Vygotsky, not just to preserve the memory of the strike, but to do so under specific theoretical lenses that highlight its gaps and contradictions, thus contributing to the analytical and strategic toolkit of future generations of activists and scholars.

At the time that the 2010-11 strike began, I was teaching seventh and eighth grade Social Studies at the UPR Secondary School, which is ascribed to the UPR College of Education, formally making me part of its faculty. Located just outside the Río Piedras campus, near the gate closest to the College of Education, the Secondary School was shut down by its own students as part of the strike. Not all faculty were sympathetic, but the APPU, of which I was a member, pledged not to cross picket lines and to remain vigilant to ensure the strike would not be broken by force. Although I did not stay overnight at the strikers' encampments or participate in many of their day-to-day activities, I was known and trusted by many strikers, having been previously active in the student movement. As a result, I had free and regular access to the occupied campus, where I

interacted socially, participated in educational/informational activities, and observed several meetings of the *pleno* (the strikers' main decision-making body). I participated in dozens of pickets and marches, took on daily late-night or early-morning shifts (which were often extended throughout the day) at the tents set up outside the gates by the APPU and other groups, and went online to procure outside and international solidarity, producing widely read blog entries and articles that were re-published in other print and online sources (Laguarta 2011a; Laguarta 2011b; Laguarta 2010a; Laguarta 2010b). During the second phase, having temporarily relocated to Barcelona, Spain, I maintained this last role, playing a major role in organizing the “World Day of Solidarity with the UPR.”²²

This is, therefore, not a “neutral” or “objective” narrative in any sense of the word. I opted to limit the scope of my interviews to members of the UJS —the student organization closest to me— for logistical reasons, and do not make any claims of authenticity on behalf of their version of events. While I knew many of the older UJS members prior to the strike, including interviewees Ian Camilo Cintrón and Hugo Delgado (both of whom are now MST “national” spokespersons),²³ through my involvement in the MST as well as the UPR student movement, I met the majority of my interviewees during or after the strike (in some cases, not until I returned to Puerto Rico to conduct my research in 2013). Unlike some of the older UJS members, most of these young activists had no prior connection to the Puerto Rican Left, and joined the student movement during the strike or the process leading up to it. Unlike myself and many members of the broader student

²² The Day of Solidarity consisted of protests, speak-outs, rallies, performances, art exhibits, and other events held simultaneously in cities around the world, on or near March 11, 2011, collected and published on an Internet blog. It resulted from personal and online conversations among myself and other émigrés, and was inspired by statements of support produced by Puerto Rican students and sympathizers living abroad during the first phase of the strike, shared through email and social media, and usually re-published on various websites.

²³ All interviewees were given the option to allow me to publish their names, at my discretion, or not. All 19 agreed to do so. I have opted to refer only to those who are publicly known by their full name and last name. Others are identified simply as they are known by their fellows, whether by their given first name or a nickname.

body, most could also claim solid working class backgrounds and grievances.²⁴ This dissertation only attempts to tell *their* story, and therefore only partially the story of the UPR student movement. One of its central contentions, however, is that theirs is an important (indeed, at moments central) part of *that* story, which deserves to be told and heard. That otherwise excellent accounts of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike neglect this part of the story may to some extent reflect the urge, shared by many within the movement, to paint a particular picture of the movement (united, spontaneous, media-friendly) that marginalizes and obscures key actors and mechanisms within a complex and often contradictory process.

The Extended Case Method

To the abovementioned ends, I employ the extended case method, as defined by Michael Burawoy: the application of “reflexive science” to the *technique* of ethnography (or participant observation), “in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the ‘micro’ to the ‘macro,’ to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory” (2002: 21; see also 23). “Reflexive science” already entails the kind of intersubjective engagement demanded by critical ethnography, but unlike other critical scholars who reduce the task of social science to interpretation or “hermeneutics” (see for example Haraway 1991; Bauman 1989) or pursue positive science with a more reflexive awareness (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 1990), Burawoy insists on a multilayered approach where the dialogue between ethnographer and participants is referred back to further “dialogues” with broader social forces and with theory in a continuous loop (2009: 43-44; see also 20). As Burawoy explains, the extended case method

²⁴ Although my parents and (maternal) grandparents were salaried employees most of their lives, and therefore part of the broader “working class” as I (and the MST) define it, circumstances enabled me to study (at a greatly reduced rate) at an elite, English-language college-preparatory private school, which in turn allowed me to graduate from an elite private university in the U.S. These are privileged resources beyond the reach of most working-class Puerto Ricans.

“deploys a different comparative strategy” than the inductive generalization commonly practiced in comparative studies —instead of seeking “common patterns among diverse cases,” it traces “the source of small differences to external forces” (2009: 49-50). Citing his own research, Burawoy explains that similar “cases” can be compared at different points in time or within different arenas, revealing dynamics that can be relayed to broader “social forces.” My own case study of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike can likewise be compared to similar processes within the same institutional arena at different points in time, or to more or less contemporary similar processes in different arenas and nation-states.

To merely compare points or periods in time, however, runs the risk of reifying them as static moments, so that observed differences between “cases” stands in for the process of change itself (Ollman 2003: Ch. 5, II, pg. 6). The “reiterated problem-solving” model proposed by Jeff Haydu helps address this methodological problem by connecting cases through “sequences of events . . . that may result in one case being transformed into another” (Haydu 1998: 348). According to Haydu, “rethinking the connections between events in different time periods as reiterated problem-solving . . . overcomes the limitations of interpretive comparisons by identifying and making use of continuities across periods, and it avoids certain pitfalls of variable-based comparisons by putting historical particulars to explanatory work” (*Ibid.*: 341). Although traditional narrative or path-dependence methodologies similarly seek to connect periods through sequences, the problem-solving model “attend[s] to the ways in which the outcomes at a given switch point are themselves products of the past rather than historical accidents. Solutions may embody contradictions that generate later crises, and they bequeath tools and understandings with which later actors confront those crises” (*Ibid.* 354). Recognizing that dilemmas result from the confluence of multiple sequences, rather than a straightforward linear development, Lin expands

upon Haydu's model by focusing on the interaction between different types of strategic dilemmas, not just from one "switchpoint" to the next, but at each switchpoint (2015: 306). By applying Lin's revised model to my extended case, I both address the structure-agency gap in social movement theory (neoliberalization "structures" problem-solving in the form of a recurring dilemma) and account for transformations in both movement and administration strategies over time.

Again referencing his own work, Burawoy explains how in one instance he "tried to expose the roots of consent to American capitalism by applying Gramsci's theory of hegemony to my experiences as a machine operator in a South Chicago factory" (2002: 21). Likewise, my intention is to shed light on social movement strategy in the context of neoliberalization by applying the insights of the literature outlined above to my own experiences, first as a member of the UPR student movement (during the crucial years leading up to the strike), and later as an active supporter. The 19 semi-structured, open-ended interviews that I conducted supplement my own participant observation by bringing additional voices into this reflexive dialogue. It is difficult to separate these interviews from my participant observation, although the primary deployment of each technique took place at different times. In reality, as I describe above, my participant observation of the UPR student movement extends back to early 2007 (if not earlier), and in my memory bleeds almost seamlessly onto the first phase of the strike itself and continues for the duration of the strike. Although no longer a matriculated "student" at the UPR after May of 2009, I continued to be actively involved there (and in other protest arenas), albeit at a geographical distance during the second phase. In early 2013, I returned to Puerto Rico in order to conduct my interviews, which I secured easily through personal contacts, actively participating in numerous protests and meetings during this period as well.

My initial intention was to interview ten teachers who participated in the 2008 teachers' strike, and ten students or former students who participated in the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike. During the course of the interviews, I decided to focus exclusively on the UPR, resulting in a final sample of 14 students and only five teachers (two of whom had participated in the UPR student movements within the five years leading up to the strike). Although a 26-question guide was used, some questions were obviated or new ones were posed in response to respondents' narratives, and respondents were encouraged to bring up new questions and issues as they occurred to them, allowing them to "generate, challenge, clarify, elaborate, or recontextualize" (Blee and Taylor 2002: 94) their story. Following widespread parameters of interviewing among social movement scholars (Della Porta and Diani 2006 [1999]), I geared my questions towards establishing individual narratives about whether, how, and why informants perceived that structural changes affected their life decisions; whether, how, and why this perception led them to join the movement and/or specific organizations; how they and the organization they belonged to interacted with others within the movement at key decision-points; and whether and how these interactions influenced specific decisions.

In order to ground the conversation within its context, I drew on various additional sources, including extensive secondary sources on neoliberalism, education, and Puerto Rican history and political economy, as well as movement publications and newspaper databases. Many recent articles from the MST newspaper *Bandera Roja*, as well as other movement documents and publications are available online at bandera.org, indymediapr.org, and other sites. I accessed others through my respondents, and collected articles from the mainstream newspapers *El Nuevo Día*, *El Mundo*, *Primera Hora*, *El Vocero*, and *Caribbean Business*, as well as other documentary sources, through the UPR Library System, especially the *Colección Puertorriqueña* archive at the

José M. Lázaro Library and the online *Proyecto Corporativo de Indización de Periódicos* database. Drawing on these sources, I conducted a detailed event analysis, focusing on interactions among different “internal” and “external” actors, which I combined with my interviews to develop the narrative I develop in the following chapters.

Why Puerto Rico?

In many ways, Puerto Rico is an ideal test case for examining the ways in which neoliberalism shapes the strategic choices facing urban class-based movements —not least of which is its record as a laboratory of sorts for neoliberalism. “Free trade” was established early in the U.S. occupation, when a series of Supreme Court decisions determined the island's *de jure* annexation to the U.S. common market. Political dependence was secured with the creation of the new jurisdictional category “organized but not incorporated territory,” bestowing sovereignty on the U.S. Congress, which persists to this day with only cosmetic alterations. A fully polyarchic colonial arrangement was set up with the approval of the 1952 Constitution, allowing for the election of all local officials and some autonomy over local administration, although final authority remains in the hands of Congress and the federal courts (see Rivera Ramos 2007 [2001]; Burnett and Marshall, eds., 2001). The resulting modern-colonial (Grosfoguel 2003), semi-peripheral polity and economy exhibits both Northern traits (heavily subsidized core levels of consumption, polyarchy, liberal pluralist citizenship) and Southern ones (dependency, massive unemployment and emigration). From the 1940s onward, Puerto Rico became a testing ground for the model of export-oriented, tax-exempt “industrialization by invitation” that would later be exported throughout the peripheral world as the spearhead of neoliberal globalization (Dietz 1993: 186-187; Dietz and Pantojas-García 1993).

As a result, despite the survival into the 1980s of a mild populism premised on public ownership of certain basic services, the dependent polity never fully acquired the characteristics

of “corporatist” citizenship prevalent throughout Latin America until the 1990s (see for example Yashar 2005). Despite historical ties between the PPD and certain sectors of organized labor, forged mostly during the party’s ascent in the early 1940s, there has never been a ruling labor-based populist party serving as a direct conduit between mass organizations and the State, and both labor and the political “left” have always been significantly weaker. These facts are important because they alter the labor-government interactions and citizenship dynamics that have been more broadly studied in the context of neoliberalism. Rather than a “transition” to neoliberal citizenship, it is more accurate to speak of the closing of traditional channels of pluralist interest aggregation (see Yashar 2005: 42, fn. 15). Factors such as partisan loyalty, leadership competition, and union competition (Murillo 2001: 11-26) become less relevant to the behavior of traditional labor and other bureaucracies. At the same time, the material and ideological threat to the salaried classes represented by the growing army of the permanently unemployed, the exit represented by an escape valve of easy and affordable legal emigration, the supplementing of household income by federal aid, and the (additional) removal of macroeconomic policy decision-making from local to federal arenas, all characteristics peculiar to Puerto Rico’s colonial model, inhibit the society-wide mass mobilizations that have recently been prevalent in similarly debt-burdened societies, North and South.

Because it simultaneously exhibits traits usually attributed to either Northern or Southern societies, Puerto Rico can therefore be helpful for discerning certain dynamics of strategic interaction that are specific to neoliberalization, beyond the expectations suggested by uneven geographic development. For example, it may be expected that cadre organizations will be less likely to be relevant to movement emergence and development in polyarchic polities with relatively low levels of repression. Or, as it has sometimes been theorized, when protests take place

in deindustrializing core areas with consumer-driven cultures, they may be expected to exhibit mainly “post-materialist” values and identities. On the other hand, peripheral or semiperipheral societies with mass unemployment and diminishing opportunities for educated young people may be considered ripe for widespread upheaval. All of these plainly reasonable expectations seem to be frustrated in one way or another in Puerto Rico, their causal force neutralized by the peculiarities of the late colonial context. This does not mean that Boudreau’s insights about the importance of geographic context are irrelevant; on the contrary, Puerto Rico should be seen as a nodal point for the contradictions of neoliberalization, where the movements that do emerge throw into sharper contrast the dynamics proper to its modes of articulation and resistance.

It is perhaps illustrative that the battle over education, one of the most representative arenas of contemporary class struggle at the global level (Compton and Weiner, eds., 2008; Solomon and Plamieri, eds., 2011), has produced some of the most important social movements in Puerto Rico of the last four decades, not just at the university, but also the public school system. At once upheld by the state as the key to modernity and progress, and consistently undermined in the exercise of colonial and capitalist control, education as the quintessential site of ideological reproduction has been one of the most fiercely contested arenas in Puerto Rico’s struggles of resistance. With the onset of neoliberalism, neglect and abandonment aimed at opening the way for privatization and “streamlining” have stirred the embers of past expectations sowed by a dependent, liberal-populist regime, as well as past resistances by organized forces dreaming alternative futures. It is no coincidence that radical cadre organizations, such as the MST and UJS, have been active at these sites, within both the rank-and-file and leadership of the Federation of Teachers (FMPR) and the university student movement since the mid-1970s, when the demise of the populist model and embryo of its neoliberal successor began to take shape.

General Statement of Findings and Chapter Organization

Supplemented by historical and documentary research, my interviews and personal experience reveal a UPR student movement that is dynamic and complex, facing choices shaped by previous interactions within and without, over the course of the previous 107-year history of its broader institutional and social contexts. Neoliberalization, a contradictory process tending towards a shift in governance repertoires experienced at the UPR as a transition from a liberal-populist public goods regime to an academic capitalist regime, has entailed new modes of framing university life, new opportunities, threats, and disciplinary mechanisms, and new demographic and class configurations within the student body itself, which have altered the range and scope of the possibilities of contention. Actively campaigning “in defense of public education” for at least two years before the eruption of the strike, leftist student cadre organizations linked events at the UPR to developments in the broader society (and world). The UJS, along with the International Socialist Organization (OSI), was particularly insistent on a language of class struggle that portrayed neoliberalization not just as an ambiguous general attack on the institution, but as a very palpable further dispossession of its most vulnerable students, and Puerto Rico’s poor and working classes as a whole. As discontent mushroomed and attempts at dialogue with a recalcitrant government and administration came to naught, the prospect of a student strike once again loomed into view, having until that moment been widely considered implausible after a haphazard strike in 2005 ended in stalemate, resentment, and division among the student body.

Numerous factors made the possibility of a strike more feasible in 2010 than in 2005. For one thing, the party in power may have broadened the cross-section of the population, including the student body, available for mobilization, as significant and influential sectors of so-called civil society, including parts of the ostensibly *independentista* left, are believed more likely to protest

administrations of the New Progressive Party (PNP) (in office 2009-2012), than of the PPD (in office 2005-2008). For another, the neoliberal policies instituted by the PNP since early 2009, laying off up to 30,000 public employees, directly aggrieved more people than any previous reform (including PNP-appointed employees of the patronage-laden public sector, previously considered electoral currency and therefore “safe”). All the same, widespread discontent and vocal protest failed to materialize into significant resistance, in part as a result of the weakness, fragmentation, or co-optation of the leadership of the traditional labor movement (itself a result of ongoing neoliberalization since the 1980s). In this context, UPR students were increasingly seen as (and imagined themselves to be) the last redoubt of popular opposition. However, in stark contrast to prevailing narratives that view the decision to strike as one made more or less organically (see for example Rosa 2015: 138-139), my research revealed a story of strong resistance, if not outright opposition, to the idea of striking by the majority of the traditional student movement leadership, still in the shadow of the defeat of 2005.

That the UJS and OSI’s proposal to strike resonated amongst a majority of those present at the general assembly that approved it (despite organized attempts to impede it) might suggest only that these groups were more in tune with the spontaneous development of student consciousness. However, to simply accept this description at face value is to ignore the previous years of active debate, agitation, mobilization, and organization that went on at the student grassroots, linking up with wider processes of contention in the wider society (such as the 2008 teachers’ strike), which helped build at least one of the collective action frames that informed the strike. My interviewees’ narratives reveal the configuration of a recurring dilemma at the heart of these debates that reflected the cohesive general tendency of neoliberalization repertoires within both the institutional and broader social arenas, and confirm a pattern of interaction between cadre and the broader

movement that continued for the duration of the strike, through countless switch points at which their intervention proved decisive. My claim is not that UJS cadre, whatever their own imagined role or intentions, “directed” the movement monolithically, as cadre had attempted in the past (nor, I suspect, could they have), but rather that they operated as one among several leadership teams, in Ganz’s sense, contending for the role of a Vygotskian “capable peer”. By insisting on its own autonomy, and keeping framing and tactical options “on the table” that may otherwise have been discarded in ways that strengthened the sense of belonging and participation among the grassroots, the UJS helped navigate the waters of neoliberalization, contributing to the strategic capacity of the movement.

Chapter Organization

In the following chapters, I attempt to tell this story by mimicking what Jean-Paul Sartre calls the “progressive-regressive method” of Henri Lefebvre, which follows three basic phases: (a) descriptive observation “guided by experience and a general theory”; (b) the “analysis of reality”; and (c) an “attempt to rediscover the present, but elucidated, understood, explained” (Sartre 1968: 52). This in turn echoes Marx’s own comments on his method, as “rising from the abstract to the concrete” (1973: Intro., 3), or more precisely, moving “from the ‘real concrete’ (the world as it presents itself to us) . . . through abstraction . . . to the ‘thought concrete’ (the reconstituted and now understood whole present in the mind)” (Ollman 2003: Ch. 5, II, pg. 1). In my case, the “real concrete” starting point is a complex actor, the UPR “student movement”. Chapter 2 therefore traces the spatial and temporal contours of the UPR student movement in order to reveal the contradictions that led to the emergence of the UJS and its development within the movement, leading up to the 2010-11 strike. In this chapter, I relate the often conflictive, sometimes overlapping relationship between socialism and nationalism as the two major ideological

narratives that informed movement framing throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. I argue that events at the UPR have always been intimately connected with contentious politics and socioeconomic shifts beyond it, but rather than merely “reflecting” changes in the broader society, the UPR has been a constitutive site for broader social and political identities and conflicts.

In Chapter 3, I move on to the next level of abstraction, towards the “context” of these broader struggles as it relates specifically to the 2010-11 student strike, to deconstruct the institutional arena in terms of the interaction between the student movement and the shifting repertoires of a neoliberalizing bloc (embodied at the UPR by the representatives and ancillaries of transnational capital within the Board of Trustees and faculty). In this sense, neoliberalization is *both* a series of practices set in motion by the agency of specific actors within specific arenas, and a “structural” shift in the sense that it is a long-term cumulative effect of pressures and mechanisms that embody historical and geographical forces beyond the immediate intentions of any single individual or collective actor. From the perspective of the oppositional student movement, the actions of the neoliberalizing bloc wove a tapestry of opportunities and threats, reconfiguring traditional social movement dilemmas into a central recurring dilemma that persistently reemerged in debates, whereby increased militancy appears as simultaneously demanded and discouraged. This dilemma set the pattern of strategic interactions within and without the movement, particularly between organized cadre on one hand and the grassroots, shaping the decisions that ultimately led to the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike.

In Chapter 4, I return to the original subject/object of this dissertation, “the UPR student movement,” at the moment of the immediate prelude to the strike, this time armed with an understanding of the internal and external dynamics that shaped it. Attuned to these dynamics, I

explore the buildup, eruption, unfolding, and outcome(s) of the strike through the lens of the interactions among its participants. Through Ganz's concepts of leadership teams and strategic capacity, I examine key decision-making points, as recalled by my interviewees as well as (in some cases) both student and corporate media, as a reiterated problem-solving process. I show how the neoliberal dilemma manifested itself at these points within internal movement debates, and interventions by organized cadre (particularly the UJS) that affected how decisions were made, and to what end. I argue that these interventions tended to promote framing diversity and tactical flexibility, which in turn increased the strategic capacity of the movement as a whole. My argument is not that the UJS "caused" the strike to happen, or "led" it in the direction of any particular outcome (much less produced ambiguous generalities like "success" or "failure"), but rather that its interactions enriched the arsenal of perspectives and possibilities with which the movement confronted strategic dilemmas, ultimately providing a far more solid and effective footing from which to do so.

Finally, in the Conclusion I bring together all three levels of abstraction. Connecting the 1981-82, 1991-92, 2005, and 2010-11 strikes as an intergenerational problem-solving sequence, and taking into account both the broader state of neoliberalization at each point, as well as internal movement dynamics, I examine my findings from Chapter 4 over time, and draw out possible wider implications and how they might be applied and tested in other cases. I argue that cadre organizations don't just help thread together what Nancy Whittier calls activist micro-cohorts (1995; 1997) and preserve movement identity and memory, but also offer lenses which allow new activists to examine their specific temporal situation at different levels of abstraction, drawing their own "lessons" from the past and projects for the future while taking into account process and relationality. In broad strokes, I suggest that urban oppositional movements (including student

movements) may face similar dilemmas wherever neoliberalization advances, and that while diverse specific factors (as highlighted by the Puerto Rican setting —such as levels of repression, forms of citizenship, patterns of urbanization, or de/industrialization, proximity to the centers of transnational power, or the extent of alternative coping strategies), may vary widely, producing widely divergent types of movements, cadre organizations and their relationship to the grassroots will continue to play a significant role (if significantly different and perhaps less visible) in surmounting these dilemmas for the foreseeable future.

Chapter 2. Through the Looking Glass: A Complex Actor through Space and Time

I joined the struggle because I believed that what the administration was doing was wrong. But the organization gave me the tools to think and ask myself why it was wrong. Then you see things deeper: is the administration wrong because it wants to be bad, or . . . [does it have a] political agenda . . . [that is] contrary to my life? Because at the time, I didn't know a lot about politics, but I did know what I wanted with my destiny and my life . . . I saw what could have been smaller as something bigger . . . the organization as such gave me the tools . . . to have a more colorful picture of my own vision.

—Leo, interviewee

To look westward from the top of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) clock tower is to read a chapter of Puerto Rico's recent past, as the gaze rolls over *urbanizaciones* and condominiums all built during the second half of the twentieth century. Juxtaposed with a contemporary satellite image displaying the dense metropolitan mesh, a 1940s photograph found online attests to how the view then extended, past the wooden, zinc-roofed settlements straddling University Avenue, over lush plantations, to the far edge of what are today the sprawling working-class neighborhoods of Puerto Nuevo and Reparto Metropolitano, and beyond (Fig. 2.1). Built during the late 1930s as part of the overall design for a relocated campus, with New Deal money channeled through the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (and named after U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt), the California Mission Revival-style tower was at the time the tallest structure in the Caribbean region (Vivoni Farage 2005; see also Moreno 2000), clearly dominating—even today—the landscape of what was then the municipality of Río Piedras (annexed to San Juan in 1954). As recently as 2005, a renowned Puerto Rican architect still admiringly expressed the clear metaphoric intention of its builders: “There does not exist in Puerto Rico a spatial sequence as symbolic as that represented by the new campus: to emerge from misery through knowledge” (Vivoni Farage 2005: 130).

By contrast, to walk through the dilapidated streets of most of the adjacent communities hardly gives the sensation of having “emerged from misery.” The historic urban center of Río Piedras, once a bustling commercial hub, has become a veritable ghost town since the advent of Puerto Rico’s shopping mall epidemic. With the exception of the student hangouts along University Avenue (now renamed Jaime Benítez Way), leading directly up to the main pedestrian gate of campus and the palm tree-lined “royal walk” that stretches toward the tower, and the stretch of Ponce de León Avenue that extends south from that gate towards the town square, businesses in the area are shuttered or ailing. Fenced off from the gated citadel that is the UPR by an ornamental facade built at the same time as the tower (and less elegant extensions around the perimeter), neighborhoods such as Santa Rita, immediately to the southwest of campus, expanded rapidly to shelter the growing student and employee population after the 1930s. Today, elderly long-time residents, immigrants, and students seeking low rents inhabit the crumbling, often graffiti-laden cement buildings. Further east, towards the “far” side of the westward-facing campus, lie even more afflicted communities. Jeanqui, a first-generation student whose family still lives in nearby Capetillo, stressed for me thus the great intangible distances separating the Río Piedras campus from its immediate geographic neighbors:

My grandfather was born and will die in the López Sicardó housing project. Right over there... No sector beyond Barbosa Avenue, all of that, Capetillo, López Sicardó, Buen Consejo... none of them has access in there [the campus].

In the following sections, I explore the geographic and historical interactions that shaped the UPR student movement as a complex actor, and the eventual emergence of the Union of Socialist Youths (UJS), a self-described “revolutionary” organization, as a nested subject within the broader movement.

Contested Campuses

Uneven geographic development has left its imprint on the strategic interaction among the UPR, its student movement, and the surrounding communities. For example, when it became a “land grant college” in 1908, under the federal Morrill Act of 1862, which granted federal land to states to be sold or used for the establishment of colleges of agriculture, science, and engineering (paving the way for the creation of a second campus), the UPR was subjected to the requirement that it house a “military sciences” program —what eventually became the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC), one of the major sources of campus conflict during the twentieth century (Colón 2005: 169-170). Likewise, when the Social Sciences and Business Administration buildings and parking lots came up in the late 1960s, they wiped out most of Barrio Amparo, an adjacent low-income neighborhood. Nearby communities have often unwittingly become the scene of spillover campus conflict, while class-conscious students have attempted (not always consistently) to reach out to residents and support their struggles. The naming of campus geographies similarly reflects traces of institutional and movement strategies: while the clock tower and University Avenue bear the names of former U.S. and UPR presidents, respectively, the Humanities Quadrangle has been unofficially renamed “Antonia Martínez Square” by the student movement, in honor of its greatest martyr, while the stretch of sidewalk between the Museum and Library, traditionally used by the movement for its *pintatas* (the painting of political murals and slogans), is known to many as “Conscience Street.”

Puerto Rico’s first university, a long-neglected demand of local elites,¹ was finally founded in 1903, five years into the U.S. occupation. The “Insular Normal School,” founded three years

¹ Local elites had sought to obtain a university from the Spanish Crown since at least 1770, to no avail despite the fact that neighboring Spanish former colonies, such as Santo Domingo, had one since the sixteenth century (Osuna 1975 [1949]: 18). At the time of the U.S. occupation, there was only one public and several private high schools (geared towards preparing the children of the elite for higher education elsewhere), about 628 public elementary

before by an act of the colonial legislature in the eastern coastal municipality of Fajardo, was moved in 1902 to rural land just outside the town of Río Piedras, and absorbed by the UPR when it was created by law the following year.² In 1911, the UPR's second campus, specializing in Agriculture and Engineering, was established in the western municipality of Mayagüez (UPR n.d.). Eight additional regional colleges, now considered full campuses, were built throughout the island between 1963 and 1979, at Humacao, Cayey, Arecibo, Ponce, Bayamón, Aguadilla, Carolina, and Utuado (Irizarry 2004: 50).³ The School of Medicine, originally a separate institution known as the Institute of Tropical Medicine and housed in a building near Old San Juan, was absorbed by the UPR in 1949, given campus status in 1966, and moved to its current home inside the state-owned Centro Médico health complex in 1972 (RCM n.d.).⁴ System-wide offices (Presidency and Central Administration) were moved to the grounds of the UPR Botanical Garden, roughly 1 km south of the Río Piedras campus, when it was inaugurated in 1971.

Like much of Puerto Rico, the Río Piedras campus was devastated by major hurricanes in 1928 and 1932. The physical damage, combined with the effects of the Great Depression on the colonial economy, prompted the federal government to include the island in the New Deal, through successive relief and reconstruction programs. In addition, the Bankhead Jones Act of 1935 provided additional funding to land grant colleges. The Río Piedras campus of the UPR was transformed, with the building of new classrooms and office space surrounding the quadrangle

schools chaotically administered by the municipalities in addition to 26 private schools (*Ibid.*: 98), and two normal schools (segregated by gender) that were “practically secondary schools” (*Ibid.*: 600).

² All laws relating to the UPR can be accessed online at

<http://www.tuconsejo.org/leyes-de-la-universidad-de-puerto-rico-1903---2013.html>.

³ Humacao, 1963; Cayey and Arecibo, 1967; Ponce, 1970; Bayamón, 1971; Aguadilla, 1972; Carolina, 1974; and Utuado, 1979 (Irizarry 2004: 50). The new units were initially considered regional colleges, not “campuses,” a distinction reserved for Río Piedras and Medical Sciences (after 1966). Cayey and Humacao later joined Mayagüez as “autonomous” colleges for administrative and fiscal purposes. All reclassified as full campuses in the 1990s.

⁴ The Institute was founded 1912 and functioned as Columbia University's School of Tropical Medicine from 1926 until 1946, when Columbia decided to stop funding it (RCM n.d.).

(which today house the College of Humanities), the clock tower, theater (located at the far end of the quadrangle, directly across from the clock tower), and the ornamental façade along its main flank along Juan Ponce de León Avenue, to the west (Vivoni Farage 2005). Further expansions since the 1960s led to the construction of modernist buildings that today house the Colleges of Social Sciences and Business Administration, Education, and General Studies, student residences (on and off campus), a student center, a sports complex, a swimming pool/gymnasium, José M. Lázaro Library, the UPR Museum, and the School of Law. Additions after the 1990s include new buildings for the Colleges of Architecture and Natural Sciences, a multi-level parking lot, and the Plaza Universitaria administration building, just outside the main flank. The latter structures became the object of student protest in the early 2000s, when it was announced they would be perpetually leased to for-profit private administrators.

Today, the Río Piedras campus —the primary (but no longer exclusive) stage of the UPR student movement— is a shady amalgam of tropical vegetation and modern architecture, stretching over 1.17 km² in the heart of the San Juan metropolitan area, minutes away from the financial district, the expressway, and the Las Américas Shopping Center. The campus is entirely surrounded by a gated fence with seven vehicular entrances (in addition to the main pedestrian gate): two on Ponce de León Ave.; two on José N. Gándara Avenue, to the south (across from which the UPR Secondary School is located); and three on José C. Barbosa Avenue, to the east. Across Jesús T. Piñero Avenue, to the north, a footbridge connects the Law School parking lot with the sports complex. Whether consciously designed this way or not, this layout foretold a great deal about the spatial dynamics of class formation that accompanied Puerto Rico’s frenzied modernization: the “front” of the campus (the tower’s clock and the ornamental facade) faces the

more or less successful “middle-class” *urbanizaciones*⁵ to the west of Ponce de León Ave., which runs north all the way from the town square, through the financial district, and past the historical boundary of Río Piedras into Santurce, while the “far” side is cradled by the poor and working class communities that stretch eastward, far past Barbosa Ave., on all sides (Fig. 2.2).

Seeing and Walking: Strategy and Scale

For me, political organization is a magnifying glass that allows everyday people like myself to see a real problem as their own, and unite as a class. The magnifying glass allows you to see this larger. The organization is the one that makes that connection—for me, *and this is how I lived it*—of this problem that affects me particularly at this moment in history, as a class problem. As a problem for us all.
—Niño, interviewee (my emphasis)

*Y caminó, vereda adentro el que más/ Ojo en camino y ojo en el porvenir/
Y cuando vino el tiempo de resumir/ Ya su mirada estaba extraviada
entre el estar o el ir.*⁶

—Silvio Rodríguez, “Fable of the three brothers” (1980).

In the opening paragraph of the seventh chapter of his classic study of contemporary culture, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel De Certeau looks down upon all of Manhattan from an immensely higher vantage point than that of the UPR clock tower, where this chapter opens (1984: 91). He contrasts this birds’ eye view of the neatly laid-out grid to that of “the ordinary practitioners of the city,” who “live ‘down below,’ below the threshold at which visibility begins” (*Ibid.*: 93). Having read an earlier chapter, the reader can relate the two perspectives, respectively, to those of the strategist (or planner), on the one hand, and the tactician: where the former maps out the world, delimiting her own place within it, the latter can merely find her way through a terrain imposed by the strategies of more powerful others (*Ibid.*: 34-39). “A tactic,” says De Certeau, referencing Carl

⁵ Literally, “urbanization.” In Puerto Rican urban and suburban areas, the term is used synonymously with “neighborhood.” The Spanish word conveys more of a sense of how recently many areas of Puerto Rico, even in San Juan itself, were urbanized.

⁶ “And he walked, furthest of all down the path/ One eye on the road and the other on what’s to come/ And when it was time to sum up/ His gaze was already lost between being and going” (my trans.).

von Clausewitz, “is an art of the weak” (*Ibid.*: 37). In apparent contrast, James Jasper makes light of the difference between broad, long-term strategies and “more immediate choices and tactics oriented towards goals,” ultimately encompassing the latter within the term “strategy” as well (2006: 4-5), defined as “the effort to *get others to do what you want*” (*Ibid.*: 5). Similarly, Marshall Ganz, who otherwise maintains a useful distinction between strategy and tactics, defines the former as “how we turn what we have into what we need to get what we want” (2009: 8). Strategy thus becomes an umbrella term for the practice of power: politics itself.

At a closer glance, however, Jasper’s insistent focus on the micro-foundations of political (or strategic) action and interaction (2004: 4) at times seems to approach what in De Certeau and others amounts to a normative privileging of “tactics” as the quasi-spontaneous everyday navigation of uncertain terrain by the “weak” (see Scott 1985; and especially Scott 1998) over plans that take into account “gruff abstraction[s] from lived reality” (Jasper 2010: 973). While such caveats about the best laid plans of mice and men, and the authoritarian, patriarchal, colonizing tendencies that may be inherent in certain strategic visions are important,⁷ it does not necessarily follow that the analytical distinction between tactics and strategy ought to be discarded. If, as De Certeau insists, weaker actors (such as the inhabitants of Río Piedras in my introductory vignette) often find themselves adrift on terrain strategically laid out by their rivals, they might perhaps benefit from drawing up maps and plans of their own, an ability that they may well be capable of acquiring (that is, *learning*). Here, the Marxist tradition’s dialectical understanding of immanence and contradiction is useful: Antonio Gramsci, for example, “understood that everyone

⁷ By “colonizing tendencies” I mean the imposition of alien discourses, worldviews, and priorities, upon a group of actors. This is an all-too-common occurrence in movements where the leadership is drawn predominantly from a more privileged or powerful social strata (typically an intellectual or professional elite) than the grassroots. As an accusation, it is often levied against a certain caricature of “Leninism,” especially by analyses that privilege the “tactics of the weak” over “grand” strategic visions and narratives (see, for example, Scott 1998: 147-179).

is an intellectual, but not everyone performs the *function* of an intellectual, so in movements not everyone performs the *function* of a strategizing leader” (Barker and Krinsky 2009: 12). To acquire the capacity and “coherence” to do so is often experienced by the “weak” as a first step in overcoming the powerlessness of their “lived reality” (Krinsky 2013: 111-115), to which Niño eloquently attests in the epigraph to this section.

As De Certeau’s metaphor and my own adaptation above suggest, the traditional distinction between strategy and tactics also addresses questions of scale, in both time and space, that collapsing them together seems to miss. The hypothetical “pure” strategist is able to see (or navigate) aspects of the terrain that the tactician cannot, and vice-versa (including historical “paths” and enduring “structures,” on the one hand, and sudden contingencies, on the other), because they operate at different levels of abstraction (Ollman 2003). To be sure, larger-scale abstractions rely more on inferences than direct observation, but sound inferences are based on observation, while much of what is taken for observable reality is always/already mediated by theoretical and ideological lenses. An “individual” is no less an abstraction from a complex set of processes and relations than a “movement” or indeed a “structure,” and there is no reason to assume that one is more or less “real” than the others, as advocates of micro-foundations often do (see, for example, Jasper’s critique of Barker and Krinsky’s application of “CHAT,” 2010: 971-972). In real life, political actors operate at multiple levels of abstraction simultaneously, and the capable strategist must be able to “zoom” in and out, as with a magnifying glass (or Google Maps; see Krinsky, 2015: 6), at a moment’s notice. Strategy is to tactics as the general to the particular, and in at least one important sense, strategic capacity is the ability to adequate each to the other.

Complex Actors, Contested Leadership

Jasper's term for groups and collectives is "compound" or *complex players*, aggregates of the "simple players" (individual persons) who in his view are the true protagonists of strategic interaction (2003: 1-16), a terminology that faithfully reflects his preference towards microfoundations. It is a useful term, when applied to social movements, for not quite the same reasons intended, insofar as broad movements are internally diverse, contradictory, and highly complex. As John Krinsky notes, drawing on the insights of Vygotskyian-influenced "CHAT" (see Ch. 1 of this dissertation, fn. 14), "there can be 'nesting' of activity, as compatible activities conceived at different levels of abstraction (e.g., keeping my home, fighting gentrification, decommodifying housing) may imply quite different compositions of subjects" (2015: 19). Complexity within a movement *field* may, therefore, tend towards internal contestation, not just over power (which, not taken in the vulgar sense, should be a given in political analysis), but over subjectivity and framing (Gamson 2004: 247). Cadre organizations, micro-cohorts, and other leadership teams within broad movements always strive to influence not just specific choices, but the *strategic framework* within which choices are weighed and enacted, including what social movement scholars call *collective identity frames* and *tactical repertoires* (see also Rutten 2008: 13; Gamson and Meyer 1996; Zald 1996). In short, they vie for the role of Vygotskyian "capable peer," which need not always be detrimental to the movement (cadre, in turn, are themselves learning all the while, not least of all from their grassroots peers). As I will argue in Chapter 4, under certain circumstances, it can strengthen it.

In an essay on the 1981-82 UPR Student Strike, historian Fernando Picó highlighted the "recurrent polarization" between the UJS and the Federation of Pro-Independence University Students (FUPI) as an opportunity for grassroots participants to play an important role in movement debates, as "arbiters" (1981: 27). In his own essay in the same book, strike leader

Roberto Alejandro, then a UJS member, explained that the FUPI had not been invited to early strike committee meetings, based on the mistaken impression that it would not be interested in participating “because it could not control the new organism” (1981: 203), which was corrected as a result of collaboration during the strike. Such episodes provide a glimpse into the contest between UJS and FUPI during that process, one instance among many in the larger contest for strategic leadership within the UPR student movement, between groups with diverging identity frames, tactical repertoires, styles of interaction, and knowledges (including of each other). They illustrate how, rather than simply divisive sectarian conflict (which it often can and does become), this contest is part of a learning process that shaped future interactions within the student movement. I discuss those dynamics over time in more detail in Chapter 5. Here, I am primarily interested in narrating the leadership contest among political organizations⁸ within the evolving student movement. What follows is a brief, general sketch of the interaction between the ideological currents that informed that contest. The rest of the chapter will focus on the evolution of the student movement as such up to 1981, including the emergence of the UJS, and the debates that shaped its parent organization, the Socialist Workers’ Movement (MST).⁹ These discussions will provide a clearer understanding of both the UJS/MST’s strategic outlook, and the ongoing dynamic between the student movement and Puerto Rico’s broader political environment.

Independencia y Socialismo

⁸ My focus here on political organizations is not intended to obscure the role of “ordinary people” and alternate modes of organizing within. On the contrary, one of the aims of this work, which will become clear in Chapter 4, is to highlight how it is ordinary people who build and join different types of organization. Whatever vehicle people choose to channel their protest, they do so through and within ideological frameworks that shape how they understand the decisions before them. As complex actors that explicitly seek to shape those frameworks, political organizations contribute a great deal to the environment in which those decisions are made.

⁹ I have selected 1981 as a period marker because the 1981-82 UPR Student Strike was the first instance of mass student mobilization against neoliberalization, as I show in the following sections and in Chapter 3.

Broadly speaking, the two major ideological currents that have informed the collective identity frames and tactical repertoires of the UPR student movement, and whose historical interaction was one of the catalysts for the emergence of the UJS in the mid-1970s, are nationalism and socialism. Not coincidentally, these have also been the main currents of resistance to Puerto Rico's colonial capitalist regime since the beginning of the U.S. occupation. Both have included reformist as well as revolutionary elements, and have been professed by individuals from diverse class backgrounds. Although they sometimes appear to overlap (especially from the 1970s onward), they have quite distinct and often conflicting trajectories. Thus, for example, during the early twentieth century, *independentista* poet and Union Party politician José de Diego, a lawyer for U.S. sugar corporations, opposed legislation limiting the weight dock workers could be made to carry on their backs, whilst in the 1930s, Socialist Party leader Santiago Iglesias Pantín, an ardent advocate of U.S. statehood for Puerto Rico, became Resident Commissioner (then Puerto Rico's highest elective office) on a coalition ticket with the Republican Party. On the other hand, the contradictions of colonial capitalism also produced convergences (see Ayala and Bernabe 2007, esp. chs. 3-5; for a comparative analysis of the historical significance of De Diego and socialist *independentista* labor leader Ramón Romero Rosa, see Flores and Campos 1993 [1978]).

Puerto Rican revolutionary thought and practice have their roots in the nineteenth century, in a handful of abortive armed uprisings against the Spanish crown, the most important among which was the September 1868 *Grito de Lares*, when a rag-tag army of several hundred medium and small landowners, sharecroppers, and former slaves proclaimed a Republic of Puerto Rico and declared the abolition of slavery, on the basis of liberal ideas similar to those inspiring revolutionaries in Spain at the time (see, for example, Moscoso 2003; Jiménez de Wagenheim 1993; Bergad 1980). Quickly routed by Spanish troops, the Lares uprising would, nonetheless, be

enshrined in twentieth-century nationalist myth as a foundational moment. Although the rebellion itself was a multi-class affair led by liberal members of the landowning *hacendado* elite, a significant number of participants stemmed from the ranks of the rural laboring classes, and its key intellectual figures, such as Dr. Ramón E. Betances (who may have fought at the barricades in 1848 Paris), were familiar with the more revolutionary currents then stirring in Europe. Late in 1871, just months after the end of the Paris Commune, Betances returned to Paris as ambassador of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, where he frequently interacted with socialists, anarchists, and other radicals friendly to the cause of Cuban, Philippine, and Puerto Rican independence (Anderson 2005).

It was in this final quarter of the nineteenth century that a workers' movement began to make its appearance in Puerto Rico itself, when incipient capitalism led to the creation of anarchist-influenced mutual aid societies among urban artisans and laborers. Unions, workers' newspapers, and strikes for improved working conditions first appeared on the scene towards the end of the nineteenth century (Meléndez Badillo 2015). Shortly after the U.S. occupation of 1898, the Free Workers' Federation (FLT) was founded. Following a successful canecutters' strike in 1915, FLT leaders decided to organize politically, founding the Socialist Party, which quickly became the third largest electoral party (Bird Carmona 2002). A recent immigrant from Spain, Iglesias Pantín became the party's unquestioned leader with the financial backing of the American Federation of Labor. Like many Puerto Rican workers, Iglesias Pantín saw the new colonial power as a historically progressive force, but his outlook was decidedly reformist (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 52-73). Through a series of alliances with the Republican Party, led by the native sugar barons, the Socialists became increasingly conciliatory of the interests represented by their coalition

partners, reaching the heights of colonial power in the 1932 elections.¹⁰ When sugarcane workers struck for improved conditions, Socialist bureaucrats in office quickly brokered a backroom deal between their counterparts in the FLT and employers. Feeling betrayed, the workers called on the Nationalist Party and its firebrand president, Pedro Albizu Campos, to represent them instead (*Ibid.*: 95-116; TFP 1982a).

However, the Nationalist vision of an independent Puerto Rico as a “nation of proprietors,” social conservatism, and quasi-military structure reflected the class aspirations of an increasingly “desperate” sector of small landowners and shopkeepers (see, for example, Corretjer 1972), rather than the demands and organizational needs of the working class (García and Quintero Rivera 1982). While its alliance with workers was stillborn, however, the Nationalists’ confrontation with the colonial regime was just beginning. Founded as little more than a debate club in the early 1920s, the Nationalist Party became radicalized by economic crisis, finding its voice in Albizu Campos, who rose to the party presidency in 1930. Born into squalor, the fervently Catholic, Harvard-educated lawyer espoused a quasi-mystical notion of Puerto Rico as part of a “Hispanic Race” in irreconcilable conflict with “Anglo-Saxon” imperialism (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 105-110). Following a failed election bid in 1932, the Nationalists starred in a series of back-and-forth revenge killings with the colonial police, prompting the introduction of a bill in the U.S. Senate in 1936 proposing a plebiscite on independence aimed at dampening pro-independence sentiment and reminding Puerto Ricans of the U.S.’s authority to dictate terms. Most local politicians rejected

¹⁰ The Republican Party of Puerto Rico was a pro-annexation party founded in 1899 and tied to the interests of local (Puerto Rican) sugar planters. It existed, through various alliances and incarnations, until the Statehood Republican Party was dissolved in 1967, after the New Progressive Party absorbed the pro-statehood movement (Meléndez 1988). In 1932, the Socialist Party and a sector of the Republican Party ran together as a coalition. Socialist leader Santiago Iglesias Pantín was elected Resident Commissioner (Puerto Rico’s non-voting sole representative to the U.S. Congress, event today), then the island’s highest elected office, and several well-known Socialists occupied legislative seats and were named to high bureaucratic positions.

the Tydings Bill, citing insufficient "transitional" measures, and it was eventually withdrawn, but not without first stirring up significant support for the Nationalists' counterproposal for an immediate "Constitutional Convention" to unilaterally declare independence. In the meantime, the party's entire leadership faced federal sedition charges, in connection to the events leading up to the assassination of Police Chief Francis E. Riggs, and were finally convicted in the summer of 1937 and sentenced to prison in Atlanta (*Ibid.*: 110-112).

The other radical political force of the era was the Communist Party, founded in 1934 by a handful of progressive intellectuals and disaffected Socialists and labor leaders. The party was the first political organization to consistently unite the cause of national liberation with class struggle and socialist ideas in its program (Fromm 1977). A self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist cadre organization that never sought to replace the Socialists as a mass-based electoral party, in its early years during the turbulent Great Depression, the Communist Party had mobilizing power far beyond its numbers: for instance, its first demonstration, a march of the unemployed through the city of Ponce, reportedly drew over 10,000 people (García and Quintero Rivera 1982: 112-113). During the great dockworkers' strike of 1938, Communists in the leadership of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) played a key role, securing the active support of the U.S. Congress of Industrial Organizations through their ties to the U.S. Communist Party. Thanks in part to the solidarity of sailors aboard U.S. cargo ships from the National Maritime Union, who refused to unload at the San Juan docks, that strike was successful (García and Quintero Rivera 1982; TFP 1988). Prominent Communists remained in the CGT leadership until late in the 1940s, when attempts to control it by the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) split the union into two factions, both of which declined and disappeared soon thereafter (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 138-139, 154-155).

Founded in 1938, under the leadership of former Liberal Party leader Luis Muñoz Marín (a former Socialist militant who initially supported independence), the PPD was a populist electoral party, campaigning on a platform of modernization and social justice, especially for rural laborers impoverished by the practices of largely U.S.-based absentee landowners and the Great Depression. Through contacts with New Deal officials, Muñoz Marín and his group were able to secure reconstruction funds that allowed them to become identified with progress and improvement in ordinary people's eyes, but ruffled feathers among traditional political elites (Villaronga 2004). Expelled from the Liberal Party, Muñoz Marín founded a pro-independence group that would evolve into the PPD. Communists initially offered support, in line with Comintern policy at the time, that the communist parties of colonized nations should ally themselves with their "national bourgeoisie" in the furtherance of a "national democratic revolution" (see, for example, Pujals 2014). Although the PPD never publicly recognized Communist Party support, a "de facto alliance" between the two functioned within the labor movement throughout the war period (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 142). In 1946, after a rapid electoral ascent, the Muñoz Marín faction renounced independence and purged the *independentistas* from the party's leadership, resulting in the foundation of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP). Following a failed Nationalist uprising in 1950 and attack on the U.S. Congress in 1954, known *independentistas* (including Communists and many PIP members) were immediately rounded up under the local McCarthy era law, a copy of the federal Smith Act, popularly known as *La Mordaza* ("The Gag Law") (Acosta 1987).

Despite long-standing tensions between the Communists and Nationalists, the two parties collaborated to demand the release of political prisoners. Several prominent former Nationalists, including second-in-command Juan A. Corretjer, who would go on to found the Socialist League

in 1964, had by then already declared themselves Marxists as a result of contacts with U.S. Communists in New York (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 147). Meanwhile, the PIP, initially founded on the Latin American Christian Democratic model, was losing support on all flanks despite its strong initial showing in the 1952 election (where it received over 120,000 votes, to place second). Chafing under *La Mordaza* and economically displaced by encroaching U.S. chain stores, *independentista* intellectuals, professionals, and small merchants became impatient with the PIP doctrine of electoral participation and non-violence, while a more conservative, traditional wing became reconciled with the status quo. By the time Cuban revolutionaries marched on Havana in 1959, many Puerto Rican *independentistas* had become convinced that only a radical “New Struggle” based on extra-electoral mobilization was capable of achieving national liberation. The Pro-Independence Movement (MPI), a new organization claiming to pick up the Nationalist’s mantle as “patriotic vanguard,” was founded that year, with the participation of journalist and former Communist leader César Andreu Iglesias (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 226; Fromm 1977). First published a few years earlier, Andreu Iglesias’s pamphlet *Independencia y Socialismo* (1951) had announced a powerful (and at the time, polemical; Fromm 1977: 11) synthesis that would forever mark the contest over the collective identity of Puerto Rican resistance movements, including that which had emerged among UPR students.

The UPR Student Movement: A Genealogy, 1903-1981

Prehistory (1903-1932)

Essentially a teacher-training school directly ascribed to the Department of Public Instruction during the first two decades of its existence, the UPR was an enclave for the children of the landowning classes and the urban commercial, managerial, and professional classes (Picó 1985a: 43). During this period, the few existing student organizations of any kind were oriented towards

sports and academics and rigorously controlled by a highly paternalistic administration (*Ibid.*: 52-55). Although women were the overwhelming majority of the student body,¹¹ the student activists who begin to appear on the historical record after the late 1910s are almost exclusively male (see Picó 1985; Navarro 2000).¹² As student cultural associations and publications emerged, they became more vocal around issues of language and identity, repeatedly petitioning the House of Delegates (then the colony's only elected political body) on these matters (Picó 1985a: 55-60). These seemingly innocuous gestures were viewed with great suspicion by colonial administrators: on at least one occasion, in 1919, the Commissioner of Education demanded a list of students who had signed a petition for a resolution requesting the independence of Puerto Rico, in order to deny them teaching appointments (*Ibid.*: 57).

A more contentious, cohesive, and explicitly political student movement began to develop in the 1920s, loosely linked to the Union Party, which dominated the House of Delegates. Student protest during this decade combined cultural nationalism with increasing demands for student participation and university autonomy (Picó 1985a: 60-62). The first significant strike in UPR history took place in 1924, when a large number of students refused to attend classes, demanding the removal of Normal College Dean Charles St. John, whose administration they considered

¹¹ Nearly three quarters (74%) of the 2,662 students graduating from the UPR between 1903 and 1923 were women, including the near totality of "Normal College" graduates (future teachers), representing 94.8% of the total (Picó 1985a: 44, 50). This was part of a larger trend towards the feminization of the teaching profession under U.S. rule, with the percentage of women teachers in Puerto Rico rising from 30 in 1899 to 74.5 in 1930 (*Ibid.*: 51). With the creation of new departments and colleges (the Normal College no longer enrolled the majority of all UPR students after 1926), the female majority descended, although it later became stabilized with the incursion of women into other professions. Today the UPR student population is roughly 60% women (Calderón Soto 2010: 6).

¹² Isabel Picó claims that early women students at the UPR were "far more tolerant," than their male colleagues "of the colonial regime and its new educational system because their personal interests gravitated around the values of modernity that both embodied for them as a social group," (*Ibid.*; my trans.). While this is entirely plausible (Picó does not cite evidence for this "tolerance," but the university and teaching profession did offer women a unique opportunity for "white collar" employment), the male leadership of the movement that eventually emerged was clearly also a result of the prevalence of traditional, patriarchal values in Puerto Rican society, and the sectors from which most students hailed in particular, of which Picó herself provides ample evidence (1985a: 63-64).

“offensive, arbitrary, and imperialistic” (Navarro 2000: 146, my trans.; see also Picó 1985a: 60, 67-68).¹³ After St. John responded by expelling one striker and suspending 200 others, students appealed to the House, which then publicly echoed their demand for the dismissal of St. John and other administration officials (Navarro 2000: 146).¹⁴ This outcome evidences the personal and family ties between student leaders and the Union Party: the son of its leader Antonio R. Barceló was one of the suspended strikers (Picó 1985a: 65; see also Navarro 2000: 147). The other visible sector of the student movement was the Nationalist Youth, Puerto Rico's first explicitly political youth organization, founded in 1919. When nationalists left the Union Party in 1922, after the former removed independence from its program, the Nationalist Youth became the newly founded Nationalist Party's student branch (Picó 1985a: 65-67).

By most accounts, the student movement of the era was not only nationalistic, but also “openly antagonistic” towards the Socialist Party and the workers' movement in general (Picó 1985a: 55, 67-68). While such portrayals may reflect selection bias, they are consistent with the class background of most Puerto Rican university students at a time when secondary schools and their graduates were rare. The Socialist leadership in turn viewed the UPR as a “luxury” that drained much-needed public funds away from the educational needs of the working class. This conflict over educational priorities reached a high point in 1929, when Socialist legislators pushed for a reduction of the UPR's assigned budget, a measure that was defeated as a result of opposition by university and public and private high school students, and a last minute deal whereby the

¹³ Although the immediate detonator of the strike was a seemingly infantile reaction to the UPR team's disqualification in an athletic competition, animosity between the students and St. John had been building up for some time (Navarro 2000: 146).

¹⁴ They were later persuaded by newly appointed Chancellor Thomas Benner to allow St. John to resign voluntarily (Navarro 2000: 147).

Socialists agreed to back off in exchange for the funding of a vocational school (*Ibid.*: 62, 68).¹⁵ Student leaders' antagonism of the Socialist Party, however, often reflected a general rejection of what they perceived as "corrupt" and unprincipled politicking pervasive throughout the political spectrum, rather than outright ideological rejection (see, for example, *Ibid.*: 66-67). Socialist and anarchist ideas were in fact gradually making their way onto the campus at the time through other channels. The Hispanic Studies program, for example, created in 1927 as the first U.S.-style discipline-specific "department" in an institution thus far made up of broad "colleges," recruited well-known left-leaning intellectuals from Spain and Latin America into its faculty, reportedly making profound impact on the student body (*Ibid.*: 61).

Flow and Ebb (1933-1959)

By the 1930s, expanded enrollment had produced a small minority of working-class students (Picó 1985b), while economic crisis generated increasing displacement and radicalization among the petty bourgeoisie. The story of Communist leader Andreu Iglesias, while not necessarily representative, is illustrative in this respect: forced to abandon his studies to work at the docks in 1935, by the following year he had joined the recently founded Communist Party (Fromm 1977: 12-13). The Socialist Youth, student wing of the Socialist Party, was finally organized in 1933, and while its influence always remained minimal, its leadership was instrumental in using newly founded student publications to promote stances that were novel to the movement and often clashed with its parent organization's positions, such as advocating the creation of a multi-class anti-imperialist United Front, criticizing the "bourgeois" character of the UPR, and supporting

¹⁵ The bill was initially supported by the Socialists' opponents in the House, the Unionist-Republican Alliance (it was introduced by Republican House Speaker José Tous Soto). However, student opposition pressured Unionist leader Barceló to cut a deal with the Socialists (which illustrates the Unionists' special susceptibility to student pressure in comparison to the other parties). In retribution for the slight, Tous Soto, pressured the Board of Trustees to fire Chancellor Benner, which was viewed as yet another act of political meddling in UPR affairs and protested extensively by students and faculty (Picó 1985a: 62, 68).

legislative proposals to improve access for poor and working class students (Picó 1985b: 549-550).¹⁶ The largest faction among politically active students, however, was that tied to the Liberal Party.¹⁷ The student strike of 1933 over the designation of a Socialist to the Board of Trustees simultaneously reflects continuing Liberal dominance and the student movement's class blinders, which prevented it from capitalizing on the workers' growing disenchantment with Socialist politicians. That strike, the most important of the highly turbulent decade and the first in UPR history to last more than one month, led to the resignation of Governor Robert Gore.¹⁸

However, it was the Nationalists who set the terms of political debate within the UPR for the better part of the decade (Picó 1985b: 533): at the apex of Nationalist Party influence in 1936, the student wings of all three other national parties (Socialist, Liberal, and Republican Union) actively participated in the United Front for the Constitution of the Republic of Puerto Rico, created at the urging of Nationalist leader Albizu after the introduction of the Tydings Bill (*Ibid.*:

¹⁶ Although *El Ámbito* and *El Cuko* were both short-lived, they were published during a critical period in the late 1930s, when economic crisis and widespread disenchantment with the Socialist Party leadership's class-conciliatory politics led to the rapprochement of rank-and-file socialist and pro-independence positions. The two pioneering publications (*El Cuko* was the UPR's first daily) illustrate the students' prominent role in this process, which was later absorbed and diluted into the PPD's populist discourse.

¹⁷ The Liberal Party was founded by a breakaway faction of the Union Party which carried the majority of popular support. The conservative old guard then fused with the Republicans to form the Republican Union Party, which forged a Coalition with the Socialists to win the 1932 election.

¹⁸ The strike took place in the context of the conflict between the pro-independence faction of the Liberal Party, led by Muñoz Marín, which ironically had maneuvered itself into the position of controlling federal PRRA funds, and the Republican-Socialist Coalition which controlled the legislature and had allied itself with Gore (see, for example, Villaronga 2004). Gore, who was critical of Puerto Rico's educational system because it did not produce "good American citizens," named Alonso Torres to the Board of Trustees upon recommendation by Iglesias Pantín. Torres had agreed to an austerity plan that would eliminate five posts at the UPR occupied by well-known Liberals and cut \$52,000 from the budget of the Commissioner of Public Instruction (*Ibid.*: 545-546). The strike was led by the Liberal Youth, and energetically defended on the pages of the main Liberal daily, *La Democracia*, but only received lukewarm support from Nationalists (*Ibid.*: 544-545). Gore, in turn, had skillfully claimed that Torres—a black, unschooled, working-class man—had been named to represent "the 96% of the Puerto Rican people who had never been to a university but were interested in the education of their children," (*Ibid.*: 544; my trans.). Although the strike declaration carefully noted that its motivation was not Torres' class, race, or even ideology, but rather partisan meddling in university affairs, the tone of the demonstrations, in which students bemoaned the naming of the "unqualified" Torres as an affront to Puerto Rican "culture" belied an elitist, conservative view of the education they were defending (*Ibid.*: 544-546).

537-538). Under the tightly controlled colonial institutional structure of the time, student anti-colonialism became intertwined with demands for university autonomy and democratic reform.¹⁹ For example, a student strike in 1931 challenged the summary suspension of 138 students by Liberal Chancellor Carlos Chardón for having publicly criticized the sidelining of *independentista* students and faculty in institutional structures (*Ibid.*: 532). Administrators offered to lift the suspension in exchange for a retraction of words considered “offensive.” Those linked to the Liberal Party agreed, while the Nationalists continued to agitate for months (Picó 1985b: 532-533; Navarro 2000: 147-148), eventually founding the National Federation of Puerto Rican Students (FNEP) in December of 1932, which effectively functioned as the youth wing of the PN until 1937.²⁰ In October 1935, a shootout between Nationalists and police just a few blocks from campus resulted in five dead and two wounded, in what became known as the Río Piedras Massacre. The event, which was set off by on-campus tensions between Nationalist students and others taking offense at statements directed by Albizu Campos against the UPR administration, set off a chain of events that led to the 1937 arrest and imprisonment of the Nationalist leadership, which in turn resulted in the party’s dwindling influence, and the dissolution of the FNEP (Picó 1985b: 548).²¹

¹⁹ In 1933, Nationalist students drafted the first concrete proposal for a program to reform the UPR, denouncing the institution as a “vehicle for imperialist penetration,” lacking autonomy and democracy: “it is convenient to repeat that the Governor (appointed by the U.S. President) appoints the Board of Trustees and that this Board appoints the administrative functionaries and professors of the university. Our first center of learning remains, thus, at the mercy of whatever policy the chief of the occupation wishes to develop,” (cited in Picó 1985b: 541; my trans.). Subsequent programs drafted in 1935 and 1939 by other student organizations echoed this criticism, albeit in less incendiary terms and more specifically seeking to free the university from “partisan politics” (*Ibid.*: 542-543).

²⁰ Hundreds of FNEP militants accompanied Albizu Campos on his tour of the countryside to agitate striking cane cutters, an experience which reportedly marked many of them, prompting them to look to class matters beyond the simple colonial conflict postulated by the party (Picó 1985b: 547). The FNEP also cultivated international ties with Latin American students (*Ibid.*: 538-540) and agitated, simultaneously with the Federation of High School Students, in reaction to the arrest of Albizu Campos and other Nationalist leaders and the Tydings Bill, both in early 1936, and the Ponce Massacre of March 1937, when police opened fire on a Nationalist demonstration in the city of Ponce, leaving 19 dead and hundreds wounded (*Ibid.*: 535-538).

²¹ Albizu Campos had denounced Chardón, arguing that the U.S educational system in Puerto Rico was geared towards producing “traitors, effeminate, and cowards who serve as good instruments to North American imperialism” (Albizu Campos 1981: 122-153; my trans.). Offended students led by the Republican Youth agitated for

The banner of university reform was picked up almost immediately by the dissident, pro-independence faction of the Liberal Party, which broke away to become the PPD in 1938. Under PPD leadership, the reform movement grew among both students and faculty, reaching its boiling point in 1941. Meanwhile, PPD leader Luis Muñoz Marín and his right-hand man at the UPR, professor Jaime Benítez, secretly arranged the appointment of Rexford G. Tugwell (who would be made governor only two months later) as UPR Chancellor, with the promise that he could return to the university post after his political term. However, student opposition to political meddling forced Muñoz to renege on this promise (Tugwell 1968 [1946]; see also Navarro 2000: 149-150). The UPR Law approved in May of 1942 partially addressed many of the movement's demands, but also created a very powerful Chancellery to which Benítez was appointed to avoid further embarrassments. The Law also substituted the Board of Trustees with a Council on Higher Education (CES) whose members served for fixed ten-year terms, rather than at the will of the governor (which made it appear less prone to partisan intervention, but in fact guaranteed the PPD's hold over it for over two decades). By the start of the following semester, Benítez had appointed his first choice, a professor from the Río Piedras campus, as vice chancellor of the Mayagüez campus, infuriating students there who went on strike for six months.²² In 1948, when the Río Piedras Student Council attempted to use the UPR Theater for a conference on Puerto Rico's political situation, featuring the recently returned Albizu Campos, Benítez denied permission, arguing that Albizu Campos was a polarizing and anti-democratic figure (see, for

an assembly to declare Albizu *persona non grata* at the UPR, stirring up animosity from the Nationalists. This led Chardón to request heightened police presence in the area. The police search of a "suspicious vehicle" outside the campus resulted in the shootout that took the lives of four Nationalists and one bystander, wounding one Nationalist and one police officer. Those events, known as the "Río Piedras Massacre," led to the assassination of Police Chief Riggs, and subsequent arrest, trial, and sentencing of Albizu Campos and other Nationalist leaders, discussed in the preceding subsection.

²² The students objected to this appointment as political meddling, in violation of the new law, which stated administrative positions should be filled from among the faculty at each campus. Benítez argued the professor had been duly transferred first (Navarro 2000: 151-152).

example, Benítez 1963: 159).²³ That denial set off a student strike that resulted in a 17-day shutdown, the expulsion of 400 students, hundreds of arrests, the closing of a student newspaper, and the elimination of campus-wide student government for nearly two decades (Navarro 2000: 154-157; see also Rodríguez Castro 2005; Reynolds 1989).

Despite a months-long off-campus “crusade” demanding the reinstatement of expelled students (Reynolds 1989), political activity on campus slowed to a low rumble after that, and stopped dead in its tracks soon thereafter. In 1950 and 1954, respectively, the Nationalists staged an uprising and attack on the U.S. Congress, which were followed by intense repression of all *independentistas*, Nationalist or not (Acosta 1987).²⁴ With the silencing of the most significant source of dissent, and the triumphal institutionalization of modern colonialism signaled by the 1952 Constitution, Benítez developed and implemented his educational philosophy of the UPR as a “House of Studies” free from any political interference. Notwithstanding this rhetoric, the institution was now under absolute PPD control (Navarro 2000). However, a new wave of student militancy was boiling just beneath the surface. Impatient with the PIP's electoral strategy, and galvanized by the Bolivarian ideal of Latin American unity against U.S. imperialism and the eruption of mass protest throughout the region, *independentista* students at the UPR were radicalizing. The Federation of Pro-Independence University Students (FUPI) was founded in 1956, strongly influenced by Cuba's July 26 Movement, which initiated guerrilla warfare against the Batista regime that year. Graduating FUPI founders, alongside expelled leaders of the 1948

²³ Released on probation in 1943, after six years in federal prison in Atlanta on charges of seditious conspiracy, Albizu Campos and several other Nationalist leaders then relocated to New York City, before returning to Puerto Rico in 1947 (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 112).

²⁴ In 1950, Nationalist Party cells in several municipalities throughout the island attempted to seize local government buildings. In Jayuya, insurgents captured the town hall and proclaimed the Republic of Puerto Rico, emulating the 1868 Lares insurrection against the Spanish. The uprising was quickly crushed by the Puerto Rico National Guard, and over 1,000 known *independenstistas* were rounded up. (see, for example, Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 165-167). In 1954, four Nationalists open fire on the floor of the U.S. Capitol (*Ibid.*: 201). They were arrested and imprisoned, but granted executive clemency by U.S. President Carter in 1979.

strike such as Juan Mari Bras, would be among the ranks of the first generation of the MPI's "New Struggle."²⁵

Sound and Fury (1960-1971)

Emulating the Nationalist FNEP of the 1930s, the FUPI claimed to represent not just its members or *independentista* students, but Puerto Rican students in general, proclaiming itself the heir to the student councils that had been banned after the student strike of 1948 (Liebman 1970: loc. 2147). By the 1960s, it was setting the terms of the debate at the UPR, as the FNEP had, even though its members were only a small portion of the student body. Although numerically small, even in proportion to *independentista* students, the FUPI had the largest membership among all politically active student organizations throughout the decade. Like the FNEP, its two priorities were the independence of Puerto Rico and democratic university reform (Liebman 1970: locs. 2105-2136). The latter, a growing demand of students and faculty beyond the left, earned the FUPI leadership by default over the reform movement,²⁶ which achieved partial success when the 1966 UPR Law re-authorized campus-wide student councils and authorized limited student representation on the University Senate (Anderson 2005; Liebman 1970: loc. 2325). The new Law, approved by a divided PPD now dominated by a liberal faction, also elevated the Benítez to the newly created UPR Presidency, allowing the Council on Higher Education (CES) to name Abrahán Díaz González, a consummate liberal, chancellor of the Río Piedras campus (Álvarez-Curbelo 2005; Anderson 2005). The greater tolerance promoted by Díaz González, together with the

²⁵ The FUPI denied allegiance to any "external" organization, and claimed to be open to all supporters of independence. However, ties between it and the MPI were clearly evident in mutual support for each other's activities and pronouncements, as well as the direct generational relay of militants and leaders from one to the other (Liebman 1970: locs. 2158-2169).

²⁶ Divided in its position with regard to reform (and its *Muñocista* hardline faction rhetorically committed to a politics-free campus), the PPD at the time lacked a formal youth organization of its own, while pro-statehood students, organized in two far-right organizations with the almost exclusive purpose of opposing to the FUPI, tended to oppose reform of any kind (Liebman 1970: locs. 2129-2139).

radicalization of the broader *independentista* movement, opened new political space for organizations such as a student wing of Corretjer's Socialist League and the PIP-affiliated *Independentista* University Youth (JIU),²⁷ which was soon vying with the FUPI for leadership over the radical student left, both at the UPR and in high schools throughout the island.²⁸

When Arthur Liebman conducted his landmark study in 1964-65, which devoted an entire chapter to *fupistas* as a marginal and “deviant” exception to the rule that Puerto Rican students were essentially conservative and quiescent, he found no indication that this would change any time soon (1970: loc. 2475). In an Epilogue written scarcely five years later, Liebman observed that while radicals were still a tiny minority at the UPR, their numbers, influence, and militancy were growing, a fact he attributed to three factors: increasing polarization between supporters of statehood and independence set off by the New Progressive Party (PNP)'s 1968 election victory; the U.S. war in Vietnam, seen by many on all sides of the political spectrum as a foreign war; and exposure to the “themes and tactics” of the civil rights and black power movements in the U.S., facilitated by cheap air travel and contact with U.S. militants (*Ibid.*: loc. 2479). Although this portrayal is not inaccurate, it lacks attention to the history of the student movement and seems to accept at face value the apparent prosperity of 1960s Puerto Rico. As elsewhere in the world, the intense radicalization for Puerto Rican student activists during the era, which closely paralleled the broader radicalization of *independentismo*, also reflected growing contradictions of Puerto

²⁷ Although the PIP had broader support among the students than the population at large (Liebman's survey reflected 24% support among his respondents; 1970: loc. 456), there is little evidence on the historical record of its involvement in campus confrontations before 1964 (see for example Paralicci 2000: 30). Liebman, who conducted his interviews in 1964-1965, seems not to have been aware of the JIU (or any PIP-affiliated organization at all), even though he included electoral support for the PIP within his survey, and identified two *independentista* student organizations in addition to the FUPI: the Christian Patriotic Crusade, and the Society of Friends of the People (1970: loc. 2105). Neither seems to have had much influence or lasted very long thereafter.

²⁸ Both FUPI and JIU had high school counterparts, the Pro-Independence Student Federation and the *Independentista* Student Youth.

Rican society and cracks in the colonial regime. Through their contacts with national political organizations, FUPI and JIU cadre played a prominent role in emerging labor, community, environmental, and anti-military struggles off campus (see for example Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 229-235). This, in turn, helped them hone and expand their ideological frameworks and tactical repertoires, even as they were being influenced by new figures, movements, and ideas from around the world (Arbona 2005).

However, it was the escalation of U.S. involvement in Indochina and military presence on campus, represented by the Selective Service and the Reserve Officers Training Corp (ROTC), that were the major catalysts of student mobilization on campus.²⁹ *Independentistas* and other radicalizing students saw the war as not just foreign and unjust, but an imperialist aggression against a fellow colonized people: in 1967, FUPI President José Rafael Varona was mortally wounded by a U.S. bomb while on a solidarity visit to Hanoi. Simultaneously, the rising tide of a Caribbean Cold War unleashed with force by the Cuban Revolution was turning the UPR into a battlefield. In September 1963, the University Anti-communist Front (FAU), a right-wing group composed mainly by students of Cuban descent and counseled by prominent exiles, organized to protest Benítez's refusal to fire mathematics professor José María Lima when he declared himself a "Marxist-Leninist" (Liebman 1970: loc. 2237). Constant demonstrations and counter-demonstrations at Río Piedras escalated as the decade progressed, resulting in physical skirmishes between leftist and *independentista* students on the one hand, and ROTC cadets, "anti-communist"

²⁹ Participation in ROTC programs was compulsory for all male students. When the University Board agreed to make the program voluntary in the summer of 1960, after several protests during the previous semester, the FUPI began an active campaign for its removal from campus altogether. In September 1961, Chancellor Benítez requested police intervention in a confrontation between pro- and anti-ROTC students for the first time (Paraliticci 2005: 30).

students,³⁰ and university security guards on the other, to which university administrators increasingly responded by requesting police intervention.³¹

On March 4, 1970, new confrontations over ROTC presence resulted in a police occupation of the campus and melees on the surrounding streets, over 100 wounded, and the death of student Antonia Martínez, shot dead on the balcony of her off-campus residence on Ponce de León Ave., who became an instant martyr of the student and *independentista* movements. The following year, on March 11, a quarrel over Muhammad Ali's politics snowballed into all-out war. In the ensuing chaos, which again spilled out into the streets of Río Piedras, hundreds were wounded, two officers (including a riot squad lieutenant) and a cadet were killed, 70 students were arrested (amidst numerous allegations of illegal detainment and torture), the PIP headquarters and numerous *independentista* homes and businesses in the area were burned to the ground, and the campus was occupied by police for a full month. Two students were charged with the murders of the two police officers, but were later acquitted. (Arbona 2005; Nieves Falcón 1971; Rodríguez Graciani 1972). This sequence of events precipitated the decision to remove ROTC headquarters from UPR campuses, the sacking of Chancellor Díaz González and later President Benítez by the now PNP-controlled CES on the grounds that their permissiveness had encouraged the violence,³² and a half

³⁰ In addition to the FAU, the University Pro-Statehood Association, a smaller group affiliated with the Statehood Republican Party, opposed the "communist" FUPI. The two right-wing groups were so intertwined that, according to Liebman by the time he was writing, the FAU "appears to have submerged its identity and become the driving force" behind the other (1970: Ch. 5, fn. 1).

³¹ Among other events: in a 1967 exchange of gunfire among students, cadets, and police, one officer was wounded and a civilian taxi driver was killed. In September 1969, the ROTC building was burned down during a riot, resulting in the arrest of 22 people, including Socialist League members and sympathizers. In November, both the MPI and PIP headquarters were attacked by a pro-statehood mob led by PNP Senator and former U.S. Army General Juan Palerm (for a full list of events during the 1960s, see Paralicci 2005: 30-34).

³² Benítez, who remained a staunch supporter of the ROTC program despite violent confrontations throughout the 1960s, changed his mind about its headquarters' presence on campus after the events of March 11, 1971, having received authorization for withdrawal from U.S. military authorities. The position of president was declared vacant by the CES, following an intense public showdown over the subject between Benítez and the PNP Ferré administration. According to staunchly "pro-American" PNP rhetoric, Benítez was too lenient with radical left-wing students who had been stirring up trouble, and was therefore partly responsible for confrontations that required

decade-long frenetic proliferation of organizational and tactical forms on the left. For many among the new generation of leaders tempered on the battlefield of the UPR, the outcome of 1970-1971 seemed to prove that a revolutionary counterweight to the state's monopoly on the means of violence was necessary and plausible, but required organization and a mass base.

Search for a Party (1972-1981)

During the 1970s, the FUPI grew closer than ever to the former MPI, which had adopted Marxism-Leninism as its “guide to action” in 1969, and rebranded itself as the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), in November 1971. The PIP, which had turned sharply leftward under the charismatic leadership of Rubén Berríos after 1968, also declared itself in favor of “democratic socialism” (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 227-229). Increasingly informed by Marxism, and determined to avoid the social isolation of previous generations, the student left scrambled to support a labor movement that was also regaining traction (Agosto 2009). At the UPR, the JIU, FUPI, and Socialist League supported strikes by the Maintenance Worker's Union (STM) and the recently founded Brotherhood of Administrative Employees (HEEND) in 1971 and 1972 (Cruz Crespo 2014: 65-69). In October 1973, the partisan power struggle to control the UPR, unleashed once more by the PPD's return to power and firing of the PNP-appointed president, set off a month long student strike for democratic reform, the first since 1948.³³ In the midst of their own contract negotiations, the STM and HEEND went on strike a few days later (*Ibid.*: 80, 84-87). When another bargaining

police intervention, resulting in several deaths and hundreds of injuries. Virtually the same sequence had played out a year earlier, with the dismissal of liberal Río Piedras Chancellor Abraham Díaz González, following the events of March 4, 1970. The pro-ROTC faction of the CES had recently achieved a bare majority (5 out of 9) when the resignation of one of its members allowed Ferré to name a PNP loyalist to the post. On that occasion, Benítez defended the ROTC headquarters remaining on campus (Rodríguez Graciani 1972).

³³ The demands put forth by the general assembly of the student body at Río Piedras were: student participation in the election of high administrative posts, a new University Law, less restrictive student disciplinary regulations, and a reform of the UPR security guard corps (Cruz Crespo 2014: 80; see also Torres 1973: 4).

stalemate produced a new employee strike in 1976, lasting over a month, the student left reciprocated their support, participating in intense confrontations with the police (*Ibid.*: 119-136).

The voting age was lowered to 18 ahead of the 1972 election, a factor that played in favor of the PIP, which doubled the number of votes it had received in 1968 (from 35,000 to nearly 70,000, or 5.4% of the vote), electing Berríos senator. The two PIP candidates to the House of Representatives, Carlos Gallisá and 24-year old former JIU Secretary General Luis Ángel Torres, also entered the legislature.³⁴ However, the outcome fell far short of the expectations of many, provoking a sour debate between the conservative old guard and the social-democratic center, headed by Berríos. A third sector (popularly known as *terceristas*), which included Gallisá, Torres, and a significant portion of the JIU, refused to side with either faction, and was invited to leave the party. A series of discussions among the *tercerista* “socialist left” resulted in the founding of the Popular Socialist Movement (MSP) by early 1974 (some, like Gallisá, went on to join the PSP instead). Torres and Gallisá nevertheless held on to their legislative seats, using them in March of 1974 to introduce a bill for a new UPR Law that included the students’ main demands from the 1973 strike. However, attempts to mobilize mass student support faltered, and after the backpedaling of PPD legislators who had previously considered supporting it, the bill never made it past the floor of the House (Cruz Crespo 2014: 110).

In February of 1974, groups of “Socialist Youth” throughout the island had held an assembly to formally become the UJS, which declared itself the youth wing of the newly founded MSP. What remained of the JIU split further, with one faction retaining its ties with the PIP, while

³⁴ Gallisá and Torres were “elected” through the application of a rule in Sec. 7, Art. III of the 1952 Constitution, which holds that if any party wins control over two thirds of the seats in either chamber of the legislature but less than two thirds of the votes for governor, that chamber’s number of seats shall be expanded, through a mathematical formula, to ensure that minority parties are represented. Torres, Puerto Rico’s youngest legislator in history, was not yet 25 at the time of the election, as constitutionally required, and his investiture was a subject of legal challenge that became academic when he reached the legal age in the summer of 1973.

the other became closely associated with the Maoist Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) and was absorbed by the UJS when the former joined forces with the MSP. The UJS's first tasks were to mobilize support for the unsuccessful UPR Law Bill and for the teachers' strike that took place that year (see, for example, UJS 1974; MSP 1974). During the 1976 UPR employees' strike, sharp strategic differences emerged between the FUPI, which argued the student movement was in a phase of "ascent" and advocated frontal confrontation with the police and administration's "thugs," and the UJS, which saw the moment as one of weakness and "retrenchment" (Alejandro Rivera 2006 [1980]; Cruz Crespo 2014).³⁵ At least one historian has argued that the debate reflected each group's recent experiences on the national political terrain: where the latter saw strength as a result of the PSP's consolidation and apparent momentum, the former saw weakness as a result of its origins in the PIP's disappointing 1972 election results and subsequent splits (Cruz Crespo 2014: 152).³⁶ Whatever the reason, later developments seem to confirm the second analysis, with mobilization at the UPR slowing to a crawl after 1976. Labor mobilization had also peaked in 1974, declining thereafter as a result of rising unemployment (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 233-234).³⁷

³⁵ In a 1980 analysis of recent history and the then-current situation at the UPR, then UJS leader Roberto Alejandro argued that the "appropriate" response to the state's repressive tactics, which caught the student movement off guard, would have been neither frontal confrontation, for which the movement was completely unprepared, nor the off-campus pickets and marches that actually ended up taking place, but "to attack swiftly and consistently, contributing to the demoralization of the enemy forces" (2006 [1980]: 35). The latter tactic was put in practice during the 1981-82 student strike, and emulated in the second phase of the 2010-11 strike.

³⁶ In a less sympathetic tone, Alejandro also links the FUPI's "triumphalist illusions" about the continuous "ascent" of the struggle at the UPR, to its status as "the PSP's youth [organization]," which it denied in public (Alejandro Rivera 2006 [1980]: 28). Alejandro nonetheless argues that evaluations of periods of "retrenchment" should always be qualified, expressing confidence that "faced with a pressing national issue, which need not be related to the university's specific problems, students will mobilize and once again shatter the paradigms of many" (*Ibid.*: 36; my trans.). One year later, this premonition came true, albeit most definitely within the purview of issues both specific to the university (a tuition hike) and connected to the broader political and economic context.

³⁷ César Ayala and Rafael Bernabe argue that nationalist policies among certain labor organizers on the left (specifically within the PSP), which prevented them from working with U.S.-based "internationals," probably contributed to division and decline within the labor movement as well (2007: 233-234). This conclusion, however, is based mainly on speculation, and in any case the debate over the appropriate response to "labor colonialism," which Ayala and Bernabe simplify considerably, is beyond the scope of this work.

Nonetheless, the public utilities continued to face periods of intense conflict, such as the 1977 electrical workers' strike, in which student cadre from the UJS, FUPI, and other organizations were actively involved. The UJS also participated in the MSP's efforts to create a network of local committees and study groups throughout the island.

The MST and its Struggles

The MST was founded in January of 1982, a product of the fusion of the ex-Maoist PSR and the UJS's parent organization, the MSP. Its founding Congress was dedicated to the Polish workers' movement, Solidarity, and the UPR Student Strike of 1981-82 (MST 1982a). The UJS played an important role in the rapprochement between the two organizations, which began with a period of introspection and self-criticism by both starting in 1978, especially of their prior "militaristic" tendencies. The MSP and PSR had previously seen each other with ferocious suspicion and disdain, but developed mutual trust through interaction in the electrical workers' strike of 1977, which was reinforced after the UPR strike and a second electrical workers' strike in 1981 (*Ibid.*; see also MST 1982b). The reference to Solidarity and the Polish workers reflected a sector of the Puerto Rican left's increasing questioning of, and distancing from, the "revisionist" and authoritarian Soviet bloc (including Cuba, which had been a powerful influence on the Puerto Rican left), and its search for a more democratic, grassroots version of revolutionary socialism. In 1984, the remnants of the Workers' Internationalist League, a Trotskyist organization founded in the late 1970s, which was well-known for its early support for gender and LGBT equality (LIT n.d.; see also Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 236), also joined the MST.

PSR and MSP (1969-1982)

The wave of radicalization that swept through the ranks of Puerto Rican *independentismo* after the triumph of the Cuban revolution included the emergence of clandestine organizations dedicated to

armed struggle as early as 1960.³⁸ Even the PSP, an electoral party whose gubernatorial candidate received 10,000 votes in 1976, publicly supported the actions of the Armed Liberation Commandos (CAL) until 1975 (Irizarry Cruz 2010).³⁹ This tactical orientation, fueled by the growth of harassment and violence against the independence movement by right-wing Cuban exile groups and unofficial parapolice units (Atilés-Osoria 2012), would see its high point in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and decline rapidly after members of the National Forces of Armed Liberation and Boricua Popular Army-*Macheteros* were arrested between 1983 and 1985 (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 283-284). During the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly after the events of 1970-71 at the UPR, effervescent debates over the appropriate balance between the “political” and “military” elements of revolutionary strategy took place. At the same time, much like the U.S. “New Communist Movement” that developed in the early 1970s (Elbaum 2002), many Puerto Rican leftists were strongly and directly influenced by what appeared to be a worldwide upsurge of revolutionary socialist politics throughout the so-called Third World. All of the organizations of the contemporary Puerto Rican left have roots, in one way or another, in this complex and tumultuous period.

The year 1969 was in many ways a watershed. Not only did the MPI take its first steps towards its reconstitution as the PSP, the eight-month strike that began in October at the General Electric plant in Río Grande, a municipality to the east of San Juan, sparked a new era of labor

³⁸ In 1960, a group of former Nationalist sympathizers calling themselves the People’s Armed Movement attempted to start a Guevarist guerrilla *foco* in the mountains of northwestern Puerto Rico. Although that experience came to an abrupt end when discovered by the police in 1964, it sparked nearly 30 years of uninterrupted, albeit socially isolated, armed struggle (González Cruz 2006; see also Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 281-284; André 1987).

³⁹ CAL actions, which focused on U.S.-owned retail chains that were fast displacing Puerto Rican-owned small merchants but also provided tactical support to striking workers, began in 1967 and were applauded by the MPI from the start (Irizarry Cruz 2010). Although the individual identities of CAL members remain a secret (the group signed its communiqués “Alfonso Beal,” in honor of Betances and Albizu Campos), it is widely believed that the leadership of the two organizations overlapped at least partially.

militancy (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 251). Polarization and conflict at the UPR also reached a new high point (see fn. 31, above). That same year, a group of former JIU members founded the PSR, Puerto Rico's first, and to my knowledge, only explicitly Maoist political organization. Always marginal, yet fiercely disciplined and somewhat influential among the radical left, the PSR emphasized political education and recruitment among the population of Puerto Rico's public housing projects, which it considered the most impoverished and therefore politically receptive sectors of the urban working class. While advocating the eventual development of "Protracted People's War," the PSR prioritized the construction of a mass communist party capable of directing that struggle politically, rejecting the spectacular armed actions of clandestine organizations as petit bourgeois "individual terrorism" and adventurism (PSR 1977: 12-16). The PSR was also the first organization to develop a theory of "industrial colonialism" in contrast to "classical colonialism" for analyzing Puerto Rican society and explaining the limited reach of the national liberation movement (Báez Sánchez 2013b: 212, fn. 23). In 1976, the PSR entered a process of internal evaluation that led to the resignation of its founding leader and the relaxing of much of its earlier dogmatism (PSR 1977: 18-19).

The MSP, in turn, was born from two national discussion seminars held in September and October 1973 attended by several hundred delegates, following the expulsion of the *tercerista* faction from the PIP, on the need to found a movement that would pursue the creation of a revolutionary "party of the working class" (Grupo Timón 2006 [1973]: 1-5; my trans.).⁴⁰ That process resulted in the creation of Socialist Work and Study Groups that would serve as the

⁴⁰ The discussion groups and seminars were organized by a Steering Committee that included the doyen of Puerto Rican communists, Andreu Iglesias, who had resigned from the MPI and collaborated closely with the PIP since 1970 (Báez Sánchez 2013b: 272, fn. 16; Báez Sánchez 2013a: 4). However, Andreu Iglesias never joined the MSP, dying of cancer shortly after the seminars that led to its founding. The Steering Committee also included the two recently elected former PIP legislators, Torres and Gallisá. Torres resigned his legislative seat soon after the defeat of the 1974 bill for a new university law. Gallisá, who never joined the MSP, served out his term as an independent.

“organizational base” of the MSP (Báez Sánchez 2013b: 272, fn. 26; see also MSP 2013 [1974]; Báez Sánchez, 2013a: 4). Unlike the PSR, the MSP did not proclaim doctrinal adherence to any specific Marxist tendency. Instead, citing Abraham Guillén, a Spanish Civil War veteran who mentored the Uruguayan *Tupamaros*, the MSP noted that conditions in Puerto Rico were very different from those in China, Russia, Cuba, or Vietnam, which were only “guides” and “example[s] of revolutionary action” to be applied according to the island’s “concrete reality” (MSP 2013 [1974]: 66; my trans.; see also Guillén 1973). Nonetheless, “it was profoundly influenced by Ché Guevara’s political thought, the Vietnamese Revolution, and the Latin American revolutionary left, especially the Chilean” (Báez Sánchez 2013b: 263).⁴¹ A “libertarian” or anarcho-socialist, Guillén was a strong advocate of direct democracy and workers’ self-management (see, for example, 1970), a tendency that left a strong mark on the MSP and later MST (Báez Sánchez 2013b). Another evident influence was Paulo Freire, and specifically his theory of “conscientization,” which is referenced directly in an early manual by the MSP Political Education Commission on study groups (MSP 2013 [1974]).

The MSP/MST Strategic Framework

One of the MSP’s study documents, still used today by the MST, is the Introduction to a book on Marxist strategy and tactics authored by Brazilian political scientists Vania Bambirra and Theotonio dos Santos, in which they define strategy as the framing of “the character of the revolution, of the principal enemy, of the allies and forces” of the working class and its party in the struggle to “take power,” and tactics as “the maneuvers, alliances, commitments, and partial movements” they realize in order to reach their strategic objectives (1980: 1; my trans.). Bambirra

⁴¹ The admiration and affinity of the MSP founders for South American urban guerrillas is further evidenced by the organization’s “unreserved support” for the Revolutionary Coordination Board created in 1974 by the Chilean Revolutionary Left Movement, Uruguayan National Liberation Movement-*Tupamaros*, Argentinean Revolutionary Workers’ Party, and Bolivian National Liberation Army (MSP 2013 [1974]: 72-73).

and Dos Santos argue that “the reduction of strategy to tactical questions” leads to “reformism” (isolating actions from their objectives) whereas inversely, “the reduction of tactics to strategic problems” leads to “deviations of the adventurist or intellectualist type” (sacrificing concrete immediate gains for ideas or principles in the abstract) (*Ibid.*: 10; my trans.). Therefore, and because radical movement leadership often stems from sectors of the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie, tendencies toward “petit bourgeois radicalism, working-class reformism, and opportunism of both origins” are dangers constantly lurking in the definition of strategy and tactics. Following this logic, the MSP and later the MST dedicated a great deal of thought in their early documents to working out just who made up the Puerto Rican working class, and its main adversaries and potential allies, and which tactics were best suited to advance independence and socialism in that context (MSP 2013 [1974]; MST 2006 [1982]).

Despite its commitment to “the seizure of political power by the working class” and firm belief in “the need to face the violence and repression of the capitalists through the armed organization of the workers” (MSP 2013 [1974]: 64-65; my trans.), the MSP saw this process as one directly tied to the development of consciousness through practice: “the laboring masses won’t accept the leadership of that party which merely declares itself ‘the party of the working class, the party of Revolution.’ The working class will follow the party it learns to recognize through long, slow, and difficult revolutionary preparation, the party that proves to be, in action, its party” (*Ibid.*: 92; my trans.). Rather than spectacular high-profile actions of “armed propaganda,” the MSP conceived of armed struggle as the “weakening, wearing out, subtracting its repressive capacity, until finally destroying said [bourgeois] State apparatus,” a process “that will be set in motion on the basis of the elevation of the conscience of the most advanced elements of the working class and of the laboring classes in general through their own experience of the struggle, in action and

through the socialist education and political leadership they receive from the party,” a “long, patient process” that necessarily had to include “the concrete practice of . . . [popular] violence” so as not to be trapped in “permanent defense” (*Ibid.*: 66-67; my trans.).⁴² This long-term view eventually evolved, in a document produced one year before the birth of the MST in 1982, into the position that armed struggle was not feasible at the present stage of the class struggle in Puerto Rico. On the basis of this analysis, the EPB-M’s attack on Muñiz Air Base in 1981 was criticized as militaristic adventurism (Torres Torres 2012 [1981]).⁴³

The MSP’s collective action frame was based on a broad working-class identity that early on rejected distinctions between industrial (“blue-collar”) workers and commercial, financial, and government (“white collar”) “employees,” while recognizing the possibility of class alliances with the “lower petty bourgeoisie” in danger of being displaced by “imperialist domination” (MSP 2013 [1974]: 21-26). Students in general were seen as a non-class, broad social group that was prone to radicalism and therefore a potential ally of the working class (*Ibid.*: 27-28). Later, the UJS refined this analysis to account for class divisions among the student body, and shifted its main emphasis to working-class students, as manifested in its insistence on income-adjusted rather than “free” tuition at the UPR starting with the 1981-82 student strike (Alejandro Rivera 2006 [1980]; see also UJS 2005).⁴⁴ Making use of the concept of “industrial colony” previously developed by the PSR,

⁴² It is possible (although it has never been confirmed, and beyond the scope of this dissertation) that in following this line of reasoning, the MSP participated in any number of clandestine operations that took place during that time. A self-proclaimed “exposé” on Puerto Rican “terrorism” published in a right-wing Cuban exile journal claimed that an organization known as the People’s Revolutionary Armed Forces was the “armed branch” of the MST (André 1987), which is false. However, the MSP may at one time have had links to this or other clandestine organizations, prior to 1982. MSP militants were arrested for possession of illegal weapons and stolen property in 1978, and again in 1981 (*Ibid.*), but in both cases charges were dropped without trial.

⁴³ In January 1981, the EPB-M destroyed ten A-7 Corsair IIs and an F-104 Starfighter belonging to the Puerto Rico Air National Guard at José A. Muñiz Air National Guard Base in the municipality of Carolina.

⁴⁴ This position is consistent with that expressed by Marx and Engels in their *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1879 [1875]; see also Ch. 1, fn. 8, above). There is no mention of income-adjusted tuition in the UJS’s General Declaration of 1974, despite the fact that the document contains a program of sorts, outlining “pragmatic” demands that the organization could raise to mobilize and recruit students, such as the proposal for a New University Law (including

the MSP frame held that the “fundamental contradiction” in Puerto Rican society was not between the Puerto Rican “people” or “nation” as a whole and U.S. imperialism, as imagined by other socialist *independentista* organizations (particularly the PSP), but between the working class and its “potential allies” (including students as a broad non-class social group) and U.S. capitalists, on whom the local bourgeoisie and mid- to upper petty bourgeoisie were thoroughly dependent (MSP 2013 [1974]: 15-21; see also MST 1982c). This frame also recognized the international character of capitalism and class struggle, particularly the role of financial capital and the U.S. municipal bonds market (MSP 2013 [1974]: 17, 47, 52-53, 74-75, fn.3).

Beyond the Student Movement

In more ways than one, not just the UJS, but the MST is an offspring of the UPR student movement, and its contradictory roles in Puerto Rican society: the organizations that preceded it were direct products of the debates sparked by the events of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the 1981 strike was one of the turning points that led to or at least accelerated its birth, and the UJS has always been its main source of recruitment and training of future leaders. Nonetheless, as a result of its ideological convictions and the class backgrounds of its first generation of leaders, but also of the times into which it was born, the MST has had a conscious and active presence in the Puerto Rican labor movement and other spaces of resistance. Like the generation of activists who formed the U.S. New Communist Movement (Elbaum 2002), the MSP, PSR, and other leftist cadre organizations in Puerto Rico required or strongly encouraged the insertion of militants into what they considered the most “advanced” working class organizations, and those with the most potential to disrupt the accumulation of capital. In Puerto Rico during the mid-1970s, this meant

elements such as “co-government,” university autonomy, and open admissions) (2006 [1974]: 7). In general terms, the document’s analysis is the same one laid out in the MSP’s General Declaration of the same year, which sees students in general as potential allies of the revolutionary working class.

the nascent pharmaceutical industry and the manufacturing sector in general, and the public utilities (MSP 2013 [1974]; MST 2006 [1982]). However, and although it always remained active within broader environmental, community, and women's movements, it was among the teachers of the public school system that the MSP was able to plant its strongest roots outside of the UPR.

Two teachers and founding members of the MSP/MST whom I interviewed, born into working-class families at opposite ends of the island, conveyed to me how the UPR, the PIP, and the public school system intersected at the start of their activist careers:

My trajectory in the struggle . . . begins in the late 1960s, when I was in high school, Luis Muñoz Rivera High School in Utuado. I began to participate with the teachers who were struggling at that time over working conditions in the schools. We're talking about the early 1970s, and some of my brothers were teachers, but also *independentista* and socialist leaders. Through their influence, I began to participate and become involved in the struggle, both in high school, and later at the university. . . [my brothers] participated as members of the PIP, and also in student struggles, one at the UPR Río Piedras, and the other one at the Mayagüez College.

Starting in middle school, I joined a youth group organized by ASPIRA in the neighborhood . . . [to] try to develop leadership among young people, improve self-esteem. . . But several of the organizers were young people who were older than us, in college or who recently left college, who were militants of the PIP. . . In high school I become part of a group influenced by those *compañeros*, that was called *Einstein Pa'lante* (I studied at Albert Einstein High School) . . . [with] the objective of making necessary demands to improve education . . . From there, many of us went on to organize the *Independentista* Student Youth. We organized a chapter at the school that fully integrated itself to the party's work. It was the early 1970s, there were elections in 1972, and we joined the activities of the JIU, and also those of the PIP's precinct in Barrio Obrero . . .⁴⁵

A focal point of nationalist mobilization over language policy in the 1920s and 1930s, *independentista* and leftist ideas were relatively widespread among teachers by the early 1970s.

Despite the rhetorical importance ascribed to education by the colonial regime, and the significant

⁴⁵ Interviews with Manuel Báez and María E. Lara. Báez and Lara are both retired teachers who held elected posts within the FMPP from 2012 until 2015, as organizational secretary and president, respectively. ASPIRA is a federally funded organization originating in the Puerto Rican diaspora in New York in 1961, along the lines of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to promote the educational and professional "advancement" of Puerto Ricans (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 238-240).

expansion in physical infrastructure and enrollment since the 1950s, salaries and working conditions were dismal. The Teachers' Association, which had been prominent in the battles of earlier decades, had become quiescent as a result of its inclusion of administrators and ties to the PPD, but in 1974 the Federation of Teachers (FMPR), a small, militant rank-and-file organization founded in 1966, opted to strike on its own. Although that strike was not immediately successful, most of its demands were eventually conceded, and the FMPR was able to consolidate and grow as a result. It also roughly coincided with the birth of the UJS and MSP, with a significant number of student and teacher cadre previously organized in the PIP. This deep connection with the public schools nurtured, and was in turn reinforced by, the MSP's pedagogical approach to its political work and its understanding of the schools as a key site of ideological reproduction.

In 1978, a left opposition ticket composed of PSP and MSP militants won an internal FMPR election, wresting control of the union from the PIP. There quickly developed a distance between the majority of the new union leadership and the MSP. In a scathing article published two years later in the MSP newspaper *El Militante*, the union leadership, including then MSP member Renán Soto (who would later go on to lead the FMPR for nearly two decades), was accused of "economism," meaning the reduction of political (class) struggle to purely economic demands, along the lines of what Bambirra and Dos Santos refer to as "reformism" and "pragmatic immediatism" (MSP 1980). That analysis, which became the basis of the MSP/MST's labor strategy, would also profoundly influence the UJS's notion of the appropriate balance between strategy and tactics within the student movement. By the early 1980s, with the crisis of the *independentista* left and declining labor militancy in manufacturing and other areas of "strategic" value, a number of MST leaders and militants made a conscious decision to become teachers and focus the organization's scarce resources in the FMPR. This decision led to the growth and

strengthening of an explicitly socialist platform within the union, which later in effect became the MST's Teachers' Caucus, playing a crucial role in the development of the teachers' strike of 1993 (Maldonado Jiménez 1996).

The broad crisis of the Puerto Rican left, which broadly reflected that of the worldwide left in the 1980s, also made its mark on the organizational culture of the MST and the UJS. Shortly after the creation of the MST, a group of former UJS cadre, including 1981-82 strike leader Alejandro, raised a far-reaching debate questioning everything from the organization's collective identity (not just what they perceived as an excessive residual nationalism, but also too rigid "economistic" notions of class), to questions of strategy and internal procedure (see, for example, Autogestión 1984). Although many of the dissidents eventually left, that debate led the MST to formally abandon "Marxism-Leninism" in favor of an ecumenical "democratic socialism" wherein specific denominations are subordinate to "liberatory practice," and of "democratic centralism" in favor of the "the right to form tendencies" that are free to publicly criticize and abstain from implementing majority decisions (MST 1999). In 1989, the MST rallied scattered socialist groups and individuals to come together in a Socialist Front that was meant to produce greater unity in practice and a gradual consolidation, similar to the process that brought the PSR and MSP together. However, in 2005, the MST's membership voted to leave the Front, claiming that rather than strengthening the left it had diluted energies demanded by the teachers' and student movements (Torres Torres 2005; for a critical "concurring opinion" see Fortuño Candelas and Olivero 2005). By 2003, a platform led by MST members had reached the leadership of the FMPR, now facing a series of difficult battles that would eventually lead to the teachers' strike of 2008.⁴⁶ Things were

⁴⁶ The FMPR was now the collective bargaining representative for 45,000 teachers and other employees throughout the entire public school system. Against the warnings of the MST Caucus, in 1998 the FMPR, led by Soto, competed for recognition as bargaining representative under the newly approved Law 45 (which for the first time formally recognized the right of public employees to bargain collectively—a long-standing informal practice under a different

also heating up at the UPR, where conflict had flared up between the UJS and members of another youth organization within the Front. Despite the Socialist Front's important role in projecting a unified socialist presence in broad mobilizations, in practice the MST had to undertake most if not all of its actions since at least 2000 on its own, including the development of civil disobedience "brigades" to disrupt maneuvers on the U.S. Navy practice bombing range in Vieques (Torres Torres 2003).

Conclusions

The conflicts between the UJS and FUPI mentioned in the sections above illustrate not just a clash of egos and personalities, or momentary disagreements over specific actions, but wider strategic differences that speak to an ongoing contest to frame the collective identity of the UPR student movement. This contest in turn was part of a broader contest among the main ideological currents of resistance in Puerto Rico during the twentieth century, nationalism and socialism. In 1982, the same year that the PSR and MSP fused to form the MST, the PSP underwent the last in a series of major schisms that resulted in its weakening and eventual formal disappearance (in 1993). The PSP dissidents, as well as the MST, argued that the break was due, at least in part, precisely to the irreconcilable tension between its nationalist leadership (which already advocated alliances with an alleged "pro-Puerto Rican" faction within the PPD) and socialist sectors (Meléndez 1984; Mattos-Cintrón 1984; MST 1982c). Although the MST would soon experience its own internal conflict, it was able to survive the collapse of really existing socialism into the twenty first century,

law— but banned strikes; see Rosado Marzán 2007) and won. One of the first measures undertaken by the MST-backed platform that reached the leadership of the union in 2003 was to fulfill the longstanding promise of leaving the American Federation of Teachers, which implied a membership referendum and facing costly punitive litigation over dues. The new leadership also foresaw an uphill negotiation battle, which materialized once the union's contract expired in 2006, leading to the strike in late February of 2008. Under Law 45, the FMPR was "decertified" in reprisal for the 2008 strike, losing whatever real advantages, as well as the artificial strength in numbers, it may have gained when it became the "official" bargaining representative.

arguably because it learned from the PSP's experience and was able to adapt, becoming simultaneously more flexible and democratic internally, while insisting on strategic clarity in the definition of potential friends and enemies, goals, and collective identity (see, for example, MST 1999). This learning curve would be reproduced within the UJS, in the leadership contest within the broader student movement.

That movement evolved through various transformations of its own throughout the twentieth century, which reflected the changing composition of the student body, as well as the changing role and character of the institution. At different moments therein, small radical student organizations with close ties to the *independentista* left (FNEP, FUPI, UJS) were able to set the tone and provide an organizational basis for the movement, despite their small number as a percentage of the student body, because they were able to “read” the issues most likely to mobilize those students who could be mobilized, while simultaneously linking them to broader social issues beyond the university. Whenever they have not been capable of realizing one of these two tasks, organizations have faltered and declined, as the FNEP did after the Nationalist leadership was imprisoned in 1937, and as the FUPI did after 1976, when it was perceived to prioritize the PSP's wider agenda over students' immediate concerns (declining and becoming ossified in dogmatism later on, as the latter declined and disappeared). The UJS, while numerically significantly smaller than the others at their zenith, was well positioned to assume this role when neoliberalization at the UPR began in earnest, after 1980. Although it has since gone through its own ups and downs, it has been able to maintain this role (as I show in Chapters 4 and 5), in part because it has developed a strategic framework that has allowed it to be simultaneously flexible and coherent, as well as attuned to both the needs of students and their relationship to processes playing out at broader geographic and historical scales.

Chapter 3. Neoliberalization at the UPR: Repertoire and Dilemma

“Here’s the deal,” I told him. “I can either describe how the Puerto Rico Government Development Bank is laying off a loan it made to the Health Authority so it can pay you 9 percent guaranteed by a Letter of Credit from the Credit Industrial Development Bank of Japan . . . or I can simply circle you for \$25,000 of the bonds. What do you say?” He said, “Put me down for \$25,000.”

—J. Lebenthal, *Confessions of a Municipal Bond Salesman*
(Lebenthal and Kanner 2006: 38).

The Governor’s Economic Advisory Council, appointed during the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) administration of Rafael Hernández Colón, titled its landmark 1989 development strategy report, “Towards the Second Economic Transformation.” In this narrative, the first “transformation” of Puerto Rico’s economy was accomplished through a liberal-populist program of modernization and “industrialization by invitation” implemented by the PPD since the 1940s (CAEG 1989: 5-9). In the Report, “privatization” was defined as a range of practices, including, but not limited to, “transferring . . . to the private sector activities and services that at a given moment are being offered by the government,” all aimed at increasing the “efficiency” and “effectiveness” of services by “incorporating the functional logic of private enterprise” (*Ibid.*: 43-44; my trans.). Seventeen years later, an Economic Development Plan published by the administration of Aníbal Acevedo Vilá (also of the PPD), which recognized the 1989 Report as one among several important precursors and incorporated its main ideological assumptions, called for a drastic restructuring of the local government, claiming that it could be done “*without the need for layoffs or privatization*” (ELAPR 2006: 9; my trans. and emphasis). Instead, the plan foresaw “incentives for early retirement” as a way to cut the payroll of public agencies by up to a third, while relying on “public private societies” for future development (*Ibid.*: 10-12, 26-34; see also Hernández Cabiya 2006a).

What transpired, in the span of nearly two decades between the two documents, to account for this devaluation of the political currency of “privatization” in the rhetoric of elites from the same political party, even as its practice persisted, in slightly adapted form? Among other developments, intense and massive protests, including a “People’s Strike” against the sale of the state-owned telephone company in 1998, and major scandals surrounding other high-profile privatization attempts had made the term itself politically unpalatable (Torres Rivera 1999). However, the underlying logic of neoliberalization continued to prevail, portending catastrophe if something was not done to check the size of government. Where the 1989 Report celebrated “privatization” as a good in itself, the 2006 Plan was part of an extended debate where the Puerto Rican public was introduced to a new, looming threat to its well-being, unless drastic austerity measures were taken: mushrooming public debt and the potential downgrading of the government’s bonds to “junk” status by transnational credit rating agencies (CRAs).¹ The comparison between the two moments illustrates how neoliberalization is a process that is marked by the interaction between advocates and not just opponents, but also more powerful, “external” actors, arenas, and disciplinary mechanisms (the CRAs and the U.S. municipal bonds market). Over time, the cumulative effects of such interactions become “structural” insofar as they pattern and shape the conditions for future interactions.

The 2010-11 University of Puerto Rico (UPR) Student Strike was a direct response to neoliberal austerity policies at the UPR aimed at satisfying the criteria of the “big three” international CRAs, Moody’s Investors Service, Standard and Poor’s Financial Services (S&P),

¹ Months earlier, following a legislative showdown, the government had imposed an across-the-board sales tax that it argued was necessary to avoid a credit downgrade. The Plan itself was published two months before the emission of \$350 million worth of additional central government bonds, which the government insisted were necessary for pending public-private infrastructure projects (Hernández Cabiya 2006b).

and Fitch Ratings.² As I describe in Chapters 4 and 5, the UPR student movement that emerged during the 1981-82 student strike increasingly saw itself as part of a broader popular movement of resistance to the encroaching logic of profit and the market on an institution that previously conceived of itself as a public good at the service of the people of Puerto Rico, and specifically its least privileged. This encroaching logic is what I refer to as the process of neoliberalization, one which is not linear, uniform, or ready-made, but which has advanced inexorably in all aspects of Puerto Rican society, as throughout the world, over the last four decades. In this chapter, I examine the neoliberalization of higher education in Puerto Rico, in terms of the strategic repertoires pursued by different sets of actors operating within nested institutional arenas, as part of the context for the UPR student movement (which in turn has conditioned the pace and specific contours of neoliberalization). I conclude that neoliberalization intensified certain aspects of the strategic dilemmas facing the UPR student movement, which as a result have appeared in movement debates as a central recurrent dilemma, in the form of an apparent tradeoff between mass appeal and effective pressure.

From Dilemma to Regime, and Back Again

Dilemmas, Repertoires, and Regimes

Without the [more confrontational] second phase of the strike, [the special fee] wouldn't have been eliminated. [Popular Democratic Party (PPD) candidate Antonio] García Padilla's campaign ads weren't made with footage from the first phase. They were made with footage of police repression against the second phase. What the PPD mobilized discursively to win the elections was the second phase. Of course, for the PPD to be able

² CRAs are private entities that rate commercial and government debt in securitized bonds according to a standard graded scale, segmented in two broad tiers: "investment grade" (Aaa/AAA to Baa/BBB) and "speculative grade" or "junk" bonds (Ba/BB and lower). These scores ostensibly reflect the "creditworthiness" of bond issuers based on their ability and willingness to service existing debt in full and on time, or inversely, the "risk" or likelihood that they will default (Datz 2004: 308; see also Hackworth 2002). The "big three" CRAs, all headquartered in New York City, currently control 95% of the extremely lucrative global credit ratings market (*Ibid.*: 309), the first two accounting for roughly 40% each (see, for example, Hill 2002). They are also the only three bond rating agencies recognized by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, which requires financial managers to base investment decisions on their ratings (White 2010; Datz 2004)

to do that, the second phase had to be a “failure”. Because they couldn’t have discursively mobilized something that was an anti-neoliberal triumph.

—Francisco, interviewee

James Jasper has derived an extensive list of dilemmas or “trade-offs” from a relatively short list of simple concepts: players (simple and complex, or compound) interact with each other, often finding resistance and/or serving as audiences for each other (and themselves) in different arenas, from which they draw and to which they in turn bring their future-oriented goals and means (resources and skills), resulting in three “broad families” of strategies (persuasion, payment, and coercion) (2004: 5; 2006: 1-13). Among the situations that arise from the possible arrangements of this set of building blocks, Jasper identifies a series of quandaries familiar to social scientists as well as activists, such as the “organizational dilemma” (hierarchical bureaucratization versus grassroots participation and involvement), the “extension dilemma” (breadth, attention, and resources, versus the coherence of those willing to incur costs and risks), and the “naughty or nice?” (or means) dilemma (the ability to persuade and attract versus the ability to threaten or deceive) (2004: 7-10; see also 2006, esp. chs. 4 and 5). Jasper also identifies more specific dilemmas that are mostly variations on (or combinations of) those mentioned above, according to the context within which they emerge. The contemporary mass media, for example, are a powerful player, audience, *and* arena whose presence may result in specific variants of the extension and means dilemmas (see, for example, 2004: 10, 13; 2006: 123, 132).

Jasper’s “taxonomy” of dilemmas is a useful exercise in conceptual definition, but illustrates the weaknesses of one-sided micro-foundational analysis: while Jasper himself implicitly recognizes the importance of context specificity for making any sense out of his dilemmas, he tells us very little about the relationship between really existing dilemmas and their specific contexts, except that they are the result of “interactions.” As Jasper acknowledges, choices accumulate to form “habits” over time (they become “sticky,” as traditional path dependency

suggests) as “successful strategic action often settles into routines” (2006: 7). This is in part because, as Yu-Sheng Lin reminds us, strategic processes imply *learning*. Every choice thus reconfigures both the “external environment” and “internal organization” that give substance to future dilemmas, but only some dilemmas resurface further down the path in a recurring pattern, structuring other, more immediate choices (Lin 2015: 293-294). Here is where strict micro-foundationalism falters: without a “grand” theory of history to allow it to “zoom” in and out between different levels of abstraction, it is difficult to account for the formation of specific recurring patterns (Krinsky 2015: 4; Jasper 2010: 972). This is especially relevant when considering powerful players or arenas, or strategic action “from above.” For example, the shift to privatization and austerity practices within the field of higher education, consisting of thousands of individual “choices” over the span of a few decades, followed an astoundingly coherent script that cannot be adequately grasped through Jasper’s framework (unless one accepts the ideological presumption that the logic of the market is simply common sense). Only by linking these choices to complex long term processes does neoliberalization come into focus as a *political* and therefore strategic project to *restore* capital accumulation and class power.

John Krinsky urges us to understand the “socio-historical coherence” of strategic action as repertoires, modular sets of practices that “are marked not just by everyday routines, but by the political projects that compose them” (2013: 113-114). In this view, neoliberalization as a process does not imply the seamless implementation of a preset design, but a *performance* of combined practices that exhibit a more or less coherent logic (Krinsky and Simonet 2011: 42; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1995). If such performances involve learning, they must also involve *teaching* (and competing for the role of teacher, as I have argued), and *forgetting* (of “unsuccessful” alternatives, but also of the contexts within which certain choices are successful

or not). Coherent modes of practical learning, teaching, and forgetting in the service of social reproduction are what the Marxian tradition refers to as ideology, and the poststructural tradition as discipline. Accrued ideological/disciplinary repertoires that affect large numbers of people over extended periods of time can be thought of as *regimes*, which can also be broken down into specific disciplinary mechanisms (Foucault 1980; Foucault 1990 [1975]; see also McAdam, et al. 2001).³ Once we understand the process of neoliberalization as a set of more or less coherent repertoires and mechanisms that result not just from habit, but also the long term strategic visions (and blind spots) of structurally positioned actors, we can begin to understand the particular shape dilemmas take shape within its environment.

Academic Capitalism as Neoliberalization

Puerto Rico urgently needs a new economic model in order to advance its development. That new model must be one based on knowledge. Its central axis must be innovation based on science, technology, and research. Our main resource is our people, and they should be possessors of *knowledge that is useful and relevant*. Our workers must be knowledge workers; generators of ideas that result in *new products, goods, and services made in Puerto Rico and sold in global markets*.

—“Change of Course to Give Pertinence to Higher Education in the 21st Century” (CAGFES 2011: 3; my trans.; my emphasis)⁴

Sheila Slaughter and others have studied the shift, within the arena of higher education, from the “public goods knowledge/learning regime” that accompanied the Keynesian/Fordist compromise of embedded capitalism, towards “academic capitalism” (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]; Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Silva and Slaughter 1984).⁵ In addition to the ideological reproduction

³ Altogether, these assemblages are what Althusser called “apparatuses” (2014 [1995]).

⁴ This quote is from a report drafted by a Committee named by Governor Luis Fortuño immediately after the end of the second phase of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, in April of 2011, and published in December of that year. Members included former UPR President Manuel Saldaña, and the recently resigned former president of the Board of Trustees, Ygrí Rivera. UPR President Miguel Muñoz (named by Fortuño after the resignation of José Ramón de la Torre in February) and the presidents of the five major private universities were invited to present their opinions and proposals, but no one representing students, faculty, or employees (see CAGFES 2011).

⁵ Specifically, Slaughter and Leslie focused on the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia (1997). However, others have identified similar dynamics taking place in other places throughout the world (see, for example, Johnson and Hirt 2011; Mok 2010; Matear 2006)

of capitalist relations through the practical training and sorting of future generations, during the era of embedded capitalism, the university had an additional role as a nerve center for ideological and intellectual production itself. Even as universities were transformed from marginal elite institutions into a genuine mass phenomenon,⁶ this function allowed academics during the era of class compromise to carve out a niche for themselves in the public goods regime (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 370). This regime was characterized by valuing knowledge as a good in itself to which citizens have a claim, the recognition of academic freedom for faculty to pursue research and dispose of results at will, and a relative separation of the public and private sectors (*Ibid.*: locs. 635, 637, 643).

The shift towards a predominantly “academic capitalist” regime entailed the focusing of research and development resources on the so-called STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) at the expense of others less useful to the market (Slaughter and Leslie 1997: 211), which as philosopher Slavoj Žižek reminds us, responds not only to a logic of greater profit, but also “to the process of enclosing the commons of intellectual products, of privatizing general intellect” (2010: 91). In contrast to the public goods regime, in academic capitalism, “institutions, inventor faculty, and corporations have claims that come before those of the public” (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 649). Knowledge is valued as a private good, “for creating streams of high-technology products that generate profit as they flow through global markets,” and little separation is envisioned between science and profit-making: “Discovery is valued because it leads to high-technology products for a knowledge economy” (*Ibid.*: loc. 653, 655; see also Slaughter and Leslie 1997). This “encroachment of the profit motive into the academy” (Slaughter and Leslie 1997: 210) has taken place through a range of practices including, among

⁶ The authors make it clear that divergent regimes can, have, and do coexist uneasily and often overlap (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: locs. 662, 858; see also Slaughter and Rhoads 1996).

others, the focusing of research funds on technoscience discussed above, patent and trademark policies; the curricular prioritizing of business and other market-oriented courses at the undergraduate level; the campus testing of corporate products, especially information technologies; the outsourcing of and/or charging higher fees for campus services; the increasing reliance on contract and part-time faculty;⁷ and broad changes in lending and tuition policies, which I discuss in further detail below (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 412, 436, 453, 458, 591).

Within the university, the principal actors gestating academic capitalism have been administrators (headed by trustees), faculty, and students (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 322). It is at this level that the disciplinary mechanisms operate, through a series of pushes and pulls, to propagate the logic of profit within the academic world. The shift towards academic capitalism at the institutional level is closely related to the broader local, regional, and transnational shifts that produced neoliberalization, in that they are underscored by a similar realignment of the professional and managerial classes away from the Fordist/Keynesian compromise, towards restoring accumulation, through networks spanning the public, private, and non-profit sectors that connect them to the “new economy” (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: locs. 814, 1357; see also Duménil and Levy 2011: 13-19; Silva and Slaughter 1984). There is a strong tendency in the U.S. for members of corporate networks in certain knowledge areas (such as information, electronics, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and biotechnology) to serve on the boards of trustees of universities integrating into the “new economy” both public and private (Mathies and Slaughter 2013; see also Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 824; Pusser, et al. 2003). It is therefore not unusual for the main promoters of neoliberal repertoires at the institutional level to be among their major direct beneficiaries as well.

⁷ In the U.S., “[p]art-time teachers increased from 22 percent of the labor force in 1970 to approximately 50 percent in 1997” (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 436).

Individual faculty and some administrators may oppose and even resist the shift towards academic capitalism, for diverse reasons. In general terms, however, universities are able to seek out and engage external entities interested in entrepreneurial partnerships because its employees have been disciplined through funding and royalty channels that “reward individuals rather than collectives of professionals.” Administrators also benefit indirectly from faculty members’ success, which “signals competence to other universities and increases their career opportunities” (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 1373). There are, of course, also more obvious ways to keep rebellious faculty in line, particularly graduate students and contract faculty who are the most directly affected by neoliberalization, but also the most vulnerable. As for students and parents, tuition increases (which represent the greatest share of increase in "external funding") combine with other ideological pressures to produce a student-consumer subject that views educational experience in terms of returns on investment (*Ibid.*: loc. 335; see also Nilsen and Cox 2014; Lazzarato 2012; Sklair 1997).

Although the years between 1980 and 2002 saw the steepest slide towards academic capitalism, the process extends as far back as 1972, when Congress amended the Higher Education Act of 1965, switching higher education funding from block grants to institutions, to vouchers — the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (BEOG), which later became the Pell Grant— that students could use in partial payment of tuition, setting off competition among universities for federally subsidized tuition dollars (2010 [2004]: loc. 807, 514, 759). Using the rhetoric of “student choice,” business policy organizations and foundations lobbied strongly for the amendments, which became the first federal legislation explicitly framed in market discourse (*Ibid.*: loc. 878, 884, 971). The amendments also boosted class and race segmentation of the higher education market in the U.S. (*Ibid.*: locs. 514, 897, 957, 964; see also Bowles and Gintis 2011 [1976]: 209).

Since then, as costs escalated across the board, “federal student financial aid in grant form diminished relative to the cost of higher education, while the supply of loan money expanded rapidly” (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 894; see also loc. 897). By the late 1990s, “proprietary” institutions recast as “for-profits” were again able (after cuts in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to high default rates) to draw heavily on federal grants and loans for employed adults and other nontraditional students attending part-time and online, programs that public and private nonprofit universities quickly began to emulate as an additional source of income (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 761; see also Ruch 2003).

The appearance and rapid expansion of the for-profit university, together with cuts in direct funding to state-run universities, not only pressured traditional institutions to compete for tuition and public subsidies (grants and loans), at an ideological level it also confirmed the feasibility of treating education as a marketable commodity (justifying “user pays” policies), thus furthering the internalization of neoliberal common sense. In addition, increasing loan programs that allowed students from middle income families to attend elite private colleges “in effect privatized the cost of college attendance” (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 906, citing Leslie and Brinkman 1988). These processes blurred the lines between the “public” and “private,” thus illustrating the constructed, contingent, and often contradictory political character of these categories (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 2010 [2004]: loc. 606). This blurring, embodied in the relationship between consumer and (individual and social) debtor, is illustrated by the crucial role of “fiscal crises” and “budget shortfalls” in legitimating the belief by administrators, as well as some faculty and students, in a language of resource shortage used to justify the search for external funding, an aspect of a neoliberal subjectivity that is simultaneously constitutive of and constituted by the neoliberal state (*Ibid.*: 326, 479; see also locs. 520, 863).

The brief sketch of academic capitalism in the U.S. presented above outlines the general elements of a coherent repertoire of neoliberalization. To summarize: the revaluation of knowledge in terms of the transnational market; the integration of the university and its members to said market through executive networks; the disciplining of community members (especially faculty) through mechanisms that reward and punish individual, rather than collective endeavors; state incentives to privatization and competition; and the emergence of an individualistic consumer/debtor ideology among students and parents. While there is no “pure” neoliberalism anywhere, the combination of several of these elements may be said, with confidence, to indicate a process of neoliberalization. One may also confidently expect that they might have consequences for student movement strategy, particularly in terms of the shaping of motivations for mobilization, the relative openness of institutional channels to non-neoliberal funding and governance alternatives, the positioning of potential allies (including faculty, other employees), and attitudes and dispositions towards mobilization and specific tactics within the student body itself. In combination with the more general impacts of neoliberalization on the broader society, which impact institutional and movement dynamics as well, these tendencies contribute to the specific reconfiguration that I call the neoliberal dilemma. I lay out my argument for how that reconfiguration took place within the UPR student movement in the conclusion to this chapter. In the following sections, I address the process of neoliberalization at the UPR (as well as the characteristics of the previous regime) to show its coherence as a sequence of repertoires.

The Making of a Modern Colony

Modern Colonialism and Liberal Development

Ramón Grosfoguel (2003), among others, has identified the mode of domination prevalent in Puerto Rico as well as other dependent territories in the Caribbean and elsewhere during the latter

part of the twentieth century as “modern colonialism,” characterized less by the direct coercion and extraction of raw materials typical of classical colonialism than by the attempt to rule with the “consent” of the colonized, by stimulating dependent development with a measure of local autonomy. Emerging in the late 1940s, after four decades dominated by sugar capital and the corresponding social structure of the agro-industrial plantation (Cabán 2002; Pantojas-García 1990; Cabán 1989; Dietz 1986), the new colonial modality marked a strategic shift from primarily military considerations to the symbolic battlefield of the Cold War, new terrain demanding the construction of an exemplary showcase of capitalism and polyarchy in the Caribbean, an imperative that grew more urgent after the Cuban Revolution of 1959 (Grosfoguel 2003: 45-46).

The shift also responded to a reshuffling of colonial and metropolitan elites, made possible by the world and local crises of the 1930s, and specifically the emergence of a new local power bloc given political voice by a reformist faction of the old Liberal Party, led by Luis Muñoz Marín, that was ready and able to position itself as an intermediary between the needs of local subaltern classes and the resources made available by the metropolitan power bloc that took shape in the New Deal (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 136-161; Villaronga 2004; on the emergence of the New Deal power bloc in the U.S., see, for example, Ferguson 1984; Hacker and Pierson 2002). Expelled from the Liberal Party in 1938, Muñoz Marín’s faction became the PPD in 1938, and quickly ascended to electoral hegemony in a modernizing drive adorned in populist discourse. On the political field, the shift was manifested in the authorization, by the U.S. Congress, for the drafting of a new colonial Constitution, ratified by popular referendum, and finally approved with amendments by Congress, which came into effect in 1952. The new Constitution proclaimed the “Free Associated State” or Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, although it was made abundantly clear

by U.S. authorities, throughout the process and continuously since, that it did not represent a change in the territorial relationship (Rivera Ramos 2007).

Economic colonialism, in the form of debt bondage and “free trade” with the U.S. (established since the early days of the occupation), was written into the Constitution.⁸ Applicable federal property law also restricts the development alternatives available to colonial managers squarely within capitalist parameters, while federal commercial regulations severely limit trade with other nation states.⁹ The model that emerged was dubbed “industrialization by invitation,” an export-oriented strategy based on attracting U.S. capital through low production costs and tax exemptions, an early laboratory for neoliberal “globalization” (Dietz 1993; Dietz and Pantojas-García 1993). Although PPD planners had foreseen a period of import substitution, local commercial banks threatened by the idea of state-led finance exerted their structural power to stunt the growth of the infant Government Development Bank (GDB), over which they soon acquired control (Padín 2003). The resulting liberal development strategy reduced the state’s role largely to that of facilitator of foreign capital, in part through the construction and expansion of vital infrastructure. Nonetheless, in that initial stage, it was still perceived as the purveyor of public goods and services to the population, remaining firmly in ownership and control of the public

⁸ The Constitution of Puerto Rico holds that “When the resources available for an economic year are insufficient to cover the approved allocations for that year, the payment of interests and amortization of the public debt will proceed first of all, and then the remaining disbursements shall be made according to the priorities established by law” (Art. VI, Sec. 8.; my trans.).

⁹ As a non-sovereign entity, the government of Puerto Rico cannot regulate its own commerce nor sign treaties with other nation-states. All commerce is subject to U.S. laws and treaties, unless expressly exempted. Among other regulations, Sec. 27 of the U.S. Merchant Marine Act of 1920 requires that maritime cargo between points in the U.S. be carried by vessels owned by U.S. citizens, built and registered in the U.S., and operated primarily by U.S. citizen crews. Many have argued that these requirements, which protect the U.S. shipping industry (and from which other U.S. territories are exempted), raise the cost of shipping between Puerto Rico and U.S. ports, which constitutes the bulk of Puerto Rico’s trade (see, for example, GAO 2013). It also limits the use of Puerto Rican ports for transshipment, thus limiting foreign trade.

education and healthcare systems, the transportation and communications networks (after the purchase of the telephone company in 1974), and the utilities.

The model seemed to offer results, with two decades of rapid industrialization and improvement of living standards. Massive emigration to the U.S., made easier by citizenship (bestowed on all “citizens of Porto Rico” in 1917), offered and was actively promoted by local authorities as an escape valve for social pressures resulting from the model’s inability to keep pace with the expanding population. In 1968, besieged by the social forces it had conjured up, the PPD’s electoral hegemony unraveled as it lost for the first time to the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP). After brief tryst with petrochemical industries in the late 1960s, from 1973 onwards, the model entered a phase of terminal stagnation that persists today. Poverty levels, which had decreased rapidly and steadily over the previous two decades, bottomed out at around 40% of the population (kept down by a steady injection of federal income-supplementing aid after 1976), while the official unemployment rate has fluctuated between 10 and 20% of the economically active workforce (Dietz 2003: 8-9, 164-168). The total number of working-age people not formally employed, however, rises dramatically if we factor in Puerto Rico’s workforce participation rate of merely 41%, one of the lowest in the world (see, for example, Malavé 2011).

Starting in 1976, local and metropolitan authorities attempted to address the crisis through a four-pronged strategy that defined the model through the century’s end: 1) federal tax exemptions for U.S. capital-intensive high technology corporations operating in Puerto Rico through Section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code, which attracted primarily pharmaceutical companies (Carmona Baez 2007); 2) the massive expansion of the local government payroll to offset the corresponding shortfall in the private sector; 3) the extension of the U.S. minimum wage and welfare state through transfers to individuals (see, for example, Colón Reyes 2011; Odishelidze and Laffer 2004); and

4) additional debt-fueled investment in infrastructure expansion and improvement. Stimulated by public assistance, U.S. financial deregulation, the relatively high wages of a highly skilled middle class, and direct local subsidies, growing consumption generated a mushrooming financial and service sector, accompanied by a corresponding decline of all productive sectors (Dietz 2003; Pantojas-García 1990). In 1996, the U.S. Congress approved a phasing out of Section 936 by 2006, which roughly corresponded to the eruption of the debt crisis (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 293). Federal liberalization across the board since the 1970s, discussed below in the context of education, has offered local elites additional pressures and incentives to neoliberalize the Puerto Rican colonial state.

The House of Studies: A Liberal-Populist Public Goods Regime

Long before Muñoz Marín and the PPD's liberal-populist development strategy, dubbed "Operation Botostrap," officially took off in 1947, the UPR was at the heart of his reform faction's strategic program. In 1931, Carlos Chardón was appointed UPR Chancellor. An agro-biologist tied to Muñoz Marín's wing of the Liberal Party, Chardón would go on to head the New Deal Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration in 1935, drafting an ambitious and controversial development plan that called for an aggressive planning and financing role for the state. In 1941, with the PPD now firmly in control of the Puerto Rican legislature, radical New Dealer Rexford G. Tugwell was appointed UPR Chancellor, as a very brief stepping stone to overseeing the island's transition towards embedded development, as governor.¹⁰ Institutionally, on the one hand, the New Deal and its extension to Puerto Rico brought a new influx of federal resources, with the UPR serving as a

¹⁰ Tugwell, a member of FDR's original "brain trust," was a Keynesian economist and former Director of the New York City Planning Commission, who had fallen out of favor in Washington as the reform climate cooled and the backlash to the New Deal began to brew. Viewed with great suspicion by the island's business elite, Tugwell was initially introduced into the colonial political scene as UPR Chancellor. He would be Puerto Rico's last non-Puerto Rican chief executive (Osuna 1975 [1949]: 552).

“brain trust” of sorts for the implementation of its programs, reflected in the tenure of Chardón and Tugwell (Mathews 1976: 156-157, 162-123; see also Villaronga 2004). However, infrastructure and curriculum still failed to meet metropolitan standards: recognition by a U.S. educational accreditation agency, the Middle States’ Association (MSA), was denied in 1937 (Osuna 1972 [1949]: 551-552).

After only 49 days as UPR Chancellor, Tugwell was appointed governor to oversee the first stages of what would later become Operation Bootstrap, already underway with the founding of the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company (PRIDCO) and the Government Development Bank (GDB) in 1942. The UPR became a “strategic institution,” as reflected in its restructuring during this era and the use of appendages, such as the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts in Mayagüez and the new Social Science Research Center (founded in 1945) as “bureaus of policy research as well as economic and social planning for the government” (Irizarry 2004: 48; see also Duany 2005; Quintero Rivera 1994). That education in general was seen as “a major strategic sector” (Irizarry 2004: 49) can be seen plainly in the words of government officials during the nearly three decades of uninterrupted PPD rule (see, for example, Moscoso 1997 [1953]; Picó 1976 [1960]; Rodríguez Pacheco 1976 [1962]). Education as a vehicle of not just individual but *social* redemption was a central trope of PPD discourse, which would become deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the popular classes (see, for example, Laguerre 1976 [1954]; Quintero Alfaro 1974).

The UPR, however, was still very much an enclave of the elite, with an enrollment of about 5,400 when the University Law of 1942 was passed by the PPD-controlled legislature, defining the institution’s orientation in the following terms:

. . . to point out the truth and to instill the methods of knowing it, of testing it, or of doubting it—in an attitude of *profound respect towards creative thought and creative doubt*.

. . . *to utilize the intellectual and spiritual riches latent in our people* and expressed in the exceptional personalities *that arise from the poorest classes*, which otherwise could not make the natural values of their intelligence and of their spirit available to the service of the Puerto Rican community (Law 135 of May 7, 1942, cited in Osuna 1974 [1949]: 553; my trans.; my emphasis).

Low tuition and state-sponsored financial aid, combined with expansion and improvement of public high schools (Rivera-Batiz and Santiago 1996: 63-84; Nieves Falcón 1965: 19-49), allowed for modest fulfillment of this populist rhetoric, with enrollment more than doubling to 11,300 by 1950, and reaching 18,800 by 1960 (Irizarry 2004: 48, 50; Nieves Falcón 1965: 67, 69). The Law also created a Council on Higher Education (CES) to conduct research on educational needs of the population as a whole, appoint the UPR Chancellor, and perform “all the duties commonly vested on a University Board of Trustees,” and created University Boards with (limited) faculty and student representation (cited in Osuna 1975 [1949]: 553-554). In addition, it set the stage for a restructuring that increased specialization and the academic offering, most significantly by dividing the College of Arts and Sciences into the Colleges of Natural Sciences, Humanities, and Social Sciences (Nieves Falcón 1965: 53-54).¹¹ The UPR finally received accreditation from the MSA, in part as a result of these changes, in 1946.¹²

¹¹ In addition to creating the College of General Studies (a two-year “core curriculum” type program required for all undergraduates which allows undecided students to remain in it past their second year; it exists as a separate college to this day), increasing the five traditional Colleges at Río Piedras (Education, Pharmacy, Law, Arts and Sciences, Commercial Administration) from five to eight. By 1945, the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts at Mayagüez had also been subdivided into the “schools” of Agriculture, Engineering, and Science, and several research centers and professional schools had been created or were in the process of being created (Osuna 1975 [1949]: 557, 566).

¹² Frank H. Bowles, a Director of Admissions at Columbia University who inspected the UPR on behalf of the MSA in 1937 and 1946, expressed the following in his 1946 recommendation of accreditation: “[The UPR] has doubled in size, added new faculty, gained greatly increased support from the Legislature and thereby from tax funds, and raised its standards to the point where it is now a respectable educational institution . . . It is planning for the future, not merely in terms of expansion, but *in terms of meeting social needs*” (Osuna 1975 [1949]: 585; my trans.; my emphasis).

Investment in education at all levels, driven by the need to develop a skilled workforce and recruit professional managers for government and industry, continued through the 1950s and 1960s (Nieves Falcón 1965; Rivera-Batiz and Santiago 1996). At the level of political representation, commitment to the redemptive ideology of education as the motor of modernization and equality is illustrated in the Constitution of 1952, which among other things forbids the use of public funds to finance elementary and secondary educational institutions other than those owned by the state.¹³ The unprecedented expansion of public schools, the erosion of the agricultural sector, and the growing demand for professional and managerial jobs in turn resulted in a massive influx of students to the UPR, doubling from 1960 to nearly 38,000 by 1970, and reaching 54,000 by 1974 (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: 176, fn. 8). The growing student population led to the creation of all eight additional regional colleges between 1963 and 1979, most of them oriented towards “technology based programs related to manufacturing and management” (Irizarry 2004: 50).¹⁴ In 1966, three laws laying out a new University Charter were approved in order to stabilize the UPR’s funding.¹⁵ The most significant organizational changes were the creation of the Office of President, and the enabling of the creation of regional colleges (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: 177). A new formula for institutional finance based on the central government’s General Fund was also established, allowing the CES to revise tuition and fees as needed and to incur debt for infrastructure by selling UPR bonds.¹⁶

¹³ “No public property or funds shall be used to sustain schools or educational institutions other than those of the State,” (Art. 2, Sec. 5; my trans.).

¹⁴ Segmentation today is as follows: graduate and research programs are concentrated at the three campuses (Río Piedras, Mayagüez, and Medical Sciences); four year programs in arts and sciences are offered mainly at the first two, plus Cayey and Humacao; the other five primarily offer associate degrees and bachelor’s degrees in business and technology related fields (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: 178).

¹⁵ Laws 1, 2, and 3 of January 20, 1966

¹⁶ Starting in fiscal year 1968, the UPR received 7.8 percent of the average of the previous two years of the General Fund, an amount that was increased annually by 0.45 percent until it reached 9 percent in 1971, the maximum set by the Law (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: 177). Additional sources of income for the UPR are tuition and fees, “other funds generated internally,” funds generated by the Educational Fund and the Lottery/Gambling Law of 1974,

Jaime Benítez, a political science professor and close associate of Muñoz Marín, succeeded Tugwell as UPR Chancellor and held the office until 1966, when he was appointed to the newly created UPR Presidency (from which he was forced out in 1971). Benítez's three-decade tenure at the helm of the UPR left a deep imprint on the life of the institution, sealing an alliance between the island's academics and intellectuals (many of them former nationalists) and the PPD project (see Rodríguez Castro 1994). Benítez's educational rhetoric, a particular blend of public goods discourse, envisioned the university as a "house of studies" characterized by the search for knowledge (in addition to research and the training of professionals), academic freedom, and the strict separation of politics and the academy (see, for example, Benítez 1963; see also Grupo Editorial 2010; Rodríguez Castro 1994). Another aspect of his philosophy was a humanistic "Western" universalism, which coincided roughly with the "bridge between cultures" metaphor deployed by Muñoz to accommodate cultural nationalism with "loyalty" to the U.S., but often clashed with the more nationalistic elements within the PPD (Nives Falcón 1965: 55-58).¹⁷ In this framework, dissent within the institution was confined mainly to polite academic debate, and "narrow" political nationalism was flatly rejected, a combination that proved explosive during the student strike of 1948, and again during the violent events of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

supplementary legislative allocations, and federal funds, especially for research and student aid (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: fn. 10). The previous formula, established in the 1942 law, "consisted of a permanent fund of twenty one hundredths of one percent of all the taxes on real estate and personal property subject to taxation, and three percent of all income produced by taxes on alcohol. Similarly, the legislature created a 'University of Puerto Rico Permanent Fund'" (*Ibid.*, fn. 4; see also Vélez Cardona 2002: 79-81).

¹⁷ Incorporating elements of traditional Latin American elite cultural notions (see Flores 1993: 39-40), this view posited Puerto Rican culture as an integral part of "Western" civilization, of which the U.S. was a more "technically" (but not "spiritually") advanced manifestation. In this sense, Puerto Rico could serve as a "bridge" for (both cultural and commercial) exchange and understanding between the Americas (see for example Muñoz Marín 1997 [1954]). In the geopolitical context of the Cold War, this ideology was concretely realized in U.S. President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, which was coordinated by Puerto Rican businessman-cum-planner Teodoro Moscoso, main architect of Operation Bootstrap. A strong example of this ideology at work in the post-1942 reform of the UPR curriculum is the creation of the much lauded graduate program in Hispanic Studies (Irizarry 2004: 48-49), today facing the threat of elimination as a result of austerity policies.

Benítez’s “resignation” in 1971, after his position was declared vacant by a bare majority of the now PNP-controlled CES, sealed the fate of the House of Studies.

The Neoliberalizing Colonial University

At the Doorstep (1972-1981)

As fate would have it, the sacking of Benítez from the UPR Presidency preceded the 1972 shift in federal higher education funding policy, described above, by less than a year. In Puerto Rico, the PPD won the elections, and Benítez was elected Resident Commissioner before the U.S. Congress, where he lobbied successfully for the island to be included in the Higher Education Act, as amended the previous year.¹⁸ Private sector enrollment, which had also been growing significantly—from a scarce 396 students in 1944, to 6,000 in 1960 and 19,500 by 1970—exploded with the influx of BEOG and later Pell Grant funds after 1973. Barely four years later, in 1976-77, the private sector surpassed public sector enrollment, reaching 58,600, 53% of the total student population (Irizarry 2004: 50; Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: 176-177, fns. 7 and 8).¹⁹ With federal loans and grants representing up to 90% of tuition, such institutions became directly subsidized by the federal government, and indirectly by the local government: by capping enrollment and imposing relatively high entrance requirements, the UPR has steered generally lower-performing low-income public school students towards high-priced private institutions, where they depend on

¹⁸ U.S. federal laws applicable to Puerto Rico, since the Foraker Act of 1900, have allowed residents of Puerto Rico to elect one “resident commissioner” to the U.S. House of Representatives, with a voice but no vote. Residents of Puerto Rico do not elect any other members of the U.S. Congress, or the president of the U.S. (although U.S. parties do hold primaries there). As citizens, Puerto Ricans who emigrate to any of the 50 states can do so once they become legal residents of the state where they reside.

¹⁹ Private higher education in Puerto Rico today consists of three single-campus, nonprofit Catholic universities (Sacred Heart and Pontifical); two nonprofit multi-campus university systems, one secular and one Ecumenical Christian (Ana G. Méndez and Interamerican, respectively); and 30 or so small nonprofit and for-profit colleges and institutes offering mostly two or four year degrees in services, business, and technology, as well as a handful of specialized graduate professional schools. The first four together constitute roughly 90% of private sector enrollment (Irizarry 2004: 51; CEPR 2013).

federal grants and loans to make tuition (Irizarry 2004: 52).²⁰ Meanwhile, enrollment continued to grow at the UPR, which purchased equipment and technology, expanded and created graduate programs, and increased personnel in all areas (faculty, administrative support, maintenance) to accommodate both a growing student body and the changing, increasingly “knowledge-based” labor market (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: 178). Higher admission standards at the UPR meant that private colleges absorbed the bottom class tier of higher education in Puerto Rico. On the other hand, lower tuition at the UPR (up to one third of the cost per credit at private institutions) meant it received a lower share of federal subsidies per student, but made it an attractive option for higher-performing working class students, particularly before entrance exams scores began to decline in the 1980s (see, for example, Ladd and Rivera-Batiz 2006: 201).²¹

The economic contraction that began in 1974 directly affected the UPR’s budget, which is directly dependent on local government revenue, prompting administrators to slow investment and cap total enrollment at 55,000 in 1975-76 (Irizarry 2004: 50; Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: fn. 8).²²

²⁰ BEOG/Pell Grant disbursements in Puerto Rico grew more than 30 times, from \$9.2 million to \$304 million between 1974 and 1986, 80% of which goes to private institutions (Irizarry 2004: 50, 52).

²¹ Using quantitative indicators to measure “quality” and “performance” in education is unreliable and often arbitrary, as opponents of neoliberal school “reform” have argued extensively (see, for example, Knopp and Bale 2012). However, the College Board Test (Puerto Rico’s equivalent of the SAT) is a major, quantitative component of admissions criteria at the UPR (and some private colleges), so that declining scores for a particular segment of the population are reflected in lower rates of admission. As Ladd and Rivera-Batiz show, between 1983-84 and 2002-03, there was a 13 point decline in the average “Verbal Aptitude” scores (“Quantitative Aptitude” scores remained the same), and 29, 4, and 2 point declines (respectively) in the Spanish, Math, and English “Achievement” scores of public high school students (2006: 201, t. 5.7). The decline in the average scores of private high school students was even steeper, due to diverse factors, but even so, private school student scores remained significantly above those of their public school counterparts in all areas (*Ibid.*: 202). Private schools in Puerto Rico are financed through tuition fees as well as federal funds disbursed through the Department of Education, despite the fact that the Constitution of Puerto Rico forbids a similar use of local state funds.

²² The UPR student population began to grow at a slower rate after 1983-84, reaching its highest point in 1988-89, with 60,566 students. Enrollment declined sharply the following year and then increased again after changes in the admissions process in 1993-94 (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004). Two decades later (2012-2013), enrollment in the UPR system stood at about 56,888 students, with an additional 5,591 or so at a handful of specialized art and technology oriented public colleges, bringing the public sector total to 62,579. By comparison, the total student population in the nonprofit private system was 139,528, and in the for-profit institutions was 43,388, bringing the private sector total to 182,916 (CEPR 2013).

That same year, for the first time since 1949, the CES increased tuition for “nonresident” students, as well as all graduate students, and increased a number of fees (Pabón 1982: 40). At the same time, concerns about the island’s growing public debt reverberated in debates about the UPR. Shaped by local and metropolitan actors, institutional rhetoric began to echo the academic capitalist discourse that had become dominant in the U.S. By 1979, the CES —now controlled by the PNP (elected with solid legislative majorities in 1976 on a platform critical of the previous PPD administration’s austerity measures)— had received a report and proposal drafted by the heads of the system’s units, stressing the need to cultivate “external funding” (*Ibid.*: 40).²³ In December 1980, the MSA issued a report in which it urged a series of measures to increase institutional resources, warning about a potential loss of accreditation. Two months later (and five months before it would be implemented), citing the threat of losing MSA accreditation, the CES announced an across-the-board tuition increase, which set off the student strike of 1981-82 (*Ibid.*: 45-48; Vélez Cardona 2014: 164).²⁴

Crossing the Rubicon (1981-2005)

During the early 1980s, Puerto Rican political and economic elites grew increasingly concerned that new federal policies might undermine two of the pillars sustaining the island’s economy since 1976 (Dietz 2003; Pantojas-García 1990; Weiskoff 1985). On the one hand, the Reagan Administration’s Caribbean Basin Initiative, which sought to extend to neighboring Caribbean nation-states many of the same federal tax exemptions for U.S. high-tech and pharmaceutical

²³ The proposal focused almost entirely on the need to raise tuition, proposing an increase in the cost per undergraduate credit of 100% (from \$5 to \$10) in 1979-80, 50% (to \$15) in 1981-82, and 33% (to \$20) in 1985-86, and in the cost per graduate credit of 33% (from \$15 to \$20) in 1979-80, 25% (to \$25) in 1981-82, and 20% (to \$30) in 1985-86. It also mentioned “revising” the automatic funding formula in place since 1966, and establishing offices at each campus to search for alternate sources of external funding.

²⁴ The rate per credit that was finally adopted tripled tuition at both the undergraduate (from \$5 to \$15 —the rate originally proposed for 1981-82 in 1979) and graduate levels (from \$15 to \$45, 50% higher than originally proposed for 1985-86).

companies operating in Puerto Rico, threatened to undercut Puerto Rico's "competitive advantage" (Pantojas-García 1990; Baver 1993). On the other, proposed cuts to welfare (extended to the island in 1976) and other federal aid programs could exacerbate social tensions and impact the retail sector. Driven by this threat, local business groups strongly dependent on the influx of federal cash have continuously sought to expand into "new markets" by making inroads into areas previously under the charge of the state. Among the most vocal have been private "nonprofit" colleges and universities, which expressed fears early on that they might lose from 10 to 15% of their students if proposed cuts to the BEOG program materialized (Pabón 1982: 53).²⁵

Puerto Rican elites had embraced the neoliberal "consensus" by the late 1980s, when an advisory council composed of private sector consultants and high ranking-government officials drafted a report calling for a new development strategy based on privatization, austerity, and increased "competitiveness" (CAEG 1989). Local capitalists, for their part, organized a "Private Sector Strategic Planning Council" that published two studies urging the total or partial privatization of public services, and identifying specific agencies to be targeted, including the Department of Education (Torres Rivera 1999: 344-346),²⁶ but not —perhaps because of its

²⁵ The Ana G. Méndez University System, one of the most assiduous proponents of educational privatization at all levels in Puerto Rico, has also been the most enterprising in seeking a "spatial fix" to its predicament, recently opening three new campuses in the state of Florida (the preferred destination of the most recent wave of Puerto Rican emigration); Dallas, Texas; and the District of Columbia.

²⁶ Also on the list were the Department of Health, the telephone company, the water company, the electric company, PRIDCO, the commercial development company, a state-owned cargo shipping company, the public employees' workers' compensation fund, a state-owned juice canning company, the Authority of Public Buildings, the state-owned sugar company, the Department of Housing, urban transport, and roadways (highways, bridges, and toll booths) among others (see also, Torres Rivera 1999; Conferencia Sindical 2007 [2001]). In 1991, the telephone company went up for sale, provoking massive protests, but failed to attract potential buyers. By 1998, however, streamlined through partial privatizations, following the 1996 amendments in the federal Telecommunications Act that opened the market to private competitors, and despite the People's Strike (discussed in Chapter 3), the Telephone Company was sold to GTE Corp., among other buyers, including Banco Popular, one of the most proactive proponents of privatization (Carmona Báez 2004: 254), whose then President (current C.E.O. Richard Carrión) was a member of the Commission that drafted the 1989 Report. In addition, between 1991 and the early 2000s, under the watch of both PPD and PNP governments, services had been outsourced in virtually all of the agencies named, while all of the productive non-utility enterprises, all of the public hospitals and most of the clinics, a coal-based power plant, the administration of the public water works, a highway, a newly built bridge connecting the airport with the

political sensitivity— the UPR, where, nonetheless, the logic of academic capitalism continued to advance. In June of 1991, the first across-the-board tuition increase since 1981 was approved and implemented, provoking a series of strikes and protests leading up to an unsuccessful three-week student strike in the spring of 1992, as well as several protests and strikes against outsourcing and employee “reorganization” by the maintenance and administrative employee unions (Ramos Rodríguez, et al. 2008: 174-187).²⁷ The legislature did increase the percentage of the General Fund going to the UPR through the automatic funding formula twice in the 1990s (for the first time since 1971), but only to cover specific programs or to offset the negative effects of broader neoliberal reforms.²⁸

In the meantime, private colleges and universities began an aggressive lobbying campaign for the redistribution of the money allocated to the UPR through this formula (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: 180). The PNP administration of Pedro Rosselló, elected in 1992, attempted to address their concerns by dividing functions of the CES, charging a new Board of Trustees with the UPR system’s administration and governance, while the local accreditation and licensing of institutions of higher education in general remained in the hands of a stripped-down CES. The Board of

financial district, were sold off. During this period, labor legislation was significantly liberalized as well, and excise and other corporate taxes were reduced or eliminated (Torres Rivera 1999).

²⁷ The rate of increase was 100% (from \$15 to \$30 per credit) for undergraduates over two years (\$20/credit in 1991-1992, \$30 in 1992-1993), and 66% (from \$45 to \$75 per credit) for graduate students over three years (\$55/credit in 1991-1992, \$65 in 1992-1993, and \$75 in 1993-1994) (Ramos Rodríguez, et al. 2008: 159; see also CES Cert. No. 159, 1990-1991).

²⁸ In 1992, the percentage was increased from 9 to 9.33, in order to compensate for the effects of so-called Municipal Reform. These laws “decentralized” many functions of the state to city and town governments meeting certain requirements, and created a separate municipal tax collection organism to fund them, thus reducing the revenue going into the General Fund, and therefore that going to the UPR by \$70 million per year (Rodríguez Fraticelli 2004: 178; Vélez Cardona 2002: 81; Vélez Cardona 2014: 164). The reform was neoliberal in practice, because it opened the door for local governments to privatize or outsource the services entrusted to them. In 1995, the legislature again raised the percentage of the UPR financing formula, to 9.6 percent, but the increase was earmarked exclusively for the Agricultural Experimental Station and the Agricultural Extension programs of the Mayagüez campus (Vélez Cardona 2002: 82). In 1997, the UPR was deprived of an additional \$13 million per year from the tax on crude petroleum, which was diverted towards special funds for the Roads and Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan Bus Authority (Vélez Cardona 2014: 164). No new accommodation of the formula was provided.

Trustees was entrusted with drafting a revision of the University Law that would formally adopt the tenets of academic capitalism: “provide for the decentralization of the system, and promote, at the same time, our commitment to scientific research, technological development, and the modernization of university processes.”²⁹ The Board’s first act was to fire the existing PPD-appointed president, whose replacement was appointed by the now PNP-controlled CES (*Ibid.*; see also Meléndez 1998: 237). The Rosselló administration also attempted to open the door to privatization in the public school system, but was rebuked by a teachers’ strike and an eventual unfavorable ruling by the then PPD-controlled Supreme Court (Maldonado Jiménez 1993; Neptune 1993).³⁰

The new University Law that the UPR’s reborn Board of Trustees was charged with drafting never materialized, in part as a result of constant partisan bureaucratic reshuffling. However, the Board rapidly set about fulfilling its mission to fertilize the soil where academic capitalism could flourish, boldly embracing the institution’s ideological function. For example, its Strategic Science and Technology Plan insisted that “business, science, and engineering courses must be revised in order to *incorporate entrepreneurial knowledges and attitudes in the students*” (Cert. No. 144, 1996-97, cited in Vélez Cardona 2008: 19; my trans.; my emphasis). In 1998 and 1999, the legislature passed the so-called Educational Opportunities Laws,³¹ which created a

²⁹ Law 16 of June 16, 1993 (my trans.).

³⁰ The 1952 Constitution bars the use of state funds to finance educational institutions other than public (Commonwealth Constitution; see also [cite case]). Law 71 of September 3, 1993 offered vouchers for elementary and secondary students wishing to attend private schools who passed the entrance exam but were unable to afford tuition (see Meléndez 1998: 236-237), and authorized privately administered schools on state property (charter schools) —an element that was not addressed by the Supreme Court.

³¹ Law 100 of June 25, 1998, provided for the funding of the educational voucher program established in the 1993 reform through the Educational Opportunities Fund. When the Supreme Court declared the voucher program unconstitutional, the legislature redrafted the law to specify that checks (rather than tuition vouchers) would be given to needy and/or talented *public* school students as an “aid” to struggling parents and a “stimulus” to the student. The part concerning higher education remained the same. Law 138 of July 1, 1999 (see also Vélez Cardona 2002: 103).

centralized Educational Opportunities Fund to be financed by revenue from all existing laws providing local educational grants for needy students, the gambling and lottery laws, and the absorption of the already existing Educational Fund. These funds would now be disbursed directly to the students' families through the CES, allowing them to be spent at any other institution (Vélez Cardona 2002: 100-105). The shift, which diverted approximately \$40 million annually from the UPR's finances, was framed within the academic capitalist discourse of "individual choice and freedom" (Law 138 of 1999, cited in Vélez Cardona 2002: 103). As evidenced by then UPR President Norman Maldonado's deposition during public hearings, underlying this rhetoric was a concerted political push towards "competitive" external funding (*Ibid.*: 101). Then GDB President Rodríguez Ema stated even more bluntly that the UPR would have to "be aggressive in identifying and approaching alternate sources of revenue" (cited in *Ibid.*: 102; my trans.) because the CRAs were concerned that it was too dependent on the government for revenue.

Although these particular funds were restored to the UPR in 2003 in yet another partisan jab,³² academic capitalism continued to advance³³ under the disciplinary pressures of the public debt and the transnational credit regime, and despite the lip service by some PPD administrators and politicians to a bland critique of "subservience to the market" (Comisión 2001). For instance, from 1999-2000 to 2005-06, during two consecutive PPD administrations, untenured faculty at the

³² The PPD administration of Sila M. Calderón, elected in 2000, restored to the UPR the \$15 million corresponding to the lottery and gambling laws, and assigned an additional \$25 million through executive order.

³³ The shift from the public goods to the academic capitalist regime is reflected in the discourse of institutional and political elites from both dominant parties. For example, a CES report from late in Rosselló's last term urged the "diversification of financing sources," identifying among the "ways to complement state financing": "1) the increase in tuition rights and academic fees . . . ; 2) [federal] grants and loans conditioned by the means of life of the beneficiary; 3) the promotion of entrepreneurial activities on the part of faculty and the institution . . . ; and 4) the promotion of philanthropy" (2000: 26-27). Shortly thereafter another study, by a Commission of the now PPD-controlled Senate, though critical of the Board of Trustees' interference with institutional affairs during the previous administration and of "technocracy subordinated to the market," insisted on the need to transform the UPR into a more "flexible" institution focused on science and technology and adapted to "the knowledge society" (Comisión 2001: 163-200).

UPR grew from 29 to 37 percent of the total, and part-time faculty from 18 to 25.5 percent, reflecting a tendency towards convergence with private institutions which is consistent with academic capitalist practices (Vélez Cardona 2008: 19; see also Rosario Luna 2014; Rosario Luna 2009). In addition, in 2003, the Board of Trustees approved the UPR's Institutional Policy on Patents, Inventions, and their Commercialization (Cert. No. 132, 2003-04³⁴ cited in Vélez Cardona 2008: 20), according to which "knowledge and technology may have some market potential, and in consequence, should be treated as an asset . . . that generates revenue for the inventor and the University" (*Ibid.*). The new policy declared University property all those inventions developed: "1) within the employees' work environment, within the normal activities inherent to the academic profession, academic research, in the course of study or employment; or 2) through the utilization of funds, installations, or other university resources" (*Ibid.*).³⁵ This period also witnessed several partly or wholly privatized construction projects, including a new, privately managed administration building financed through its own separate bond series.

Permanent Crisis (2005-2010)

May of 2005, only five months into the PPD administration of Aníbal Acevedo-Vilá, was a watershed for neoliberal subjectivity in Puerto Rico. Public debt, which had grown massively since the 1970s as the result of a development strategy based on investment in infrastructure, and now stood at over \$40 billion,³⁶ made its grand entrance into the broader public consciousness. After years of continuous downgrading, S&P downgraded the central government's bonds to the bottom

³⁴ All UPR Board of Trustees certifications are available online (in Spanish) at: <http://www.vcertifica.upr.edu/certificaciones/External/Certificaciones.aspx>.

³⁵ As a result of this new strategic priority, the U.S. Patents and Trademarks Office granted 18 new patents to the UPR between 2003 and 2008, bringing the total to 27 (CAFI, cited in Vélez Cardona 2008: 20). In 2008, the UPR had an additional 14 patents pending approval, and was evaluating two invention reports (CAFI, cited in Vélez Cardona 2008: 20).

³⁶ Puerto Rico's total public debt grew from \$2.5 billion in 1972, to \$5.3 billion in 1975, \$12.6 billion in 1990, \$15.3 billion in 1994, \$24.2 billion in 2000, and \$40.3 billion in 2005.

of the investment grade category, sternly warning that the next downgrade would plunge the island's credit into "junk" status (see Alm 2006: 320). A new across-the-board tuition increase, implemented in order to secure a projected bond issue which finally took place in December 2006,³⁷ had provoked a month long student strike at the UPR that ended on May 2, in a stalemate that amounted to victory for neoliberal administrators.³⁸ During that same month, a Special Commission for Fiscal Reform, created by Aceveco Vilá in one of his first acts in office, published its final report recommending a flat 10% sales tax—a measure the governor had campaigned against (CERF 2005; see also Torres Rivera 2006).

The ensuing debate produced a partisan standoff between the administration and the PNP-controlled legislature over the rate of the tax (the PPD finally settled on 7%, while the PNP, which had argued during the election for a much higher rate, insisted on 4%) that dragged on for a year, into the 2006 budget approval discussion, resulting in a two-week government shutdown that left 100,000 public employees temporarily jobless (Torres Rivera 2006).³⁹ Public frustration worked

³⁷ Two types of bonds are guaranteed by UPR revenues and property: University System Revenue Bonds and AFICA Series 2000 Bonds (used to finance the Plaza Universitaria Project). As to the former, according to the GDB, "University System Revenue Bonds are obligations of the University of Puerto Rico *secured primarily by a first lien on tuition fees*, and certain other specifically pledged revenues. Further protection is provided by a debt service reserve equal to maximum annual debt service of the University System Revenue Bonds," (GDB n.d. [a]; my emphasis). Bonds issued by the UPR are issued pursuant to a Trust Agreement dated June 1, 1971, as subsequently amended, among the UPR, the U.S. Bank Trust National Association (Trustees), and Banco Popular de Puerto Rico (Co-Trustee), in which the former agrees to "fix, impose, revise from time to time, and collect tuition fees, students fees, and rentals and other charges . . . so that Pledged Revenues . . . will be sufficient to pay principal of and interest on the Bonds (including the 2006 Bonds) . . ." (UPR 2006: 8). The 2006 Bond Issue Statement reveals that the tuition increase was initially projected for "the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic year" (*Ibid.*: 21), eight months before it was announced in Cert. No. 70 (dated March 31, 2005). In its rating of the 2006 Bonds, Standard & Poor's listed, among the institution's continuing weaknesses, "Tuition fees that while recently increased after nearly a decade are still extremely low" (S&P 2006: 2).

³⁸ The rate of the increase was 33% for both undergraduates (from \$30 to \$40 per credit) and graduate students (from \$75 to \$100). See Cert. No. 70, 2004-05. Officially, the strike ended with an agreement to create a multisector Committee for the Study of Institutional Finance (CEFI 2005). A partial report by that Committee (which included representation of the students, faculty, administrative and maintenance employees, and Presidency) was published on July 1, 2005, concluding that a tuition increase for fiscal year 2005-2006 was unnecessary (CEFI 2005: 21). However, rather than repeal the increase, the Board of Trustees merely approved a payment plan for those who required it (see Cert. 91, 2004-2005).

³⁹ The PNP refused to approve the proposed budget, which foresaw a sales tax of 7%.

to the PPD's advantage, and a rogue group of PNP legislators yielded, approving a 7% Tax on Sales and Use (IVU), of which exactly half of the portion corresponding to the central government (1.5 of the 7% corresponded to the municipalities) would go to an "Urgent Interest Fund," administered by a public corporation (COFINA), which issues its own bonds.⁴⁰ COFINA bonds are separate from those of the central government, secured using yearly IVU revenue, and used to pay back the GDB for loans made to different state agencies to cover budget deficits caused by the constitutional requirement that the public debt must be serviced before any other expenditures.⁴¹

Far from the stated purpose of addressing the "problem" of the informal economy (see CERF 2005), the highly regressive IVU was always conceived and intended as a failsafe for the island's debt bondage regime.⁴² For the UPR, this segmentation meant \$52 million yearly in tax revenue that would never reach the General Fund, and therefore the institution's coffers (Vélez Cardona 2014: 164). The government also stalled contract negotiations with public-sector unions during this period (for two entire years in the case of public school teachers), in an attempt to break any potential resistance. An Advisory Committee on Institutional Finances appointed unilaterally by then UPR President Antonio García Padilla (brother of now Governor Alejandro García Padilla), allegedly in pursuance of the agreement that ended the April 2005 strike (but actually in

⁴⁰ See Law 117 of July 4, 2006 (creating the IVU); Law 91 of 13 May 2006 (creating the Urgent Interest Fund); Law 291 of December 26, 2006 (creating COFINA).

⁴¹ As a result of the debt service guarantee contained in Art. VI, Sec. 8 of the 1952 Constitution, central government debt that can be covered by the yearly budget is referred to as "constitutional" debt, whereas "*extraconstitutional debt*" is that financial obligation whose yearly cost (interests, principal, and other expenditure) exceeds the capacity of the State's revenue. It is a debt acquired without capacity for repayment, for which extraordinary measures will be required. Calling it extraconstitutional debt implies, to a certain point, disguising its illegality" (Gándara Sánchez 2014; my trans.). Extraconstitutional debt generally refers to loans made by the GDB to state agencies as a result of the constitutional priority given to debt service, and is different from the central government's "constitutional" debt, as well as that of the municipalities and the public companies, which is not covered by the Constitution (see Alm 2006: 321; Gándara Sánchez 2014; see also GDB n.d. [b]).

⁴² Although the IVU did not ease the accelerating growth of the public debt or the continued downward slope of the island's credit ratings, it was well received by the CRAs. For example, in its first report after the IVU's approval (downgrading the central government's debt), Standard & Poor's identified as a positive factor the "[g]reater degree of revenue flexibility" as a result of the IVU (GDB n.d. [c]).

substitution of the multi-sector committee appointed as part of that agreement, which met and produced a partial report in June 2005), published its final report in August of 2006, recommending a permanent yearly escalating three or four percent tuition increase affecting only the incoming class, guaranteed for the expected duration of the period of studies (CAFI 2006: 227; see also Vélez Cardona 2008). In June of the following year, the Board of Trustees adopted an amended version of the plan, for a six-year period, with an immediate, one-time only 13% increase for 2007-2008 and a 4% increase each year thereafter until 2012.⁴³

In October of 2006, immediately prior to a new bond issue,⁴⁴ the Governor's Office published its Plan for Economic Development and Transformation, proposing a massive restructuring of the central government's spending through agency consolidation and incentives for "voluntary" retirement and resignations (ELAPR 2006: 26-34).⁴⁵ Among other "strategies," the plan called for financing infrastructure through public-private partnerships (*Ibid.*: 10-12) and "inserting" Puerto Rico into the "knowledge economy" as a center for biotechnology, engineering, and information sciences with the UPR at its core (*Ibid.*: 13-15, 50; see also Duprey Colón 2010; Muñoz Varela 2013). Haunted by federal corruption charges and weakened by the teachers' strike of 2008, Acevedo Vilá was defeated in that year's election by right-wing conservative candidate Luis Fortuño of the PNP, which reaffirmed its control of the legislature. One of the Fortuño Administration's very first measures, following the recommendations of yet another Advisory

⁴³ Thus, the cost per undergraduate credit for incoming freshmen, guaranteed for five years, was \$45 in 2007-2008, \$47 in 2008-2009, \$49 in 2009-2010, \$51.00 in 2010-2011, \$53.00 in 2011-2012, and \$55 in 2012-2013. The cost per graduate credit in Arts and Sciences (including Law) for incoming students guaranteed for 150% of the required duration of the degree, during the same fiscal years was \$113, \$117, \$122, \$127, \$132, and \$137, respectively. See Cert. No. 60, 2006-2007, pgs. 12-14.

⁴⁴ The Official Statement accompanying the October 19, 2006, issue of Tax and Revenue Anticipation Notes in the amount of \$875 million mentions both the IVU sales tax (discussed above) and the "reorganization" plan as part of the government's "efforts to implement a fiscal reform" (Commonwealth 2006: 6).

⁴⁵ The plan, colloquially known as "Silva Puras's 100 day plan" after then Chief of Staff Jorge Silva Puras and the amount of time in which he argued it would be implemented, foresaw the reduction of the "size" of the central government by as much as one third (Hernández Cabiya 2006).

Council headed by private sector notables (see CAREF 2009: A-1), was to approve the notorious “Fiscal Emergency Law,” Law 7 of March 9, 2009, which allowed it to temporarily override labor legislation and public-sector contracts for a period of two years, laying off up to 30,000 public-sector workers (around 17% of the public workforce). Parallel legislation also promoted the incursion of private capital into the public sector through public-private partnerships, which it was believed would absorb the laid-off employees. Law 7 was Puerto Rico’s first legislation explicitly drafted at the behest of the CRAs (“to avoid a further credit rating downgrade”). Although the Law explicitly “exempted” the UPR from its cuts, it affected the institution by excluding it from receiving any of the new revenue generated by special measures in the law (\$41 million per year), exacerbating an alleged \$300 million budget shortfall. The elimination of fee waivers that set off the first phase of the 2010-11 strike was an austerity measure justified on the basis of that shortfall, while the \$800 “Fiscal Stabilization Fee” that set off the second phase was intended to secure a new institutional bond emission (see Kaske 2010: 4).

The Recurring Neoliberal Dilemma

In Yu-Sheng Lin’s account of Taiwan’s 2006 anti-corruption protests, the central recurring dilemma haunting the “Reds” movement, around which all of its other choices gravitated, reflected the dominant electoral logic pitting the pro-unification “Blue” party bloc against the anti-China “Green” bloc. The Reds made a series of decisions that kept bringing them back to the Blue vs. Green frame, allowing their “infiltration” by the Blues and resulting in lost legitimacy and ultimately the movement’s demise (2015: 296-305). A related long-term trend could arguably be seen in the UPR student movement, as student mobilizations are likely to achieve wider popular

support against PNP administrations than when the PPD is in office.⁴⁶ However, it would be a mistake to claim that electoral politics as such represented the recurring dilemma of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike. For one thing, the strike is one “event” within a longer, established movement sequence, not dependent on the presence or absence of any particular political sector. Although the prominence of radical pro-independence organizations within it, vaguely corresponding to a small minority of the national electoral field,⁴⁷ has traditionally been used by opponents to challenge its legitimacy, few today seriously question that those organizations have earned their standing within the movement. If anything, the leadership contest between nationalists, including “pro-Puerto Rican” sectors of the PPD, and socialists seeking to frame the movement’s identity in terms of class instead, has prevented the movement from being dominated by any electoral party.

My research shows rather that the central recurring strategic dilemma that faced the UPR student movement before and throughout the 2010-11 student strike exhibited elements of what Jasper calls the extension and means dilemmas (and several variations therein), appearing within movement debates as a tradeoff between mass appeal and effective pressure, exacerbated by the omnipresence of mass media.⁴⁸ This tradeoff is not unlike the parallel tendency Sidney Tarrow

⁴⁶ Even the color scheme is similar, with the PPD identified with the color red, the PNP identified with the color blue, and the PIP identified with the color green.

⁴⁷ Although the PIP, which has fluctuated between 2 and 6% of the vote after 1952, has been the only consistent electoral representation of *independentismo* during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, two smaller parties associated with pro-independence sectors of the student movement have participated as well: the pro-independence, “Marxist-Leninist” PSP (with close ties to the FUPI) participated in the 1976 and 1980 elections, and the Working People’s Party, a broad anti-neoliberal party founded after the end of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, which counts numerous pro-independence socialists among its leadership, including members and former members of the September 23 Youth (J23), participated in 2012 and will do so again in 2016.

⁴⁸ The role of the media during the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, including strikers’ efforts to offset negative media coverage by creating their own alternative media, has been ably documented by Alessandra Rosa (2015: 201-233). Although my interviewees provided ample commentary on the role of the media in framing the strike, both within and without the student movement, which can surely enrich and provide additional or alternative insight to Rosa’s research, I have opted not to make it the focus of this dissertation, as there is enough material there for one or more stand-alone articles. I am confident that the presence and role of the media as both actor and arena will come through in the analysis.

and others have shown towards radicalization on the one hand, and institutionalization on the other, over the course of any protest cycle (1989; see also Taylor and Van Dyke 2004; Kriesi et al. 1995; Koopmans 1993). Such observations, however, are typically made in the context of a traditional path dependence framework that doesn't take into account the ways in which processes like neoliberalization might affect this inevitable polarization, or how movement actors may address the challenges it poses.⁴⁹ Although these challenges aren't new to the UPR student movement, my interviews reveal, at the heart of movement debates, a strong relationship between neoliberalization and the particular configuration described above (as a recurring question consistently raised when addressing more contingent problems). In Chapter 4, I discuss how the intervention of UJS cadre at key points during the strike's problem-solving sequence contributed to the movement's overall strategic capacity, and in Chapter 5, I show how this sequence is part of a longer process stretching back to the strike of 1981-82. In what remains of this chapter, I offer examples from my interviews to illustrate how the administration's repertoires of neoliberalization, described above, were translated within movement debates as a tug-of-war between confrontational pressure methods that might alienate potential participants, and more broadly appealing ones that might be less effective at obtaining concessions.

The Politics of Pressure

Do others do what you want them to because they love you or because they fear you? Do you ask politely for what you want, or do you disrupt things? Does violence work for protest groups [. . .]? Your choice may depend on your capacity to disrupt economic and political normalcy as well as on what alternatives you can pursue . . . Naughtiness follows the logic of coercion (or of war), niceness that of persuasion (of a debate). We might also call this the chaos dilemma: will you

⁴⁹ For example, Douglas McAdam and Yang Su argue that in the U.S., at least since the 1960s, effective movements must combine disruptive threats with democratic persuasion (2002; see also Taylor and Van Dyke). McAdam and Su don't address neoliberalization, but the timing of their research (which focuses on the 1965-73 Congressional record) coincides with the earliest overtures of neoliberalization in the U.S. (see above). If, as much of the literature suggests, neoliberalization over time can be expected to "close" the spaces of persuasion, one might expect a higher degree of disruption, and less commitment to "persuasion" to be more effective, particularly under "harder" neoliberal repertoires.

do better when things are predictable or when they are chaotic? . . . When normal routines are to your disadvantage, there may be little to lose and a lot to gain from shaking things up.

—James Jasper on the “Naughty or Nice? Dilemma” (2004: 9; see also Piven and Cloward 1979 [1977]; Gamson 1975).

In summarizing for me some of the major debates that took place, then UJS spokesperson Ian Camilo Cintrón emphasized the recurring centrality of these questions in the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike:

Many differences emerged around the methods of struggle. On the one hand there were sectors that were more moderate, more conservative . . . On the other . . . [some of us] defended not discarding any method out of hand. [We argued] that to really advance in the strike process we needed to exert pressure, and part of that was breaking with what at a certain point became the quotidianity of the strike, the normalization of being on strike [during the first phase], and we understood that to move forward in reaching some sort of agreement, we had to generate a problem for the administration and government.

I think these are the kinds of activity that continue to pose open challenges to the government as an institution, as the public authority, as the entity called upon to control the reins of society. Demonstrations and activities that break with that quotidianity, that normality of things —and in the end, that’s what they’re there for: for folks to keep producing, for economic activity to keep flowing, for activities whose function that is to go on . . . that kind of demonstration and action erode that, shake up that status quo, that normality.

Like Ian Camilo, other interviewees defended the disruptive actions taken by the movement in terms of “pressuring” the government and administration.

Most of my interviewees first experienced this quandary as what Jasper calls “simple players”: the choice to mobilize, to become involved in the student movement, compelled by an urge to “do something” about neoliberalization, implied an initial break with everyday normality.

For some, usually those with prior family ties to the left, the excitement of opposing an extreme neoliberal like Luis Fortuño was motivation enough:

When I was in high school, I would joke with my best friend . . . that we had to go to the UPR Río Piedras because Fortuño was going to win, and something was going to happen at the university. And that’s why I applied to the UPR Río Piedras (Tere, interviewee).

For others, there was a greater sense of lived injustice or threat, tied to specific neoliberal policies, whether at the university or outside of it:

When Law 7 [came into effect], my dad [an employee of the state-owned Water and Sewage Authority] wasn't affected. My dad had been there for years. But many of his coworkers, who were older than me and good friends —people you always care about— I saw that they were affected. My dad tried to fight for them, so they wouldn't get laid off, and they were laid off anyway. Well, I was offended, and that was the first time I went to a demonstration. I think [the march against] Law 7 was on October 15 [2009], and on the 13th or the 12th, we marched to the Botanical Garden from the university (Leo, interviewee).

Then with the special fee [that set off the second phase of the strike], that affected me personally. It was going to be less income, at that time. I was still on unemployment. I had been laid off because of Law 7, and I still hadn't found work. Finding work took a while . . . it was a really difficult time.

You worked at a government agency?

No. When Law 7 happened, many private businesses used it as an excuse to fire employees. Mainly those who had been there less time, they were cut. Or people who had a higher salary, when [employers] wanted to pay less, got cut (Yari, interviewee).

The personal decision to mobilize involves a choice between what Jack Goldstone and Charles Tilly called *repressive threat* (the risks and costs of protest) and the *current threat* posed by the consequences of *not* acting (2001: 181-183).

In the case of at least one interviewee, the repressive threat included threats and harassment by family members, as well as being denied the opportunity to continue studying at the UPR *after* the strike was over, by an overzealous anti-strike administrator. Others report instances of police officers showing up at strikers' workplaces to inform employers of their participation. As Jasper and others insist, these choices are never simple, straightforward risk/benefit calculations (most of my interviewees would in all probability have been deterred otherwise), but mediated through and through by emotions and cultural meaning, whether it be the exhilaration, as in Tere's case, of becoming a student activist at *la Iupi* (as the Río Piedras campus is colloquially known), the outrage felt by Leo at the way his father's coworkers and friends were treated, or the more direct financial attack felt by Yari (2006: 3; see also Gould 2009; Polletta 2004; Polletta and Jasper 2001;

Goodwin, et al. 2001). Much of the framing work that organizations do consists precisely in agitation, “stirring up” these emotions on the basis of already existing identities and cultural/emotional references and values (such as Tere’s image of *la lupi* as a hotbed of radical activism, or the class solidarities binding Leo’s father—a longtime supporter of Fortuño’s party—to his fellow workers at the public water company). As I discuss in Chapter 4, it was the political and organizational footwork that the UJS and others were already doing on campus that allowed my interviewees to connect politically with the social issues that were meaningful to them.

By contrast, none of the four classic dimensions of the political opportunity structure identified by Douglas McAdam—the relative openness of the political system, the stability of elite alignments, the presence of elite allies, or the state’s repressive capacity (1982)—had recently changed in any significant way. From a longer perspective, neoliberalization seemed to be *closing* traditional channels of participation within both the institution and the state, with the ideological space between the two dominant parties narrowing, as the literature on Latin America might predict (see, for example, Robinson 1996: 48-61, 339-345; Eckstein 2006: 8-9). Ian Camilo recalled how under a PPD administration in 2005 (when he was an undergraduate), before the tuition hike that set off that year’s strike was announced,

in the UJS we would discuss the possibility that, given the university’s fiscal situation, the administration would impose an increase in the costs of study. It’s not that we knew exactly when it would happen, but I remember *compañeros* who argued that it was a possibility. For a lot of reasons: the historical tendency that every decade more or less [since 1981] the costs of study were increased, there hadn’t been a hike since 1991-92, the new administration’s political line in terms of the country’s government was one of fiscal crisis, of having to find the way to increase revenue.

Four years later, Fortuño’s PNP administration showed its commitment to neoliberalization, remaining unmoved by (and generally dismissive of) the wave of massive protest and discontent unleashed by its sacking of 30,000 public employees through Law 7. In the resulting climate of unresponsiveness and expectation, many students felt that the administration and government

could only be moved if pressured through confrontation, rather than persuasion. Neoliberalizing repertoires generated an *inverse opportunity* of sorts within the student movement dilemma.

Leo's intervention at a pre-strike assembly, before he had been approached by UJS cadre, illustrates this growing frustration felt among many within the student grassroots:

They were talking at the Education College assembly, and saying "it can't be done . . ." And people saying, "we've had pickets and pickets here, and that doesn't solve anything." And as usual, I get agitated and blurt out, "We haven't done anything here! We haven't had a *paro* [stoppage], we haven't had a strike for these *cabrones* to understand!" So I get my turn to speak, and I raise a motion to strike. And we vote, and it doesn't pass . . . And I tell them, "there's a lot that we haven't done, and if we don't do them, we're going to lose a lot of things."⁵⁰

When the strike was eventually approved by a campus-wide assembly, the administration's well-documented reticence to negotiate and reliance on heavy-handed repression (which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4), generated a dynamic whereby strikers grew increasingly convinced that confrontation was necessary, a perception that was reinforced by the contradictory results of the first phase. According to Ian Camilo:

[By the start of the second phase] we were aware, as a result of the experiences we had during the strike, and of some of the movement's weaknesses, that if we had the intention of winning this second round, we were going to have to articulate a stronger process of struggle than during the first. Because we knew that the success of the process did not lie in how we could convince the administration, but how we could generate enough pressure to force it to yield.

Sectors that perhaps at a given moment had been somewhat skeptical [about confrontational methods] sometimes became convinced that they were necessary for the movement to advance its demands. Other sectors perhaps distanced themselves from it . . . I saw that throughout the strike, in general terms, those who continued to participate would become radicalized. Activities or actions that most initially considered inadequate, eventually were carried out. That is, people changed their position, with all the experience they were acquiring through discussion and debate, and maybe out of desperation as well.

As frustration increased and patience wore thin, the urge to "do something" increasingly came to

⁵⁰ Among Puerto Rican protest movements in general, a *paro* is a stoppage with a defined, or set time limit, whereas a *hulega* properly speaking is an indefinite strike. Unless otherwise noted, I will refer to the former in Spanish, and the latter by the English term "strike."

mean the urge to confront.

Previous PPD administrations had followed a different strategy than the PNP in terms of the policing of campus mobilization, despite pursuing a similar neoliberal repertoire, resulting in different movement dynamics (discussed in Chapter 5). Also unlike the PNP, the PPD maintains an active presence within the UPR student movement, playing a contradictory role.⁵¹ For example, in the buildup to the strike, when a group of students occupied the expressway during the October 15, 2009, *paro* and march against Law 7,

[it was caused by] a mix of things, because in those sectors there were people close to the PPD . . . without entering into conspiracy theories, but there was an element of trying to keep damaging the government's image and forcing its hand, from all of the opposition, which went from the PPD to the revolutionary socialist organizations (Ian Camilo).

The party's attitude towards the possibility of a strike at the UPR itself, however, was obstructionist at worst, cautious at best. When it became apparent at the assembly that declared the 2010-11 strike that it would have ample support,

a student from the PPD Youth raised a motion conditioning the strike to having 40 people per gate, then 30 people . . . originally she had proposed 100! And that wasn't a debate process, it was a shouting match! And that condition was met, incredibly! That condition was easily met throughout the first week of the strike, very easily (Francisco).⁵²

Once that hurdle/barometer had been met, PPD members would go on to play a prominent role during the first phase of the strike. Interviewees point out individuals in specific leadership positions, such as now PPD legislator Manuel Natal, a member of the Law School Action Committee (CAED), and fellow CAED member Arturo Ríos, very quickly portrayed by the media as lead student negotiator (although there were no formal distinctions), who would go on to serve

⁵¹ The PNP often seems to mobilize only in opposition to movement demands, even though pro-statehood students have participated in the movement, as well as its leadership (including during the 2010-11 Strike).

⁵² My interviewees claim that this student went on to leave the PPD Youth and join the UJS, although after the end of the strike she would distance herself from it as well. I do not reveal the student's identity because she is not a public figure, and I did not have the opportunity to interview her.

as the incoming PPD governor's legal advisor on labor matters for a year and a half.

The PPD's tune would change dramatically in the weeks leading up to the second phase of the strike, as figures identified with it stepped out of sight.

Of course, all the same I can tell you that the people who are now in the *popular* government, like Arturo Ríos, Manuel Natal . . . in that part of the strike, "*coquí, coquí*" [the sound made by the coquí tree frog, a colloquial equivalent of crickets chirü], they simply didn't participate . . . In the end, deep down, they defend the institutions against which we are struggling (Tere).

It's contradictory, because the first activity of the second period . . . in August [2010], the first activities are organized by the CAED and the CAs, folks who later stop participating. In fact, Arturo Ríos was elected president of the Río Piedras General Student Council [after the first phase of the strike] and he steps down, claiming personal problems . . . That may have been true or false, but the reality is that he didn't have any personal problems when he was appointed to *Fortaleza* [the governor's mansion]. At that point, that sector, headed by Arturo and others, abandons the process of building [the second phase of the strike] (Francisco).

As a whole, the PPD would grow silent except to condemn the PNP administration's repressive methods (of which the PPD would make extensive use in the 2012 electoral campaign).

The first [phase of the] strike was a "popular" strike, in both senses [PPD members are known as *populares*]. It was a strike that everybody liked because it was against the Fortuño government. It was a "beautiful" strike. The second strike, closer to the elections, was more confrontational and questioned other things that hadn't been questioned during the first. During the second strike, the function of the university was completely questioned, as well as the way that the university was financed, which wasn't questioned during the first strike (Tere).

At some point between the first strike and the second strike, the PPD decides that the student movement no longer serves its purpose, which is to degrade Luis Fortuño's capacity to win the next elections, and has started to be a denunciation of the system as such. At that moment, there is a break in the student movement. I don't think they sat down at a table and said that, but in the PPD's political and ideological conception, that's the contradiction: at what point does the student movement cease to fulfill the party's electoral objectives and begin to denounce not just the PNP, but also the PPD and the system as a whole (Francisco).

The dynamic of the strike forced the PPD to confront its own recurring dilemma, which like that facing the student movement, while not created by neoliberalization, was thoroughly marked by it.

Neoliberalization contributed to the closing of traditional opportunities by more clearly defining

the limits to the PPD's availability as an elite ally of the student movement.

A further way in which neoliberalization was experienced as a pull towards mobilization and militancy was in the growing awareness of the *transnational* or global character of neoliberalization, and of the resistance to it, among the UPR student movement. Arguably, such an awareness can just as well instill a sense of hopelessness, seeming to create an insurmountable distance between actors and the centers of "real" decision-making. Ian Camilo, for example, recognized that the "pessimism and uncertainty" weighing down activists in recent years were "not particular to Puerto Rico." Ibrahim García, another interviewee who participated in the 2005 UPR Student Strike, recalls how when he and others began to bring up neoliberalism within the movement, "there were folks who said we wanted to stop globalization from *la Iupi*, like we were nuts for talking about neoliberalism at the university." However, to feel part of a worldwide struggle can also be a powerful motivator.

As two first generation working class students without prior connections to the left, whom I interviewed, both told me:

In Latin America we're seeing a resurgence of the left, with all the criticisms we can have towards that type of left: Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, a new left that social movements are rebuilding as part of a larger struggle (Niño, interviewee).

And I realized during the 2011 strike that this is also an economic crisis, and that influenced me. This isn't just happening in Puerto Rico, look at Greece, look at Spain (Jeanqui, interviewee).

Ibrahim recalls how learning about movements elsewhere *after* the 2005 strike had helped him and others to better contextualize and articulate what they had been fighting for:

I remember that in those days I was beginning to learn about participatory democracy. All of those currents of thought were going around, in the heads of those of us who participated in the struggle, "pumped" to keep going, to organize our political ideas . . . Not long after the CUCA, there had been the *pingüinos* [penguin] movement in Chile. That was real good, because it was many of the ideas that were in the CUCA struggle that maybe we hadn't been able to articulate more clearly, and suddenly, in the *pingüinos* we had a referent of the defense of public education. School kids with such political formation, barricades . . .

at a level that was like, “Whoa!”⁵³

Ibrahim and Ian Camilo had both been part of a group that traveled to Venezuela immediately after the 2005 strike, for that year’s World Festival of Youth and Students, which brought them into contact with student movements and radical ideas from around the world. While the commanding heights of transnational capital might seem out of reach, if the flesh-and-bone actors who implemented neoliberalizing repertoires elsewhere could be pressured into making significant concessions elsewhere, perhaps they could in Puerto Rico and the UPR, as well.

The Politics of Number

The further you expand your group (or alliance), the less coherent your goals and actions will be. Normally, fewer people will be willing to bear high risks and costs, so expansion limits your range of abilities . . . [c]oalitions may exacerbate internal tensions in exchange for external strength.” Furthermore, “[i]n an acute form of the extension dilemma, powerful allies offer power and attention, but they may subordinate your goals to theirs . . . Powerful allies usually consist of political and economic elites, who in turn demand some moderation in movement demands and tactics.

—James Jasper (2004: 7-8; see also Goodwin 2001; Goldstone 1991; Meyer 1990).

The urge to extend a movement’s appeal, and especially the search for allies with access to institutions and the media, tends to create an incentive for less confrontational, more widely appealing tactics and frames. Neoliberalization exacerbates this tradeoff in several ways. I’ve already discussed the ambivalent role of the PPD and its members as potential elite allies. Neoliberalization also makes it difficult for any one aggrieved constituency to gain significant concessions. This is so in part because neoliberal states are generally less responsive, as discussed above, but also because neoliberalization involves the *weakening* of the structural power of its potential opponents, among them labor, which has been a traditional ally of the student movement

⁵³ “CUCA” refers to the broad student committee that was formed to coordinate the 2005 strike, the University Committee Against the Hike (CUCA). The “Penguin Revolution” (so called in reference to the black and white uniforms used in most schools) was an uprising of high school students in Chile in the spring and fall of 2006, demanding a reform of the primary and secondary education system (mainly, the repeal of a late Pinochet-era law privatizing the entire system).

in Puerto Rico as elsewhere. This dynamic has been broadly documented in other parts of the world: in synthesis, the new-found mobility of capital eviscerates the industrial strongholds of unionism, and the specter of mass unemployment raises the costs of protest, leaving labor bureaucrats more vulnerable to discipline, through co-optation or attack (Eckstein 2006: 9-16; Murillo 2001: 4; Moody 1997: 180-200). As in the U.S. and other deindustrializing economies, Puerto Rico's union density steadily declined from the 1970s up until the present, in direct correlation with the loss of its privileged access to the U.S. market, and the resulting collapse of manufacturing (Rosado Marzán 2007; Pantojas-García 1990). By the late 1990s, Puerto Rico's labor movement had all but disappeared in the private sector, remaining strong mainly in the state-owned utilities. Hungry for dues, local affiliates of U.S. "international" unions supported Law 45 of 1998, formally authorizing collective bargaining by employees of public agencies, despite the fact that it imposed heavy penalties for striking. A clear schism, manifested in sour debates over the abrupt end of the Telephone Workers' strike in the summer of that year, emerged between unions adhering to the U.S. "business unionism" model and more militant, independent rank-and-file unions that openly accused them of accommodating neoliberalism (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 297-299; Conferencia Sindical 2007 [2001]).

The gap between the two sectors widened into the 2000s (see, for example, Early 2011: 6-8, 284-285, 316-317; Conferencia Sindical 2007 [2001]). When Law 7 was passed, just two months into the Fortuño administration, the MST expressed doubts about the possibility of a "general strike" because, according to Ian Camilo,

we understood, because of the experiences we'd had with the majority of the unions in the labor movement, mainly the so-called internationals (which we called *chupacuotas* — "dues-suckers"), these unions with a business-oriented view of their function . . . for a long time, they had failed to articulate a process of struggle. They had become inclined towards a trade-unionist perspective of working through collective bargaining, and leaving aside, or altogether, militant struggle for reaching their objectives.

Despite months of vociferous protest, three massive marches, and scores of localized, generally mild direct actions, the union leadership was ill-prepared to mount an effective resistance against Law 7. When mobilization basically fizzled out after the final card was played on October 15, the student movement almost literally stepped in to fill the vacuum:

[CAED and other students occupied the expressway on October 15, 2009] because the country's main union leadership had insisted so much that there was going to be a general strike. When that national *paro* ended with the two rallies, I think those *compañeros* identified that it would all end there (Ian Camilo).

[T]hat [first phase of the] strike wasn't about that [tuition waivers]. That strike was about Fortuño and the neoliberal administration. That strike was, in a certain sense, what would have been done in the rest of the country if on October 15, the Puerto Rican union movement had decided to push its statements about Law 7 to their last consequences. And the student strike, in a certain sense, rode the wave of social discontent all the way to the end. And in the end, as when a wave crashes on the shore . . . it rode it until it could no more (Francisco).

Speaking about the PPD's shifting attitude towards the strike (discussed above), Francisco explains:

that is also what defines the attitude of half of the labor movement towards the possibility of a general strike, because part of the labor movement puts its eggs in the basket of the PPD winning the next elections, which can be seen clearly in the All Puerto Rico for Puerto Rico Coalition [one of two labor, community, and religious coalitions assembled in the mobilizations against Law 7], which literally stops fighting because it's aligned with the PPD's interests. In that sense, there's also a break within the student movement [at the beginning of the second phase].

Therefore, although the frustrated expectations raised by Law 7 certainly served as an initial motivator of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, in a more direct sense, the general state of the labor movement (and especially the U.S.-affiliated, PPD-aligned unions) did not work in the strike's favor. As I discuss in Chapter 4, for some of my interviewees, even the generally supportive Professors' Association (APPU) and Brotherhood of Non-Professional Employees (HEEND) ended up playing a demobilizing role.

The labor movement's ambivalence paralleled and in some ways overlapped with the situation of the student movement's other major traditional ally, the *independentista* left. After the

2004 elections, when the tendency of many *independentistas* to vote PPD (colloquially known as *melonismo*) was clearly instrumental to the PPD gubernatorial candidate's slim victory (Ayala and Bernabe 2007: 312), purported *independentista* leaders who had openly advocated such support began to openly discourage and oppose protests that could be seen as damaging to the PPD.⁵⁴

Later, our analysis [of negative coverage by *independentista* media pundits and low public support for the 2005 UPR Strike] was that this was related to the phenomenon of *melonismo*, that whenever the PPD takes the reins of the island's government, supposedly *independentista* sectors, which in practice support the PPD, play its game and tend to accommodate it and cover-up many of its policies (Ian Camilo).

After the [2005] CUCA Strike, there was a climate of demoralization. There was also a context that we were under a PPD administration, and *melonismo* . . . was having an effect over many potential struggles. Even so, there were some important campaigns in terms of [opposition to] the so-called IVU [sales tax] . . . the famous two-week government shut-down under [PPD Governor] Aníbal [Acevedo Vilá], led by . . . the more combative wing of the labor movement (Ian Camilo).

Many of those leaders also publicly opposed the 2008 teachers' strike, but again supported the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike against Fortuño's PNP administration, not without contradictions, as Francisco points out:

There is a diversity of other organizations that are unorganized organizations, in the sense that they aren't institutionalized, bureaucratic, don't have a president, a spokesperson, a name, but they also operate [within the student movement]. During that period, the PPD Youth was active (and organized!) at the UPR. And there were other [political] spaces that weren't necessarily as well organized, but which had ties to the Puerto Rican left, to nationalism, spaces such as the Hostosian National *Independentista* Movement, what's known traditionally as *melonismo*, or the post-PSP environment, which were active at the university, and we had those dynamics that always take place among students, there are always those who are more organized and more disposed [to mobilize].

We need to keep in mind that on that day [when students stunned everyone by voting down an administration-sponsored attempt to end the strike by holding an assembly on an off-campus venue] the front page of the *Claridad* newspaper [an *independentista* weekly

⁵⁴ Already in the late 1970s, nationalists in the PSP called for rapprochement with a "pro-Puerto Rican" wing of the PPD, which almost certainly contributed to that party's dismal performance in the 1980 gubernatorial race, and eventual demise. In 1992, when PIP's net loss of 20,000 votes in comparison to 1988, it was speculated that this reflected a wave of *independentistas* crossing party lines in order to "stop" the popular, aggressively pro-statehood PNP candidate Rosselló. This tendency, colloquially labeled *melonismo* (after PPD candidate Victoria "Melo" Muñoz, daughter of Luis Muñoz Marín, and watermelons, which are PIP green on the outside, and PPD red on the inside).

founded and formerly run by the PSP] called on students to end the strike! To say “let’s secure what we’ve gained thus far, because what we’ve gained is a lot!” The generalized opinion of the left in Puerto Rico was that on that day, the strike either had to end, or would end.

The fact that students overwhelmingly voted to keep the strike going gave it the legitimacy and momentum to win over fence-sitters for the duration of the first phase of the strike. As discussed above, however, the second phase would be a different story.

The demobilizing role of much of the *independentista* left can thus partially be explained in terms of the electoral calculus of a weak nationalism hedging its bets with a neoliberalizing PPD, as well as those sectors’ assessment of the situation of the labor movement (the radicalization of the 1970s had produced close ties between the two sectors), but also in terms of the way that *class positions* factored into movement debates. Social movement scholars have long pointed out how, along with narrowing and displacing the traditional organizational base for class struggle (as described above), which creates across-the-board incentives for coalition-building, neoliberalization also generates disenfranchised urban “middle” sectors with their own agendas, resources, identity frames, and tactical preferences (Moreira Alves 2001 [1989]: 295-297; Moody 1997). This corresponds to the shifting place and political allegiances of the professional and managerial sector, discussed earlier in this chapter: while some trained professionals reinvent themselves as entrepreneurs and executives, others invariably get left behind or remain ideologically loyal to an embedded, public goods model of social organization. This includes university faculty, the profession charged with the training of all the other professions (Slaughter and Rhoads 2010 [2004]: loc. 1363). As a result, these sectors occupy contradictory class positions, and therefore their ideological and strategic commitments can be heavily ambivalent. In Puerto Rico, the *independentista* movement’s leadership (and especially its more nationalist sectors) has historically been dominated by members of the commercial and professional classes (lawyers

being particularly conspicuous) that have experienced some sense of displacement by U.S. interests (see, for example, Ferrao 1990).⁵⁵ This tendency helps contextualize the major differences and debates that have taken place within spaces where *independentismo* has been historically overrepresented, such as the student movement at the UPR, Puerto Rico's foremost center for the training of professionals.

Most of my interviewees were acutely sensitive to different class positions within the student movement, to which they attributed many of the ensuing differences in strategic debates. "Class" in this sense refers not just to family background or immediate situation, but also aspiration and ideology. Law School and Natural Sciences students are generally presumed to come from wealthier families because those colleges have more stringent entrance requirements (suggesting higher quality, and therefore costlier, private schooling —and in the case of Law School, often elite undergraduate studies in the U.S.)⁵⁶ By contrast, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education students are seen as more likely to look forward to a future in devalued, proletarianized, salaried "professions" such as teaching.

At the Natural Sciences gate, the dynamic was different [from the Humanities or Social Sciences gates]. First of all, the requirements to enter those colleges are super high, not all the children of workers have the capacity to enter those colleges because of the type of education they received, etc. And that was really evident during the strike (Orlando).

However, there is also strong sense that many future lawyers and doctors eschew more confrontational tactics not necessarily because of an elite background, but in order not to jeopardize graduation and professional opportunities, or even an ideological identification with the institutions of the status quo (in the case of law students especially).

⁵⁵ There is an ample body of informed (if biased) discussion of this dynamic from the socialist perspective (see, for example, Meléndez 1984; MST 1982; TFP 1982b; Maldonado Denis 1980; Corretjer 1972). The nationalist position tends to dismiss this kind of debate altogether as divisive.

⁵⁶ In my experience, this background is shared by many graduates of UPR Law, if not the majority.

Several interviewees pointed out what they see as class dynamics underlying apparent tactical differences, in terms of participants' sense of urgency (current threat) or simply ability to participate during the two phases of the strike, characterized by different dynamics and demands.

Often times, differences that were projected as simple matters of opinion in terms of the methods of struggle also had to do with the ideological perspectives that different sectors have. Maybe some people weren't willing to risk as much, or to expose themselves to as many things, by resorting to certain methods. There are sectors that are simply opposed to them. There are class elements involved, in terms of the valorization given to the mode of the demands. For some sectors, perhaps what was important was to express an opposition to the government, and reach some other kind of agreement. But for others, we're talking about the fact that their very ability to study at the university was at stake (Ian Camilo).

The first strike was over tuition waivers and the second over an \$800 a year fee . . . I think there were folks from all of the colleges who really weren't affected [by the latter]. There we saw the element of how far folks were willing to go for something that wasn't for them . . . that kind of person was willing to vote against the fee, but not to go a little further, like they were during the first strike, because it really didn't affect them, and they weren't going to sacrifice their studies or whatever for something that didn't affect them directly (Orlando).

I think the people who participated actively in the second [phase of the] strike were more disposed to confrontation, to less conciliation, than those who only participated in the first. And I think it's due to a class issue, in the sense that the first strike was about defending a so-called privilege, for honor students, musicians, artists, athletes. But the \$800 special fee involved economic aspects, and was universally applied. Some people could pay it, but not others. In fact, I think (though I don't have the evidence to sustain it) that the social composition of the second strike was very different from that of the first. Folks who were in the first had the luxury of spending 62 days in a camping tent and not going to work. Folks in the second strike came and went during what would have been their normal class time, went in and out, went to work . . . there were *compañeros* there in their work uniform (Tere).

Illustrating Tere's point, two of my interviewees, Yari (then a new single mother) and Jeanqui, did not participate as actively during the first phase as during the second because family or work responsibilities prevented them from doing so. Similarly, while few of my interviewees reported being directly affected by the elimination of tuition waivers, many expressed difficulty remaining enrolled as a result of the special fee.

Finally, neoliberalization heightened the perception of a tradeoff between effectiveness and

mass appeal through the disciplinary and other ideological mechanisms that internalized and normalized the neoliberal common sense of individualism and consumerism. Already in 2005, according to Ibrahim,

[In student debates before the start of that year's student strike] there were obviously people who said, "[the price of] everything must increase," "that's the way things are, life . . . that's normal," "it's only \$10 per credit" . . .

Inversely, mobilization and protest became denaturalized. Ian Camilo recalls how, especially in the aftermath of the unsuccessful 2005 strike, to propose even a simple demonstration would provoke heated debate.

There were sectors who'd lecture that it was antiquated, that those methods were a thing of the past, and they gained some terrain for a while. Even those of us who strongly defended those methods, we were somewhat neutralized.

By contrast, the aggressive style, rather than the content of Luis Fortuño's neoliberal repertoire, had opened up some space for protest by 2009. Even so, the advance of neoliberal common sense was evident in elite and media criticisms of his program.

Everyone was against Fortuño, and perhaps the media weren't completely against what he was doing, but the form or manner in which he was implementing those policies, perhaps too blatant, or perhaps too much direct confrontation, and perhaps the way that it generated too much instability in the country for the tastes of media owners. I remember the argument, "no, the problem isn't the layoffs, it's how they're doing it, all at once . . ." Because the discourse on so-called big government had been present in the country for a long time, since the 1980s, if not earlier (Ian Camilo).

During the strike, as several interviewees pointed out, the threat of a "lost semester," as a result of the strike, was continually wielded by the administration, speaking to students' subjectivity as service consumers in an educational market. At a wider level, a similar narrative made use of the Middle States Association (MSA)'s looming presence, to argue that accreditation would be denied. As I discuss in Chapter 4, the fear of such an outcome struck a deep nerve among the faculty, and some students.

Conclusions

Two conceptions then begin to clash: a voluntaristic conception that takes for granted the existence of the student movement, as an objective condition, and seeks to organize folks with the will to fight, versus a conception of the process as one through which a mass movement is built, on the basis that only such a movement can simultaneously push forth a victorious struggle at the university, and insert itself in the struggle at the national level.

—Francisco

Not all of the broader movement's participants shared the UJS's long-term goal of undermining the stability of colonial capitalism in Puerto Rico, nor did radicals share would-be reformers' hopes of neutralizing the threat to existing institutions posed by overzealous neoliberalization. It was the administration's intransigence at the negotiating table, a corollary of its specific neoliberalization repertoire, which caused the two to align. Nor was the recurring dilemma outlined above neatly drawn along organizational and ideological lines, with radical cadre always pushing for the most confrontational alternative and apolitical or reformist groups or grassroots holding back. As my interviewees point out, that dilemma echoed in debates among leftist cadre organizations as well, and within them. Interviewees recalled harsh words between the three main socialist cadre organizations —the UJS, Socialist International Organization (OSI), and September 23 Youth (J23)— over the initiation and end of the strike. They also attest to heated arguments within the UJS itself surrounding key decisions; interviewees who had yet not formally joined often adopted the most confrontational stances. These dynamics, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, speak to Francisco's concern in the epigraph to this section. To the extent that the movement as a whole was able to perceive and address its recurrent dilemma in properly *strategic* terms (that is, in terms of neoliberalization), it tended toward the “mass movement” conception, that Francisco sees as the key to its success; where it failed to do so, it remained mired in immediate tactical abstractions that depleted its energies and diverted its focus.

Chapter 4. The UJS and the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike: Socialist Sails over Neoliberal Waters

Certainly, the strike wasn't of a single color, nor did all of us who today reject the "feudal" model of the university share an identical vision of the community of scholars that must be promoted. But there was something then in the air of the strike that evoked a different order of things—collective decision-making models, echoes of labor struggles, conceptions about educational opportunities, about moral obligations.

—Fernando Picó, on the 1981 UPR strike
(1982: 31; my trans.).

*Al bucanero las tierras vírgenes/ el agua indómita, la mar
inédita:/ los horizontes en donde aúlla/ la agria jauría de la
tormenta.*

—Luis Palés Matos, "Aires Bucaneros"
(2000 [1950])¹

Perhaps the most widely recognized Puerto Rican historian of the past several decades, Fernando Picó, ironically titled his contribution to the best-known narrative of the 1981-82 UPR Student Strike, "The Socialist Strike at the Feudal University" (Picó et al. 1982).² The counterintuitive image was meant to juxtapose the radical ideas and projects that moved an increasingly class-conscious student body with the institution's byzantine and undemocratic governing structures.³ Three decades later, that "feudal" apparatus still stood, basically unchanged since 1966, although little remained of the lofty educational and civilizing mission that had sustained the UPR before a liberal populist regime proclaimed it a House of Studies. The undemocratic scaffolding had served

¹ "For the buccaneer, the virgin lands/ the untamed water, the uncharted sea:/ the horizons where the harsh hounds/ of storm are howling" (my trans.).

² An ordained Jesuit priest and member of the UPR Faculty since 1972, Father Picó had been one of two faculty mediators during that Strike, who resigned from the mediation committee when its futility became evident. The book, which takes its title *Las vallas rotas* ("The Broken Fences;" Picó et al. 1982) from the prologue by Cuban poet and patriot José Martí to Venezuelan poet Juan Pérez Bonalde's *El poema del Niágara*, contains the testimonials of Picó and fellow faculty mediator Milton Pabón, as well as then UJS spokesperson and CGE President Roberto Alejandro. Martí's extraordinary prologue, cited evocatively in the epigraph to *Las vallas rotas*, is worth recalling: "The times of raised fences are through; this is the time of broken fences . . . Now . . . ideas mature within the public square where they are taught, walking hand in hand, and step by step . . . As eminences descend, the plains are raised, easing transit through the earth . . . We are witnessing a kind of decentralization of the intelligence" (epigraph to Picó et al. 1982; my trans.).

³ A meticulous historian, Picó knew that 1981 Puerto Rico was anything but feudal. For his account of the conversations that led him to choose the title, see Picó 1982: 30-31.

neoliberalizers well, facilitating the periodic imposition of tuition hikes, among other performances that became central to their repertoire since 1981. As neoliberalization reared its head once more, at the forefront of resistance was a complex actor well known to those familiar with 1981-82: a self-described “democratic and revolutionary” socialist organization, now integrated by a new generation of militants, many of whom had never known the fears, dogmas, or hopes of the long twentieth century. In this chapter, I seek to cast light, through their stories, on how cadre organizations such as the Union of Socialist Youths (UJS) help shape the decisions that movements make as they traverse the uncertain waters of neoliberalization.

In the previous chapters, I have laid out a theoretical framework for understanding the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike in terms of a learning or problem-solving sequence wherein diverse actors in a nested movement field, including cadre organizations, interact with each other and with others, including opponents, within different arenas. I do not wish to make a lengthy restatement here, merely to remind the reader that the following chronology should be read as a problem-solving sequence, wherein all movement actors are learning, and some (particularly cadre) are competing to “teach” or frame tactical repertoires and collective identities. I will highlight key decision-making switchpoints within the sequence, to illustrate the recurrence of what I have called the neoliberal dilemma, as a result of both the actions of external actors, and the movement’s own solutions to more immediate problems. In the following sections, I will show how UJS cadres’ interventions at those points, in interaction with both external and internal actors, and through different process mechanisms, pursued a *strategy* (in the narrow sense of a plan) of political coercion or *negotiated pressure*, aimed at building a long-term movement of resistance to neoliberalization. These interventions sought (not always successfully) to frame tactical and identity debates in terms of *that* strategy, in a self-consciously pedagogical way. Finally, I

demonstrate that in doing so, the UJS strengthened the elements of strategic capacity for the movement as a whole, contributing to its varied and complex outcomes.

Switchpoints and Key Actors

October 15, 2009, the day of the national *paro* against Law 7 where hopes of a broader anti-neoliberal struggle fizzled out, was the turning point or *switchpoint* that opened a path to the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike. After this date, there are eight clearly discernible switchpoints in the sequence that spans both phases of the 2010-11 strike. I briefly identify them here for the purpose of clarity. They are, in order chronological order:

Phase I

1. March 10, 2010: occupation of Academic Senate opens door to more serious discussion of a possible future strike, in the course of which UJS decides to unilaterally bring proposal for an immediate strike to general assembly.
2. April 13, 2010: student general assembly approves 48-hour *paro* at Río Piedras campus on Apr. 21, demanding the repeal of Board of Trustees' Certification 98, to be followed by immediate indefinite strike if administrators refuse to negotiate.
3. May 13, 2010: second general assembly organized off campus by student council and administration surprisingly results in overwhelming support for continuing strike; increased repression; student participation in May 20 protest of Governor Fortuño at Sheraton Hotel results in violence, intensifying debates about tactics and strategy.
4. June 9, 2010: when administrators leave negotiating table, student negotiators from the Humacao, Cayey, and Mayagüez campuses stage sit-in, spark student occupation of Central Administration, deciding outcome of first phase.

Phase II

5. November 18, 2010: 98.2% of student voters oppose an \$800 special stabilization fee; after months of heated debate, bare majority of UJS decides to support a strike before the holiday break, on days before the Dec. 1 general assembly, which approved a new indefinite strike, starting Dec. 14, if the administration refused to negotiate after a preventive 48-hour *paro* on Dec. 7-8.
6. January 11, 2011: students, faculty, and employees hold sizeable march through campus, challenging protest ban; group of masked marchers cause property damage, prompting strike leadership to express itself against use of masks, try civil disobedience Jan. 19-27.
7. February 9, 2011: police harassment, filming of student sidewalk-painting activity results in violence, arrests; faculty and employee unions, UPR President De la Torre, demand removal of police; De la Torre forced to resign; Feb. 22 assembly debates, votes to "suspend" stoppage; UJS proposes activities for "pedagogical closing."

8. March 7, 2011: before all the activities approved at the Feb. 22 assembly can take place, Chancellor Ana Guadalupe is attacked, reflecting demoralization, frustration; movement collapses.

In the following sections, I examine these switchpoints more closely, in terms of the interactions that constituted them, with a focus on how the neoliberal dilemma resurfaced at each, texturing and contouring the corresponding debates.

A number of complex actors are part of this narrative, some of whom have already surfaced in earlier chapters. The UJS, of course, is the focus of my research, although by no means the sole protagonist of the story. A non-exhaustive list of other major players occupying the movement field during the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike includes:

1. International Socialist Organization (OSI): originally the Puerto Rico branch of the U.S. Trotskyist-descended organization of the same name (now disbanded); together with the UJS, it was considered one of the more radical student organizations at the UPR during the strike, and an active proponent of the strike process.
2. September 23 Youth (J23): the youth wing of the now extinct Movement Towards Socialism; at the time of the strike, the J23 was also connected to the Working People's Party, a small left-populist electoral party; the J23 was considered by many of my interviewees as generally ambivalent towards the strike.
3. Popular Democratic Party (PPD): the major electoral opposition to the ruling New Progressive Party (PNP), the PPD is also unanimously considered by my interviewees to be a neoliberal party, although other *independentistas* have traditionally allied with it in hopes of attracting its "pro-Puerto Rican" wing or blocking the PNP's advance; the PPD Youth was very active during the first phase of the strike.
4. Committee in Defense of Public Education (CEDEP): largely an OSI/UJS initiative, the CEDEP was one of the early broad student grassroots committees that were crucial during the buildup to the strike; it was conceived as a permanent "struggle committee" rather than a contingent strike committee, although it eventually dissolved into the strike's decision-making structure.
5. Committee Against Homophobia and Discrimination (CCHD): overlapping in terms of membership with the CEDEP, the CCHD was the other major pre-strike grassroots initiative, founded by leftist LGBT students and supporters, to fight discrimination by Río Piedras area businesses.
6. Law School Action Committee (CAED): founded by left-leaning Law School students to oppose Law 7; many of my interviewees considered most CAED members to be privileged and in the PPD's orbit; the CAED was the first and largest of the action committees (CAs) eventually created at each of the Río Piedras campus colleges in the buildup to the strike.
7. National Negotiating Committee (CNN): the 11-campus negotiating body, elected by striker *plenos* (plenums; horizontal decision-making bodies open to all active participants)

at each campus, that substituted the Río Piedras Negotiating Committee once the first phase of the strike became system-wide.

8. Student Representation Committee (CRE): the body of “spokespersons” elected by the full *pleno* of strikers, which replaced the coordinating committee elected by the assembly that declared the second phase of the strike; created after the events of Jan. 11.
9. Río Piedras general student council: the elected, institutionally recognized representative of the student body before the administration; the student council was considered by my interviewees as a largely obstructionist force during the first phase of the strike.
10. Association of Puerto Rican University Professors (APPU): the main faculty association at the Río Piedras campus; not legally authorized to bargain collectively or strike because its membership is composed of “professionals.”
11. Brotherhood of Exempt Non-Docent Employees (HEEND): the non-managerial administrative personnel union; bargaining representative for the entire UPR system.

Other organizations, such as the University Pro-Independence Federation (FUPI), the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) Youth, the Hostosian Youth, and the anarchist *Acción Libertaria*, were active participants, but less visible and relevant to this part of the analysis.

Prelude to a strike Foretold

Alessandra Rosa has produced a chronology and narrative of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike (Rosa 2015; Rosa 2012). From my perspective, the major weakness of her account is that the links it establishes to the historical trajectory of the UPR student movement, and particularly the years connecting the 2005 strike and the 2010-11 strike, are insufficient (even though she does include a historical narrative of the student movement since its origins). Her account also has a different analytical focus, one that does not recognize in significant depth the movement’s internal contradictions, dilemmas, and interactions at decisive switchpoints on the path. What follows in the next subsections is an account, based on the narratives of some of my older interviewees, of those crucial four years leading from the end of the 2005 strike to the start of the 2010-11 strike sequence. Then I move directly into the analysis of the eight switchpoints I have identified above, loosely threaded together, with as much detail as allowed by time and space constraints, by descriptive narrative. This will necessarily entail leaving out important episodes and characters

that are not central to my analysis. To fill these gaps, I refer the reader to Rosa's work, and more generally, to the special issue of *Sargasso* (a peer-reviewed journal edited by the UPR English Department) dedicated to the strike (Stanchich, ed. 2012), with the caveat that there are also significant omissions there, which I address in my account.

Crossing the Desert: 2005-2009

When I arrived at the UPR Río Piedras in January 2007, with the exception of leafleting and poster by the UJS and other organizations, there was little political activity. I participated in a number of campus general assemblies that had to be cancelled because assistance was far from quorum (10% of what was then around 18,000 students, or 1,800). Much of the student movement was still licking its wounds from the demoralizing stalemate that ended the 2005 strike (discussed in Chapter 5).

The demoralization was brutal. Besides, we were demonized. For all the rest of the student body, the University Committee Against the Hike (CUCA) was an embarrassment, they claimed we made them look crazy. It was really a brutal demotivation, and some of us just left on a trip to Venezuela and left everything hanging . . . We didn't dare to even picket, because everyone was down, embarrassed, "nobody likes us," that kind of attitude (Ibrahim).

Ian Camilo Cintrón, who went on to be UJS spokesperson during the 2010-11 strike, assured me the environment was so hostile that when former CUCA members tried to run for Student Council positions, opponents campaigned against them on the basis of their participation in that strike. However, the strike also generated a battle-tested cohort of activists eager to keep up the fight, and external events gradually gave them causes around which to coalesce. One of the first came just a few months after the end of the strike, when it was learned that Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, leader of the clandestine Boricua Popular Army-*Macheteros*, had been gunned down by federal agents. The killing, believed to be a cruel, targeted assassination by many across political lines, prompted an

outpouring of popular sympathy.⁴ UPR students participated in numerous activities to denounce the event.

As UJS and other organizations' leaders graduated or left the UPR, a generational "transition" began to take place, where the new cohort suddenly found itself at the head of a dwindling and divided movement, with "a certain experience, but at the same time still with political and ideological insufficiencies" (Ian Camilo). The trip to the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students held in Caracas in early August, mentioned above by Ibrahim and previously discussed in Chapter 3, was one of several major experiences following the 2005 strike that helped UJS members address those "insufficiencies" and gain a clearer understanding of neoliberalism. Ibrahim also recalls that the UJS, which had come out of the 2005 strike particularly battered as a result of its leadership role, was finally able "after a while" to regroup and meet to assess what had happened.

I think at that assembly we reached some good syntheses of what was happening, and what was needed, and with those ideas that came out of there, some folks were able to hang on to a clear idea that we needed to build a student movement at the UPR . . . I think that was good, at least at an organizational level, although obviously, after a while the number of people doing the work was greatly reduced, but in any case we had laid a foundation about what we had to do, and how to build a movement.

In essence, the analysis that was the basis of the UJS's movement-building strategy leading up to, and throughout the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, was laid out at that meeting. A third major formative experience was the first edition of the Pablo Soto Carriat Socialist School, organized by the UJS's parent organization, the Socialist Workers' Movement (MST), in the summer of 2006. The "school" was a summer-long intensive group study of classic Marxist and MST texts and

⁴ Ojeda Ríos, who had wounded an FBI agent while actively resisting his 1985 arrest, had been on the run since removing his electronic ankle bracelet and fleeing house arrest in 1990. It is a documented fact that the 72-year old Ojeda Ríos, wounded in an initial shootout, did not receive medical attention, and bled to death (CDC 2011).

Puerto Rican protest movement history.⁵ By then, student cadre had been at the forefront of confrontations with police during the more militant unions' May 1 mobilizations through the financial district, among other events denouncing the two-week government shutdown and the IVU sales tax.

Early in the fall semester of 2006, students at Río Piedras began to meet regularly to discuss the upcoming long-awaited reopening of the UPR Theater, closed since 1998 for remodeling plagued by delays and accusations of corruption. Cadre organizations and a broad group called the Pro-Theater Collective made public expressions and distributed leaflets denouncing encroaching privatization. Estela, who entered the UPR the previous fall (and who would not join the UJS for another three years), was first attracted to the student movement by the widespread organizing around this issue:

It was said they had fired a lot of *Iupi* employees who had continued working for the university while the Theater was closed, doing other jobs. The folks who worked the lighting, sound, all that. The biggest issue for me was that they fired all those people, removed them from those transitory posts they were given, and brought in people from the Guaynabo Fine Arts Center, a private business, who were going to begin to give that service.

Owned entirely by the UPR, the 1800-seat arts and lecture hall has also been one of the major performance spaces in Puerto Rico, providing a diverse offering with guaranteed free or affordable spaces for the university community, as well as a free venue for academic and community events (UPR n.d.). Rumors circulating since the previous semester that the theater would now be managed by a Governing Board composed of entertainment moguls and finance executives had been confirmed, and it was feared that the new Board would prioritize for-profit events and significantly cut back or eliminate access for the UPR community.

⁵ Pablo Soto Carriat was a beloved MST leader who passed away in 2005. Many of the texts used by the MST and UJS for "political education" can be found online, here: <https://www.scribd.com/user/230988037/Editorial-Laura-Lecturas-Proletarias>.

Adding insult to injury, the Board scheduled two separate opening night concerts by the Puerto Rico Symphonic Orchestra: one for the community, which was free to the public; and an invitation-only gala for wealthy donors, financial executives, politicians, and artistic notables,

directed towards the country's upper crust, in political and economic terms. It was an analogy of the classist reality we were living, how the Theater was being destined towards that class, and access to it was being denied to the great majority (Ian Camilo).

Students opposing these moves protested during both events. During the first, public opening, they staged a "counter-opening" with musical and theatrical performances outside the theater, without attempting to disrupt the official event. The following day, however, hundreds encircled the building, blocking the entrances, as guests lined up outside. Student demonstrators wore red t-shirts in ironic representation of a red carpet, to symbolize how "the rich" were entering the UPR Theater by "walking all over" its students. The act of civil disobedience resulted in minor confrontations, the cancellation of the event, and the summary suspension of six students.⁶ For Ian Camilo, this last result showed that the administration "had learned the lesson of the CUCA strike, not to let off so easily those responsible for the execution of struggle processes . . . to take reprisals against those who were doing so." For the UJS, at least, the stakes were evident:

We were already clear on the question of neoliberalism, and that was the argument for us: the privatization of the theater was part of that. At first there was resistance to linking the thing with privatization: "that's not it," why were we politicking? why did we want to make this an issue of rich and poor? (Ibrahim).

⁶ The event had to be canceled when the musicians of the Symphonic Orchestra refused to play. Suspended students included then UJS spokesperson Víctor Rodríguez, and current MST spokesperson, interviewee Hugo Delgado (then a student of education). In addition, a concert by Catalan singer-songwriter Joan Manuel Serrat (an old favorite of the Latin American left), slated for a few days later, had to be moved to an off-campus venue. Through an online letter, the UJS made a public appeal to Serrat to cancel the show in solidarity. Serrat responded stating that he did not "feel comfortable" performing in the Theater in the midst of a conflict between students and administrators, without attributing blame to either side (Fullana Acosta 2006).

In addition, the protest was harshly criticized by prominent former leftists with ties to the PPD, who would later enthusiastically praise the 2010-11 strike against a PNP administration.⁷ Despite such criticisms, Ian Camilo and Ibrahim identify this action (and the debates and activities surrounding it) as their cohort's first real experience of movement leadership, which many would continue to exercise in the 2010-11 strike. The first major on-campus protest since the 2005 strike, "the theater protest" was, generally speaking, successful.⁸

Most of what little movement activity could be felt on the Río Piedras campus in early 2007 (including some agitation over a proposed new student conduct regulations) was largely the result of momentum from the theater protest. That momentum gradually grew as rumblings of a possible strike by the Teachers' Federation (FMPR) became louder.⁹ During the fall semester of 2007, and early in the Spring Semester of 2008, I participated, along with members of the UJS and other leftist cadre organizations, in organizing on-campus discussions and classroom talks coordinated with sympathetic professors.¹⁰ Shortly before the strike finally broke out in late February of 2008, a student general assembly in Río Piedras approved a UJS proposal to create a University Committee in Support of the Teachers' Struggle and ended with a statement of support for the FMPR's demands and a march to nearby Miguel Such Technical Vocational School.¹¹ The

⁷ A representative figure of this sector is the singer-songwriter turned producer, Silverio Pérez, who had recently been named member of the Theater Governing Board, who called the student demonstrators "fascists" because of their alleged intolerance and violent methods. He later apologized (Shookoh Valle, 2006).

⁸ The most controversial private-sector figures named to the Board resigned soon thereafter, and today the Board is composed of faculty members and private citizens with no direct interests in entertainment (Junta Directiva n.d.).

⁹ At the time, contract negotiations between the Department of Education and its employees' exclusive bargaining representative, the FMPR, now led by a radical platform that included MST members, had been stalled for nearly a year, which became two by the time the strike erupted in February 2008.

¹⁰ During the last-ditch effort to negotiate in the final weeks before the strike, a debate between the FMPR's Attorney and the government's "mediator," the Secretary of Labor, was co-sponsored by student organizations at the UPR Law School, filling a lecture hall to capacity and receiving mainstream press coverage.

¹¹ During the strike, the MST and UJS, through the support committee, were the main channel of communication between the FMPR leadership and other UPR student radicals, who were mostly "stationed" at the Miguel Such picket line during the strike. This was done for symbolic, logistical, and tactical reasons. Miguel Such was a highly symbolic site because the FMPR was founded there. Radical students were more likely to "defend the picket line"

UJS also argued for the need to strike at the Río Piedras campus in solidarity with the teachers, a proposal that finally materialized when the general assembly approved a proposal for a 24-hour *paro* on what turned out to be the last day of the broader process, the first shutdown of the Río Piedras campus since 2005.¹² Asked how that strike influenced him, Ian Camilo observed,

The FMPR strike, for me and others of my era, served as a really concrete referent on how to articulate a process of mass social struggle. How to basically build a movement from its grassroots, and unleash the most resistance possible against the offensive of the rich and the government. From a conceptual level, of how to visualize a process of struggle, to more specific aspects about how to organize strike committees, the logistics that need to be present in such a process, the aspects of material preparation in order to see it through, the conspiratorial mentality one develops, of constantly thinking about how to achieve goals and advance on all sides . . . and at the same time, it had an influence on me personally . . . because I clearly identified how through political and labor union work with the teachers, one can contribute much to the radicalization and development of class consciousness of many people, and that . . . almost entirely, was what motivated me to become a teacher.

In other words, it was a practical school of strategic thinking.

Setting Sail: The Student Campaigns Against Law 7 (2009-2010)

The immediate prelude to the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike extends from the inauguration of the right-wing administration of PNP Governor Luis Fortuño in January of 2009, until April of 2010, a period Ian Camilo refers to as the “student campaigns against Law 7.” As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the first acts of the incoming PNP-controlled legislature, signed into law by Fortuño, was the “Special Law Declaring Fiscal Emergency and Establishing an Integral Fiscal Stabilization

actively, thus receiving greater media coverage at Miguel Such (where the FMPR held all its press conferences), which in turn dissuaded fence-sitting teachers and parents from crossing the picket line. This tactic was not designed to attract public sympathy, but was effective in keeping classrooms empty, prolonging the strike, easing some of the pressure on strikers, and arguably, avoiding greater confrontation.

¹² The teachers ended their strike after ten days, without a contract, but with a few important concessions. The assembly that ended the strike was attended by an even larger crowd than that which ratified the FMPR delegates’ previously approved strike authorization in November 2007, and by all reports the mood among those present was upbeat and celebratory, despite the fact that the strike itself was losing traction as picket lines dwindled. Aware of the latter fact, the leadership had timed the end of the strike so that it could be presented as a “teachable moment” about the dignity and fruitfulness of struggle, a respite in order to regroup and build a stronger movement in the future rather than a defeat (see, for example, the interview with FMPR President Rafael Feliciano in Bale and Knopp 2012: 155-156. The UJS attempted to replicate this strategy in its partially implemented proposal of a “pedagogical closing” to the second phase of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike.

Plan to Save Puerto Rico's Credit," Law 7 of March 9, 2009. In addition to its aforementioned effects on public sector workers, said law explicitly excluded the UPR from its share of increased revenue resulting from the Law (including an additional 0.75% of revenue generated by the IVU sales tax, destined to service the public debt), representing a *de facto* \$144 million cut for the institution from fiscal year 2008-2009 to fiscal year 2009-2010, which combined with other deficits, added up to a budget shortfall of \$300 million (Atilés-Osoria 2013). As illustrated by Leo's and Yari's testimonies in Chapter 3, many students were themselves, or had family or acquaintances directly affected by other provisions of Law 7, which authorized the government to bypass collective bargaining and lay off as many as 30,000 public employees.

Two specific campaigns against austerity had developed on the flagship campus at Río Piedras during the 2008 Fall semester: one against the closing of a reserve reading room at the College of Social Sciences, and another, centered mainly at the College of Education, against the announced cancellation of the 2009 Summer sessions. All of the campus leftist organizations participated in the steering committees that emerged around these two issues, which merged into the CEDEP during the Spring of 2009, although according to my interviewees, they were primarily the result of the efforts of the UJS and the OSI.¹³ Tere recalls first approaching the student movement at the time, within a context of wider protest on and around campus:

When [mobilization for] the reading room happened, I went to my first picket, which I remember was in front of Lázaro Library, and there I began to meet people on the left. Around that time was also the CCHD's protest against *El 8 de Blanco*. I also participated in that demonstration, always from a distance.¹⁴

¹³ Niño and Estela, for example, explicitly mention the J23 and PIP Youth, in addition to the UJS and OSI.

¹⁴ The CCHD's first major event was a picket that drew hundreds of participants, including political leaders, in April 2009, in front of *El 8 de Blanco*, one of many bars on University Avenue popular among students, where two women had recently been treated roughly and thrown out by staff, allegedly for kissing.

Intended as a permanent “struggle committee,” the CEDEP explicitly tried to link campus mobilization against austerity to class struggle beyond the campus, and specifically resistance to Law 7 and other neoliberal policies. Respondents note that in addition to mobilizing, the CEDEP held regular study groups that read up on the history, tactics, and strategy of radical student movements around the world from May 1968 up to the present.¹⁵ Membership was open to all who agreed with a brief and broad set of principles, which later generated disagreement between organizations, as I discuss below.¹⁶

As discussed in Chapter 3, beyond the UPR, there were constant mobilizations against Law 7 throughout 2009. UPR students participated in the May 1 and June 5 protests, as well as many of the smaller ones, in a heated climate that propitiated involvement. For example, in early August, a minor incident on University Avenue spun out of control, as municipal and state police used tear gas and batons to disperse the largely student crowd of Thursday night revelers.¹⁷ Tere cites this event as the one that finally shook her out of her “distant and passive” participation, into attending CEDEP meetings. In the midst of rising expectations, the public sector labor unions called for a national *paro* demanding the repeal of Law 7, to be held on October 15. On September 28, a general assembly of the student body at Río Piedras, approved a 24-hour *paro* on the next day. It

¹⁵ Francisco cites as examples the 1966 UPR Laws, texts by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, André Glucksmann, and other *soixante-huitards*, the history of the 1968 events in Paris and Mexico City, the 1974 Draft UPR Reform Law written and submitted by then PIP legislators Carlos Gallisá and future MST founder Luis Ángel Torres, *Las vallas rotas* and other texts by Roberto Alejandro (former leader of UJS and the 1981 UPR Student Strike). Much of the inspiration for the 2010-11 UPR strike was derived, directly or indirectly, from the Parisian May 1968, including the name of the *comités d’action*, the conception of the CEDEP as a permanent “struggle committee” (rather than a contingent strike committee), and the UJS’s notion of “movement-building” (see, for example, Ross 2002).

¹⁶ Francisco points out how the CEDEP Principles of Unity were drafted by himself and an unaffiliated student who is now a Catholic priest, and insists that the OSI’s objections were just a pretext for the real point of contention, which was over organizational recruitment policy and clashing notions of the movement itself.

¹⁷ The clearly disproportionate use of police force, in the context of an aggressive effort by PNP San Juan Mayor Jorge Santini to enforce a local ordinance that prohibits drinking alcohol in the streets, was widely perceived to reflect the PNP’s broader hostility against the use of public spaces, and against students specifically. The event was followed by a massive protest at the state police headquarters, and a series of “cultural events” on the streets of Río Piedras intended, in Tere’s words, “to challenge the municipal ordinance” (see also Cintrón Arbasetti n.d.).

was there that the idea of creating CAs at each college was proposed, echoing the initiative of the recently created CAED. That *paro*, the second within a year and a half, successfully paralyzed all activity on campus. According to Francisco,

That *paro* provoked the Fortuño administration to order the closing of the university during the whole week of October 15, when we planned to hold a student assembly to shut down the university in support of the national *paro*. We were unable to do so because of the administration's lockout, foreseeing that something was going to happen. In fact, they cited a UJS newsletter that I think I wrote, that says something along the lines that our purpose was to create a hell for the Fortuño administration at the university, to stop Law 7.

When the student movement instead joined the unions' march on October 15, the UJS's position, according to Francisco, was still that students should declare an indefinite strike in November, as part of a universally expected prolonged national struggle for the repeal Law 7. That assessment changed rapidly once it was evident that struggle would not materialize.

On October 15, as many as 80,000 people marched from different points close to the Financial District to Plaza Las Américas, the largest shopping mall in the Caribbean, owned by the Fonalledas Group, staunch supporters of Law 7 with direct ties to the Fortuño administration.¹⁸ The group that departed from the UPR, which included students, faculty, and university employees, among others, took a detour from the announced route, paralyzing traffic as they flooded onto and marched down the Las Américas Expressway. The several thousand marchers lingered at the Roosevelt Avenue overpass, as the rest of the marchers passed below to reach the shopping mall, which had closed for the day in anticipation of the event. When the Police called on the crowd on the Expressway to disperse, several hundred people defied the order and insisted on blocking traffic for the duration of the main event. The police riot control and mounted units arrived, to

¹⁸ The Fonalledas Group is Puerto Rico's largest "family owned" real estate development firms (see, for example, Covas Quevedo 2014). Fortuño's Chief of Staff, Marcos Rodríguez Ema, served as its Director of New Business Development between government jobs as president of the Government Development Bank for Puerto Rico during the Pedro Rosselló administration, and his post during the Fortuño administration.

which CAED members responded by staging a sit-in. The tense standoff lasted several hours, until negotiators got police to agree to allow demonstrators to disperse without force or arrests. This spontaneous act of disobedience, with which Ian Camilo claims the UJS had “differences,” illustrates the level of discontent that had built up, which found itself suddenly without an outlet when the unions stopped talking about a General strike after that day.¹⁹ The general level of expectation was still such, however, that on the Humacao campus, a student general assembly approved an indefinite strike that lasted two weeks.²⁰

Navigating the Neoliberal Dilemma

Visualizing Outcomes

The UJS as a socialist political movement never lost sight of the fact that in the end, our goal is independence and socialism for Puerto Rico. And during the second strike, while we were fully immersed in the demands of the student movement, we also gave those demands a socialist touch. And within that broad frame of the UPR’s particular struggle, there was also the national struggle for independence and socialism.

—Niño

A central component of strategy in its most specific sense involves the capacity to imagine possible outcomes and trace potential tactical paths to the desired goal or goals, is part of movement framing. It is therefore helpful to lay out how the UJS visualizes outcomes, and the ways in which it might contrast with other sectors of the student movement. As explained in Chapter 2, the UJS and the

¹⁹ The UJS had marched down the Expressway, but upon according to Ian Camilo, he and some others had already left the scene and were having lunch when they heard about the sit-in. In his view, the action reflected the “desperation” felt by members of the CAED and other sectors of the student body upon realizing that despite their bluster, the labor union leadership would not go any further. Ian Camilo also noted that the CAED was not known for “pushing the struggle to its limits,” so that sit-ins of this kind were the most radical actions they could envision. However, he also recognized that “the Law School *compañeros* were the first to begin to give continuity” to the expectations that had been building up.

²⁰ Located near the southeastern coast, a 45-minute drive away from San Juan (without traffic), Humacao campus students were less in tune to what was going on at the national level. This is generally true of UPR campuses except Río Piedras and Mayagüez, where there are cadre organizations with ties to national political organizations and labor unions. In addition, the regional campuses have much smaller student populations, and generally receive far less attention from the government or media. A campus like Humacao can therefore strike for two weeks with very little consequence, in terms of repression, negotiation, or news coverage.

MST are self-styled “revolutionary” *and* “democratic” organizations, which aspire to a transition to some kind of working class-led redistributive state. This tension between “revolution” (radical transformation without discarding any “method of struggle” on principle) and “democracy” (in terms of both *internal* procedures but also of maintaining a constant link to the “level of consciousness” among “the masses”) has resulted in a strategy that I call negotiated pressure (see, for example, MST 1999; Alejandro Rivera 2006 [1980]). Although the UJS’s “radical habitus” and “protest capital” predisposes it against institutional “persuasive” politics (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 277-278; see also Bourdieu 1990), the mass orientation of its framework creates a need to build legitimacy that leads back to negotiation, in a context where the prospects for open combat are extremely limited. As a result, *political* coercion or “pressure” is used to secure tactical gains as part of a long term process of movement-building (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 264). The strategy relies heavily, in Ian Camilo’s words, on “using the police to create instability” —using the regime’s own unresponsiveness and repression to undermine its legitimacy, a variant of media-dependent tactics aimed at “embarrassing the target” (Gamson 2004: 258).²¹

It should come as no surprise, then, that most of my interviewees, when asked what makes a movement “successful,” agreed that while achieving specific stated demands was important, the most important elements of success were “organization” and “conscientization”:

How do you define a movement’s success?

Many would define it as achieving the demands, I suppose. That should be the general response. But I think it’s much more complex than that. A successful movement isn’t necessarily defined by achieving its demands. Many say the strike wasn’t successful because not all of its demands were met [immediately] . . . I think the simple fact that a movement emerges is in a certain way a success, as long as it rises up from the grassroots, from the masses, from below. If it has an objective, creates consciousness, organizes people . . .

In what sense is that a success?

²¹ Although this tactical repertoire is highly effective, it is a double-edged sword that can backfire in several ways. For example, although the role of the media is not the focus of this dissertation, such tactics can make radicals far more dependent on the media than they’d like to be (or admit they are).

Ay chico, what a complicated question! I guess I'm the most optimistic person in the world . . . Thanks to the strike, many folks have organized politically, many people who never questioned anything, began to do so. We all learned from these processes. And even though not all the demands were met, and the movement wasn't a resounding success (at least in the second strike), it had its good side: we confronted the police, we confronted the state, we confronted a system that everyone thinks is unbreakable, and we saw that it could break . . . that feeling alone, of empowerment, already defines a successful movement: For folks to know that if they organize, they can move things? Man, that's a success for me (Tere).

The strike "process" is seen as having "objective" effects, in terms of placing the movement in a better position for future struggle, upon demobilization:

I think both phases of the strike process were extremely successful. I even think the effects of that process are still being felt, in terms of the political and social impact it had, particularly on young people. I tell you this because last week I met with students from the UPR Bayamón . . . 2014 and they were talking to me about the 2010-11 strike! And they knew, they've studied it or at least know about it . . . I think the strike had a big national impact, especially on our generation. It raised a new cohort of militants and fighters . . . (Ian Camilo).

However, they were also often experienced as intensely subjective:

In your experience, how did the strike process transform you?

Completely, even in my son's upbringing. This process gave me many new tools, including being more conscientious about gender, equity, basic principles such as solidarity, a fair distribution of labor . . . all of these things that seem simple to some who already take them for granted, but for me, I wasn't aware of them. And this process helped me get to know them. Also to resist, to understand self-defense. I apply these things to my own daily life now, and I try to inculcate them in my son. Obviously, adapting them to his current capacity (Yari).

It is perhaps no coincidence that Ian Camilo, an older cadre already in a formal leadership position in the UJS at the start of the strike process, seems to see the strike's gains in terms of potential new recruits (to the "struggle" if not directly the UJS), while those recruited during the course of the strike tended to view it in more personal terms.

Several interviewees also conceived of conscientization not just in terms of movement participants, but the broader public, as perceived among their friends and families:

During the strike, I'd go have lunch at my grandfather's house, in the housing project [walking distance from campus], and people would ask, "How's that going, in there?"

They'd tell me, "*Eso está cabrón*, for them to take 800 bucks from you! Keep going, keep fighting!" . . . You know, people say, "the 2011 movement wasn't successful." Look, in 2011 we had the media and almost everything against us, unlike in 2010. But I think it had been 20, 30 years since there was a movement that was willing to take a risk against the state police, which was inside the campus again. And that impacted a lot of people, even my grandfather, who told me, "I hadn't seen you guys [the students] face off against the cops for years . . . I guess it's not all dead in there after all!" (Jeanqui).

Do you think any of your acquaintances, not necessarily family, who didn't directly participate, in some way changed their perception after watching you participate?

Yes. Mainly many high school friends who approached me, or who have approached me little by little, or who have opened their minds to new ideas . . . I think their consciousness has advanced. Many of them out of curiosity, ask many questions. And I respond what I can. But yeah, I think I've contributed to that somewhat (Yari).

The fact that for a year and a half the country didn't talk about anything else other than the students is a victory. My dad worked at the AMA [Metropolitan Bus Authority] at that time (he retired a few months ago). The only thing people would talk about at the AMA, the people who got on the buses with all the diversity that implies, were the university strikes. Be it positive or negative, founded or unfounded, they talked about the UPR. And they questioned what was going on there, for these kids to decide to take action against the government. A government which, let's not forget, won by the largest margin that had been won since [PPD founder] Muñoz Marín . . . A government that had a lot of the people on its side. But those same people who maybe voted for Fortuño began to realize that his policies didn't represent them as a class. And maybe they didn't participate directly with the students, but they showed support . . .

But even if [the repeal of the special fee] hadn't been achieved, would you still think a victory was achieved?

As I told you, the way in which the struggle is perceived in Puerto Rico was radicalized in many ways. Let me give you an example: When we were little, we'd play cops and robbers. My little cousin, who was 7 years old during the strike, played cops and strikers. And the strikers were the good guys and the cops were the bad guys! For a child at such an early age to begin to make that association, that the state's repressive force was coming to hit these kids who are doing things right, that's a victory [for us] (Niño).

Niño, Yari, and Jeanqui, all working class students with no prior connections to the left, expressed surprise at the positive responses to the strike among their acquaintances. Most significantly, the above responses refer to the second, far more violent phase of the strike.

The least "optimistic" response to this question that I received still reflects how the tensions described above frame the organization's attitudes towards short and long-term objectives:

The first element is the objectives that the movement itself defines. There are folks who argue it doesn't matter if the movement's demands are met, victory isn't defined by that.

That's partly true, but when the movement says, "We want X," it's defining its victory in that way . . . that's part of the definition, a part that we [the movement] build. There's another part that's independent of the demands, which has to do with emerging political consciousness. There's a certain "vanguardist" vision that sets its priorities on the basis of consciousness alone . . . That vision assumes that the strike is a site for the production of consciousness, rather than a contradictory space of political practice . . . I think there is a dialectic between the emergence of consciousness and the creation of organized spaces of struggle (Francisco).

Unlike other interviewees, Francisco stated plainly that the second phase of the strike was a "tactical" and "moral" defeat, not because it didn't meet its objectives (he insists that the special fee was eventually repealed *only* as a result of the second phase), but because of the divided and demoralized way in which it ended. However, even Francisco notes that the usual "backlash" that follows demobilization was "quickly overcome," as "organized spaces of struggle" directly inspired by the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike have endured to this day. When asked if all movement participants shared their complex definition of success, interviewees agreed that not all did:

So why did some sectors of the movement think [in terms of meeting demands only]?

Because it's a very linear vision of how processes take place, and with what purpose. In the UJS, we understand that processes take place, not just to reach certain demands, but because they're necessary. And many people understand processes as going from point A to point B, without seeing the zigzags and detours, or the different dimensions that may be successful or not.

And why are you [the UJS] able to see those zigzags?

Ay, I don't know, because we're psychic! No, I believe that political education, and having lived through other processes [are the reason why] . . . besides, as socialists, we understand that people need to organize, that there are long-term goals. I don't know if people who aren't in socialist organizations have that vision (Tere).

Leaving aside for a moment the ideological factor (which is an object of competition within the movement field), this response illustrates the centrality of strategic thinking for my interviewees. Their peculiar strategic vision of negotiated pressure emphasizes a tension (or "dialectic") among tactical elements that seems especially suited to the neoliberal dilemma, as I will show.

Framing the Repertoire

The student movement had that contradiction, of defining itself in terms of practice, of defining itself in terms of the strike. As if the strategy were the strike.

This stretches back to the definition of the strike committees, as opposed to committees to defend public education. Which is an important, political difference, in the sense of the relationship between theory and practice, the insertion of militants among the student body.

—Francisco

The constellation of strategic performances that constitutes a social movement's tactical repertoire, no less than those of its powerful opponents, are marked by political projects and not simple routine (Krinsky and Simonet 2011; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). Repertoires are historically specific and modular "toolkits" that often combine, within the same action, expressive and instrumental elements, and can be conventional, using existing institutional channels, or disruptive and violent (here I use the term "confrontational" to encapsulate the latter two) (see, for example, Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 266-267; Tarrow 1998). They are also inextricably linked to a movement's collective identity and goals (desired outcomes), as none of the questions "Who are 'We'?" "What do we want?" and "How do we get it?" can be answered in isolation. Each of the eight switchpoints that I have identified in my interviewees' collective narrative about the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike sequence was accompanied by intense debates where actors, "simple" or "complex," strove to answer the contentious question, "What is to be done?" while simultaneously "'managing difference' without suppressing it" (Rutten 2008: 13, 20; Polletta and Jasper 2001). Long-standing complex actors with clearly defined political projects and regular internal deliberation, such as the UJS, simply do so more self-consciously.

The eight events that I selected, from my interviewees' responses, are switchpoints in the sense that they clearly mark a different direction in the strike sequence. Except for three, most of them were not the calculated result of actions arrived at through collective deliberation within the movement or any specific, publicly known organization. That type of action did, of course, take place, but in most cases it is difficult to pinpoint a direct connection to these major turns of event. Rather, these events were surprising, apparently spontaneous or decided on the move (tactically),

and often seemed to contradict the movement's present course. This does not mean that deliberation, debates, and decision-making were not important to these events; on the contrary, as I argue later in this chapter, they were crucial to the arc of movement learning. Whether positive or negative (for movement "success"), the apparently spontaneous actions that continuously moved the process onto new tracks reflected prevailing moods and tactical orientations and dispositions among the core group of strikers. All of the switchpoints were followed, and in a few cases preceded, by such debates and interactions, in all cases contributing to the environment that generated later switchpoints, and illustrating the continual recurrence of the trade-off at the heart of the neoliberal dilemma.

Phase I: *Printemps (La belle grève)*

The first two switchpoints in the buildup to the strike, after October 15, 2009, were the occupation of the Academic Senate on March 10, 2010, and the approval of the strike itself by the Río Piedras student general assembly on April 13. The two are intimately connected, and in many ways the debates surrounding them are the same. However, it is important to distinguish them conceptually as events, because it was not a foregone conclusion after March 10 that a strike against neoliberalization would begin when it did (or at all), merely that it was visible on the horizon. On that day, a picket in front of the clock tower, organized to protest the newly appointed interim UPR President Ramón De la Torre during his first appearance at a session of the Academic Senate (located behind the tower),²² grew so unexpectedly large that organizers decided to walk in and occupy the senate hall, where they held an impromptu assembly in which many of the strategic

²² The elderly De la Torre, whom Francisco claims was a "caricaturesque figure" whose only "dignified act" throughout the strike was to resign after the events of February 9, and was widely regarded as an incompetent puppet of the governor, quickly began to speak of cuts and austerity measures, which Ibrahim claims the UJS was able to easily link to Law 7 and the governor's neoliberalizing repertoire.

elements that eventually became part of the strike were first discussed.²³ According to Ibrahim, “after that people started joining the CAs, folks who were mobilized realized they had a base, a broader public than they had thought, that we had a certain legitimacy.” Equally important,

we begin to have multilateral meetings and *plenos*. We begin to talk about coordinating the CAs, all of that emerges from realizing the thing was on its way, and what were we going to do? And the student movement begins to get to know itself, because there was a lot of prejudice: they’re like this, they’re like that, these folks are wimps, those are crazy rebels. I remember people who thought that sectors like the left and the Social Sciences and Humanities CAs didn’t want to negotiate, didn’t want there to be a negotiating committee, just struggle yes or no. Later, in those meetings, people get to know each other, understand that we’re going to do this right, and the different positions begin to be known. The movement becomes more cohesive (Ibrahim).

Organizations and grassroots committees that had been meeting and acting separately, around contingent campus issues, began to come together consistently.

After one such meeting failed to produce a unified position, the UJS decided to put out a public statement announcing that it would support an indefinite strike demanding the repeal of the Board of Trustees’ Certification, which declared a “moratorium” on fee waivers for honor students, athletes, musicians, and employee families, at an upcoming student general assembly.²⁴ In response, the CAED emitted its own statement, “informing” that “the action committees and other organizations consider the indefinite strike as the last resort for the student struggle” (2010). In a brief response published online, Ibrahim (also a member of the Social Sciences CA) questioned the CAED’s right to speak for all of the CAs, arguing that no such “last resort” position had been

²³ These included, “the idea that the strike had to include all 11 campuses, to eventually hold a national student assembly (which ended up happening towards the end [of the first phase]), that we had to negotiate with the Board of Trustees, not the president” (Ibrahim).

²⁴ Cert. 98, 2009-2010. Decried by the trustees as recently as February 24, the elimination of tuition waivers was by no means the spark that set off discussions about a future strike, nor immediately recognized as the banner that would rally the student body in the way that it did. According to Francisco, even the UJS initially considered Cert. 98 simply an opportunity for a short, defined *paro* that could be used to organize, with sights set on the next semester.

expressed at the last broad meeting, and defending the tactical autonomy of all movement participants.

I think it's great that on the one hand the UJS is "playing hardball," making a call for an indefinite strike, and on the other the CAED is inviting the president to a dialogue at the Law School.²⁵ As far as I know, the CAED didn't ask anyone for permission to have a dialogue with the president. The CAED believes that is right and necessary, and has done it, and I congratulate them. The victory we want will emerge from this combination of tactics . . . If the J23 understands that they have to go to the *Justas*²⁶ to convince people, let them do it; if the CAED wants to dialogue with the president, let them do it; if the OSI understands that there should be a defined *paro* first, and later build up to an indefinite strike, let them keep proposing that (García 2010).

In fact, it was the OSI's proposal of a 48-hour *paro* immediately followed by an indefinite strike, if the administration didn't budge, that carried the day at the general assembly (not the UJS's appeal for an immediate strike), despite the opposition of the CAED and the J23. It was the unaffiliated grassroots students at the assembly who made the difference, a difference that was far from clear at the start of the assembly:

I think the OSI was able to read that. And I think that's why they went with that proposal, which to the UJS at one time may have seemed conservative, timid. But the OSI was able to play between the two positions and use the rhetoric of "well, maybe this will get resolved and the strike won't be necessary" (knowing that it wasn't going to be resolved). And that ultimatum they proposed, I still believe that it worked out well, even if it stings us in the UJS a little (Tere).

According to Tere, it was the debate itself, where even "quirky" objections and attempted obstacles could be teased out and examined, which ultimately won over the assembly.

²⁵ The statement also claimed that the CAs were "arms of the student councils for the organization of student struggles," invited the public to an "open dialogue" with President De la Torre, and claimed that "our purpose is to exhaust the channels of dialogue before considering an indefinite strike as an option" (CAED 2010).

²⁶ The Interuniversity Athletic League's *Justas* ("Jousts") are a yearly weekend-long athletic competition among all of Puerto Rico's institutions of higher education attended by thousands of college students, more for the weekend festivities surrounding them than for the athletics. They are Puerto Rico's rough equivalent of Spring Break. The upcoming *Justas* were a subject of some debate at the April 13 assembly that declared the strike, because some of those present were concerned that those supporting the strike merely wanted a campus shutdown so they could go party all week. Eventually, it was decided that the 48-hour *paro* would begin after the end of the *Justas*.

The assembly was the switchpoint that initiated the strike sequence as such, setting off a wave that eventually included all 11 campuses, leading to the creation of the CNN.²⁷ In the debates surrounding it, as well as the Senate occupation, at the very origin of the sequence, we can discern the tradeoff between pressure, represented by the UJS's "hardball" position, and a concern for the movement's outward projection, represented especially by the CAED (whose communiqué criticizing the UJS includes an exhortation to build a "mature" and "unified" movement). On this occasion, it was the OSI who was able to "read" the dilemma and use the neoliberalizing administration's own unresponsiveness as the fulcrum to launch a "unified" strike. That process began, on the dawn of April 21, with violent confrontations between campus security guards and students trying to shut the access gates to campus. Francisco recalls that day as "the most violent one on campus until February 9 [2011]," yet at the time there were few if any objections raised from within the movement. Had they not been successful, the first phase of the strike could hardly have developed in the way that it did. Because they were, over the following weeks, massive popular support for the UPR strike was able to become the outlet for all the pent-up energies of frustrated anger and opposition against Law 7 and neoliberalization. All of the cultural expressiveness and consciousness-raising discussions that followed, in a context of relatively transparent, horizontal, and participative decision-making, imperceptibly but irreversibly, led to the next two switchpoints.²⁸

²⁷ All but the Medical Sciences campus (where conditions are more complex) went on indefinite strike, after a few of them went through rocky and/or false starts. The students at the Medical Sciences campus declared a one day paro in solidarity, which was the first time in history that all 11 campuses have been paralyzed together, and were represented on the CNN. Medical Sciences was also shut down for a few days at one point during the strike by a maintenance workers' strike.

²⁸ The performative and "creative" character of the first phase of the strike has been widely documented and emphasized by many observers, occasionally contrasting that aspect to the second (see, for example, Rosa 2015; Atilés-Osoria 2013; Lynn Rosario 2013; Everhart 2012; Chaar López 2011a). Although many of my interviewees denied and resented this contrast, insisting that in fact the second strike had been far more creative in tactical and strategic terms (an argument that is worth exploring in future works), many provided interesting new insights into the

The administration-sponsored assembly at the Convention Center on May 13, as well as the sit-in by student negotiators that led to the occupation of the Central Administration building on June 9, 2010, were both unforeseen responses by the student grassroots (and, in the second case, a sector of the leadership that surged organically at the grassroots as a consequence of the strike itself) to hostile maneuvers by the administration. Both events came at points when the campus occupation was losing momentum, under the weight of time and idleness, according to several of my interviewees. Francisco conveys the momentousness of each occasion, thus:

At that assembly at the Convention Center, all opposition to the strike was defeated. In that assembly, there was no need to count votes. It was asked: “Who is in favor of ratifying the strike?” Hands raised . . . evident majority. And at that moment that it’s declared an evident majority, a bunch of people who had come to oppose the strike got up and left, crying. They looked clearly plaintive, because they realized they were finished! . . . It was unexpected, but once we realized what was happening there, it was transcendental. I presented the motion to ratify the [preliminary] agreements [that the administration was claiming as final] *and* the strike, and we barely had to debate it.²⁹

[Students who did not participate in the buildup to the strike, but participated and were radicalized by it] were the ones who guaranteed the strike’s victory at the moment when it became inevitable. When the administration left the negotiating table, a group within the CNN occupied, performed a sit-in in front of the offices of the trustees, and immediately all of the students who are on campus go to Central Administration. Some people even ran, because you can run there from campus! Everyone reached Central Administration, occupied and surrounded the building, didn’t allow the trustees to leave, until they sat back down. I argue that at that moment, the strike was won. There was no way for the administration to win. That is the strike’s point of inflection.³⁰

dynamic of artistic expression during this first phase, which I can not elaborate on here because of time and space constraints.

²⁹ The May 13 Assembly was widely seen as an attempt by the student council’s executive committee, in collusion with the administration, to end a strike my interviewees believe it had never wanted in the first place. Recalling a similar off campus Assembly during the 2005 Strike, many feared that conditions would give the administration the advantage. In addition, the assembly was scheduled by the council without the consent of any of the strikers’ deliberative or negotiating bodies, and followed an onslaught of ads in the press by the administration claiming that a preliminary agreement concerning the ground rules of the negotiation itself represented a “resolution” to the conflict. Francisco also related to me how the council president accidentally revealed that ballots had been prepared, printed, and brought in advance (even though show of hands is the established default norm at UPR student assemblies, and secret ballots have to be approved in advance), which further galvanized those present. After marching triumphantly to the Capitol, strikers (including many freshly recruited at the assembly) returned to the Río Piedras campus to find its perimeter entirely encircled by police.

³⁰ On May 27, during a massive march by UPR students from all 11 campuses to the Governor’s Mansion in Old San Juan, Governor Fortuño announced that he would order the removal of police officers from the surroundings of the

Neither event was a product of specific movement deliberation, yet both were the result of the environment and momentum created by the strike itself, as well as the specific tactical debates and discussions that could be had in the context of the occupied campus.

These debates, which began the moment that the campus was shut down on April 21 (and intensified after the May 13 assembly), gravitated around two axes that illustrate the recurrence of the neoliberal dilemma: the appropriate or necessary level of confrontation (Jasper's "Naughty or Nice?") and geographical scope of strike activities (constrained to campus or not). Both elements in turn were present in debates over two specific tactical repertoires: securing the campus gates physically, and taking protest activities "off campus," to have a more personal contact with the public and pressure Fortuño and the trustees more directly.³¹ For example, the violently repressed demonstration at the Sheraton Hotel, where an expensive fundraising event for Fortuño was being held, was another apparently spontaneous event where the initiative was largely on the side of "radicalized" grassroots. The protest was welcomed by the UJS as an example of the kinds of militant off-campus activity it had been arguing for. According to Orlando, who participated in and was hurt during that event,

The UJS was among those who argued that to simply watch the gates, staying inside the campus, wouldn't reach the degree of national importance that we wanted. We sought to take the struggle outside, to the economic interests that were affecting us. For example, the demonstration at the Sheraton, where Fortuño was . . . the UJS believed the struggle needed

Río Piedras campus, and proposed a seven-day time frame to settle the strike and a well-known Catholic Bishop to mediate negotiations. The CNN rejected the mediator, considering that it would delay unnecessarily delay the process, which then seemed to be progressing. However, on June 7, President De la Torre announced strikers had 24 hours to clear all 11 campuses and open the gates. On June 9, during a meeting at the Central Administration building, where the CNN presented a new counterproposal, the trustees attempted to leave, claiming there was nothing left to discuss while the campus gates remained closed.

³¹ This first aspect involved, for example, loud marches in semi-public spaces like *Plaza las Américas* or through neighboring communities. Several of these were in fact carried out during the course of both the first and second phases of the strike, and despite early resistance, were generally uncontroversial, once they were carried out, because they did not result in confrontation (except perhaps indirectly disrupting shopping activity), but rather were enthusiastically received by the public.

to be more proactive, needed to cause pressure, which couldn't be media pressure alone (Orlando).

The other major specific tactical debate was geared towards the building of barricades at the campus gates, and the eventual student takeover of "Gate 6.5," also known as the "police gate" or "security gate."

One of the greatest differences with the CAED was about closing the police gate. That business was brought up, I'm not making this up, like eight times before the *pleno*. And I think there was one day that they decided not to come. and then, we could see clearly [that the CAED was the only opposition] . . . "If they're not going to participate, we can do whatever we want, however we want!" . . . Although their *modus operandi* wasn't very creative. They also opposed the folks who wanted to go back there with poems and night readings, and I don't know what else, instead of just barricading it like the rest of us wanted. *The other gates built barricades, and not the Law School gate?*

No. The rest of us spent a lot of time under the sun. They decided to camp out inside a building. . . "Our gate has a chain on it, we'll be in the building." The rest of us lived day to day, watching our gates, protecting our space. Besides, their gate had basically been shut by other folks. Their most immediate job was precisely to watch that police gate. The rest of us had to divide that task amongst us, they didn't do it.

So what happened with that gate, then?

I think there wasn't enough discussion about that gate. During *paros* we usually allow researchers, even the UPR security guards in. And the discussion at the *plenos* was that we didn't want the security guards, the researchers we always said yes [as long as they identified themselves] . . . the debate and the argument [not to shut it] was: "it's being watched and there are turns for people to go," there's no need to barricade or anything. And the rest of us from the other gates, "*Coño!* We go there to watch over it at all hours, and you live right there, and do nothing. So we're going to barricade it so that we never again have to keep watch" (Estela).³²

³² The Río Piedras campus has seven main vehicular access gates, six of which are adjacent to a different colleges within the campus where a CA had been organized (see Fig. 2.2). During the first phase of the strike, each CA was charged with "watching" its corresponding gate. The seventh gate, an entrance on the far side of campus, located between the Law and Natural Sciences gates, was adjacent to the offices of campus security, and the newly built, vacant General Studies building. Because the students had been unable to shut it down on the first day of the first phase, it was used not just by the natural science researchers conducting ongoing experiments who had been authorized by the student *pleno* to access their laboratories, but also security guards, contracted construction workers, and employees of Chancellor Guadalupe's office who were ordered to report to work. Because students insisted on keeping this last group out, they often claimed to be researchers or simply attempted to shove through the often compact student picket line, generating many of the relatively scarce and mild incidents of confrontation between police (posted outside the gate) and students that took place during the first phase.

The CAED strategy, according to Estela and others, remained essentially unchanged from its pre-strike position: allow negotiations and legal proceedings to take their course.³³

The problem with that attitude, from the point of view of the UJS (and, according to my interviewees, eventually the majority of the strikers), was that aside from immediate security concerns, it was uncondusive to the kind of “conscientization” that radical cadre sought for long-term movement building. Most importantly, in the medium term it also generated inertia, which worked to the administration’s favor, as factors like anxiety over graduation, hopelessness, and boredom began to set in. Organized cadre knew this from learning about the experiences of 1992 and 2005, when the administration played the waiting game, allowing the strike to collapse under its own dead weight. A tactical repertoire that included physically securing the campus and then going off campus to take the fight to the neoliberal governor and his appointees, whatever short-term goals it may have sought to fulfill, also kept the core of strikers active and alert. Under the conditions generated during the first strike, of massive public legitimacy and an occupied campus, which afforded the space and time for cadre to make these arguments, coupled with the administration’s persistent blunders and dwindling legitimacy, allowed the grassroots to learn quickly, taking the initiative at decisive moments. The Convention Center vote not only breathed new life into the movement, it was met by the administration with perhaps its greatest mistake in

³³ Two law students had sued the administration on the very first day of the strike, seeking a court order to force the administration to end the recess, under the theory that this would result in the removal of police stationed around the campus entrances. This action, which eventually reached the local Supreme Court only to be declared “academic” because the recess had by then been lifted (*Moreno Orama & Farinacci v. De La Torre, et al.*, 2010 TSPR 70), has been portrayed by some observers as a legal strategy of the student movement (see for example Atilos-Osoria 2013: 111). In fact, the suit was never discussed or approved outside of the CAED, another example of the tactical autonomy that the UJS defended. The administration’s countersuit against those student leaders it could identify, eventually produced a Supreme Court decision that declared the UPR to be a “semipublic forum” where authorities could regulate “the time, place, and manner” of otherwise protected expression. Following U.S. state and federal jurisprudence regarding *private* universities, the court argued students had no legal right to bargain collectively or strike, due in part to the “contractual nature” of the institution’s duty to provide services to each individual student (*U.P.R. v. Laborde et al.*, 2010 TSPR 225; my trans.; my emphasis). The decision was published on December 13, 2010, days before the second phase of the Strike began.

the whole process: a sudden increase of insufficient repression (Davenport, et al. 2005; Goldstone and Tilly 2001). The Central Administration sit-in and occupation, in turn, was the tipping point that communicated to PPD-appointed trustees that the movement could not be contained without increasing repression to politically unacceptable levels.³⁴

Phase II: *Au milieu d'hiver, un invincible été . . .*

The first strike had the form of a strictly university conflict, but the character and political content of a popular uprising. The second strike had the form of a national insurrection, of a popular uprising, with battles in the streets, the constant occupation of the Río Piedras campus by police, persecution of the students, stone-throwing and tear gas every night. But it had the political content of a student vanguard, without political content. Only in certain instances did it make the link, where we can see the dialectic at work.

—Francisco

If under the conditions of the first phase of the strike, the movement's legitimacy promoted and sustained the radicalization of the student grassroots, the radicalism of the second phase ended up producing its own legitimacy, in a manner that was partially successful, but ultimately unsustainable. This, however, wasn't always a foregone conclusion. The first major switchpoint on the road to the second phase of the strike was an event calculated to build its legitimacy: the November 18 secret-ballot student referendum where voters massively rejected the \$800 special fee. Holding the referendum was part of a plan proposed by the UJS at the November 11 Río Piedras general assembly, aimed at

turning the tables on the administration's logic which portrayed the student movement as

³⁴ Two days later, on June 11, negotiation resumed. On that same day, the lower court judge overseeing the UPR's countersuit against the students "recommended" that the parts submit the dispute to voluntary mediation. On June 13, students, faculty, and administrative personnel celebrated a symbolic graduation ceremony outside the Río Piedras campus in lieu of the official graduation, which had been cancelled by the administration, where strikers were honored as "exemplary citizens." Two days later, on June 16, a bare majority of the Board of Trustees (those who had not been appointed by Fortuño, plus the student and faculty representatives) finally signed a document agreeing to all of the students' core demands: the repeal of Certification 98; that none of the UPR's units would be sold off or privatized, whole or in parts; that none of the strikers would be subject to summary sanctions for anything that happened during the Strike; and that a planned special "Fiscal Stabilization Fee" whose existence had become known over the course of the negotiation would not be implemented in August, but subject to future negotiations. The first ever national assembly of students from the entire UPR system was held on June 21, ratifying the agreements, and officially ending the occupation and first phase of the strike.

intransigent. We did things to show that we were exhausting all avenues. We knew what it would all lead to, but we were speaking to the gallery. So folks would start to understand that the strike that's coming isn't capricious, this is a necessary process. But at the same time, a process of accumulating forces, which is what's important . . . I had no idea, really, that it would be so complicated to do. But I think, politically, it was worth it, because it exposed us to public opinion, to do the work that we wanted with the people (Ian Camilo).

The referendum did draw a number of people closer to the movement, including Yari, one of the most radical new voices in the UJS orbit.

The approved plan also foresaw the creation of a coordinating body and a student shutdown of the Central Administration building. According to Francisco, the shutdown (in the new context of an ongoing semester) and referendum,

show two faces of the student movement: one is the face of movement building, of organizing, of giving people the space to express themselves, versus 150 masked students arriving at Central Administration at 5:00 am, surrounding it, and declaring it closed. What is the resonance of that activity, versus the resonance of an activity like the referendum, where the student body gets to participate, spaces for debate are opened, spaces to persuade people? I think that the two exemplify [the interplay between a] fatalist vanguard vision and another vision of political construction. Which is vanguardist too, but it isn't a voluntaristic vanguardism.

Francisco's critical dissent shows how the horns of the neoliberal dilemma appeared not just in the interaction between cadre and grassroots, or between different cadre organizations, but within the UJS itself. Throughout the fall 2010, the UJS debated the appropriate timing for a second strike, with Francisco and other "constructionists" (those who argued time was needed to "build" the movement) arguing for the start of the spring semester in January, while a bare majority, nurtured by the influx of new recruits radicalized during the first phase, argued that it would be too late, because the fee would be in effect. The UJS had begun the semester without mobilizing around the special fee at all, but rather around its Income-Adjusted Tuition proposal, believing that in that way it could give political content to the broader mobilization. However, many felt the need to switch gears when it became evident, halfway through the semester, that very little mobilization was taking place beyond that.

The debate continued until a few days before the December 1 assembly, when it was known, according to Niño, that the OSI would propose a 48-hour *paro* beginning one week later, followed by an indefinite strike after another week. The UJS's "freedom of tendency" resulted in ongoing public disagreement between the majority and constructionist dissidents, who *de facto* abstained from the broader discussion. Tere, another dissident, recalls:

I'm still a little traumatized with that. I didn't agree with launching a second strike at that moment. The timing was wrong, final exams were coming, the holiday recess, and it really didn't make sense, not having been able to regroup forces all semester, to try to do it in two weeks, go on strike, and then go on holiday break. That decision was very difficult for the UJS . . . The other *compañeros* thought it was a good moment [to start the strike], and the UJS went to that assembly divided. I remember, there was a newsletter that wasn't distributed, because inside [the UJS] we were pulling one another's hair, we wanted to kill each other! Then we closed ranks, as we always do, but that specific decision . . . was really, really, really hard.

But a formal decision to take a position at the assembly was made?

We made that decision by majority vote. We weren't able to reach consensus, although in the UJS we always try to reach consensus. I abstained from voting [in the assembly], so as not to vote against. I remember we [the dissidents] discussed whether to take a turn opposing starting the strike now. And we decided not to because it would look bad to have two people from the UJS saying different things, and we'd end up with nothing.

And what was the debate like, the differences, in the assembly?

I think they were the same as during the first [phase], and the same debate we had in the UJS: the question of timing, of regrouping forces, and also, well, demagogic positions . . . evidently trying not to have a second strike at all, which are always there.

Yari, on the other hand, who had not yet been officially recruited to the UJS, but was invited to the pre-assembly discussions, recalls influencing the pre-assembly discussion by arguing that "if we were going to do anything [about the special fee], it had to be now, because in January it would be more difficult to move people . . . because in Puerto Rico people disconnect entirely over Christmas."³⁵

That position carried the day at the assembly as well, setting off the far more violent sequence of events at the Río Piedras campus that is captured accurately in the epigraph to this

³⁵ In my experience, this observation, which may not appear as culturally specific at first sight as the phrasing makes it seem, is accurate and relevant.

subsection.³⁶ In order to face the challenges posed by this new scenario of an “open gate strike” (unseen since 1981), the strikers designed a strategy they called *entra y sal pa’ fuera* (“go in and bust out”), whereby students would attend classes as scheduled, and at a designated time, walk out in unison and join a march throughout the campus, with specially designated “security groups” in charge of specific tasks such as disrupting classes with resistant professors, and drawing police attention away from the marchers. Disagreements over timing notwithstanding, it is difficult to envision any scenario, under the prevailing condition of police occupation, that might have played out otherwise. Within that sequence, there are two switchpoints, equally confrontational, but with radically inverse effects: the events of January 11 and the events of February 9. While both cases involved some level of coordination and intention to disrupt, in the former the plan spiraled out of control, with adverse effects for morale and momentum.

Up until that point, until Christmas, not all was lost. But after January 11, after having spent the break preparing for 1/11/11 [an allegory of the UPR’s 11 campuses] . . . There was an activity honoring [Puerto Rican educator Eugenio María de] Hostos, and folks were going to enter the campus, we were going to march with the people inside the campus, and all of that. On the one hand, all of that was being planned, but on the other, there was the vanguard line that marching was just not working anymore, and we had to actually paralyze administrative processes inside. So, some folks prepared to disrupt some offices where some final grades were being tallied . . . There were two different lines about the purposes of the event that day. And that’s a disastrous recipe, to have a march with dual intentions (Ibrahim).

Ibrahim, who originally favored the parallel disruptive activity, claims that what happened in the Student Center was completely unplanned, and that in fact the route of the march was supposed to

³⁶ The strike began with a preemptive 48-hour *paro* on December 7 and 8. On those days, campus security was outsourced to a private firm, which recruited manpower overnight with little or no training. By midnight on the morning of December 7, all access gates to the campus had been removed in order to avoid another student occupation. The preemptive *paro* thus began with intensely violent confrontations before the sun came up, media coverage of which was wildly unfavorable to students, although later it was largely uneventful. When the morning of December 14 arrived, the campus had been occupied by the Police, in order to enforce a ban on all campus protest by the administration, now authorized by the Supreme Court’s decision in *U.P.R. v. Laborde*. This second phase of the strike was limited by and large to Río Piedras, where some professors continued to hold classes, particularly in the College of Natural Sciences, where some of the most intense confrontations took place.

go nowhere near it. However, he believes that the movement overreacted to the negative press generated by the incident, laying the foundation for some sectors to argue that an assembly to end the strike was now necessary.

In addition, the January 11 events produced two interrelated effects that directly impacted the movement's ability to sustain the confrontational strategy that it had pursued until that point.

On that day, the student movement went on the offensive, but at the same time it provoked a response from the state that is much greater than what we had been prepared for . . . or maybe we hadn't been altogether prepared before, but this was definitely beyond our possibilities. I mean that the next day, the campus was once again completely occupied by cops. *Compañeros* who went in during the morning to hand out leaflets were arrested just for that, and the repressive response increased significantly. Basically, there were riot control agents every five feet around Natural Sciences, which is where classes and exams were being taken (Ian Camilo).

I frankly thought [smashing windows and overturning tables] was stupid. There was no kind of need for that. But hey, we all decide what we do. And since the media began to talk about *encapuchados* [masked strikers], it was decided that we wouldn't allow *encapuchados* in our protests anymore. Since the media had a thing against the *encapuchados*, and we didn't want to seem like bad people, but rather let our faces be seen, be relatable . . . Never had so many *compañeros* been arrested as after their *capuchas* [masks] were taken away! (Tere)³⁷

On the one hand, a massive (and foreseeable) increment in the level of repression exerted by the neoliberalizing state, beyond the student movement's capacity to confront it. On the other, the omnipresence of the mass media, as perceived by a multi-class movement with few reliable external allies, concerned with (and subjectively affected by) external projection, generated a debate that resulted in self-regulation that further eroded the capacity to confront and disrupt efficiently. At this point in the second phase, the UJS, for whatever reason, put aside its cherished

³⁷ A *capucha* is, literally, a hood. In the context of Latin American protest movements, *encapuchado* refers to any facial cover that serves to hide the demonstrator's identity. The most usual forms, in my experience, are a t-shirt wrapped around the head, using the neck opening for visibility, or the combination of a hooded sweatshirt and a bandanna wrapped around the face, below the eyes.

tactical autonomy and abided by the prohibition of *capuchas*. The coordinating group created by the general assembly was also disbanded, to form the “representative” CRE.

Capuchas or not, however, sustained confrontation of the kind that had characterized the first stages of the second phase was now impossible. Caught on the two horns of the neoliberal dilemma (pressure and mass appeal), the newly created CRE opted for a new track, inaugurating a repertoire of civil disobedience. Although some of the UJS’s more recent recruits, such as Yari and Niño, claimed adamantly, when I interviewed them, that the organization had opposed this tactic, others stated matter-of-factly that it was the UJS’s idea.

What was the UJS’s position in that discussion [about civil disobedience]?

It was the UJS who proposed it originally. In fact, I was already [formally] in the UJS, I was at the meeting where it was discussed, where we discussed proposing that to the broad movement, and I think the *compañeros* from the OSI were on the same page. At that moment, we were on the same page, having barely discussed it . . . A little to follow the example of Vieques, and appealing to external solidarity, we thought up the civil disobedience so that not just students, but parents, labor leaders, MST members could participate (Tere).

One might ask, “How is it that the most violent sector of the student movement [UJS and OSI] at the same time heads a gigantic process of civil disobedience?” Because that civil disobedience was conceived once the possibility of marching through the campus, shutting down the campus, was defeated by the presence of the police. That process gave the movement some oxygen, in the sense that it allowed a lot of people to participate. At that point, many people who had been distanced by the movement’s own dynamics, which gradually leaves people behind as the movement advances (because it advances very fast), can participate again, actively. And there are hundreds of arrests. Of course, the civil disobedience also reaches its culmination when it is done at the Capitol [on January 27] (Francisco).

There are three crucial points here. First, the ample participation of dozens upon dozens of students (strikers, former strikers, and non-strikers) as well as supporters from all walks of life, daily over the course of a week, demonstrates that at this point, even after the violent confrontations of the first weeks of the second phase and the events of January 11, the strikers’ demands and the strike tactic itself still had widespread legitimacy. Second, the use of nonviolent tactics did not guarantee a nonviolent response by the state, as shown both by police removal tactics at the UPR gates and

the police riot that broke out when the sheer number of people at the Capitol became an obstacle to arrests.³⁸ Third, the UJS was more pragmatic than it projected, at least to young would-be cadre in its orbit.

The end of the civil disobedience sequence left a core of radicalized strikers unable to act effectively, violently or nonviolently, within a campus hermetically controlled by police. The week and a half or so between the events at the Capitol, on January 27, and the events of February 9, were marked by the uneventful tension of the eye of a hurricane passing through. As several interviewees told me, the consensus within that remaining core was to find any excuse to “stir things up,” which the police didn’t make too difficult. Yari, Estela, and Mili all narrated incidents of police harassment, especially of female strikers, during this time (including the groping of arrestees, catcalling and blowing kisses, and following them into the bathrooms), which sparked spontaneous campus rallies and demonstrations. In contrast to the events of January 11, the events of February 9 were not the result of a plan gone bad, but rather the combined effect of an intolerable, combustible environment and the strikers’ strategic predisposition. Comparing the February 9 events with the following switchpoint (the aggression against Chancellor Guadalupe on March 7, addressed below), which resulted from a similar mix, Francisco observed that the latter, while in his opinion “not unjustified,”

hadn’t been legitimated, people didn’t experience it as something that made sense, as opposed to February 9, a day when the police was confronted, when hundreds of students fought the police all over the campus, where nearly 30 students were arrested, where there were stones thrown, but it all had meaning in a certain sense. In fact, it had so much meaning that the APPU, the HEEND, and the president of the university all decide this conflict had to end, and the justification is “the police must leave, because someone’s going to die.” And because of that . . . the president calls for the police to leave and is forced to

³⁸ Interviewees report that in the melee that ensued, cadre were chased by waves of police officers all over the Puerta de Tierra section of San Juan, where the Capitol is located. Ian Camilo claims he ran all the way to the Lawyers’ College building, which is located in Miramar, over a mile and a half away.

resign because of it.³⁹

I hope it's not too far a departure from academic detachment to point out, at this point, the transcendental significance that De la Torre's resignation had for everyone who lived these events, whether directly, or as in my case, vicariously from afar, as a deeply involved spectator. On February 9 there was an intentional, strategic, *political* rationale in "stirring things up," one that momentarily slowed the downward arc of the strike's momentum and nearly reversed it.

In this sense, February 9 was *the* turning point of the second phase of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, one whose consequences once again hinged almost entirely on forces external to the student movement, much like the pivotal day of October 15, 2009, which opened the door to the future development of the strike. The student movement, at that point, its energies all but depleted, made a last minute "Hail Mary" move that very well could have changed the eventual course of the strike, had conditions been otherwise, and, indeed, gave it one final breath.

After that, the HEEND shuts down the campus, the APPU declares a *paro* that has no [formal] legitimacy, which it has no way of approving, an organization that in its whole life has never gone on strike, in desperation! And I think that if at that moment the HEEND and APPU had told the administration, "Eliminate the special fee now, look at what's happening!" it would have been a different story than what they did: "Get the police out now, look at what's happening!" There's a displacement of the main slogan, from "*No a la cuota* [fee]," to "*Fuera la policía*" (Francisco).

Whether or not the APPU and HEEND joining the student strike against the fee would have made a difference in eliminating the fee sooner than it was (and the HEEND, at least, does wield considerable political and numerical muscle), is not the point. The point is that they could have and did not, not for ideological reasons (both have been consistent and vocal critics of neoliberalization), but for practical ones, choosing instead to displace the student movement's demands, which led it to confront the police in the first place, for what they believed a more urgent

³⁹ The APPU and HEEND are the main faculty association at the Río Piedras campus, and the system-wide administrative employee union, respectively (see list of players at the beginning of this chapter).

consideration. To understand the enormity of the displacement, one has only to consider the immense magnitude of the solidarity march that took place that weekend. Would any of the tens of thousands who marched have done otherwise if the organizers had adopted a slogan clearly demanding the repeal of the special fee, in addition to the withdrawal of the police?⁴⁰

There is one organizational component of the march that would perhaps have been significantly weaker, had the strikers' demands not been displaced by police withdrawal, insofar as the PPD might not have mobilized its base so massively behind such a slogan. As noted in Chapter 3, what the PPD needed to mobilize, in its electoral calculus, was the *form* of a repudiation for Fortuño's repressive policies, not the *substance* of anti-neoliberal resistance. However, there are further reasons why the external displacement of the student movement's demands reiterates, once again, the neoliberal dilemma, since the APPU and HEEND are not among the unions most firmly within the PPD's orbit. Instead, their very practical reasons for not jumping into the fray against the special fee have to do with the legal and bargaining constraints to which the formerly quite militant Puerto Rican labor movement has increasingly tied itself under and through neoliberalization.⁴¹ As Francisco notes, the APPU is not even a "union" with a legally recognized right to strike, although at this point its leaders were willing to overlook that fact. Perhaps getting the police out and preventing the spilling of blood was a good enough reason for them. Underneath these emotional, affective motivations, however, there are equally relevant political dynamics at

⁴⁰ The ambiguous slogan of the march, held on Sunday, February 13, was "I ♥ UPR," which was intended to resonate with St. Valentine's Day. The implication was that violence on campus was "destroying" the beloved institution. Although the blame was by and large focused on the police, my interviewees insist the "pacifist" thrust of the message diluted and displaced the strikers' demands.

⁴¹ In the APPU's case (but probably not the HEEND's), it is also important to consider that many of its members (although not necessarily the majority, as Prof. Pabón claimed) opposed its leadership's entire stance with regard to the student strike at this point, and would have probably opposed the mere mention of a strike for which, as Francisco notes, it lacked the legal authority in the first place (see, for example, Pabón 2012; Seale Collazo 2012). "Get the police out" was an easier sell to a politically timid "professional" membership base than "Zero fee."

work. For Francisco, the student movement (including the UJS) may have been ultimately responsible for this outcome: “If you’re unable to keep the discourse focused on the political question as such, on your demands, you get sidetracked, and you end up fighting for something transitory, secondary.” In other words, fixated on the tactical question of “saving” the strike itself, the strikers were unable to exercise hegemony over their allies, in the Gramscian sense of “moral leadership.” One way or the other, the decisions following the February 9 switchpoint clearly illustrate the neoliberal dilemma at work: the strikers’ militant pressure tactics opened a window for building concrete unity behind their anti-neoliberal demands, but it was traded off by allies for an apparently broad, but ambiguous, abstract, and toothless appeal for “peace.”

The brief upswing in momentum and morale injected by the events of that day and the sudden outpouring of sympathy they elicited, evaporated quickly, when unity behind the demand to repeal the special fee failed to materialize. At that point the strike was on its last legs, and a student general assembly was called for February 22. Going into the assembly,

There were two analyses [among the core of strikers]: that the student movement was still strong and could resist a little more; and the UJS’s analysis, that we had already lost our link to the masses (which I didn’t understand at the time), and therefore we should end the strike, regroup forces, reestablish contact with the student body during a new semester. That seemed impossible at a given time, and many saw it as renouncing the struggle. That real political analysis that was taking place in the *plenos* and in that last assembly showed how the UJS still had contact with reality (Niño).

The main proponent of the first “analysis” was the OSI, which went to the assembly with a proposal to maintain and intensify the strike, although many in the UJS (as Niño confirms, in his own case), initially agreed with it. Nevertheless, the mood at the assembly was clearly for ending the strike. However, it was not a hostile environment, as might be expected after three months of almost nonstop violent protest visibly led by politically marginal groups.

[A]t that assembly, the most inconceivable things happened. First, the absolute legitimacy of the student movement and of the strikers among the student body, with the respect and the deference of “these are the people who have been fighting for us.” Of course, that also

represents the existing differentiation between that internal core of strikers, and the rest of the student body. But there was also a legitimacy gained through the struggle. However, at the same time as the discourse of struggle was hegemonic, the proposals of struggle as such were not. Then, a sector [of the assembly] . . . made the world's most improbable proposal: "Let's continue the strike, but taking classes" (Francisco).⁴²

Ultimately, the proposal that was approved was UJS spokesperson Adriana Mulero's plan to "suspend" the strike on a high note, with a series of mobilizations and consciousness-raising activities designed to lay a foundation for future struggle.⁴³ However, two weeks later, before all of the activities proposed by Adriana could be carried out (which they eventually were, but to little effect), the second phase of the strike turned one final corner, with the attack on Chancellor Guadalupe, after which it finally collapsed out of sheer exhaustion.⁴⁴

For Niño, as for many of my interviewees, "the second strike was *the* strike." While it was never able to "catch the wave" of momentum that the first phase of the strike did —although it lasted, interruptions notwithstanding, a roughly similar span of time (for a comparative representation identifying switchpoints, see Fig. 4.1)— the level of popular recognition and historical import of the second phase, given the conditions in which it took place, are nothing short

⁴² The proposal echoed ideas that had been floated by a group of faculty and students calling itself "University without Walls" throughout the second phase, which essentially held that what was important and radical was not the disruption of normal functioning, but to challenge the constraints on knowledge placed by capital and the state by creating novel situations like taking class in non-traditional settings (see, for example, Chaar López 2011b).

⁴³ Adriana was not only one of two UJS spokespersons during the strike, she was also a member of the original Río Piedras negotiating committee, in representation of the CEDEP (of which she was also the spokesperson), a member of the logistical coordinating body created for the second phase of the strike, and a formidable figure in her own right. Along with others, like non-UJS CRE member Xiomara Caro, she gave the second phase a powerful female voice. I repeatedly approached Adriana for an interview, but she finally declined, for reasons that are not relevant to this study (and which I wish to respect). This dissertation is painfully incomplete without her account.

⁴⁴ On March 7, accumulated frustration reached a boiling point when strikers at a scheduled demonstration learned that Chancellor Ana Guadalupe was presiding an administrative meeting at the Architecture School. The students moved to the building and surrounded it. Rather than use a back entrance or wait until tensions subsided, UPR Security pushed and shoved students aside in order to bring the chancellor out the front entrance. In the ensuing scuffle, Chancellor Guadalupe (the person many considered mainly responsible for the two-month Police occupation of the campus) was drenched in water, claimed her hair was pulled, and the windows to the security vehicle that would transport her were smashed. Several students were summarily suspended after the altercation, including Ibrahim (although not on the basis of those events, but a conflict with security guards before the start of the first phase, where he was injured). Ian Camilo and Adriana had previously been suspended for allegedly inciting the January 11 events.

of remarkable. Among my interviewees, even the least sanguine, Francisco, attributes the elimination of the special fee, as well as the emergence of new spaces and generations of activists, to that phase.⁴⁵ What he sees as a dialectical conflict within the movement, and particularly organized cadre, between a “voluntaristic vanguard” and a movement-building conception, is a manifestation of what I call the neoliberal dilemma. What the preceding analysis shows is that the tradeoff at the heart of the neoliberal dilemma, between pressure and mass appeal, is often a false choice. The tactical decisions that hit switches that propelled the movement on an upward curve were those that most firmly tensed the bowstring between the two horns. Those that slid towards one or the other tended towards inertia or disaster.

The 2010-11 UPR Reiterated Problem-Solving Sequence

The preceding section lays out the problem-solving sequence that, in retrospect, spans and connects the decisional switchpoints that are described and analyzed. The narrative developed, through my interviewees’ responses, presents a picture of an ideologically rich and diverse movement field. It also presents a leadership competition and learning process, whereby accumulated “lessons,” at least as much as patient deliberation, often resulted in the hitting of a switch that turned the entire process onto a new track. Part of that learning process includes the radicalization of a core of 200 to 300 strikers during the course of the first phase of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, who would be the epicenter of the second.⁴⁶ The intensification of

⁴⁵ In terms of the big picture, however, this phase was partially successful in the both the short and long term. In the short term, because it pressured the legislature to approve a special need-based grant, using funds identified by PNP Senate President Tomás Rivera Schatz (known as *la Beca Schatz* or “the Schatz Grant” in humorous reference to the Pell Grant), which allowed many of the neediest students to cover the cost of the entire fee. Orlando reports qualifying for and receiving this grant. According to Estela, the initial proposal was that the funds would be used to lower the fee by half for all students, a proposal she claims was discussed and accepted by both the UJS and her CA, but never seriously considered by the plenum of increasingly worn-out and frustrated strikers.

⁴⁶ This number was cited by several of my interviewees. It is consistent with my participant observation, based on the average size of “spontaneous” mobilizations and *plenos* during the first phase.

confrontational methods, which accompanied this radicalization, inevitably meant that many participants, unable or unwilling to assume the heightened level of risk, dropped out. However, as my discussion of the February 22 assembly seems to indicate, and despite heated criticism and sometimes hostile argument (the last remaining OSI holdouts, true to form, calling UJS leaders “traitors”),⁴⁷ at no point was there a major movement break that truly isolated the radicals, as might be expected. Why? In part, because the mechanisms and processes that I discuss below allowed the movement to “manage” its differences effectively.

Consciousness-Raising, Empowerment, Polarization

For most respondents, the process that Hirsch calls “consciousness-raising” (1990: 244-245) began when they first arrived at the UPR, and has continued since, in ongoing formal and informal interactions within the UJS and MST, the broader student movement, and the student body and university community more generally. Necho, for example, credits classroom discussions as his first contact with the ideas and concepts that later became more defined through movement participation. For many, these concepts offered a way of thinking systematically and explaining concerns they had previously had, while the few from more affluent backgrounds, like Estela, report the experience as “opening their eyes to a different reality.” For the UJS, consciousness-raising or “conscientization” is a lifetime, practical process where each militant develops his or her own consciousness as he or she experiences contradictions, becomes involved and/or organized, and sustains discussions and debates with fellow militants. “Consciousness” isn’t necessarily tied, in my interviewees’ language, to any particular identity, but is more of a practical awareness of “the need to struggle.” What direction that struggle takes depends on the ways in which the solidarities, “we” feelings, and projects tied to that consciousness are framed (Hunt and Benford

⁴⁷ This outcome of the February 22 assembly was reported by several interviewees, and repeats the exact same scenario at the end of the 2005 UPR Student Strike.

2004; Rutten 2003; Hirsch 1986). Within the UPR student movement, the UJS and other cadre organizations often sponsor talks, panel discussions, and study groups, in addition to decision-making deliberations (often also seen as “consciousness-raising” opportunities) to promote their preferred collective identity frame. The first phase of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike lent itself strongly to this kind of activity. For example, Niño reports a talk organized by the UJS on the topic of “What is socialism?” led by veteran MST member Miguel Báez as a dramatic turning point in his personal “rise” to consciousness.⁴⁸

What Hirsch calls “empowerment,” in turn, is a function of a movement’s “success” at mobilizing large numbers or disrupting normality (1990: 245). Each small or partial success imbues participants with confidence that they are sacrificing for something real and achievable, not only some far-off revolutionary change, or abstract ideas or principles. Various interviewees report experiencing a feeling of inevitability at several points during the first phase of the Strike: Ibrahim after the occupation of the Academic Senate, Estela during a massive solidarity concert that she helped coordinate during the first weeks of the strike, Francisco after the occupation of the Central Administration that forced the trustees back to the negotiating table. From a longer-term perspective, the concept of empowerment also underscores the importance of achieving specific shared objectives, which is the reason goals and objectives matter, even for my interviewees, who overwhelmingly define “success” in different terms. In this sense, Niño is right to note that the “success” of the first phase was crucial for the second phase to happen (as Francisco observes, it was the first time in UPR history that “two” strikes take place in just one semester,

⁴⁸ Miguel, a mathematics teacher from the rural town of Utuado, where he was a local leader of the FMPR since the 1970s, founding member of the MSP and MST, brother of Manuel Báez (whom I interviewed as part of my research), and one of the most genuinely humble and sincere people I’ve ever met, despite his staggering and incisive political intellect, passed away in March 2013. Niño’s exact turn of phrase was (addressing me): “*y tú sabes como eso te cambia la vida*” (“you know how [meeting Miguel] changes your life”). He was not mistaken.

rather than years apart). On the other hand, a violent cycle in which the strikers were badly outmuscled, without any concrete gains, led to exhaustion, demoralization, and eventual movement collapse after the attack on Chancellor Guadalupe. However, interviewees argue that taken as a whole, the strike's success can be seen in the very fact that nearly four years after the end of the second phase, there is still an active student movement at the UPR, which has never been the case before, largely because of the rapidly changing character of the student body, which Francisco notes is a strength as well as a weakness. According to respondents, this is the result of the strike's "conscientization" and "empowerment" (the idea that struggle is not in vain) of a new cohort of young people (Whittier 1995; 1997).

Finally, "polarization" (Hirsh 1990: 245), which my interviewees call "radicalization," is largely (although not exclusively) a function of what Goodwin and Tilly call "repressive threat" (2001: 179-194). If collective identities are strong enough, repression below a certain threshold will stimulate rather than squash participation and mobilization. In Francisco's words, "Repression works, that's why states do it. But timid repression never works" (see also Davenport, et al. 2005; Goodwin and Tilly 2001). A clear example of this dynamic in the first phase of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike took place after the unexpected ratification of the strike on May 13, when the campus was cordoned off by the police. Statements by police officials that no food or water could be delivered to the strikers inside, and the serious beating of at least two people attempting to access the campus, galvanized rather than quelling the movement and its supporters. Likewise, the incident at the Sheraton Hotel, while it provoked some criticism of the students, was largely seen as an excess of force on the part of the police, generating sympathy and moving participants to redouble efforts. On the other hand, the much higher levels of near-constant repression throughout the second phase of the strike, although it strengthened some participants' determination, also

demobilized many. In that context of prolonged, exhausting stalemate, the events of February 9, effectively “stirred things up,” as strikers hoped, but were unable to translate into renewed momentum, lacking an effective political connection to the broader context. At this point, tactics had overtaken strategy.

Learning and Strategic Capacity

Undoubtedly, the revolution will teach us and will teach the masses of the people. But the question that now confronts a militant political party is: shall we be able to teach the revolution anything?

—V.I. Lenin, “Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,” 1905 (cited in Shandro 2007 [2001]: 314).

I’m not sure that all of my actions as part of the APPU during the 2010 UPR strike contributed to the advancement or safeguarding of those values [of education as a public good]. But I feel an almost Cartesian certainty that I did act as an educator during that crisis: *e-ducere*, leading-out, cannot possibly be limited to writing for peers in journals, or speaking in classrooms to students.

—James Seale Collazo (2012: 19).

In a thoughtful and poignant response to Prof. Carlos Pabón’s much-publicized essay criticizing the APPU’s support for the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike,⁴⁹ my teacher, friend, and colleague James Seale Collazo tells the following story:⁵⁰

Within the occupied Río Piedras campus, the need to maintain unity meant that in practice, the more combative student sectors had to remain accountable to those less inclined to throw stones or conceal their faces (the so-called *encapuchados*); the latter, for their part, had to recognize the legitimacy of more risky tactics.

An example of this dates to roughly midway through the [first phase of the] strike, when several dozen masked students took over the security gate, through which the

⁴⁹ Pabón’s scathing essay, “Fungir como docente,” originally published on the website *80 grados*, remains the most widely debated text produced by UPR faculty members in connection to the strike process, and the most sophisticated, good faith criticism of said process. It should be read, discussed, and critiqued widely by future student activists. The essay makes three basic arguments: 1) the students’ tactics were ineffective and counterproductive; 2) the APPU had no right to speak for all faculty because not all faculty are APPU members; and 3) faculty who refused to teach during the police occupation of campus were abdicating their function as “docents” (Pabón 2012).

⁵⁰ Although I never officially sat in his class (which illustrates much of the argument he develops in the cited essay), “Yimi” stands out among the many valued individuals I have had the honor to call teacher. He taught at my high school when I was a student, and was faculty advisor of the Model U.N. club, in which I participated. In the semesters prior to the strike, we worked together in the Social Studies department at the UHS, and later stood together in support of it as members of the APPU, of whose Río Piedras chapter he was secretary at the time.

chancellor and other administrators had been entering. I immediately got distressed emails from colleagues outside the island concerned that the student left had run rampant. I was much less worried, because I knew that this move had been under discussion for at least three weeks in the occupiers' frequent plenary sessions. Later, one of my acquaintances in the student movement—who had opposed the security gate takeover—told me how the groups that had been advocating for it had gone around to all six camps, lobbying for support and eventually crafting a collective decision which, as far as I could tell, worked well: with the students in control of all the entrances, conflict over researchers' access to their laboratories ended (2012: 14).

In Freirean fashion, Seale pointedly suggests that he himself learned from the student strikers' horizontal and participatory deliberative spaces. He is here describing a process of mutual learning, through which different sectors of the student movement (and its supporters) learned from each other, and negotiated or managed the inevitable tendency toward polarization (which I have argued, acquires a peculiar flavor under neoliberalization). What he seems to miss is that much of the organizational and discursive space that made this process possible was the conscious design of radical organized cadre, for both instrumental and normative reasons, and that it also extended into the second phase of the strike, under far more difficult conditions.

If a central element of leadership is education (and vice versa), as the etymology clearly suggests (to lead *out*; to help draw out a subject's immanent potential; Freire 2005 [1975]; see also Vygotsky 1978), the contest between leadership teams must also be seen as a contest to *educate*; that is, to give not just tactical form, but political, strategic content. The deliberative structure of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, organized through the CAs and bestowing final decision-making authority on the *pleno* of active strikers, promoted the sense that leadership and responsibility were a collective endeavor. Although widely perceived by the state, media, and public as the movement's "leadership," the negotiating committees' function was primarily to convey information between the *pleno* and the administration. Its influence on strategy, while important, was limited to that which could be suggested by that information and the way it was presented.

During the course of the strike itself, the power of the student councils, which the administration initially insisted on portraying as the student's only legitimate leadership (as the only institutionally sanctioned entities), was limited to being represented on the negotiating committees and the authority to summon the general assembly (which is not negligible, since the assembly is the only body that can initiate and end strikes). The *representative* authority of the student councils (as elective bodies) was thus recognized, but checked by the *participative* authority of the assemblies and *plenos*. In practice, the options presented to and decided upon by the *pleno* were delineated by multiple and overlapping leadership teams that regularly met on their own to discuss strategy: the CAs, negotiating committees, student councils, and political organizations (whatever their ideology and level of formal "organization"). Among these, the latter were especially well positioned to influence the discussion, as their members also participated within broader teams at different levels of the nested structure.

Leadership

The only real justification for political organizations is to give processes continuity, direction in the sense of coherence in time and space. Not in terms of controlling, not in the military sense, but direction purely in the political sense.

—Francisco

Ganz refers to a leadership team's identities, social networks, and tactical repertoires as the biographical sources of strategic capacity (2009: 14-17). These sources refer to the assets brought to the table by the leadership teams' individual members' experiences and relationships. That model, however, suggests that these assets are individually acquired and cultivated, and then somehow pooled when the individual members come together at a single point in time, presumably at some point before the start of the movement. Organizations and "leadership teams," however, are themselves ongoing, collective processes rather than static or monolithic actors. In the case of the UJS, as respondents' narratives show, cadre who join at different times bring their own

experiences and relationships, which are in turn challenged or complemented by those of older cadre (including non-student MST members). The participation of some UJS militants, such as Ibrahim, Ian Camilo, and Adriana, in earlier student struggles, including the 2005 strike, significantly shaped their strategic contributions to the 2010-11 strike. Rather than examine the identities, social networks, and tactical repertoires of individual UJS members as discrete assets, I will discuss the organization's collective contribution, through the mechanisms that Hirsch calls "group processes" (1990), described above, to the framing of collective identities and tactical repertoires.

Framing affects motivation in that it provides the language in which the "call" to movement is made, and therefore influences who will "respond," in what capacity, and up to what point. It also affects salient knowledge and heuristic processes, in that it shapes perceptions of what information and experiences are meaningful to the movement, what lessons are learned, and how they may best be applied. Diverse understandings of the immediate and broader context enrich the range of options available for creative and innovative action (Ganz 2009: 13). As detailed in Chapter 2, the UJS has historically sought to mobilize working and working-class students as part of the broader class struggle in Puerto Rico, openly promoting a socialist direction for the student movement. At first glance, this may seem like a narrow frame, as Francisco implicitly recognizes, by qualifying his interpretation thus:

The UJS is a socialist organization that conceives of itself as revolutionary. In a certain sense, its perspective transcends merely student issues. But that transcendence is sometimes interpreted as a reduction or separation of the student problem into that of the working class student, which for me is incorrect. The correct [socialist] vision of the student body and student struggle lies in how the student struggle is related to the [class] struggle at the national level, not how the student struggle is partialized.

My interviewees' personal narratives of involvement and recruitment challenge the assumption that this frame is narrower than nationalist or generic "student" identities, as illustrated by the

examples cited at the end of Chapter 3.⁵¹ Leo, for instance, who claims that his upbringing was “bluer than the American flag [in reference to the pro-statehood PNP],” had little interest in nationalist causes, but was drawn to the movement by the perception of a threat to less privileged students, with whom he identified. Even those who did not see their own personal background as “working-class,” such as Estela, were moved by a sense of indignation towards the increasing commodification and elitization of the UPR as a result of neoliberalization. The existence of the socialist frame, along with the others (the nationalist and generic student frames, as well as remnants of the institutional liberal-populist frame), helped to motivate and sustain the involvement of a not unimportant segment of active participants and contributed a broader, longer-term view of the context in which the movement developed.

Tactical repertoires can significantly affect motivation as well, as my discussion above on polarization suggests. From the point of view of strategic capacity, it is not specific kinds of tactics that generate or erode motivation, but the timing and context in which they are exercised and experienced. The use of confrontational tactics and even mobilization in general may have “turned off” some sectors of the student body and/or potential supporters, under the widespread impression that they would always be negatively covered by the media and negatively received by “public opinion” (see, for example, Rosa 2015). In addition, even moderate (non-lethal) repression over an extended period of time, while politically costly for the state, can be demoralizing, although unsuccessful repression is a powerful motivator. Inversely, successful confrontation, if framed

⁵¹ By “generic” I mean the idea that the UPR’s problems are an issue that affect an amorphous student body or university community, and should be dealt with as such. Not only is this actually an extremely narrow perspective, as Francisco notes (and the history of the UPR as an elite institution reinforces), but it can be very problematic in terms of motivation, because it coincides with some of the frames used by the state and others to dampen mobilization. Someone who mobilizes exclusively in terms of self-interest as a “student” can just as easily demobilize and/or oppose mobilization, if convinced that it “threatens” graduation, accreditation, campus “peace,” academic life, and/or the “educational services” purchased, more than the state’s actions do.

right, empowers and motivates (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 280), while unsuccessful confrontation leaves even the most radical movement vulnerable to repression, demoralization, and debilitating self-policing. The decision to strike (including the forceful closing of the campus gates on the first day), the decision to maintain the strike at the Convention Center (and the subsequent “taking” of Gate 6.5 and demonstration at the Sheraton), and the sit-in at Central Administration, were all confrontational actions that served as switchpoints during the first phase, which were met with initial internal and external resistance, but empowered and motivated strikers and supporters. During the more violent second phase, the referendum and the effectively disruptive *entra y sal pa'fuera* repertoire provided momentum, but the violent events of January 11 raised daily confrontation beyond sustainable levels, placing a ceiling on momentum and starting an inevitable downward slope that the events of February 9 could not reverse.

While it may be an exaggeration to claim, as Estela does, and several other interviewees suggest, that “if the UJS had not been participating in the movement, there would have been no strike” (although it should be noted that Estela participated in the movement for three years before working closely with the UJS), it seems evident that it would have been an entirely different process, perhaps one in which active participation was more difficult to generate and sustain. The UJS’s informational and organizational footwork prior to and during the strike earned it a solid footing and reputation for commitment and consistency among the student body at large, whatever support its positions may have enjoyed.

It was more the consistency in the work. They [the UJS] were always, always present, and they knew what was going on in the campus, even outside. There was always work, no matter the time of year. The first day of classes, there was always a newsletter. There was always movement, discussion, and work in the UJS (Estela).

The way that organizations move people, I think is what most attracts folks. It could be their way to treat others and their actions, which always speak louder than words. Many folks may criticize, but they respect other organizations based on their actions: “They work

this way, they have this identity.” They may not agree, but there’s a certain respect towards the work (Leo).

Throughout the 62 days that the [first phase of the] strike lasted, I gradually realized there was a certain group of people that was making a small difference in daily activities, in how we were integrating what we preached to our daily lives (Niño).

[During the second phase of the strike] . . . I saw that the organization that was really the strongest in the combative sense, whose members were sacrificing the most, which was making public denunciations, even if not everyone agreed (but I did), was the MST . . . and not so much certain individuals, but the quality of its base. For example, I’d see other organizations that were present, but there was always really a central individual figure . . . But with the UJS, although faces were constant, they were also always diverse. And they also talked about diverse issues . . . not just the plight of the poor and working class, but working class women, the question of education. There were members who maybe didn’t talk in the *plenos*, but I saw them on the picket line, or I saw that they were the first to sit [for civil disobedience], or to resist (Jeanqui).

In that assembly, I realized there were people there who I thought were advanced for their age, they knew too much! And they said very coherent things, which caught my attention . . . the ones who caught it the most were from the UJS, because I saw that they did what they said they would, because a lot of people would take turns to speak [at the assembly], and then you’d see them act in a very different way. These were people [the UJS members] who were willing to be on the frontlines and go to the last consequences (Yari).

This kind of consistency reflects commitment to a “calling,” which is part of the identity of a leadership team, one of the biographical sources of motivation, a crucial element of strategic capacity, according to Ganz (2009: 14-16).

The UJS and other organizations contributed the cumulative experience, skills, and resources of their social networks (in the UJS’s case including, but not limited to, the MST and FMPR), which broadened the salient information (useful information and feedback) available to the movement as a whole (Ganz 2009: 17).

What is the role of political organizations in movements like this?

To give the necessary tools to the movement so that it can carry out its struggle, such as . . . from the theoretical, from understanding why a process has to take place, to understanding self-defense and how to carry it out, carry out resistance. Educating, all of the resources one might need, from a megaphone, anything. Minimal as it might seem, these things are necessary, and perhaps people [in the movement] haven’t had the experience. And political organizations, which do, facilitate the rest. I think the role of organizations is to pass on that knowledge to everyone else.

Do you think organizations make a difference in terms of the movement's emergence and eventual results?

Yes, they give it direction, focus. I think people [in movement debates] were often tripping . . . everyone had an idea, really nonsensical things, some more hippie-like [pacifist], others more radical. Almost always the political organizations, because they've had a previous discussion, or know the history of working class movements in this country, have a referent in terms of strategy and tactics, and give some shape to what must be done (Yari).

The UJS also promoted a diverse and flexible tactical repertoire from the start, as evidenced by Ibrahim's response to the CAED before the first phase (cited above), which practically echoes Ganz: "[w]hen different team members know how to get things done in different settings and by different methods, they add to the whole team's skills, its flexibility, and its capacity for bricolage" (2009: 17). Consider, for example, Estela and Yari's contrasting testimony on how membership in the UJS affected their individual tactical decisions:

If I hadn't been part of the UJS before, during, and after the strike, I would have been one more hippie who didn't want anything to happen, who maybe wanted things to change, and wanted to win, but I don't think I would have been prepared to make any of the decisions that needed to be made in here daily. None of them! (Estela).

Many times, it was the organization itself which held me back a little. Why? Because we couldn't be making decisions just because our consciousness went beyond the collective consciousness. We had to understand that we were only going to go so far as the movement was willing to go, not beyond that. If they had let me, I would have kept going! (Yari).

The UJS kept on the deliberation table tactics (including, in some cases, the strike itself) that some participants were either all too eager to pursue without discussion (as the January 11 events attest), or to discard altogether. The UJS and other cadre organizations also contributed to the movement's rich collective identity, not just by promoting tactical diversity and flexibility, but also as strong advocates of leadership by women and members of the LGBTQI community.⁵²

⁵² Time and space constraints prevent me from including a more detailed discussion of the role of gender and sexual orientation within movement dynamics in this dissertation. As with the role of the media, the question of comparative "creativity" between the two phases of the strike, and several other areas, there is enough material in my interviewees' responses to merit one or more separate works.

Organization

Deliberation, together with resource flows and accountability, constitute what Ganz calls “organizational sources” of strategic capacity (2009: 17-19). These also contribute to strategic capacity if the structures of deliberation are “regular, open, and authoritative.” Motivation is enhanced because participants become more committed if they feel they are protagonists in the process. The capacity to act autonomously at the local level and not depend on decisions taken at the center also strengthens the sense that actions are related to local conditions and will be effective (see also Hirsch 1990). Information and learning available to all participants also increases the possible sources of feedback and the diversity of alternatives that may be considered. However, even meetings that are regular and authoritative can be monopolized by powerful or charismatic figures, stifled through procedural or bureaucratic maneuvers, or manipulated by withholding or tampering information, thus sabotaging their strategic potential. It is, therefore, fruitful to underscore that a useful notion of “openness” must include democracy, horizontality, and transparency beyond the mere possibility of participation. In addition, although the importance of regular, authoritative meetings cannot be overstated, as with “biographical sources,” it is preferable to speak of processes rather than discrete meetings and structures. As my research shows, a great deal of the deliberation that nurtures complex decision-making takes place through informal conversations and debates.

The scaffolding of deliberation and decision-making bodies around which the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike was built, described above, was born almost entirely from the initiative of cadre organizations, putting into practice the lessons learned from the experience of 2005 and other previous processes, preserved in the memory of older cadre.

The CEDEP, for example, why does it emerge? It emerges because there’s a concerted policy of the UJS and the OSI to create a broad space of struggle. The CAs are created, at

each of the colleges where they are created, at the gates, because a political organization, the J23, goes to the September 29, 2009, assembly and proposes the creation of strike committees (Francisco).

Before I was in the MST, I was a militant of the CEDEP, which was organized by *compañeros* from the OSI and the UJS. And I also participated in the Humanities CA, which was organized by *compañeros* from the J23 and the OSI. And I still haven't seen a grassroots committee, a broad committee, where you can't find people from political organizations. Because there need to be folks with a political project in order for these structures to emerge (Tere).

Despite differences in conceptualization (the CEDEP was intended to endure beyond any given movement sequence, whereas the CAs were “strike committees” initially intended for a specific *paro*), both emerged from concrete practical situations (the CEDEP as a merger of the bodies created to defend the Social Sciences reading room and summer courses, the CAs for the September 29 *paro* against the effects of Law 7 on the UPR). Participation in these base committees was open to all interested students (although the CEDEP had a brief set of broad principles all members were asked to read and agree with), democratic, and horizontal.

It is important to emphasize that these bodies were far from perfect. Tere, for instance, reports that information did not always flow smoothly from the negotiating committees to the *pleno* during the first phase of the strike, which she attributes to conservative figures among the negotiators, contrasting it to the way leftist cadre handled information. In addition, conditions during the second phase made it impossible to sustain the double filter (CAs plus *pleno*) that made the first phase particularly participatory. Under these changed conditions, Francisco argues that disbanding the coordinating body created by the assembly in favor of the CRE, in an attempt to make representation function in the same way as during the first phase, was a “huge mistake” because the unwieldy “bureaucratic” structure slowed and complicated communication. Nonetheless, my interviewees' narratives make clear that for the most part, decision-making was regular and authoritative, and as democratic, horizontal, and transparent as possible. These

qualities allowed participants to hear and evaluate a diversity of arguments for and against different tactics and make informed collective choices at moments that demanded quick decisions. At other times, such as the decisions to build barricades, take over Gate 6.5, or favor the continuation of the strike at the assembly at the Convention Center, the decision-making bodies eventually favored the more confrontational alternative. What several interviewees report as the “radicalization” of a core group of students over the course of the first strike reflects not just external interactions with unresponsive and repressive institutions, but also, in part, this process of participatory learning, which did not simply tilt in the direction of confrontation. Niño, for example, who did not initially understand the proposal, by a sector of the UJS, for a “pedagogical close” to the second phase of the strike, realized at the assembly that it was that position which was “in touch with reality.” Another example is the decision to switch from active on-campus disruption and confrontation to civil disobedience.

It is also useful to remember that leadership teams, and groups of participants in general, preserved their tactical autonomy, a position insistently pressed by the UJS. Thus, successful actions such as the spontaneous occupation and sit-in at Central Administration, or the unspontaneous measures taken by a tactical “security” group created for specific confrontational actions, were made possible without altering the balance of trust among participants. Other, less successful actions, such as those that took place on January 11 (a combination of spontaneous and unspontaneous elements), generated criticism and debate, but were handled internally without causing major breaks in the core group of strikers. Even those of my interviewees who report feeling “angry” at those events, or considered them “stupid” or “ridiculous,” did not see this as reason to abandon the movement (nor, inversely, did they do so when legal or institutional means were pursued unilaterally by the CAED). Simultaneously, the collective nature of the process

instilled a strong sense of accountability among all participants and leadership teams, which needed to be reconciled with this autonomy, so that at times, for example, the UJS opted to formally sacrifice this autonomy. Democratic, horizontal, and transparent decision-making allowed strikers to understand differences without alienating the minority and to make use of a diverse tactical repertoire, while maintaining a sense of responsibility to the collective and the process, “managing difference without suppressing it.”

Conclusions

The political [cadre] organization is not the motor of history. The organization is, at its best, a lever. When it successfully inserts itself into the fissures that accumulate within its context, it can force them open, make the pain be felt more strongly, make us more conscious of what’s going on. They can’t do it in a vacuum. An organization isn’t justified because Lenin said something. It’s not prophetic, it’s a pedagogical relationship . . . To conceive political practice as an educational and self-educational process, a critical and constructive process. That political practice-as-pedagogy is what, in its best moments, the UJS was able to do.

—Francisco

Throughout the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike sequence, formal organizations and informal groups functioned as leadership teams, which competed to shape the movement’s collective identity frames, tactical repertoires, and overall strategic outlook. The most coherent among these competing frames offered a “language” or “toolkit” for movement participants to grasp the significance of their participation. The movement’s ability to cohere was made possible, not by a “unified” frame that everyone agreed to, but by the tactical autonomy that allowed diversity to flourish within a wide array of participative, horizontal, and transparent decision-making structures. Those structures, and that tactical autonomy, which propitiated a learning process of reiterated problem-solving at each of the major switchpoints in the sequence, were for the most part conceived of and actively promoted by members of cadre organizations like the UJS, as part of their long term strategic vision.

However, the movement's "solutions" to the dilemmas that appeared at each switchpoint did not result in momentum that progressed in a graceful upward curve. The persistent recurrence of the neoliberal dilemma meant that what appeared as a solution to a given contingent problem contributed to an accumulation of effects that kept producing unexpected switchpoints, where the dilemma reemerged. Whether or not any one of the decisions taken was the best possible one from the standpoint of the movement's stated common goals is not relevant here. What is relevant is that the decisions taken at each of those switchpoints, which only when connected in retrospect seem to "lead up" to their eventual outcomes, all addressed different aspects of a constellation of challenges patterned and textured by neoliberalization. In this uncertain climate, cadre organizations, but especially the UJS, contributed to the strategic capacity of the movement as a whole, enriching its available tactical repertoires and collective identities. One of the ways they were able to do so was by channeling a rich trove of experience, skills, and other resources accumulated through a longer historical sequence of struggles against, among other things, neoliberalization, at the UPR and beyond. That sequence of struggle at the UPR, from 1981 onwards, is the focus of Chapter 5.

Chapter 5. Conclusions: Learning and Struggling on a Moving Train

And I hugged Don Leandro with a joyful and emotional shiver, I felt I was standing on the earth, not floating in the air, that I wasn't just the child of an elaborate theory, but stepping on the concrete world, he gave me roots in the earth, he tied me to the ground, to history. I felt invincible. As we said goodbye I gave him my hand and he gave me his hand, I remember I pressed his hand hard with my two hands and I said: "We'll be seeing each other." And then he replied: "Yes, I'm old, but remember that my boys are there with you."

—Omar Cabezas, *La montaña es algo más que una inmensa estepa verde* (1982: 116; my trans.)¹

The phases of the 2010-11 student strike at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), and their outcomes, cannot be understood in isolation from the ongoing history of the institution and its student movement, partially outlined in Chapter 2. This is a history of continuous, contentious, and contradictory transformation, from a socially marginal elite institution dedicated to the training of colonial educators and bureaucrats, to the neuralgic center of a liberal-populist strategy of modernization and development offering quality and affordable higher education as a public good, to a neoliberal provider of educational commodities increasingly embedded within a market-driven knowledge economy. The oppositional student movement that has continually re-emerged and re-invented itself throughout this process has changed accordingly, from a tiny male-dominated elite driven mostly by nationalistic concerns, to a battalion of organized, radical militants influenced by the international revolutionary left, to a broad-based movement against neoliberalization focusing primarily on student economic concerns. Contention at the UPR has also been inextricably linked, through multiple two-way channels, to Puerto Rico's broader social and political context.

In the preceding chapters, I have described these dynamics as part of an ongoing process of *neoliberalization* at the UPR whose seed was sown in the early 1970s: the expanding

¹ Omar Cabezas is a former Sandinista commander whose *bildungsroman* about the guerilla war against Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza has been translated into English as *Fire from the Mountain* (1985). Francisco related to me the deep personal impact that reading the book during the buildup to the first phase of the strike had on him and other UJS members.

encroachment of market forces corresponding to a gradual shift in the dominant institutional logic, from one premised on the delivery of public goods to citizens, to one serving consumers in the transnational knowledge economy. That process served as the context of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike. I have argued that this process is not spontaneous, but one that has unfolded through the tactical repertoire of economic and political elites at the UPR and beyond, a neoliberalizing bloc. Rather than making the strike or its outcome foregone conclusions, neoliberalizing repertoires in many ways limit the framing and tactical options available to student and other movement actors through a host of disciplinary mechanisms that dampen the conditions for militant collective action, even as the same mechanisms make traditional channels of mediation less responsive to actors' grievances —this is what I have called the recurrent “neoliberal dilemma.” I have further argued that the UPR student movement is not just a complex actor (and nested movement field), but itself a reiterated problem-solving or learning process within which actors contend for the role of “teacher.” One such type of actor, cadre organizations, possess an accumulation of experience, skills, strategic frameworks, and other resources that can help navigate the political climate of neoliberalization, building strategic capacity, through deliberative processes that are participative, horizontal, and transparent.

The reflexive, extended case method I have built, using my participant observation and interviews of members of one such organization, the Union of Socialist Youths (UJS), supports the following empirical conclusions, outlined in the preceding chapters:

- 1) Governance and financing reforms implemented at the UPR by administrations named by both the Popular Democratic (PPD) and New Progressive (PNP) parties since 1981 form more or less coherent repertoires that are consistent with the process and political project of neoliberalization.

- 2) Debates within the UPR student movement at and around critical switchpoints leading up to and during the 2010-11 strike tended to revolve around a tradeoff between pressure and mass appeal, aspects of which are made salient by the effects of the repertoires mentioned above (hence, the recurrent “neoliberal dilemma”).
- 3) The UJS and other cadre organizations intervened in these debates in ways that significantly influenced the decisions of the broader movement, and expanded and enriched, within the given conditions at each switchpoint, its tactical repertoires, collective identity frames, long-term outlooks, and organizational structure, thereby strengthening the elements of its strategic capacity.

In this concluding chapter, I will show how the twin processes of neoliberalization and the reiterated problem-solving UPR student movement have interacted and shaped each other over time, by examining three student strike processes that took place at the UPR before the 2010-11 student strike, once neoliberalization began to germinate, in 1981-82, 1991-92, and 2005. I will show how these processes themselves acted as switchpoints in a longer path leading up to the 2010-11 strike, and contrast it to the student movement’s preceding history (1903-1980), to confirm the above conclusions within a longer time frame.

Laying Tracks, 1981-2005

The 1981-82 strike and its Aftermath

The 1981-82 UPR Student Strike was the head-on collision of two trains, which I discuss in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively: the radical student movement that emerged during the early 1970s, as a result of the accumulating contradictions of the House of Studies liberal-populist public goods regime, and a neoliberalizing academic capitalist regime that suddenly burst forth, after years of silent gestation. Describing the changes in the institutional culture of the UPR between his joining

the faculty in 1972 and the outbreak of the 1981-82 student strike, historian Fernando Picó (one of the mediators in the latter conflict) notes a certain “plebeianization” of the faculty,² and the comparative lack of a “clear perception” among the student movement of its priorities, despite awareness (in part through its own earlier struggles) that the UPR was “modifiable” (1981: 18-19; my trans.). While Picó does not say so, it is likely that this cultural change also reflects the sharp spike in the influx of first-generation working-class students that followed the expansion of the federal BEOG program to Puerto Rico in 1973, forcing the UPR to cap enrollment in 1975 (by 1981, the administration was looking for ways to reduce it). Although the Federation of Pro-Independence University Students (FUPI) was still at the center of the student movement, both at the UPR and beyond, it was no longer able to provide leadership or coherence to the “political ghetto” of sorts that according to Picó the student left had become (*Ibid.*: 19; my trans.).³

When rumors of a tuition hike began to circulate (as early as 1980), the student movement consisted of a handful of leftist cadre organizations and Christian student groups inspired by liberation theology.⁴ Although the UJS and FUPI tended to dominate decision-making discussions, “polarization” between the two organizations often allowed others to exercise a decisive role (Picó

² Picó notes that although the “caliber” of some of the visiting faculty and intellectual debates of the Benítez era were still missed, in 1981 there was no longer nostalgia for the authoritarian style and fostering of elitism among the student body that were common in the early seventies. He attributes this to generational turnover within the faculty and to the successful efforts during that decade to gear the campus conversation towards the problems of Puerto Rican society, rather than abstract discussions of the great ideas of “Western Civilization” (1981: 18).

³ Picó notes that FUPI leadership of the 1973 and 1976 strikes, as well as student demands throughout the decade, were generally seen in the light of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party’s broader positions, around which the FUPI tended to gravitate. This led to the widespread perception that the university itself was not a priority for the FUPI (Picó 1981: 19).

⁴ Nieves Falcón, et al., identify three student political organizations (FUPI, UJS, and Fuerza Verde, a new Independence Party-affiliated organization) and two clandestine groups that may or may not have been tied to one or more of the public organizations: the People’s Revolutionary Commandos and a Provisional Committee for Student Defense, a group that among other things advised students on methods of active “self-defense” against police. In opposition to the strike, Nieves Falcón, et al., identify two “ephemeral” organizations, the Committee Pro Right to Study (COPRODE) and the University Pro Study Committee, apparently ad hoc anti-strike groups in the spirit of the FAU of the 1960s (1982: 168-174; my trans.). The two main religious organizations involved in the strike were the Catholic Action Youth and the Evangelical Students Against the Uniform Increase (Alejandro 1982: 150-155).

1981: 27). The PNP, which had returned to office in 1977 after campaigning against the austerity measures of the last two years of the PPD administration, was soon proclaiming its own austerity agenda. Governor Carlos Romero Barceló was reelected in 1980 amidst allegations of fraud in a closely contested race, but his party lost control of the legislature to the PPD (Nazario Velasco 2005: 261). In the midst of this tense political climate, the long-awaited announcement that tuition at the UPR would be raised for the first time in over 30 years was made by the Superior Education Council (CES) during the summer recess of 1981.⁵ In February 1981, following an initiative by the UJS, a broad Committee Against the Uniform Tuition Increase (CCAUM)⁶ was formed, which organized a student referendum in which the hike was rejected by an ample majority late in the spring semester, a boycott of tuition payments at the start of the fall semester, and numerous speak-ins and on-campus rallies and marches (Nazario Velasco 2005: 268-269; see also Alejandro 1982: 131-132). The CCAUM, which favored income-adjusted tuition, allowed the numerically small UJS to set the terms for the student agenda (Alejandro 1982). A few months later, UJS Spokesperson Roberto Alejandro was elected president of the Río Piedras student council (Nazario Velasco 2005: 269).

In late August, the council organized the first student general assembly at the Río Piedras campus since 1976. The assembly agreed to give the administration a one-week ultimatum to stop the “uniform” (across-the-board) hike and instead implement an income-adjusted payment system. When it did not, a second assembly approved an immediate five-day *paro*, and gave the

⁵ The previous November, the CES had raised the salaries of the president and chancellors by 40%, announcing by January that a budget deficit would force it either to reduce the number of students, raise tuition, or ask the legislature to increase. An initial proposal to the legislature, asking it to expand the UPR’s funding formula, was almost immediately withdrawn, in tune with the administration’s austerity rhetoric funding (Nazario Velasco 2005: 259; see also Picó et al. 1981).

⁶ The organism’s full name was Committee Against a Uniform Tuition Increase and for a New University Law. The demand for a new university law was a remnant of the mobilizations that took place in 1973 and 1974. However, in the context of the 1981 strike, it always remained secondary.

administration another week to reconsider, before reconvening to consider making the strike indefinite, to which Chancellor Antonio Miró Montilla reacted by declaring an academic recess. Early the following week, the Academic Senate named a Mediating Committee, which initiated conversations between the CES and the student leadership.⁷ These broke down when Miró Montilla abandoned the Mediating Committee, after the CES insisted it would not seek additional funds from the legislature.⁸ Following the intervention of two PPD legislators, a “consensus” document was drafted, according to which the CES would agree to study alternatives softening the impact of the tuition hike “to the extent that additional resources may be assigned” (Alejandro 1982: 136; my trans.). However, the text did not commit the CES to a reversal of the hike or any other specific actions concerning the semester in course. Under pressure and feeling emboldened by rising public sympathy, a student general assembly held in late September refused to ratify the agreement and declared an indefinite strike.⁹

The chancellor once again declared a recess and summarily suspended four student leaders, including Alejandro and the president of the FUPI, and successfully requested a court injunction barring them from entering the campus.¹⁰ In the ensuing spiral of violence, faculty became more vocal in calling for an end to the checkpoints and police occupation. In late October, police were finally removed from campus, but striking students continued to demonstrate. As a result, the

⁷ The four-member Mediating Committee was composed of Chancellor Miró Montilla, the Administrative Dean, and two faculty members, Fernando Picó and Milton Pabón, who published their recollection of events in *Las vallas rotas* (Picó, et al. 1981). The CES at the time fulfilled the functions of a Board of Trustees (see Chapter 3 of this dissertation).

⁸ The recess was lifted briefly, but the campus was paralyzed that very afternoon by students claiming the initial recess had cut short their approved five-day *paro*, to which the chancellor responded with another recess.

⁹ Picó and Alejandro’s versions differ. The former claims, “September 21 was disheartening; at no other time were the students closer to obtaining their demands” (Picó 1982: 23; my trans.), whereas the latter argues that “it was a text based on expectations.” According to Alejandro, on the day of the assembly, the CCAUM leadership attempted to persuade both the chancellor and students of an additional time frame to discuss the document, but were flatly rebuked by both (Alejandro 1982: 136-139; my trans.).

¹⁰ Checkpoints and fences were erected and manned by police, who inspected validated student IDs possessed only by those who had paid the semester’s tuition in full. However, strikers (who were at the time also boycotting tuition payments) were often able to enter undetected and stage demonstrations within the occupied campus.

chancellor declared a recess yet again, and the four suspended leaders were arrested and sentenced to several months of prison for violating the court order (but were soon released, when the Supreme Court reversed the decision). In mid-November, the CES agreed to a new study of alternatives, and modifying sanctions for the strikers, but rejected amendments proposed by the Mediating Committee, prompting the two faculty mediators to resign.¹¹ Nonetheless, on November 25, a massive crowd of students gathered on the great lawn of the Río Piedras campus to discuss the Certification. Barred by the court injunction from leading the assembly from within the campus, student leaders stood with loudspeakers on the back of a flatbed truck right outside the fence. On the pretext of a parking violation, police dissolved the assembly by force (Nazario 2005: 276; see also Picó, et al. 1981).

The Supreme Court ordered the administration to allow the celebration of a fifth general assembly on campus, temporarily suspending the injunction against the four student leaders. Two days later, the assembly ratified the continuation of the strike, producing a new police occupation of the campus. Over the winter break, the CCAUM offered conditions for ending the strike, which were initially accepted, but rejected after convening with the governor.¹² A sixth assembly in January 1982 voted to prolong the strike, but a week later, after what Alejandro later called “the richest of all the experience in collective debate” (1981: 191), a seventh assembly finally agreed to end it, after four and a half months since the start of the initial *paro*. Although the students’ core demands were never met, they had secured important concessions from the legislature.¹³ The end

¹¹ CES Cert. No. 52, 1981-1982.

¹² The proposed conditions were: 1. deferment options for those students who had not yet paid for the fall semester; 2. additional need-based financial aid for those unable to pay; and 3. the removal of police from campus (Alejandro 1982: 187-188).

¹³ One million dollars in financial aid for undergraduate students, and an additional half million for graduate students, as well as participation on an official commission with members of the CES and Academic Senate to study matters related to the hike (Alejandro 1982: 191-192).

of the 1981-82 student strike did not immediately usher in an era of quiescence at the UPR.¹⁴ The campus remained occupied by police until 1985, when the CES, following the PPD's return to office, declared a general amnesty for the 1981-82 strikers and named a new liberal chancellor, Juan R. Fernández, who set in motion a process of dialogue that culminated in a resolution of the Río Piedras Academic Senate, adopting a "policy of non-confrontation" in April of 1992, whereby that body committed itself to a series of internal mechanisms for conflict resolution through dialogue (Ramos Rodríguez, et al. 2008: 144).¹⁵

A Gathering Storm (1991-2005)

The second half of the 1980s were relatively uneventful at the UPR (for example, the UJS's most important and successful campaign of the half-decade was to stop an increase in the price of photocopies on campus). A growing political crisis of the Puerto Rican left, marked by the loss of cadre in large numbers, was accelerated by the collapse of the international socialist bloc. The UJS, FUPI, and other student organizations remained active, but small. However, when the possibility of the first tuition increase in 10 years began to be discussed in early 1991, it set off a series of *paros* leading up to a three-week strike that involved campuses beyond Río Piedras and Mayagüez. The Río Piedras general assembly declared two 24-hour *paros* prior to the increase, which was approved by the CES in July, and a 48-hour *paro* demanding an income-adjusted system, as soon as the fall semester began in late August. Amidst tensions between pro- and anti-strike students,

¹⁴ Barely a month after the end of the strike, during a celebration of the one-year anniversary of the creation of the CCAUM, shots were fired during a confrontation between students and UPR security guards. In June of 1982, the CES expelled Roberto Alejandro for life, banning him from entering any of its campuses for five years, and requested a permanent police presence at Río Piedras (Picó, et al. 1982: 236).

¹⁵ The non-confrontation policy was always more an accepted practice than a *de jure* norm. It existed, *de facto*, in the policies of Chancellor Fernández, long before it was formally adopted by the Academic Senate, and it ceased to exist as soon as the administration ceased to observe it. The Senate is the most representative body of institutional governance at the UPR, but has no truly binding policy-making power beyond making pronouncements that can be overridden by the Board of Trustees (previously the CES). It is charged by the trustees with "*cooperating and collaborating* closely in the establishment of academic norms *within the jurisdictional limits established by law*" (Junta de Gobierno 2015: 19; my trans.; my emphasis).

then UJS spokesperson María Judith Oliveros was elected student council president.¹⁶ Students continued to demonstrate, holding a fourth *paro* in early April of 1992, and a fifth on the morning of April 23, which was extended indefinitely.¹⁷ Chancellor Fernández declared a recess which kept the campus closed until a general assembly voted to end the strike in a tight vote in mid-May, ratified by yet another assembly a week later (Ramos Rodríguez, et al. 2008: 169-170).

Despite the evident interest demonstrated by attendance at several of the assemblies that took place throughout the process, limited student participation in actual protest actions, wide disarray among the left, and the administration's resolve to avoid movement-galvanizing confrontation at all costs resulted in an inability of the 1991-92 student movement to gain any traction.¹⁸ The end of the strike was followed by a five-year lull in student protest, despite support by left organizations for occasional protests by the employee unions. Barely one year later, a new PNP administration passed Law 17, transforming the CES back into a Board of Trustees charged with transforming the UPR into a leaner, more "efficient" revenue-generating institution, an important step towards neoliberalization (discussed in Chapter 3). UJS and other student cadre, including high school students, agitated against the measure, and participated the 1993 teachers' strike against wider neoliberal reforms in public education (Maldonado Jiménez 1993: 75), but the general student response was negligible. It was not until 1997, with talk of the privatization of the Telephone Company in the air, that tensions began to stir again, when Secretary of State Norma

¹⁶ The student right formed the ad hoc group COPRODE (borrowing the name of its 1981 precursor) for the sole purpose of opposing strikes. Meanwhile, student left organizations had formed a movement umbrella called the Committee for Student Revindication.

¹⁷ This fourth *paro* prompted the formal adoption of the non-confrontation policy by the Academic Senate. The policy did not bar the possibility of student or employee *paros*, merely expressed the commitment of the existing administration to working them out through institutional mechanisms, rather than resorting to the police.

¹⁸ The actual student occupation of the campus during this "indefinite strike" lasted only three days.

Burgos sparked a near-riot by showing up unannounced at the Río Piedras campus (see, for example, Álvarez Curbelo, ed. 2005: 365).

The events leading up to the “People’s Strike” against the privatization of the Telephone Company in the summer of 1998 reignited the left, prompting significant student participation. Broader student presence was visible at marches and other large events, while UJS and other student cadre were active at picket lines throughout the duration of that conflict (see, for example, Coordinadora Sindical 2007 [2001]: 39). However, it was the eruption of the renewed struggle against the U.S. Navy’s presence on Vieques after the accidental killing of civilian security guard David Sanes in April of 1999, that marked the revival of the UPR student movement at large. Hundreds of the more than 1,000 activists who received and carried out one- to six-month long sentences at the Guaynabo federal detention center for trespassing on U.S. Navy property during the four-year long civil disobedience campaign were UPR students. The UJS contributed to all aspects of the brigades organized by the Socialist Workers’ Movement (MST) to enter the bombing range and disrupt practices, which in turn served as a vehicle for enlisting new recruits (Torres Torres 2003). In April 2001, a picket at the now off-campus Río Piedras ROTC headquarters, in solidarity with the Vieques struggle and over 30 students then imprisoned for civil disobedience, resulted in the sentencing of a UJS member to one year in federal prison for allegedly striking an ROTC officer (Snodgrass 2015 [2009]: 253).

The U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in turn fanned the flames of anti-militarism. On the day the U.S. invaded Iraq in February 2003, hundreds of UPR students immediately walked out and mobilized to Fort Buchanan in Guaynabo, where they were joined by other activists in a sizeable demonstration, which resulted in confrontations with Military Police. At the Mayagüez campus, student mobilization led to the formation in 2001 of the University Front for

Demilitarization and Education (FUDE) by various organizations, including the UJS, as well as non-organized students (see, for example, Brusi 2005). In September 2003, the FUDE set up a civil disobedience camp on land slated for the construction of a new Air Force ROTC building with UPR funds. For six months, the FUDE and its supporters staged various activities, including pickets, marches, a one-week hunger strike, and an occupation of the main ROTC building. In March 2004, an agreement was reached with the Mayagüez campus chancellor that the programmed building would be put to other uses. However, one of the faculty members who supported the students was fired from his post, prompting an abortive and unsuccessful 24-hour *paro* at Mayagüez and Río Piedras demanding his reinstatement in October of that year.¹⁹

The student leadership that emerged from the Vieques movement and other anti-military mobilizations were highly committed, eager, and experienced in diverse protest tactics, but strategically lacking, according to Ian Camilo, who was then an undergraduate at Río Piedras. Theirs was Puerto Rico's first post-Cold War generation of radical activists, fresh from the first wave of consistent contentious mobilization at the UPR in over two decades. Galvanized by success in Vieques, they joined a patchwork of loosely articulated organizations that attempted to maintain momentum among a student body that had largely reverted to normalcy. The organizational landscape had itself changed significantly since the 1980s: the entire left was transformed in one way or another by far-reaching debates about internal democracy and non-traditional issues such as gender and sexuality; the FUPI, long the largest and most consistent group, had become a shadow of its former self; and new radical left groups had emerged, including the International Socialist Organization (OSI) and the Revolutionary Left Youth, as well as a string

¹⁹ My interviewee and later UJS spokesperson, Ian Camilo, was critical of this *paro*, which was decreed "spontaneously" by a "self-constituted" assembly of a scarce hundred participants, in the midst of another mobilization. Although he was not in a leadership position at the time, he recalls UJS leaders debating heatedly with the activity's organizers, although the UJS and other cadre organizations ultimately participated in the *paro*.

of short-lived anarchist efforts.²⁰ However, entrenched in official student institutions, the left remained small and isolated from the wider student body. A number of decisions were perceived by many to be over-hasty, reckless, or otherwise undemocratic, feeding claims by right-wing and pro-administration sectors that the movement was controlled by cliques more interested in sowing chaos than solving students' day-to-day problems.

The 2005 strike and Beyond

Although anti-militarism was the main focus of the student movement during the first half-decade of the new century, it was not the only issue that students rallied around. A march against privatization plans at the UPR, held in October of 2003 from the Río Piedras campus to the Central Administration Office in the nearby Botanical Garden drew a considerable turnout, for the period. In early April of 2004, a student general assembly at Río Piedras approved an indefinite strike against cuts in summer classes, despite the opposition of the UJS and OSI, who insisted that the movement was ill-prepared for a prolonged struggle. According to Ian Camilo, who was not yet a UJS member at the time, the pro-strike position was pushed by people who were later discovered to be acting on behest of the administration, attempting to force the students' hand and call their bluff. Nonetheless, heeding the majority's decision, cadre organizations took on the work of seeing the strike through, which succeeded when the administration repealed the cuts after three days. Such a deceptively simple success did not reflect the movement's strength, but rather what to Ian Camilo and Ibrahim seems, in retrospect, like the administration taking the students' pulse in preparation for what was to come. Rather than a cohesive movement against neoliberalization,

²⁰ The Revolutionary Left Youth was, with the UJS, one of two student organizations in the Socialist Front at the time. It later dissolved itself in the effort to create the Movement Towards Socialism and September 23 Youth (mentioned in earlier chapters).

organizations were focused on their own work.²¹ Such was the situation when administrators announced a new, across-the-board tuition increase.

The hike, to be implemented at the beginning of the next semester, was approved suddenly by the PPD-controlled Board of Trustees at an extraordinary meeting in late March, catching a fragmented and dispersed student movement off guard.²² At an informational meeting organized by the newly elected Río Piedras student council on April 1, “internal squabbles among the diverse student groups were evidenced.” At that meeting, one of my interviewees, Hugo Delgado, then a spokesperson for the UJS, used his turn to analyze the reasons for the hike, arguing that the money would be used to make the UPR “more attractive” for future bond emissions to finance UPR infrastructure (López Cabán 2005a). At Río Piedras, a general assembly to discuss the issue was not held for a week after the hike was certified. That assembly was at the time one of the largest in recent memory, according to Ibrahim, Ian Camilo, and Hugo. Noting that the movement was not ready for prolonged conflict, despite evident discontent among the student body, organized cadre argued against striking, proposing instead a period of agitation and gradual mobilization, in order to build and organize support for a strike if the hike was not repealed by the beginning of the fall semester. Itself ambivalent and ill-prepared to steer the discussion, however, the cadre leadership was unable to dissuade the assembled students when the motion calling for an indefinite strike was raised.²³ Left organizations conceded to the majority, and an *ad hoc* volunteer United Committee Against the Hike (CUCA) was put together. Students at 9 of the UPR system’s 10 other

²¹ Ian Camilo reports the UJS, for example, agitated around the issue of “sick buildings” – crumbling, unsanitary classroom infrastructure. Others, such as the OSI, turned to international issues such as Solidarity with resistance movements in Latin America or Palestine.

²² Cert. No. 70, 2004-2005.

²³ Ibrahim, who participated in the assembly and was not yet a UJS member, notes that the mood was ambivalent. For example, then UJS spokesperson Scott Barbés took a turn on the floor to argue against the strike. Soon thereafter, however, two other well-known UJS militants arrived with a case of wine allegedly discovered at the President’s Office, thereby exacerbating the generalized mood of hostility towards an administration already widely perceived to be extravagant in its ceremonial spending, while implementing austerity policies.

campuses also declared *paros* ranging from 24 hours to indefinite over the following weeks.²⁴ Unlike previous strikes, there was no consensus within the CUCA itself to support an income-adjusted alternative to the across-the-board-hike, as some now argued for universal free tuition. The only cohesive demand of the 2005 strike was a repeal of the tuition increase.

It soon became evident that fears about the movement's readiness had not been unfounded. Despite the majority vote and large turnout at the assembly, student presence at the gates of the Río Piedras campus the next morning was reduced to a few dozens, mostly organized cadre. Nonetheless, a march from the campus to the Central Administration building, held on the following Monday, drew over a thousand students, as well as members of the faculty and employee unions. In addition, the strike was ratified by majority vote at an extraordinary assembly called by the Río Piedras student council, two days later. A few days later, a group of students and faculty rallied in protest against the strike, led by the PPD and PNP youth organizations. The division manifested itself within the student council, after the president resigned. She was succeeded as interim president by vice-president Ernesto Chévere, a known strike supporter who was close to the UJS. On April 20, the council met without Chévere, replacing him with secretary Nina Valedón, a PPD youth member, who immediately announced a new assembly to consider ending the strike. The assembly was held at an off campus site on April 26, and was cut short by a violent altercation between groups for and against continuing the strike.²⁵

²⁴ Classes remained uninterrupted at the Medical Sciences campus. On April 7, Bayamón and Ponce each declared 5 day *paros*, while Mayagüez declared a 24 hour *paro*. The Bayamón *paro* became an indefinite strike on April 12, while the one at Ponce was lifted. Carolina and Aguadilla declared 5 day *paros* on that day (which Carolina eventually extended into an indefinite strike), and Mayagüez declared an additional 48 hour *paro*. Utuado declared an indefinite strike on the 13th, which was lifted on the 22nd. Cayey declared a 72 hour *paro* on the 19th. Humacao declared an indefinite strike on the 20th, and Arecibo on the 24th. Four campuses in addition to Río Piedras (Bayamón, Carolina, Arecibo, Humacao) were still on indefinite strike when an agreement was reached between the Río Piedras CUCA and the administration, on April 30. All four voted to end their strikes soon thereafter (CLACSO 2005: 241-242; López Cabán 2005a; López Cabán 2005b)

²⁵ After discussing whether or not to boycott the assembly, which it considered illegitimate, the CUCA decided to mobilize its supporters in force, reasoning that a vote to end the strike would be premature (not having secured a

Demoralization within the ranks of the movement itself, nurtured by lack of public support, had already decimated the number of students actively manning the picket lines. A further violent incident among nominal strike supporters, which took place upon returning to campus after the aborted assembly, further demoralized strikers and worsened already extremely negative press coverage. As in 1992, the administration had opted to bet on time rather than repression, resisting calls among an anti-strike sector of the faculty for police intervention, and wearing out CUCA leaders at endless, courteous but unproductive meetings with the president. On the night of April 28, CUCA negotiators and then UPR President Antonio García Padilla reached a preliminary agreement, which was ratified by the Board of Trustees and an impromptu student assembly on the following day. The agreement, which was harshly criticized as insufficient by some CUCA members (the OSI in particular), postponed the hike for at least one semester, and established a Committee for the Study of Institutional Finances (CEFI) composed of representatives of the student, faculty, and administration. The CEFI published a partial report in the summer in which it concluded that the hike was not necessary (2005). However, the CUCA soon fell apart under intensely negative perceptions among the student body, and was unable to sustain mobilization once classes began in the fall. The administration withdrew its participation in the CEFI, and implemented the hike in the spring semester, with little opposition.

Neoliberalization: Context and Process

After the titanic collision of 1981-82, which nearly decimated the UPR student movement, its path and that of the administration's neoliberalizing repertoires became permanently intertwined. One

single concession). Ibrahim, Hugo, and Ian Camilo insist that the decision to disrupt the proceedings had not been taken beforehand. However, the prevailing mood was not to allow the strike to end under conditions manufactured by the administration. In retrospect, Ibrahim observed that the number of students for and against were more or less even, and that a more persuasive attitude might have won over the undecided.

salient way in which the student movement's repertoires seem to have changed with neoliberalization is reflected in the frequency of the use of the strike tactic itself. Although student "strikes" at the UPR date back to 1924, in the first nearly eight decades of the institution's life, they exceeded a month's duration only three times, in 1933, 1942, and 1973 (Fig. 5.1).²⁶ During the following three decades, four distinct strike "declarations" (by open student assemblies at one or more campuses) took place (in 1981, 2005, and April and December 2010; Fig. 5.2).²⁷ Arguably, this contrast might reflect, at least in part, that police reform and lower levels of repression after the mid-1980s encouraged the strike tactic (Fig. 5.3).²⁸ However, in the specific context of the UPR, these changes must themselves be seen in the light of the 1981-82 student movement, whose readiness and ability to echo (but not match) the state's coercive capacity, raised the risk of deadly outcomes making high repression politically costly.²⁹ The semi-official adoption of the non-confrontation policy in 1992, as the PPD was openly embracing neoliberalization (see Chapter 3), should also be understood in terms of a "softer" repertoire, part of the mixed bag of "actually existing" neoliberalism (Krinsky and Simonet 2011; Brenner and Theodore 2002).³⁰

²⁶ I do not include the 1976 strike, despite the fact that student assemblies at several campuses declared a "strike," because they did so largely in solidarity with employee unions that had already paralyzed all normal activity on campus (the student strikes were lifted as soon as negotiations between unions and the administration concluded).

²⁷ The less consistent 1991-92 process consisted of five shorter *paros* over the course of a year, followed by a three-week campus shutdown (Fig. 5.2).

²⁸ The historical record on this point is mixed at best. It should also be noted that increasing levels of repression during the first phase of the 2010-11 strike did not discourage the second phase from happening once the non-confrontation policy was scrapped.

²⁹ Particularly for the PPD, which by the 1980s was openly courting *independentistas* who sympathized with the student movement. Part of this courtship was an explicit distancing from the repression of the independence movement under the PNP. One of the new PPD-controlled legislature's priorities was the investigation of the police killing of two young *independentistas* in the summer of 1979. Investigations showed the two had been entrapped by an "anti-terrorism" squad and executed while unarmed and in custody. Most of the officers involved eventually served murder sentences, although evidence that would have incriminated higher-ranking members of the Romero Barceló administration could not be produced (see, for example, Nelson 1985).

³⁰ As various scholars have argued, in Europe as in the U.S., sectors of the former New Left have often played a significant role in enabling forms of governance that are perfectly compatible with neoliberalization and often help to legitimize it (Muehlebach 2012; Boltanski and Chiapello 2006). The clearest example of one such initiative in Puerto Rico is the Office for Socioeconomic Financing and Self-Management (also known as the "Special

The increasing reliance on strikes is more likely a result of the fact that after 1981 the UPR student movement was responding to specific immediate economic policies affecting large numbers of students, where previous movement causes revolved around nationalist themes, or their resolution lay in the legislature. Neoliberalizing repertoires, on the other hand, while perhaps originating in forces far beyond the UPR, were enacted and could be rescinded by administrators whose jobs, income, and reputation could be directly threatened by paralyzing its normal functioning. The attempt to “use” the police to create instability *on* campus, while simultaneously moving the strike *off* campus, to hound Governor Fortuño himself or picket individual trustees and other high-profile neoliberalizers’ places of business, reflect this perception among at least a sector of the 2010-11 student movement. A comparison with the pre-1981 period can also illustrate how neoliberalization shaped the institutional environment by narrowing the spaces of traditional mediation. For example, during the earlier period, the student movement had consistent access to allies or dissident factions within the ruling political parties and civil society, who regularly intervened to facilitate partial concessions. As a result, mobilization tended to produce apparently favorable outcomes more readily, resulting in prolonged strikes less frequently (Fig. 5.1). That major concessions happened during the early to mid-1960s, when internal governing structures at UPR were *least* democratic, underscores the point, because this was a time of intense internal fissures in the PPD that played to the student movement’s favor.

Thus, for example, whereas brief and relatively low-intensity campaigns in 1960 and 1966 resulted in significant far-reaching concessions from both university administrators and the legislature (albeit in a broader context of widespread confrontation), more than a year of protest, organization, and public debate went unheeded in 1981-82, 1991-92, and 2010-11 (the hike caught

Communities Office”), created during the “soft neoliberal” PPD administration of Sila Calderón (2001-2004) to fight poverty in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities (De Jesús Dávila 2010).

students off guard in 2005) (Fig. 5.2); yet, in all four latter cases (including 2005), administrators responded to strikes by including students in some deliberative (if toothless) forum or another (Fig. 5.5). The responsiveness of the state to student demands in the pre-1981 period (or lack thereof, as in 1948) is clearly related to the political fortunes of and shifting alignments within the PPD and its predecessor, the Liberal Party. During that era, concessions could be obtained from the ruling PPD at times of ascent (1942) or internal strife (1960s), but not consolidation (1948, 1970s) (Fig. 5.1). The post-1968 era of bipartisanship paved the way for a different electoral dynamic, where the pro-statehood PNP served as a foil for many *independentistas* to turn to the PPD as the “lesser evil,” a dynamic discussed at the end of Chapter 3 as *melonismo*. Where a student movement supported by an ascendant *independentista*, religious, and labor left could once gain concessions from the PPD by rallying sympathetic sectors within the party itself, from now on it would have an easier time mobilizing against PNP executives than against equally unresponsive PPD executives (Fig. 5.3).

The political crisis of the Puerto Rican labor and pro-independence left is a complex process that can hardly be reduced to any one factor, and there is much to be said about the role of nationalism in this dynamic. Tellingly, however, the shift described above was not immediate: for instance, the confrontational 1973 and 1976 strikes, led by the FUPI at the time of its closest relationship to the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), took place during a PPD administration.³¹ The 1981-82 strike itself was actively and materially supported by militant public sector unions as well as the Catholic Church and other congregations, whose influence was reflected in the active participation and leadership of faith-based student groups in the strike. That strike is, therefore, a major switchpoint for the UPR student movement in several important ways, in addition to being

³¹ The “post-PSP environment,” as Francisco calls it, is the sector of the *independentista* movement most closely associated with *melonismo*.

the first major process of resistance to neoliberalization at the UPR. First, it provoked a shift in the administration's repertoire towards less repressive tactics, embodied by the non-confrontation policy. Second, it was the last student strike before 2010-11 to generate significant expressions of support from organized civil society, and the last to include *active* participation from militant non-student sectors within it,³² even though all three later processes also developed in the context of broader national mobilization. Third, it became a template of sorts within the tactical repertoire of at least part of the student movement, which I discuss in more detail below.

The 1991-92 and 2005 UPR Student Strikes were also important switchpoints for the student movement, albeit in perhaps less dramatic ways. Most significantly, for the purposes of this section, they came at decisive moments in the trajectory of neoliberalization in Puerto Rico as discussed in Chapter 3 (and particularly of its embrace by the PPD). The 1991-92 strike followed the publication of the first government report openly advocating privatization (CAEG 1989), as well as the first attempt to privatize the Telephone Company. In turn, the tuition hike that sparked the 2005 strike was the opening shot of another PPD administration's efforts to re-energize neoliberalization (after four years of "kinder, gentler" neoliberalization, under a different PPD executive), facing threats of potential credit downgrade (Fig. 5.2). The 1991-92 strike was also an important switchpoint in the sense that it demonstrated the effectiveness of the PPD's non-confrontation strategy. That strike, and the administration's response to it, set the tone for what would be an era, especially after the late 1990s, of relatively frequent mobilization (with varying degrees of effectiveness), as a new cohort of student radicals, emerging from the crucible of the 1998 People's strike and the 1999-2003 Vieques movement, struggled to gain a foothold on the slippery terrain of the administration's patient waiting game. That patience was finally tested in

³² Perhaps the one exception was the civil disobedience portion of the second phase of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, which according to Tere was expressly designed by the UJS with the purpose of involving outsiders.

2005, after which mounting pressure to curtail its “permissiveness” of student radicals (as the administration began to do, starting with the 2006 theater protests, discussed in Chapter 4) converged with a far more aggressive push towards neoliberalization.

Cadre and Grassroots: Interaction as Learning

The re-introduction of student assemblies at the UPR after 1966 renewed the possibility of student “strikes” legitimized by open deliberation and majority vote. Much has been made by both sympathetic and critical observers in Puerto Rico about the students’ “appropriation” of what is eminently a tactic of workplace struggle (see for example, Picó 1981; Nazario Velasco 2005), although the notion that non-workers may have disruptive power in their own right was neither invented in Puerto Rico nor can it be reduced to mere mimicry (Gamson 1975; Piven and Cloward 1979 [1977]). It is probable that striking also rose in prominence within the student movement’s repertoires as a result of the approximation to workers’ struggles that took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, although clearly the tactic was available (and used repeatedly) before then. Broad student participation in the 1973 and 1976 UPR employee strikes brought the movement (beyond radical cadre already active in labor struggles) directly in contact with the trappings and dynamics of militant labor, which contributed to its emulation during the 1981-82 strike.³³ In turn, that conflict’s stature captured the imagination of future cohorts of cadre. In Francisco’s words, “the Bible of the student movement, or at least a sector of it, is called *Las vallas rotas*.”³⁴

³³ Those strikes also signaled the emergence of a previously inexistent contentious labor dynamic at the UPR, in part a result of the institution’s dramatic expansion (the contradictions of the liberal public goods regime), and the appearance of budgetary concerns that would serve to justify encroaching neoliberalization in the following decades (Cruz Crespo 2014).

³⁴ *Las vallas rotas* is the compilation of the recollections of the 1981-82 UPR Student Strike of faculty mediators Picó and Pabón, and strike leader Alejandro, previously mentioned in footnotes to Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

A striking difference in the internal interactions of the UPR student movements of the pre- and post-1981 periods can be seen in the creation of intermediate deliberative bodies. Whereas during the former period, student political organizations informed by nationalist frames often simply claimed or aspired to represent “Puerto Rican students” in their entirety or attempted leadership-level coordination with little or no grassroots participation (Fig. 5.1), every strike process since (and including) 1981-82 has been led by broad deliberative “committees” open (at least in theory) to all those willing to participate (Fig. 5.4). This strategic innovation, an initiative of the UJS introduced in February 1981 with the creation of the CCAUM, was also in part tailored to the re-introduced student general assemblies. These broad committees have allowed for day-to-day decision-making to become increasingly transparent, horizontal, and participative over time, evolving into the dual structure of action committees and *pleno*, first rehearsed in 2005, which finally came into its own in 2010-11. This structure both ensures the sovereignty of open assemblies and minimizes the free rider dilemma by allowing a core of committed participants executive control (Fig. 5.4). Another crucial aspect of the model that has evolved is the tactical autonomy that all participants enjoy, which on balance, as I showed in Chapter 4, strengthened the movement’s strategic capacity. The UJS has consistently pushed for such autonomy within the movement, which echoes its own internal “freedom of tendency,” since at least the 1990s.³⁵

A further area of important innovation has been the changing role of the general student councils, and the gradual emergence of parallel negotiating bodies. Student councils, along with assemblies, were banned in 1948 and reintroduced in 1966. Ostensibly representative, council members are chosen by the student body through direct secret ballot, but elections seldom draw

³⁵ As discussed in Chapter 2, the MST and UJS formally abandoned “democratic centralism” in the early 1990s. At least two of my interviewees, Jeanqui and Tere, cited freedom of tendency as a big draw in their decision to join the organization.

much interest or participation during “normal” times of campus inactivity. Because they are considered to provide institutional experience and status, council positions are usually coveted by aspiring politicians from the PNP and PPD youth. Because they offer privileged access to resources, as well as authority to organize assemblies, the student left has also traditionally sought to control them, often successfully in times of mobilization.³⁶ However, as student cadre have discovered, leadership of institutionally sanctioned bodies can also have significant drawbacks, as they can help portray the student cadre as an entrenched and out-of-touch clique. After the 2005 strike, when a pro-strike president was deposed by fellow council members, resulting in parallel claims to represent the student body by the CUCA and the anti-strike student council, the UJS made the conscious decision not to pursue official posts further, proving more adept at influencing the movement from the grassroots.

That experience also led to the introduction in 2010 —on the authority of the assembly— of a separate, elected negotiating committee directly accountable to *pleno*, which was able to claim representation successfully, despite the administration’s initial reticence to speak to anybody but the student council (Fig. 5.4).³⁷ Previously, the negotiating role was attributed on a more or less volunteer basis to the cadre who took on the task. This became an issue at the end of the 2005 strike, according to Ibrahim, because administration proposals were either rejected offhand by the CUCA steering committee, or presented almost as *fait accompli* (at the very end), with little deliberation (in stark contrast to 1981-82, when massive student assemblies at times overwhelmed the CCAUM). The UJS, which played a prominent role in the CUCA leadership, was especially

³⁶ Thus, for example, UJS leaders Roberto Alejandro and María Judith Oliveros were elected Río Piedras student council presidents at the onset of the 1981-82 strike, and early in the 1991-92 process, respectively. Future MST founder Luis Ángel Torres also headed the Río Piedras student council in the early 1970s, when he also led the *Independentista* University Youth.

³⁷ Negotiating committees existed in 1981-82 and 1991-92, but they roughly overlapped with the student council, then controlled by the student left.

hurt by that manner of proceeding, which it was determined not to repeat in 2010-11. The participation, horizontality, and transparency that characterized decision-making during the latter process were therefore not a given, but developed over time. Increased accountability and deliberation over time, themselves a result of the learning process, led to greater strategic flexibility and innovation at crucial moments in the UPR 2010-11 Student Strike, when the movement found itself having to “switch gears” while in motion.

Like any learning process, the interaction between cadre and grassroots participants, underlying the construction of deliberative spaces, has been ongoing. As Roseanne Rutten has pointed out, it is not uncommon for cadres’ “instrumentalist” attitudes to be viewed with suspicion by grassroots participants (2008: 17), a dynamic that several of my interviewees confirm. In the past, many have accused UPR student cadre of monopolizing broad committee discussions, intentionally or not. Writing about the 1981-82 strike, Picó, for example, attributed this to the “culture” of vigorous debate within the FUPI and UJS, which in effect marginalized participants less experienced in the arts and vicissitudes of constant deliberation (1981: 27). In my experience, many cadre justify this as simply part of the natural “learning process.” Both contentions are probably at least partially true, and I have also personally witnessed how cadre at the UPR have themselves had to learn to change their approach to grassroots participants, to a more genuinely pedagogical one. Niño, for example, noted how, before joining the UJS, his impression of deliberative meetings was that “these people destroy each other when debating,” although later he appreciated the importance of vigorous polemic, and what he was able to learn from those meetings. However, he also admitted that not all his fellow UJS members had the necessary patience or grace when interacting with their less experienced peers.

I argued in Chapter 4 that strategic capacity, and specifically the crucial element of motivation, did not result from any one specific set of tactics, but rather the timing and context in which they are enacted. Although most of my interviewees insist that achieving the movement's specific demands should not be the primary measure of movement success, it can be a helpful gauge of the learning curve over time, given that it is so critical to motivation. Once again, the comparison of all four post-1981 strike processes is illuminating. The 1981-82 strike, occurring under favorable political conditions and during a national crest in militancy and mobilization, did not stop the imposition of a uniform hike, but did produce significant secondary concessions as well as a powerful and lasting symbolic movement resource. In 1991-92, an inexperienced new generation facing dramatically changed conditions, including a shift in administration strategy towards non-confrontation, at a time that was generally a political low point for the left, never really achieved traction and was by far the least fruitful of all four processes (Fig. 5.5). Nonetheless, the advance of neoliberalization, as well as the resurgence of anti-militarism, allowed the student movement to enter the new century with fresh energies. The 2005 strike, marked by all the difficulties discussed above, has been negatively compared to the 2010-11, overlooking the clear direct relationship between the two. Even in terms of specific demands, its outcome can in fact be read as a "success" in comparison to the two previous strike processes: the tuition hike was *not* implemented for another semester, and unlike in 1981-82, the resulting study of institutional finances produced a published partial report (CEFI 2005) (Fig. 5.5).

In contrast to 1991-92, the 2005 strike was led by a cohort of students seasoned in anti-militarist protest and amidst widespread discussion within international left circles of "neoliberalism" (Fig. 5.2). As noted above, many of its younger participants, armed with resources and experiences usually acquired through cadre organizations (not just the UJS), would go on to

play leading roles in the 2010-11 strike. The 2005 strike is therefore a crucial switchpoint, without which the 2010-11 strike may never have happened, certainly not in the way that it did. Perhaps the clearest illustration of the post-1981 sequence as a prolonged learning process, however, can be seen in the almost steadily shrinking distance between each switchpoint. Whereas the 1981-82 strike was followed by a ten-year relative lull in all student mobilization, the 1991-92 process was followed by only five years of quiet, the 2005 strike (as demoralizing as its immediate outcome may have been) by only three, and the first phase of the 2010-11 strike by only months (where a similar outcome in 2005 failed to produce a second phase). Although the “success” of the 2010-11 strike as a whole, in terms of movement demands, in 2013, has been followed again by relative quiet, ongoing efforts by cadre to sustain political debate and organizing led to significant and amply supported *paros* in 2015 and 2016 (Fig. 5.4). Continuing commitment by PPD and PNP leaders to neoliberalization, combined with renewed tradition of student militancy, portend a promising future for the UPR student movement.

Conclusion

I remember one of the most important conversations for me during this whole process was with Miguel Báez. When the second strike was approved, and that process started, I was still against [the timing], and I told him why . . . and the *compañero* clearly told me: “OK, all of that may be true, but we’ve assumed a commitment to the student body to struggle. We’ve called on them to struggle, we’ve called for a strike, and the student body has approved a strike. We’re there, we have to be there, and this is the moment to assume responsibility for our words in political terms” . . . To be organized is to assume that responsibility with the memory of popular struggles, which is nothing less than to assert the possibility that things can be different.

—Francisco

Neoliberalization and the UPR student movement crashed into one another in 1981, and have been barreling forward, spiraling around each other, ever since. The visible traces of this “encounter” on the UPR student movement, which I discuss above, can be summarized as follows. First, there is a higher frequency of prolonged strikes (those lasting at least one month) taking place in the three decades since 1981 (four, counting each phase of the 2010-11 strike separately, plus the year-

long process of 1991-92) than in the eight preceding decades (only three). Although there are other factors that probably contributed to this trend, such as the influence of the militant labor movement of the 1970s, striking was clearly part of the movement's tactical repertoire before that. And while the reintroduction of student government after 1966 also reintroduced the legitimizing mechanism of the general assembly, in the 15 years before 1981 it was only exercised for student concerns once (1973). In terms of the external interactions that conditioned this increasing frequency, there are two definite switches present, both clearly elements of coherent neoliberalizing repertoires: 1) the administration tactic of increasing tuition, or searching for some facsimile, every so often (the exact timing varies, in part as a result of real or perceived movement capacity to respond; and 2) the administration's diminished responsiveness to protest, debate, and negotiation, except under pressure.

Second, there is a visible increase in the strategic capacity of the movement, as measured in terms of both the progressively shorter lapses between strike processes and in their gradual effectiveness at achieving some form of concessions, after 1991-92. Although in isolation, the former could simply be attributed to accelerating neoliberalization (less time between hikes means less time between strikes), in combination the two trends also reflect movement interactions within a long-term process of reiterated problem-solving or learning. As I have shown, the contest among leadership teams to provide tactical repertoires and collective identity frames to the broader movement has been a crucial part of this learning process. Notably, the two trends demonstrate the interrelation between the two types of "outcome" that my interviewees envision: on the one hand, the attainment of the movement's stated demands, and on the other, the movement's growing "conscientization" and "organization," as expressed by its readiness and capacity to respond. This tendency towards mutually reinforcing outcomes is the learning curve of the student movement,

with each strike serving as a switchpoint that, seen in retrospect, “leads” to the next, much as the switchpoints within each process, observed in a longer temporal scale, at a higher level of abstraction.³⁸

In this sense, as my opening metaphor suggests, neoliberalization and the post-1981 student movement are not strictly separable from one another. It is only in and through their interactions, which are also those between the student movement and the institution/administration (both of which are not just compound actors, but arenas, or rather nested fields of action), that switchpoints in the sequence are hit. The individual actors involved in this complex dance have changed, as have the repertoires through which they interact with each other. But while neoliberalization is driven and sustained by dynamics and forces far beyond Puerto Rico, the student movement replenishes itself entirely every four or five years (on average), both a blessing and a weakness, opportunity and threat. Whatever continuity can be maintained, from one moment to the next, hinges exclusively on the movement’s ability to pass on the lessons learned to the next cohort. While it is certainly true, as Nancy Whittier shows, that a movement’s identity can endure without or outside of formal organizations (1995), there is a certain strategic coherence in consistent political practice, that only organization can provide over time. At least, the most consistent response I received throughout my interviews to the question, “What was the role of political organizations in the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike?” was to transmit the knowledge, experiences, and skills of previous generations—to function, in Francisco’s words, as “organized memory,” in the face of the organized forgetting promulgated by neoliberalizers.

How generalizable are the lessons of the UPR student movement? A certain conventional wisdom today tells us cadre organizations are a thing of the backwards past, or at least the

³⁸ I have only discussed the switchpoints within the 2010-11 strike in any significant detail, but the summaries above suggest important turning points within the other three processes as well.

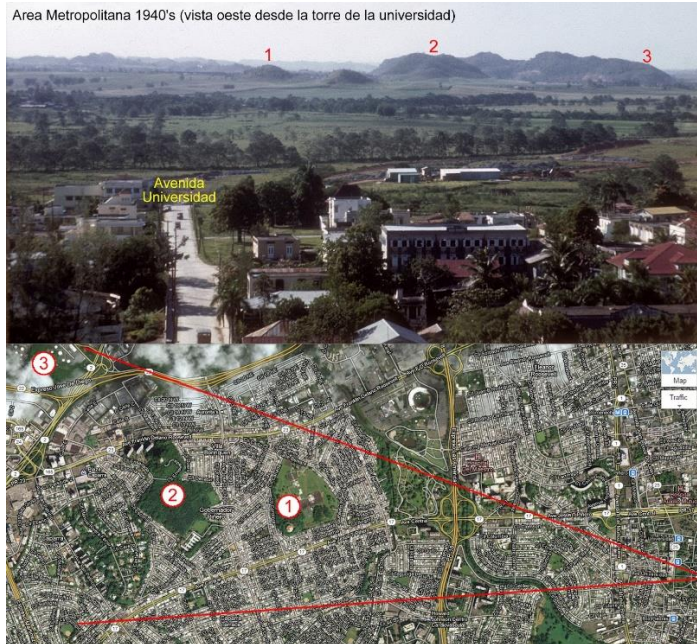
repressive periphery, where the movement constraints might still stand to benefit from the Leninist model. By contrast, it is sometimes suggested, “spontaneous” and “leaderless” movements are the way of the future, particularly in “advanced” core societies. Surely, there are certainly tendencies inherent in organization that democratic movements and organizations will always have to combat. But while horizontalism is certainly a virtue which, as the UPR student movement shows, can flourish in the midst of competing leadership *teams*, the responsibility that comes with leadership is often a scarce commodity in settings that lack at least some level of organization. Few polities anywhere exhibit the peculiar mix of core and periphery that is strikingly evident in Puerto Rico. And yet, I have argued, this is precisely what makes the case so compelling. Although its colonial status is omnipresent in the narrative I have woven (neoliberalization flows from changes in federal law and policy; rent-seeking local elites adapt by cannibalizing the public sphere; workers and professionals make use of citizenship and cheap airfares to “vote with their feet”), similar vicissitudes to those facing the UPR student movement appear wherever neoliberalization rears its head. Any more than superficial look at contemporary resistance movements, North and South, reveals small, tight-knit groups of ideologically driven cadre, hard at work before, during, and after even the most seemingly spontaneous eruptions of protest.

By applying the method of the extended case study to the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike, and then to the thirty-year time period between 1981 and 2011, I have sought to avoid, on the one hand, reifying the movement or its context as somehow frozen in time, and, on the other, controversies that may arise from choosing between comparative strategies. I have made clear the characteristics that make my case distinct from practically all others, I have argued that the concepts that help to illuminate the case are unrelated to said characteristics, and I have compared the case to itself at different points in time to reveal it as a set of interrelated processes in motion.

This work has not sought to argue or explain causation, but rather the opposite: to demonstrate how these processes mutually condition and shape one another in this ongoing dialectical relationship. If I have characterized the cadres' role as pedagogical, I hope this will not be interpreted to suggest the relationship as unidirectional or the "knowledge" imparted as unchanging truth. In the film reel that I have striven to present, the lines between structure and agency, context and interaction, contradictions and dilemmas, cadre and grassroots, learning and struggling, are constantly being blurred, sharpened, and reversed.

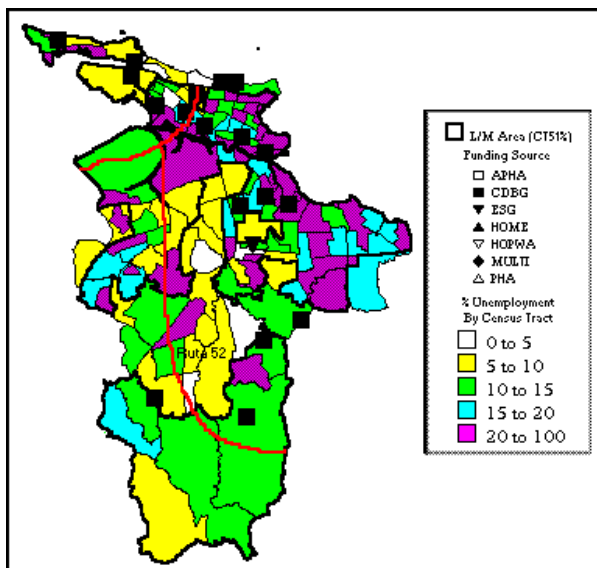
Figures

Fig. 2.1. Westward view from UPR clock tower, 1940s, with contemporary satellite image.



Source: <http://redescubriendopuertorico.blogspot.com/2012/04/el-valle-al-oeste-de-rio-piedras-1940s.html>.

Fig. 2.2. San Juan Municipality, unemployment by census tract, 1995.



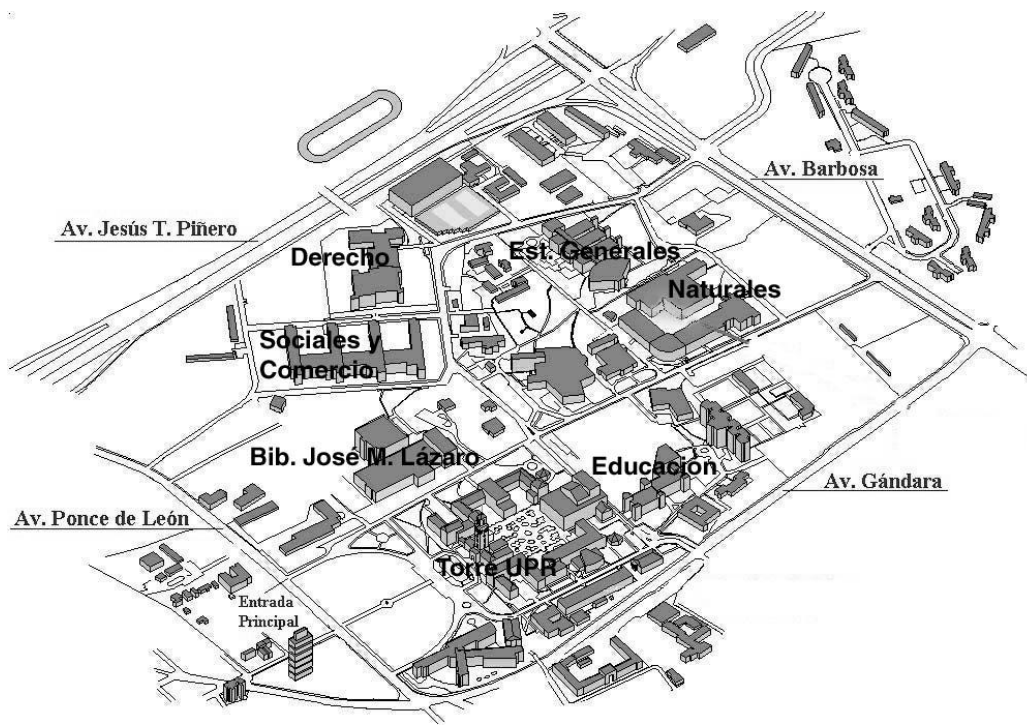
Lower percentages of unemployment are lighter, higher percentages are darker. The Río Piedras campus is a small white tract contiguous to the “ESG” triangle in the upper right hand quadrant. Source: <http://archives.hud.gov/reports/plan/pr/sanjuapr.html>.

Fig. 2.3. Rough location of the 11 campuses of the UPR system.



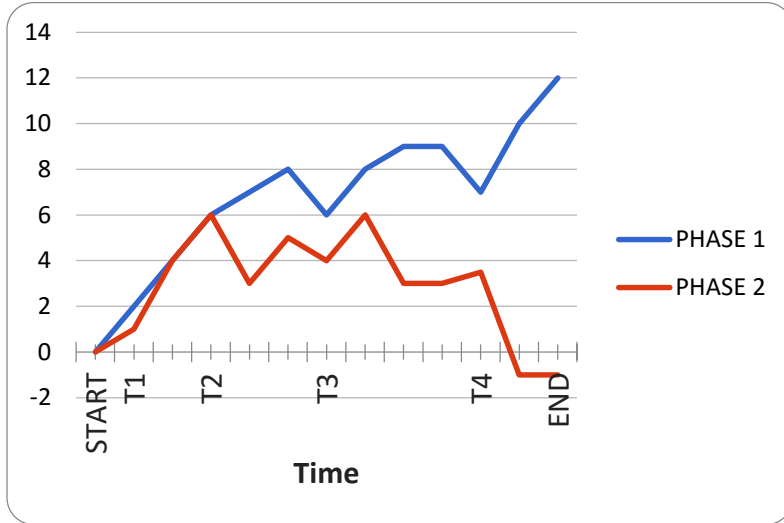
The Medical Sciences and Río Piedras campuses would be placed more accurately next to each other, slightly above the midpoint between the words Bayamón and Carolina. Source: <http://grad.uprm.edu/oeg/InformacionGeneral/>

Fig. 2.4. Rough map of the Río Piedras campus.



Source: <http://biblioteca.uprrp.edu/mapa-rp.htm>.

Fig. 4.1. Comparative momentum (two phases of the 2010-11 UPR Student Strike)



T1-4 = Switchpoints

	Phase 1	Phase 2
START	(+2)	Slow start to semester (+1)
T1	Mar. 10, 2010: Occupation of Academic Senate (+2)	Nov. 18, 2011: Referendum on special fee (+3)
	(+2)	Dec. 7: Strike begins (+2)
T2	Apr. 13, 2010: General assembly approves strike (+1)	Jan. 11, 2011: Vandalism during campus march (-3)
	Apr. 21: Strike begins (+1)	Jan. 19: Civil disobedience starts (+2)
	Stagnation (-1)	Jan. 27: Events at Capitol; civil disobedience ends (-1)
T3	May 13, 2010: Convention Center assembly (+2)	Feb. 9: Police harassment leads to riot (+2)
	May 20: Confrontation at Sheraton Hotel (+1)	Feb. 9: APPU and HEEND demand police withdrawal (-3)
	(+0)	Stagnation (+0)
	Stagnation (-2)	Feb. 22: General assembly; UJS proposes "pedagogic close" (+0.5)
T4	Jun. 9, 2010: Occupation of Central Administration (+3)	Mar. 7, 2011: Chancellor Guadalupe attacked (-4.5)
	Jun. 16: Agreement signed (+2)	
END	Jun. 20: Agreement ratified	

Fig. 5.1. Pre-1981 UPR student movement

	1930s	1940s	1960s	1970s
Duration (strikes lasting more than 4 weeks)	1933: 1 month	1942 (Mayagüez): 6 months	None, despite high level of mobilization	1973: 40 days
General orientation of student demands	Nationalism, university reform	Nationalism, university reform	Anti-militarism/anti-imperialism, university reform	Anti-militarism/anti-imperialism, university reform, labor solidarity
Repression	N/A	No police intervention or expulsions (1948: police intervention, hundreds of expulsions)	After 1964: repeated police intervention (arrests, injuries, extensive property damage; at least 1 death), expulsions.	1970-1976: repeated police intervention (arrests, injuries, extensive property damage; at least 3 deaths), expulsions.
Allies	Resolved through the intervention of Liberal Party in House of Delegates	Early 1940s: student mobilization supported by the PPD, led to 1942 University Law; 1942, 1948: PPD consolidation (no support)	Liberal wing of PPD secured concessions (1960 ROTC made voluntary; 1966 University Law Reform)	Militant organized labor, including the HEEND (struck at same time as students in 1973); after 1972: PPD consolidation
Cadre-Grassroots Interaction	FNEP declared itself representative of all students; youth wing of “patriotic vanguard” (Nationalist Party)	Student mobilizations directed either by PPD (early 1940s) or Nationalist Youth.	FUPI declared itself heir to 1948 student council; close ties to “patriotic vanguard” (MPI)	FUPI ties to PSP make it increasingly difficult to hegemonize changing student body

See List of Acronyms.

Fig. 5.2. Duration and context (post-1981 UPR student strike processes)

	1981-82	1991-92	2005	2010-11 (Phase I)	2010-11 (Phase II)
Duration	4.5 months	5 <i>paros</i> over the course of 1 year	29 days	62 days	3 months, not counting 2.5 week holiday break
Pre-strike mobilization and public debate	7 months	10 months before 3-day occupation	N/A	16 months	5 additional months
UPR context (previous decade)	1970-71: March events; 1973-76: support for employee strikes, mobilization for new UPR Law; 1976-81: relative demobilization	1981-92: Relative demobilization	1997-2003: People's Strike, Vieques, Iraq/Afghanistan Wars, camp against ROTC building in Mayagüez; 2004: short strikes (mixed results)	2005: UPR strike, killing of Filiberto Ojeda; 2006: mobilizations against austerity, IVU tax; 2008: teachers' strike; 2009: opposition to Law 7	Phase I
Immediate national context	Electrical workers' strikes (1977, 1978, and 1981), land occupations by poor communities	Large mobilizations against plans to sell Telephone Company in 1990	Rumors of credit downgrade; preceded mobilizations against "100 Day" austerity plan (Oct. 2005)	Widespread mobilizations against Law 7	Aftermath of Law 7

See List of Acronyms.

Fig. 5.3. External interactions (post-1981 UPR student strike processes)

	1981-82	1991-92	2005	2010-11 (Phase I)	2010-11 (Phase II)
Party in office	PNP (split legislature)	PPD	PPD (split legislature)	PNP	PNP
Organized student opposition to strike	COPRODE, Pro-Study University Committee	COPRODE	PPD, PNP Youth	None	None
Overall administration strategy	Repression (police occupation)	Non-confrontation	Non-confrontation	Increasing confrontation	Repression (police occupation)
Media coverage	Mixed	Mixed/neutral	Largely unfavorable to students	Largely favorable to students	Largely unfavorable to students
Civil society support (outside UPR faculty, employee unions)	Significant material support by labor unions, churches	None	None	Significant, but limited material support, initiative by organized civil society	Very limited (except demand to remove police from campus)

See List of Acronyms.

Fig. 5.4. Strike organization (post-1981 UPR student strike processes)

	1981-82	1991-92	2005	2010-11 (Phase I)	2010-11 (Phase II)
Broad organizations/ formed prior to strike	CCAUM/ Yes	Student Revindication Committee/ No	CUCA/ No	CEDEP, CCHD, CAs/ Yes	CEDEP, CCHD, CAs/ Yes
Negotiation	Student council/CCAUM leadership	Student council/Student Revindication Committee leadership	CUCA steering committee	CNN	CRE
Grassroots decision-making	Assembly	Assembly	Assembly , CUCA	Assembly, <i>pleno</i>	Assembly, <i>pleno</i>
Student cadre organizations	UJS, FUPI, Fuerza Verde (PIP), Catholic Action Youth, Evangelical Students Against the Uniform Increase	UJS, FUPI, PIP	UJS, OSI, JIR, Student League, FUPI	UJS, OSI, J23, FUPI	UJS, OSI, J23, FUPI
Overall campus situation	“Open” campus (police occupation, student disruption)	“Closed” campus (short <i>paros</i> , 3- day student occupation)	“Closed” campus (student occupation)	“Closed” campus (student occupation)	“Open” campus (police occupation, student disruption)

See List of Acronyms.

Fig. 5.5. Outcomes and aftermath (post-1981 UPR student strike processes)

	1981-82	1991-92	2005	2010-11 (Phase I)	2010-11 (Phase II)
Outcome	\$1.5m in financial aid to needy students; participation in official study commission; Hike maintained	Hike maintained	Agreement to form CEFI, no hike in August, study alternatives to tuition hike; incremental hike for incoming students.	Concession of students' main demands (repeal of Cert. 90, no fee in August, no reprisals against strikers)	"Schatz Grant"; Pledge by all but one candidate to repeal fee; eventual repeal of fee (Jun. 2013)
Aftermath	Police occupation until 1985; relative demobilization for 11 years	Relative demobilization for 5 years (until 1997 plans to sell Telephone Company), despite Law 17 and teachers' strike in 1993	Demoralization; relative demobilization for 3 years (until 2008 teachers' strike)	Initial re-fragmentation; Phase II	Relative continued mobilization

See List of Acronyms.

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