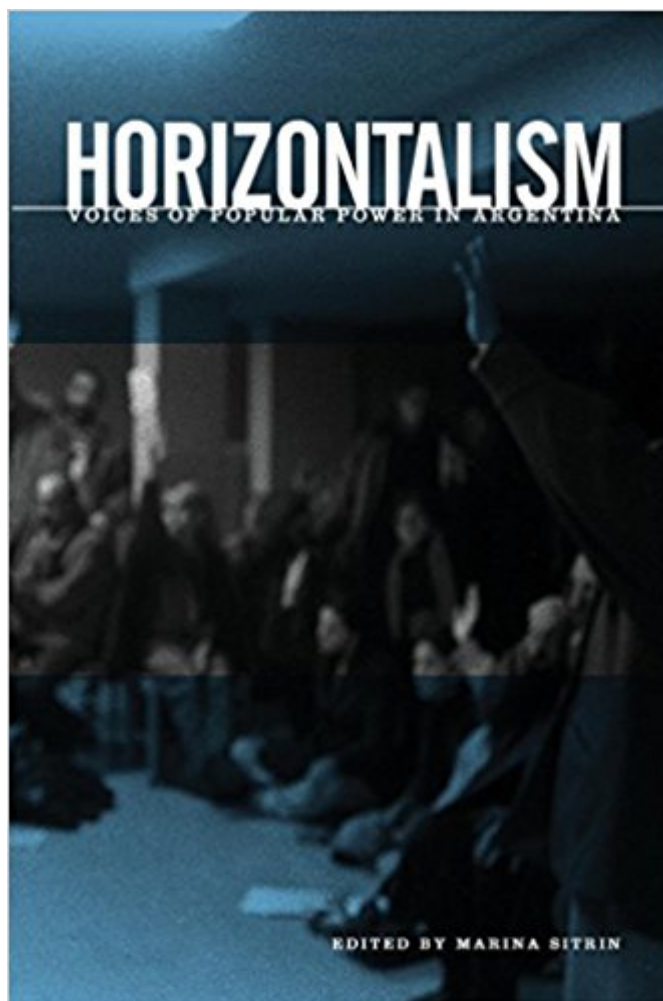


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# Horizontalism: Voices Of Popular Power In Argentina



## Synopsis

Chosen by Rebecca Solnit for her "Secret Library of Hope: 12 Books to Stiffen Your Resolve" (Dec. 2007). "The movements in Argentina have been among the most creative and inspirational in recent years. Marina Sitrin's collection allows us to learn from the activists themselves and continue the experiments in autonomy and democracy they have begun." •Michael Hardt, co-author of Empire "...a fascinating account about what is fresh and new about the Argentine uprising." •John Holloway, author of Change the World Without Taking Power

The popular rebellion that began in December 2001 in Argentina with the IMF melt-down and subsequent capital flight sparked a process of creativity that continues to this day. Different from so many social movements of the past, this rebellion rejects political programs, opting instead to create directly democratic spaces on street corners, in factories, and throughout neighborhoods. Many have come to call this new social relationship, "horizontalidad." Horizontalism is an oral history of the exciting transformations taking place since the popular rebellion. It is a story of cooperation, vision, creation and discovery. It is a history told by people in the various autonomous social movements, from the occupied factories, neighborhood assemblies, arts and independent media collectives, to the indigenous communities and unemployed workers movements. Marina Sitrin is a New York City-based lawyer, writer, and activist who has spent large portions of the past three years in Argentina. Her work has appeared in Left Turn and Perspectives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Marina Sitrin, a New York City-based lawyer, writer, and activist, has spent large portions of the last three years in Argentina working with, and studying, the autonomous popular movements developing this oral history.

It appears that all the ingredients have to be just right for this amazing social phenomena to appear after many years of revolutionary stagnation. There is now a new choice to pick from without excluding one's other beliefs, and not having to fit one's ideology in some rigid dogma. Horizontalism is oxygen, it allows conversation proceeded by action, or rather, a flow of ideas with practical activity. It is about dreams becoming reality, followed by new dreams and new reality. It is as close to the processes of life as one can get. The book, Horizontalism, allows the voices of the participants to tell their story as it is being written, because this is not for armchair intellectuals but rather about those changing thru daily discussions and practical activity that blossoms with new ideas and vocabulary, that promises more hope for a world free of vertical dictates and abundant information and collective will.

First of all I really enjoy reading oral history. I consider this book to be an extremely important read, very provocative, because in many ways it reviews the important concepts of Horizontalidad, Protagonism and Subjectivity, Dignity, Autogestion, Politica Afectiva, and The politics of Walking. These concepts are explained from the words of people who have learned what they mean by living them. The book explains how people have taken controls of their lives and their movement- it has left me begging for more information about -how is their movement working now? ...and how do I create this in my own world?

From the military dictatorship to the dictatorship of the market, the lives of the Argentinian people have been shaped by hardship, loss and tears. Though not lately receiving quite as much attention in the mainstream press as the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela, the social rebellion in Argentina is in many ways even more exciting as it is happening outside the realm of traditional politics and statecraft. In this wonderfully engaging oral history project, Marina Sitrin chronicles the lives of various women and men involved in the neighborhood assemblies, recuperated factories, the unemployed workers' movement, alternative media collectives, human rights organizations, radical student groups, lgbt activism, and feminist struggles that constitute the piquetero movement. Devoid of a populist leadership and a vanguard party, this is a movement that emphasizes decentralization, egalitarianism, horizontalism, consensus decision-making, autonomy, social protagonism, and

face-to-face democracy. Rather than fighting for a centralized, authoritarian, bureaucratic state socialism, the piqueteros are building a grassroots, participatory socialism from below. Unlike other radical Latin American movements, this is largely a rebellion of the underclass rather than the working-class. While the industrial proletariat does play a critical role in the movement (i.e. the garment workers at Brukman, the print shop workers at Chilavert and the workers at the Zanon ceramics factory), other important groups play a vital role like students, queers, housewives, sex workers, artists, and the unemployed. Faced with overwhelming poverty and state repression, the brave Argentinian women and men in this book are pioneering a new form of social activism against the tyranny of global capital. For activists interested in the history of the Argentine financial meltdown, alternatives to neoliberal economics, and the hopes and dreams of the piquetero movement, this is a really important and extremely readable book!!!

Wonderful insight into what the community can accomplish digging out of the debris of a [deliberately?] failed economy, compounded and precipitated by an ineffective yet murderous military dictatorship, which tried their best to decapitate all existing popular community leadership. The examples of the recuperation/recovery of idled productive assets show that there is an alternative, and the practice of using street demonstrations to identify repressors, collaborators, and anti-community profiteers/speculators could be a model for the U.S. The implementation of community education programs would also be helpful here. It was heartening to see that no bloodshed was required, although some did occur in reaction to the very effective tactics.

This is an inspiring collection of oral history excerpts detailing the anarchist ethos of Argentina's Horizontalist movement of the early part of this decade, in which thousands of people joined together in grassroots, participatory, anti-hierarchical struggles to rid themselves of government and take collective control of their lives and neighborhoods. Dozens of factories were taken over and run by the workers, 4 governments were ousted in a matter of days, and hundreds of thousands took to the streets to demand "Que se vayan todos!" Everyone must go! Sitrin records many stirring accounts of the political awakening and empowerment of ordinary people. They explain in their own words, humbly but eloquently, their anarchist principles of "autogestion" (self-management), and horizontalism, and their refusal to vie for government. My only qualms with the book are that it gets to be somewhat repetitive, and could have been shortened by 50 pages without losing much detail. Also, as this is history from the grassroots, we never get a clear overview of the arc of the events of the late 90's and early 00's, or an explanation of how the movements fell short of their lofty goals,

and what lessons were learned to help prepare for the next upsurge. And the lack of detail about the interviewees, such as age, class, occupation, family circumstances, prevents the speakers from fully coming alive in my mind the way that the interviewees of Studs Terkel or Robert Coles do. But overall, this is a unique and valuable contribution to the literature on cutting edge of grassroots social struggle.

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