



## Power building it without taking it

*“I want a revolution that changes the very nature of how power is structured and perceived, that challenges all systems of domination and control, that nurtures the empowerment of individuals and the collective power we can wield when we act together in solidarity.” – Starhawk, US activist and writer*

“Meet me by the giant fist!” I can hardly hear my friend’s voice above the roar of the crowd. “Giant fist?” I shout into the cell phone. “Yes”, she laughs, “it’s huge, pink, and made of paper maché. You can’t miss it.” And sure enough, above the sea of heads, I see it: an eight foot-high fist, defiantly erect and utterly ugly, rising above the tens of thousands of people who are here in the main square of Buenos Aires, the Plaza de Mayo. We are celebrating the first anniversary of the day in December 2001 when Argentina’s economic collapse caused a popular uprising in the streets, ousting the Government and kick-starting a countrywide rebellion that became a crucible for popular politics.

The fist had been placed there by one of the traditional leftist political parties – political dinosaurs who had attempted to take over the Plaza with a huge stage and long line-up of ranting speakers, calling for a revolutionary workers’ government. It was a desperate attempt to co-opt this genuinely popular movement

which was born of disgust with party politics and politicians. Somehow the giant raised fist, so crude and aggressive, said it all. It was so clearly an icon of the politics of the past, something that one might find among the dusty items in the antique shop of failed revolutions, a monolithic symbol of a time when revolution had a simple formula: you built a huge party, waited for the right historical moment, stormed the government buildings, replaced the government, and took power.

The raised, clenched fist is a symbol of people-power worldwide, and yet it is made by a body that is tense, angry, and threatening. It’s a hard, closed, hostile gesture, something that seems alien to what the contemporary spirit of global anticapitalism is about. With a clenched fist you can’t reach out to a stranger, you can’t give or receive gifts, you can’t shake hands. You accept nothing, learn nothing, you can only fight – and the thing for which you fight is power acquired through force. In contrast, perhaps the greatest advantage of our movement of movements is that it struggles to avoid taking power, seeking instead to shatter it into little pieces, to share it amongst ourselves, to open up spaces where everyone can develop the power to create, and to destroy the power that dominates.