

RESISTANCE TO THE DOMINANT ECONOMIC DISCOURSES: MAKING
SENSE OF THE ECONOMY FROM A WORKING-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the way that working-class people contest dominant economic discourses and how they develop alternative explanations for their economic situation. Based on qualitative interviews, participant observation, and archival research in an urban working-class neighborhood of Spain, findings are that the workers do not reproduce dominant economic discourses because there is an alternative economic discourse that has gained importance in the community. This alternative discourse, with a clear Marxist base, stands for workers' rights and the welfare state, rejects cuts on the budget for social services, and blames the national elites for the current economic crisis. The dissertation analyzes the three historical processes that produced this alternative discourse, (1) the neighborhood movement for the improvement of the living conditions in the community, (2) the resistance against the Franco dictatorship, and (3) the workers' struggle to achieve labor and social rights through the organized labor movement. Findings also reveal how the members of the community are socialized into this alternative discourse and how the discourse is used in the everyday life of the community to contest dominant economic discourses. The findings demonstrate that the very pro-worker economic discourse that allows workers to contest mainstream economic discourses constitutes a major element of demobilization of the community. Finally, the paper also provides important insights on the socializing role of neighborhood organizations and workers' unions and political parties, as well as an analysis of how Spanish urban workers understand social stratification.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Questions

Sociology has long been concerned with the study of the working class in itself, and for itself. Attention has been paid to workers' position in capitalism (Marx 1983; Tilly 1984), their working and living conditions (Engels 1984), their position in the market (Weber 1946), their relationship to the authority and possession of qualifications (Wright 1997), their choice of life style and their access to different types of capital (Bourdieu 1984), their shared historical experiences of economic exploitation (Thompson 1966), and the possibility of upward social mobility in their society (Blau and Duncan 1967; Lipset and Bendix 1959; Marshall and Firth 1999). Likewise, there are abundant studies on the development of class consciousness and on working class collective action.

Less studied is the topic of workers' adherence to and replication or reproduction of capitalism. Antonio Gramsci (1971) considered workers' support of the fascist state and analyzed the capitalist class' ability to turn their vision of the world into the dominant *ethos* that provided guidance for everyday life. Gramsci suggested that social control takes place through the acceptance of ideas that prevent social change and stressed the importance of culture in sustaining those ideas. In addition, more recent studies have focused on the reproduction of capitalism due to widely accepted organizational practices (Burawoy 1979). The current study focuses on the less explored field of the creation and reproduction of dominant economic discourses and of the workers' resistance to and/or reproduction of them and, therefore, contributes to filling a gap in the literature.

When studying the reproduction or resistance to certain discourses, it is important to take into account the inequalities (of power, status, education, etc.) that

affect a groups' ability to put forward their image of the world. According to Goffman (1977), society provides individuals with a 'definition of the situation' in which they interact, which is created through broader social processes. Thus, individuals will ordinarily just assess what the situation ought to be for them and adapt their behavior to it. The concept, originally posited by Bourdieu in 1977 and known as the *doxa*, or the "mutual knowledge" or "stocks of knowledge", was later described by Giddens (1984: 4) as a social construction that implies the naturalization of the relationship between subjective values and objective structure. *Doxa* is embedded in our discourses and interactions, and is not directly accessible to actors, as it is taken for granted (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Habermas 2010). For this reason, most actions reproduce the familiar social structures even when individuals are acting against them (Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Hays 1994; Sewell 1992).

Furthermore, these social constructions are not innocent or accidental, but are profoundly political. C. Wright Mills (1967) has pointed out that the dominant group in a society is the one who is able to define a situation. Mills calls this the "accepted vocabulary of motives" and "the ultimates of discourse" (1967:448). The implication is that certain images dominate thought and prevent other images from influencing ideas and action (Edelman 2001). Along the same line, Bourdieu (1977), proposed that in order to generate a critique of *doxa*, a group of people must be able to mobilize an alternative definition of the situation and convince the bulk of the population of the alternative to open new opportunities for action. Bourdieu argues that, in class societies where there are differences in power, the dominant groups tend to impede this countermovement from even forming.

However, *doxa* is, to some extent, at risk in all social interactions just as it is in these processes where it can be problematized (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

Habermas (2010), explained in this regard how parts of *doxa* may come to comprise the horizon of what can be discussed when individuals -because they are in a new social context or because they have been exposed to other structures- fail to comply with what is expected of them. Likewise, Bourdieu (1977), suggested that *doxa* can be brought to discussion only through a crisis, when the cultural and material conditions that maintain this *doxa* change radically or when individuals are exposed to different social circumstances. These changes make individuals realize that many things that they understand as natural are, in fact, social and arbitrary. It is then, when the somehow self-evident link between the objective structures and the subjective values is broken, that the undiscussed can be brought into light.

The present study explores the negotiation of a very small and particular part of *doxa* - images regarding the economic system – in the context of an economic and political crisis in Spain, focusing on the economic discourses of the working class. This study, therefore, constitutes a contribution to the study of the working class from discourse analysis. More concretely, this dissertation answers the research questions:

- How do working-class people contest dominant economic discourses?
- How do working-class people develop alternative explanations of their economic situation?

The research questions are based in several goals:

- To analyze whether working-class people reproduce the dominant economic discourses.
- To analyze whether working-class people present resistances to the dominant economic discourses in the form of other (alternative) discourses.
- To analyze which cultural repertoires and alternative discourses allow them to contest the dominant economic discourses.

- To analyze whether working-class people are conscious of their own acts of resistance (alternative discourses).

1.2 Definition of Key Terms

Scholars of class and stratification are profoundly divided in their definitions of what constitutes the “working class” and some scholars even challenge the utility of the term to explain the current stratification of developed countries. For many years, the “working class” was associated with manual work, also called blue-collar jobs, as opposed to white-collar and professional jobs. However, the expansion of the third sector and the engagement of a great proportion of previously manual workers into the service sector has called this definition into question. Whether we take into account their dependence on a wage, their lack of assets and capital, and their lack of workplace authority (Tilly 1984), their position of dependency in the market (Weber 1946), or their lack of economic, cultural, symbolic, and social power (Bourdieu 1984), the “working class” constitutes a low strata in industrial and post-industrial countries. It is, however, a population that is (mostly) engaged with the formal economic system and who constitute able members of society, as opposed to an even lower social class comprised by those who fall off the system and live under conditions of extreme marginalization.

The interviewees and participants of this study can be classified as working-class using any of the most extended definitions of working-class. Furthermore, an active effort has been made to incorporate working-class people usually excluded from working-class studies. These include, women, homemakers, unemployed and retired workers, and service workers.

Thus, the study does not only focus on factory workers but provides a more comprehensive picture of the working-class. Although the selection of study interviewees and participants was made based on their class position, the study also takes into account other variables that shape the interviewees' life experiences and opportunities. Such constructs include, gender, ethnicity, age, etc. In addition, interviewees were encouraged to provide their economic views from whatever positions they preferred. Class was, however, the main variable underlying the economic discourse of interviewees, and some interviewees pointed to the dependence on earning a wage as a major factor affecting their lives. This was illustrated in the following quote by a retired mechanic:

“Since we got married we’ve always been waiting for the wage. I’ve closed some companies, they closed! I left, they downsized, or I saw that they were going...and I changed. Constantly, it’s being like a general trend in our married life. She’s been unemployed, I’ve been unemployed, constantly, constantly. In my generation, you’ll see many people who have been in this situation.” [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

Another central term in the present dissertation is that of “dominant economic discourses”. The meaning of the term describes the most prevalent explanations of the economy in a society in a given time. In the present study, a broadly encompassing operationalization of the term was intentionally adopted. Dominant economic discourses were considered to be all economic discourses supported by powerful international organizations - especially the International Monetary Fund and the

Central Bank -, a central government, or a powerful think tank. In the case of Spain, dominant economic discourses include the views on the economy, the national situation, and the working class supported by the People's Party and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (the two parties that have governed over the last thirty-five years) and by the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and by other (more powerful) countries in Europe, especially Germany. Other economic ideas, however extended, do not have enough sway over those in powerful positions in this setting, and only those with extensive resources will be considered dominant.

Through the field work, an active effort was made not to impose any pre-conceived definition of dominant economic discourse on the interviewees and to let them identify which economic discourses are relevant to them, and which economic discourses are believed to be of benefit to their social group or to other social groups. The empirical data suggest that that dominant economic discourses include, although not exclusively, pro-market discourses, especially neoliberalism.

A final term that ought to be defined is that of "cultural repertoires". Cultural repertoires refer to the views, stories, concepts, images, worldviews, shared templates, and representations available to individuals. In this case, particular attention has been paid to the historically available social, political and economic theories and ideologies and their reconfiguration and adaptation in the economic discourses of Spanish urban working-class people. Indeed, the interviewees and participants of the present research creatively combined elements of different theories and ideologies to provide somehow coherent economic discourses, as explained in detail in the conclusions.

1.3 Synthesis and Chapter Overview

The present research analyses how working-class people who live in urban working-class neighborhoods contest the dominant economic discourses and develop alternative explanations for their economic situation. Based on in-depth qualitative interviews with thirty working-class residents of the neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí (Barcelona, Spain), participant observation in numerous meetings and activities in the neighborhood, as well as archival research on the past social struggles of the neighborhood, it is concluded that the working population of La Verneda – Sant Martí does not reproduce the dominant economic discourses, such as the neoliberal and the neoconservative discourses, because there is a counter-discourse that has achieved a central importance within the community.

This alternative discourse results from the historical experience of struggle in the neighborhood for the improvement of living conditions, the resistance against the Franco dictatorship, and the fight for workers' rights through the organized labor movement. The discourse, which draws importantly from Marxism, stands for workers' rights and the welfare state, rejects cuts in the budget for social services, and glorifies neighborhood organizations. At the same time that this counter-hegemonic discourse allows working-class individuals to challenge the dominant economic discourses, it is one of the main elements preventing mobilization.

Many of the young and middle-aged workers of the neighborhood reject the traditional communist rhetoric and suggest that the neighborhood organizations, which were formed by traditional manual workers who participated in communist or socialist parties, are not actually open to them. The present research also provides important insights on the socializing role of neighborhood organizations and workers' unions and political parties. These results can be generalized to all large cities in

Spain as La Verneda – Sant Martí is representative of the urban working-class neighborhoods of the country and most of these neighborhoods underwent the three historical processes that gave birth to the counter-hegemonic discourse of La Verneda – Sant Martí.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature on the recent changes in capitalism, the financial and economic crisis of 2007/2008, and the expansion of neoliberalism as a dominant discourse, as well as to review theories of workers' reproduction of capitalism and its supporting ideas. The dissertation proceeds with Chapter 3, which will present the methodology used in the study and with a brief introduction to the neighborhood of La Verneda - Sant Martí. The following three chapters will present the main findings of the present study regarding the working class resistance to the dominant economic discourses (Chapter 4), the working class demobilization (Chapter 5), and the peculiarities of the counter-hegemonic discourse of La Verneda – Sant Martí (Chapter 6). Finally, the Conclusions offer a presentation of the theoretical findings of the dissertation and a discussion in dialogue within the existing literature.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Chapter Synopsis

This chapter provides an overview of the theories and studies that have informed the present research and analysis. This study draws from two blocks of literature. The present research considers, on the one hand, the recent changes in the capitalist economic system and the financial crash of 2007/2008 as it took place in Spain. On the other hand, it takes into account previous literature on reproduction of and resistance to dominant economic discourses, and on workers' resistance to capitalism and search for a dignified identity.

Previous literature on monopoly capitalism has provided the mechanism that allows an understanding of the complexity of the economic situation in which present research interviewees live and were asked to reflect upon. An understanding of the research done, to date, will provide a background and a milieu in which participants' precarious situation can be fully appreciated.

2.2 Monopoly Capital and the Great Recession

Monopoly capital

In order to study workers' discourses on the economy, one must take into account the changes that have occurred in this sphere in the last fifty years. In this section, the present research considers diverse analysis of monopoly capitalism and its effects on workers. It provides an analysis of neoliberalism as a dominant economic discourse, and posits explanations of the financial crash of 2007/2008, as it has taken place in Spain. Besides economic explanations on the general functioning of capitalism, this section also provides some insight into the economic discourses that

have been sanctioned and celebrated by the dominant groups in Europe in the last decade and around which popular consent is built.

As early as the 1960s, Baran and Sweezy (1966) developed a theoretical model of the monopoly capitalist system through a study of its most advanced case: the United States. The model is applicable to other capitalist countries as well. Baran and Sweezy explained that monopoly capitalism takes place as the old bourgeois families and groups of interest lose their power and large corporations take their place. These corporations act like individual entrepreneurs, but they are generally larger and have more resources than did those with old fortunes, and are better able to maximize their benefits and assess risks. Corporations also have a longer time horizon and they are more rational calculators than are individual entrepreneurs. In contrast to the traditional bourgeois who owned a factory, the new corporations are led by managers who are company men and who may own shares of the companies that they manage, as well as having other investments. The rise of the managerial class will be considered in more detail below, through the works of Piketty (2014) and Domhoff (2014).

Regarding relations of production, Baran and Sweezy (1966) also explained that the logic of *quid pro quo* capitalism is incompatible with the forces and relations of production in monopoly capitalism, as the large companies can fix the prices of the products. According to these authors, the overwhelming power of the capitalists generates a situation of great inequality. That is, great wealth is created and, at the same time, there are many people living in poverty. Baran and Sweezy suggested that this system would eventually “threaten devastation and death to millions of others around the globe” (2000:367).

Baran and Sweezy (1966) also considered the main internal contradictions of monopoly capitalism. They showed that, under conditions of monopoly capitalism, surplus tends to rise. In contrast, there are a limited number of outlets for the absorption of surplus. This contradiction leads companies to stagnation: they have to allow work to below full capacity because, otherwise, they would produce more surplus than they could actually absorb. Baran and Sweezy also observed that the accumulation of surplus creates economic crisis. However, as the production of surplus is an inherent part or a characteristic of monopoly capital, it is not possible to prevent crises by cutting back the surplus, as this would only make the situation worse.

Changes in the economy have also affected the labor process and workers. Burawoy (1979) detected two major changes in the labor process from 1944 to 1974: an increase of individualism, following the increasing autonomy of workers, and a diversification of the hierarchy. This implied that there was no longer a unique identifiable authority that workers could confront. Furthermore, Burawoy observed that multinational companies had developed internal labor markets and internal states and that these contributed to the reproduction of capitalism as they obscured the relations of production presenting workers as individuals instead of as members of a class.

Along the same line, Aglietta (2015) suggested that the capitalist class encourages divisions within the wage-earning class, which has become increasingly fragmented. Aglietta argued that the capitalist class cannot keep their privileged position in the relations of production nor direct the process of accumulation, unless class struggle is institutionalized in the economic sphere. Finally, Hardt and Negri (2001) studied the globalization of the economy and finances and supported

Burawoy's conclusion that, although the exploitation of workers persists, it is more difficult to identify a particular enemy to whom oppose.

The most recent analysis of monopoly capitalism is the acclaimed book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* by Thomas Piketty (2014). Piketty (2014) pointed out a central contradiction in capitalism: the return on capital is greater than economic growth. This means that the fortunes accumulated in the past yield many benefits and, thus, power increasingly concentrates in fewer hands. Piketty explained that, when a country saves a lot and grows slowly, past fortunes acquire a disproportionate importance, affecting the social structure and the distribution of wealth. The divergence of incomes and the increase of inequalities, Piketty argued, constitute a threat to democracy. Furthermore, this author envisioned that income divergence could increase in the twenty-first century to historic heights.

Piketty (2014), observed another change in the economy that leads to a polarization of society: the increase in rewards for the "super-managers", also called patrimonial or the propertied middle class. Piketty pointed out that this is particularly the case in the United States and the United Kingdom. The existence of the super-managers challenges the difference between income from capital and income from labor as the managers sometimes earn their wages in the form of shares in the stock market.

Likewise, we see the case of workers who sell their labor and make a lot of money out of it, which, in turn, allows them to exploit large groups of the population. Piketty (2014: 334) calls this tendency "meritocratic extremism". This finding has been confirmed by Domhoff (2014). In a recent study of power in America, Domhoff (2014), identified the "corporate rich." This group is composed by the owners of the large companies, their CEOs, and their top-level managers.

The corporate rich group has, according to Domhoff, a disproportionate amount of power and a major impact on the job-security, income, and well-being of most of the population. Their power is such that Domhoff suggested that they “rule America” (in the title of the book). Furthermore, the corporate rich commonly oppose other social groups such as organized workers. Despite the fact that the corporate rich “rule America,” Domhoff also pointed out that their domination is not automatic; it requires effort and the combination of different forms of power. These include structural power, status power, and expert power.

The present research studies how the people affected by the rise of inequalities and by the concentration of wealth, described above, understand the functioning of the economy. Chapter 4 will show how workers rely on their personal experience of the processes described in this section to make sense of the economic situation. For instance, the paper provides testimonies of workers’ experience of several ways in which their income has been impacted. First, the research explores unemployment due to delocalization and mechanization, then it explores the local effects of financial deregulation, and, finally, the globalization of finances, and of the polarization of the Spanish society.

Furthermore, some workers were able to explain some of these processes with everyday examples from their neighborhood. For instance, they explained the artificial fixation of prices referring to the changes in the price of oil in the gas stations of the neighborhood, and the “free” market tendency towards monopoly examining the decline of small grocery shops in their neighborhood in front of supermarkets.

Research illustrates that most workers, in general, do not understand these processes well and that they focus their explanations of the economy strictly at the

nation-state level. Most interviewees and participants presented very simple explanations of the economy, mentioned very few social actors, and were unsure of the relationship between them (see Chapter 6). These limitations may correspond to some extent with the decline of participation in workers organizations, especially the worker's union, the party, and the neighborhood organization, and the consequent decline of their socializing role, also detailed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4 details workers' understanding of social inequality and provides testimonies of their perception that "the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer". Workers also proved to be conscious that they are on the losing end of this bargain. Chapter 6 provides many descriptions of workers' hard living and working conditions and of their dependence on a wage.

Regarding "traditional intellectuals" (Gramsci 1971), understanding of the economy, the present study seeks to identify whether the workers who serve as participants are conscious that each economist belongs to a particular social group or interest group, and that their membership in one or another group can provide important information (see Chapter four). Some interviewees and participants also expressed their distrust of economists for their relationship with powerful groups. For this reason, it is important to pay attention to the discourses that workers themselves have developed, as a response to demeaning dominant economic discourses. Attention should be paid, as well, to workers resistance to dominant economic discourses. The next section focuses on one particular dominant discourse: that of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism

Thus far, a variety of analyses of monopoly capitalism have been taken into account. To understand the current economic situation, it is also important to take into account neoliberalism. David Harvey (2005: 2), defines neoliberalism as: “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”. The idea at the root of neoliberal theory is that the market is fairer in the allocation of resources (idea of meritocracy) than the state, which can be distorted by interest groups and is less capable than the market of providing an equilibrium between supply and demand. In this model, markets are expected to develop in all areas, and the state is expected to intervene in the areas where markets do not exist, in order to open them to free competition.

More interesting for this research is the fact that neoliberalism can also be understood as a political project of the economic and political elites to restore their class power (Harvey 2005). In his study on neoliberalism, Harvey (2005) stressed that neoliberalization intends to restore the power that elites had before the compromises of the postwar period. Harvey explained that, after World War II, the elites had to agree with diminishing social inequalities. Likewise, there was an important web of social and political constraints that operated against the “free” market. These constraints were successful during the decade of the 1950s and 1960s, but then declined and ended in an economic crisis.

According to Harvey, these social constraints to the “free” functioning of the markets were also successful in challenging the power of the elites everywhere. Thus, elites used the crisis of the 1960s to present neoliberalism as “the only answer” (p.13)

to improve the economy, with the hidden purpose of restoring their class power. Harvey also commented that the left failed in providing a clear anti-capitalist response to the crisis.

Neoliberalism has also become a hegemonic mode of discourse (Harvey 2005). Harvey (2005), suggested that neoliberalism had become incorporated into common sense through its appellation to basic ideals, such as dignity and individual freedom. This way, any resistance against neoliberalism, for instance, the intervention of the state, can be criticized as curtailing these basic ideals. In this regards, Sites (2007) argued that neoliberalism is an ideology that transforms the liberal conceptions of individualism, freedom, and markets into biased representations of contemporary capitalism.

Neoliberalism also became hegemonic by presenting itself as the only option, as mentioned above. This point is also supported by Bourdieu (1998), who suggested that one of the strengths of neoliberalism is that it presents itself as the only option and as inevitable in daily lives. According to Bourdieu, neoliberalism is conservatism disguised with economic rationalizations, and it implies the abandonment of many areas of social policy by the state. He believed that neoliberalism was forcing both the United States and Western Europe into a process of involution towards a “penal state” (p.34). Bourdieu also believed that the success of neoliberalism was due to the fact that it does not come with the conventional conservative cover. Bourdieu thought that globalization is a myth that has been created to attack the welfare state and deteriorate labor rights. This myth could lead us to an unrestrained capitalism.

Another interesting approach to neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse is provided by Jamie Gough (2002). Gough (2002:58) studied socialization understood as the “nonmarket cooperation between social actors”. Based on his research, he

suggested that the neoliberal context alters old forms of socialization and prevents their politicization. This occurs because neoliberalism develops at the urban level in interaction with regulatory landscapes. Neoliberalism is also affected by the path-dependency of class relations and socialization. Gough explained that the new forms of socialization end up deepening social divisions and internalizing neoliberal social relations. They are, in fact, more effective than neoliberal urban projects for achieving neoliberal goals. Some examples of these forms of socialization provided by Gough are: business organizations, industrial clusters, and “joined-up” urban governance. Thus, neoliberalism is a form of depolitization. Neoliberalism is also understood by Gough as class discipline.

Harvey (2005) suggested that the ideal of individual freedom of neoliberalism is, in fact, in tension with the hopes for social justice developed by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This could be a source of resistance against neoliberalism. However, Harvey also found a lack of any serious debates in the United States that could present divergent concepts of freedom. He referred to this as “the impoverished condition of contemporary public discourse in the United States” (p.183). In this regards, Leitner et al. (2007) pointed out that, although neoliberalism is constituting itself as a hegemonic discourse, there are other “socio-spatial imaginaries” (p.11) that may provide a basis against neoliberalism. These authors explained that all discourses come from a place and time and that they are marked by this. Thus, the local level is very important in developing an understanding of neoliberalism.

Regarding the local level, the present research shows that Spanish urban workers who reside in working-class neighborhoods do not generally reproduce the dominant economic discourses but, instead, are able to develop alternative

explanations for their economic situation. These results challenge the “hegemonic” character of neoliberalism as a discourse. The research has shown that, despite the existence of dominant discourses regarding the economic situation in Spain and the European Union after the 2008 crash, discourses that are favorable to the cutting of social services and the reduction of public spending, workers are able to discern that neoliberal cut-backs and pro-market legislation are not the only possible option.

Chapter 4 illustrates workers’ defense of the welfare state and their opposition to the liberalization of markets. Resistance is particularly strong around the commodification of specific rights, especially health (healthcare) and knowledge (education) that workers refuse to accept as “fictitious commodities” (Polanyi 2001). This resistance lays out the question of whether there is a possibility for a wave of resistance against the recent wave of marketization that would be started by the workers of southern Europe.

The present dissertation also shows that workers challenge the dominant explanations that present the citizens of Southern Europe as not being very hardworking and as living above their status or means. These discourses are contested with pro-worker discourses that point out to the social value of the working class and to its moral rightness, and to the abuse of it by some idle and abusive classes (see Chapter six). Workers’ discourses could serve of inspiration to intellectuals for the study of the situation of the south of Europe from another point of view.

Finally, some scholarly analyses of neoliberalism may find support in the empirical results of this research study. Especially, the analysis of neoliberalism as a project of the elites, as presented by Harvey (2005), will be investigate for any support from the interviewees. It will be investigated whether there is support or opposition to this neo-Marxist author, and whether the workers of the present research

identify the source of the problem in the greed of the elites and in their consequential abuse of the capitalist system, instead of locating the problem in the economic system *per se* or on the last, most recent phase of it.. The next section, will take into account the effects of the economic crisis in Spain and the creation of dominant images about the crisis.

The economic crisis of 2007/2008

In order to understand the responses of the interviewees, it is also important to provide a reminder of the financial crash of 2007/2008 and the Great Recession, and to pay attention to the way they took place in Spain. The year 2008 saw the start of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression (Crotty 2009). Although the financial crisis was triggered by the United States' subprime mortgage market crisis, the crisis' terrible effects also were linked directly to the flawed practices and institutions that constitute the current financial regime, called New Financial Architecture, which had been under development since the 1970s (Crotty 2009, Hellwig 2009). In this section, both factors will be taken into account.

The crisis of the subprime mortgage-backed securities started with a bubble of residential real-estate markets. Hellwig (2009) explained that the focus on growth and on high profits blinded private investors and financial institutions of the risk implications of their actions. For instance, they trusted rating agencies' assessments of credit risks, overlooking clear flaws in the financial products. Thus, from 2001 to 2007, investment in subprime mortgage-backed securities steadily increased, concealed by the rise of the real-estate prices. However, when real-estate prices

started diminishing, the risk associated with mortgage-backed securities become apparent.

Subprime mortgage-backed securities in the United States only constitute a small piece of the financial system, however the deregulation of the financial system and its globalization allowed a small crisis to escalate into a worldwide crisis (Hellwig 2009). In this regards, Crotty (2009) suggested that the crash of 2007/2008 actually constitutes the latest phase of a process of deregulation of the financial markets that started in the 1970s. According to Crotty (2009), this process has taken place in the form of cycles that combine moments of financial deregulation with moments of financial innovation. These cycles result in financial booms that, in turn, end in crises.

Governments responded to these crises with financial bailouts that allow the process to continue and increase. This dynamic has resulted in the global financial crisis. Crotty (2009) also recounted that, since the 1970s and 1980s, financial market regulation has been inspired by the efficient financial market theory and the new classical macro theory, which have justified radical deregulation as compared to the tight control of finances before that period. This has given place to what Crotty (2009) calls “a new globally-integrated deregulated neoliberal capitalism.”

With regard to the New Financial Architecture, Crotty (2009) criticized the fact that it is based on a weak theoretical basis and that it has perverse incentives that lead to the generation of excessive risk, to financial booms, and eventually to crises. Furthermore, this arrangement of finances allowed for the creation of complex and opaque financial products that could not be priced correctly and that lost liquidity with the boom. Crotty also demonstrated that banks kept risky products such as

mortgage backed securities and collateralized bank obligations due to the pressure to generate high profits and the convenience of these almost-deregulated products.

The bad practices of the banking system were supported by regulators that allowed banks to hold assets on off-balance-sheets with no capital reserve requirements. Furthermore, regulators allowed big banks to measure their own risk and to decide on their own capital requirements, what induced excessive risk-taking on the part of powerful banks. Once the financial crash occurred, the tight integration of the global financial system allowed for the contagion of agents all across the globe, increasing systemic risk (Crotty 2009). Effects in the financial system soon translated into severe economic recession in most developed economies and an important fallout of global trade. In turn, the downturn in activity occasioned a rise of unemployment (McKibbin and Stoeckel 2010).

In the case of Spain, the global financial crisis was worsened by the bursting of a national real estate bubble and by the high incidence of corruption. Fernández and Collado (2017) paid special attention to the real estate bubble as the main cause of the Spanish crisis. They detected an exponential growth of residential construction between the 1990s and 2006.

This boom was facilitated by low interest rates, abundant low-cost funding, and demand for urban development. There was, as well, a high degree of specialization in construction. In fact, in the burst of the economic crisis in 2007, construction accounted for 13.3% of employment in the country, as compared to a 6.7% in Germany. Moreover, in 2008, construction accounted for 10.5% of the GDP. Extensive construction took place due to the Spaniards' preference for home ownership over rent, a social development that was encouraged during the Franco dictatorship.

The property boom went hand in hand with a sharp increase in house prices. In turn, this real estate financial bubble led to the overpricing of real estate assets. Fernández and Collado (2017), explained that although there were no subprime loans in Spain, the financial system of the country was rooted in other products that were equivalent in risk. In 2007, and in contrast to the tendencies observed in the previous decade, housing production and housing prices plummeted. The effects were so severe that the government intervened financially to refloat the sector in an attempt to avoid the collapse of the financial system of the country.

A second major factor in Spain, closely related to the real estate bubble, is corruption. Corruption in Spain, although it has taken place in many spheres, has a special connection with the real estate market. This occurs because new development processes in Spain imply the reclassification of pieces of land that were not previously designated for construction as development areas. The re-designation process requires the approval of the regional administration. It is, thus, the public administration that decides what land can be used for construction.

Reclassifying land has resulted a very lucrative process as previously undeveloped land can multiply its value by 100 to 5000 times when it becomes available for development (Fernández and Collado 2017). This process facilitates corruption among public officials in charge of rezoning, as they may be bribed to reclassify pieces of land. In fact, Fernández and Collado (2017) report that, between 2000 and 2010, there were 676 identified cases of corruption related to development policies. This scenery of corruption is particularly detrimental for Spanish citizens as the very public officials in charge of defending the general interest participate in corruption networks.

Speculation and corruption harshened an already tough financial crisis, and the austerity measures used to face the crisis worsened even more than did the living conditions of the citizenry. In this regard, Cioffi and Dubin (2016) explained that the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank, and the European Commission, popularly called Troika, had forced Spain to adjust its economy through the reduction of real wages and had promoted the liberalization of labor market institutions. On top of that, these scholars pointed out that the Spanish conservative party (People's Party) used the excuse of the Troika's pressure towards economic reform to develop neoliberal law reforms. In fact, they suggested the labor law reforms of 2012 go well beyond the demands of the Troika. The aim of these reforms was to weaken unions as they are the organizational base of the political opposition. Cioffi and Dubin also observed that the labor reforms had successfully shifted power from labor to employers.

The combination of the effects of the crisis and the Troika's austerity measures have generated mass unemployment and have opened the doors to neoliberal economic reforms (Cioffi and Dubin 2016). Likewise, real wages have plummeted for most Spanish citizens, many Spanish nationals have emigrated, and many immigrants have returned to their countries (Cioffi and Dubin 2016, Fernández and Collado 2017).

Besides attending to the effects of the crisis, it is also important to take into account the dominant discourses and images that are used to explain it and understand it. Silaški and Đurović (2017), through a multimodal analysis of magazine covers, discovered that the metaphors used to refer to the Eurozone have a common denominator. That is, they all point to the danger of dissolving the monetary union or unilaterally abandoning the euro. The authors termed this type of metaphor a

“destruction metaphor”, as they are directed at generating fear among the readers. By presenting the Eurozone as about to collapse, the covers generate anxiety, a state in which readers are more prone to accepting whatever rescue measures suggested.

These results are confirmed by Pentaraki’s (2013) research. Pentaraki (2013), identified a “mantra” used throughout Western Europe by establishment politicians to push people to accept neoliberal policies and austerity measures. The message is, “If we do not cut social spending, we will end up like Greece”. The author compared this claim to Thatcher’s claim “There is no alternative” used in the 1970s to expand neoliberalism. The message suggests that, unless citizens accept the cut of social spending, they will suffer as Greece did, after Greece engaged in excessive spending and years later, continues to suffer the consequences.

Pentaraki reported that Greece is pictured as a villain, corrupt and frivolous in its expenditures. This ideology is presented in contrast to the three organisms that are supposed to bring back stability to the Euro through neoliberal policies, the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Penatkari also highlighted the way that establishment politicians and the corporate media reframed thinking about the crisis in a way that avoids referring to the systemic causes of the crisis. Systemic factors are, thus, actually disguised as characteristic of the country and supported through untrue assertions about Greece. Among these false assertions are that the population of the country is the laziest, or that they have the highest proportion of public servants. Degrading images are also promoted, for instance Greeks are represented as “cheats” and as pigs. The acronym PIGS has been used recurrently to negatively refer to Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain, both in the EU and globally. The replication of and recurrent use of the

term in both academic articles and in news shows that it has become a dominant representation of these countries (Pentarakis 2013).

The focus of the dominant discourses on Greece, or the use of Greece as a metaphor or a cautionary example, has been confirmed by various studies. For instance, Angouri and Wodak (2014) explained that dominant discourses about Greece have a recurrent “success story” that presents Greece as fortunate for having acquired a primary budget surplus. This story also suggests that, thanks to this budget surplus “the worst has passed”.

However, an analysis of everyday discourses reveals that the dominant myth of ‘Grecovery’ is not aligned with the very negative economic situation and the troubled socio-political context of the country. Along the same line, Lampropoulou (2014) analyzed the representation of the Greek national elections of 2012 in a British newspaper. She identified the use of a double-voicing. That is, Greeks were presented in the newspaper both as independent, in that they are strong and active and they are free to choose who they vote for, and to have input into what indirectly affects the future of the EU. At the same time they are also portrayed as dependent, that is, the Greeks are passive recipients of orders from the EU and ultimately dependent on it. Lampropoulou (2014), observed that this double-sided presentation contributes to reproducing dominant discourses in the broader socio-cultural context and to preserving social control.

The literature review, above, regarding the economic crisis provides a recent framework in which the present research takes place. Spain constitutes a privileged space to study workers’ understanding of the economy since the economic and political crises that follow the 2008 crash have made it possible to challenge many social practices and structures that were previously taken for granted. The economic

crisis has also brought the economy to the forefront as a main topic in public discussion. In the next chapter, Chapter 3 (methodology), the characteristics of the worker community studied and the effects of the economic crisis on it will be provided in full detail.

The dominant images and discourse from the mass media presented above constitute an example of the discourses that the interviewees and participants receive. Chapter 4 reveals the interviewees' and participants' use of the mass media and their capacity to critically reflect on the content of these media. The present research provides an example of the way that a disadvantaged group with a very limited knowledge of economics and with barely no control over the mass media is able to actively challenge the messages broadcasted by the mass media and to reflect on the interests behind these contexts. These results strengthen the central argument of this dissertation about the working class' capacity of resistance against the dominant economic discourses.

2.3 Working-class Reproduction and Resistance to Capitalism

Another essential theoretical basis for this dissertation are studies on workers' reproduction and/or resistance to the capitalist economic system and to dominant economic, political, and social discourses. The most recognized book in this area is Michael Burawoy's *Manufacturing Consent*. Burawoy (1979), addressed the question of why workers actively participate in the intensification of their own exploitation. He showed that consent is produced at the point of production, independent of other factors such as schooling or mass media, and concluded that rationality is a product of a specific organization of production. He also pointed out, in criticism of harmony

theories and conflict theories, that conflict and consent are not causal factors but are, instead, the products of a specific organization of work.

Burawoy (1979) also explained that the behavior of workers depends on the configuration of the labor process - how it is organized - not on the previous consciousness and values of workers. He showed that the consciousness and values that workers bring from the family, the church, the school, etc. do not affect the relations of production. They only mediate these relations, and have an effect only within very restricted limits. Thus, the productive process is relatively autonomous. Previous values are only useful, according to Burawoy, in times of crises, in which they are used as ideologies.

At the point of production, Burawoy (1979) observed, both workers and management organize the labor process as a game. This work game makes the workday more bearable, providing workers with a relative satisfaction and, therefore, generating consent. This, in turn, allows for the production of more surplus value and the reproduction of capitalism. The constitution of the labor process as a game contributes to obscuring and securing surplus value because, (1) it increases individualism among workers, (2) it forces them to accept the rules of the game, and therefore, consent to capitalism, (3) it generates a specific set of interests that are taken as a given, and (4) the possibility of winning helps to eliminate the idea of any possible alternative. In this way, dissatisfaction is diverted away from capitalism.

Burawoy's research proves the value of organizational analysis for the study of the reproduction of capitalism. However, in order to understand reproduction and resistance it is also important to take into account the effect of the cultural sphere. As early as the 1940s, Antonio Gramsci (1971) studied how social control is enacted through ideologies that prevent social change.

Gramsci observed that, in modern societies, control is maintained through consent to ruling ideas rather than by direct imposition of force, and he highlighted the important role of culture in legitimating those ideas. More interesting for this research is Gramsci's identification of all men as intellectuals. Although Gramsci did not consider women, his analysis of intellectuals is believed to be extended to all workers. Gramsci (1971) considered that all men are intellectuals as they have an intellect, and can use it, and that every man "contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it" (p. 9).

Gramsci (1971) distinguished between two main types of intellectuals, "traditional intellectuals" and "organic intellectuals" (p. 3). Traditional intellectuals are the people who have been traditionally educated and provided with knowledge (e.g. ecclesiastics) and who consider themselves a separate social class. Organic intellectuals belong to a particular social class and may constitute their fundamental thinking and organizing element. Gramsci posited that, in modern capitalism, intellectuals should not mainly be orators and writers, but organizers and leaders. The degree of "organicism" of an intellectual would be measured according to the degree of connection that the intellectual maintains with the social group that the intellectual represents.

Gramsci was confident that all social classes could develop their own organic intellectuals through education, and that the working class would develop its own intellectuals just as the bourgeoisie had done. Although his work on intellectuals suggests the possibility for counter-discourses, Gramsci mostly focused on presenting the hegemonic process as excluding alternatives to the established structures of status and power (Sivaramakrishnan 2005).

Less optimistic than Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984), highlighted the depth of symbolic domination. According to Bourdieu (1977), domination occurs through the settlement in the individuals' unconscious of accumulated sedimentations of the social structure. Bourdieu's concept of the habitus captures this type of domination: the dominated internalize the social structure so much that they become unable of recognizing it as such. Thus, misrecognition is ingrained in the individual psyche and harmonizes the habitus with the field, that is, the system of social positions in which struggle over the appreciation of different types of capital takes place.

As social actors resort to habitus to structure their perceptions and actions, they end up reproducing the very same social structures that have produced it. In the case of the subordinates, who Bourdieu (1984) characterizes through a habitus of what is thought to be necessary and passivity, they internalize a "taste" for what is available to them. In this process, the dominated are brought to accept their objective opportunities, and to adjust their subjective aspirations to them.

According to Bourdieu (1977), it is only when habitus and the field do not match that there is a possibility to challenge the social structure. Although Bourdieu did, thus, acknowledge the possibility of social change, he considered resistance only as an episodic phenomenon, and focused his work onto the study of reproduction. Nevertheless, his theory of practice has been successfully used for the study of social movements (Crossley 2003).

Bourdieu (1984) also paid attention to cultural capital, which he defined as the knowledge, know-how, and cultural styles that constitute resources to solve relevant problems in a specific field or that can be used to acquire resources or can be converted into other resources. However, Bourdieu mostly focused his research on

how high-status cultural resources are used in the social reproduction of domination. Bourdieu also observed the reinforcement of elite cultural capital through micro interactional processes in different fields, especially in education (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Likewise, and in contrast to Gramsci, Bourdieu (1977) believed that only the dominant groups and some privileged intellectuals were able to objectively observe a social structure, during non-crisis conditions. Bourdieu focused exclusively on traditional intellectuals.

Bourdieu's understanding of domination has been criticized by Burawoy (2012) who, in a more recent article, set to go beyond Gramsci and Bourdieu in the study of workers' reproduction of capitalism. Burawoy criticized Gramsci's understanding of domination because it disregards the mystification that, according to Burawoy, is characteristic of advanced capitalism and is, therefore, too optimistic about the subordinates' ability to contest domination. According to Burawoy, in Gramsci's theory of domination, domination is naturalized and eternalized, or made eternal, rather than mystified. This means that workers understand what they are doing and actively and consciously participate in the reproduction of capitalism. For this reason, Burawoy suggested that in Gramsci's writings the dominated seem to have a dual consciousness rather than a false consciousness. He concluded that there are non-hegemonic foundations to hegemony, more particularly the mystification of exploitation through the organization of the labor process as explained in *Manufacturing Consent*.

Regarding Bourdieu, Burawoy (2012) criticized his understanding of misrecognition as universal and subconscious, and his subsequent pessimism regarding social change. Burawoy suggested that the concept of habitus is actually unverifiable, and that Bourdieu did not provide any theory of its components or of

how it was created. Burawoy concluded that challenges to domination can be explained without taking into account any deep psychology and that the concept of habitus is, therefore, dispensable.

Symbolic domination has also been considered by Edelman (2001), who explored the strategies used by the elites to avoid social change. Edelman suggested that rationality is an exception, not the rule, in humans' interpretation of the world, and that people actually have many beliefs and false representations of reality. These common illusions include race, gender, and nationalism. These misleading images are promoted by an elite, which benefits from them, and are skewed against the poor, the weak, and the marginalized.

However, according to Edelman, the elites believe their own lie and, therefore, are also victims of a "false consciousness." These false images represent conservative forces against social change and prevail because everybody benefits, to some extent, from them. Moreover, these simplified images are necessary to understand and act in the reality that we perceive. However, Edelman warned that misleading representations of reality lead to actions that cannot really deal with the problems at hand.

Edelman (2001) also explored recurrent sources of mistakes in the perception of reality. According to him, the main mistake is accepting that one should be ruled by someone else. The fact is that the majority of the population accepts the rule of a minority. Edelman also observed that the dominant images are imposed over other possible alternative images. Thus, social change comes about when new images challenge the established order. In order to prevent this, the elites work hard to retain their power.

In this regard, Edelman suggested that there are many obstacles to social change in everyday life that are barely perceivable. For instance, he pointed out that public opinion tends to criminalize and stigmatize the very poor with the use of pejorative labels. In fact, Edelman highlighted that the rich have a lot of class consciousness, and the poor, very little. The divergence of power is clear in the public opinion on poverty; governments give more money to businesses than to poor people, but the story is told as if poor people were abusing the system.

The studies considered to this point have focused on how elites or dominant groups control the bulk of the population through dominant images and discourses that prevent social change. For this theoretical framework to be complete, studies that consider the space and ability of the subordinates to reflect on and challenge the dominant discourses must be taken into account. For instance, and in challenge to Bourdieu, Erickson (1996) has suggested that all fields require at least three types of culture, one for domination, one for integration, and one for hidden forms of resistance.

Despite the abundance of studies on resistance, most of them fail to provide a definition for the term and use it in a very loose manner (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). Hollander and Einwohner (2004), through a thorough meta-analysis of the literature, found that most studies of resistance focus on physical or material resistance, especially on social movements.

The second most studied type of resistance is symbolic resistance, which includes opposition through songs, dances, open discourses, publications, and certain uses of silence, among others. Studies on resistance vary in their focus, too. Some attend to the scale of the resistance or to the level of coordination, to the targets of the protest, or to the goals of the subordinates. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) pointed

out that most studies focus on progressive change of the dominated against the dominant, and this is also going to be the case in this research, but also some authors focus on resistance from the most powerful or in antisocial resistance. Two elements are, however, present in all definitions of resistance; resistance involves action (active behavior) and opposition (challenge, subversion, and change).

Hollander and Einwohner (2004) also suggested a typology of seven types of resistance, among which we find “overt resistance,” such as revolutions and social movements, and “covert resistance.” Covert resistance is intentional but unnoticed and, therefore, unpunished, but can be recognized by culturally aware observers such as sociologists. This type of resistance is also called “everyday” resistance.

One of the most recognized scholars on “everyday” resistance is James C. Scott. Scott (1990) distinguished between the “public transcript” (p. 2), the open interaction between the dominant and the subordinate, and the “hidden transcript” (p. 4), that takes place off-stage, far away from the view of the dominant. Scott acknowledged that in everyday situations of domination both the dominant and the subordinate are usually interested in misrepresentation. The dominant groups provide a performance of command and mastery and try to guess the real intentions of the subordinates, who may be perceived as “faking” their deference towards them. In turn, the subordinates provide a performance of consent and deference, while they are actually trying to guess the dominant’ real intentions. These representations of “fake” deference is what make the dominant, in some cases, perceive the subordinates as deceitful and lying. The “public transcript”, therefore, shows the situation as the dominant would want it to appear. This systematic bias in the direction of the values and preferences of the dominant may create the illusion that there is a hegemony of the dominant values or discourses.

However, there is, as well, a “hidden transcript” made from the speeches, practices, and gestures that contradict or challenge the public transcript. The hidden transcript is specific from a particular social site and is elaborated among a restricted group of people and hidden from others. This explanation of the different transcripts may seem to indicate that the public transcript is always used in situations of domination while the hidden transcript is that used away from the powerful, but Scott (1990) specifies that power relations are more complicated than that. In fact, the frontier between the two types of transcripts is a constant struggle between the dominant and the subordinates. What is more, the subordinates also counter with many strategies, to present their resistance in the public transcript, which reveals their intense desire for making the hidden transcript heard. Specifically, they try to assert into the public discourse a veiled discourse of dignity and self-appreciation.

However, the vulnerability of subordinate groups does not usually allow them to go for a direct confrontation and other, more subtle, forms of resistance are preferred. In discourse, different strategies of disguise are used such as anonymity, euphemisms, or grumbling. Scott (1990) also found out that ideological insubordination takes a quite public form in popular culture and folk. Songs, dances, religious beliefs, and so on, allow the subordinate group to confront an official culture that is usually demeaning for the subordinates. Furthermore, cultural expression, with its varied possible interpretations and symbolism, is especially adequate for disguise. For instance, the immaterial form of oral traditions and their anonymity help escape punishment for their content.

In conversation with Gramsci and his disciples, Scott (1990) suggested that they had overestimated the ideological hegemony of the dominant groups. He also warned against deducing ideological consent on the part of the subordinates through a

process of just observing acts of compliance because, as explained above, the subordinates are inclined to provide these performances when interacting with the dominant, and then challenging them in other, more hidden, ways.

Also considering everyday resistance among the dominated, Lo (2015) introduced the concept of “unrecognized cultural currency”. Unrecognized cultural currency (UCC) refers to the cultural competencies specific to the subordinates that enable their everyday resistance. These cultural resources, Lo explained, have little symbolic value but can, nevertheless, be used by the subordinates to resist and push back the forces of domination. UCC involves cultural styles, knowledge, and know-hows that are not considered useful by the gatekeepers of a field, in contrast to cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu. UCC is not an instrument of dominance but it cannot either challenge the whole structure of domination. However, UCC helps subordinates in their everyday resistance to complete exclusion from the field.

Like Scott, Lo (2015) stressed that covert maneuvering is very different than just passivity or withdrawal. She also suggested that the use of UCC is meant to remain veiled from the gatekeepers of a field rather than to seek their approval. However, and more important for this research, UCC helps expand the cultural toolkit of the dominated. It also allows them to keep some autonomy over their participation in the field and to achieve greater symbolic status.

The main limitation of everyday resistance detected by Scott (1990) and Lo (2015) is its very limited effect on the field and its incapacity to lead to social change. Although paying attention, too, to everyday resistance, the present study is going to focus on another form of resistance that is compatible with this hidden resistance and with open expressions of symbolic resistance: counter-hegemonic discourses that circulate in the underground.

We have seen in Scott's research the hidden attempts of the subordinated to present (hidden) transcripts that allow them to keep their dignity and self-esteem as opposed to the public transcripts accepted by the dominant. Some scholars have focused more specifically on workers' attempts to keep their dignity in an economic system that degrades them. In what follows we consider two analyses from the United States and France. These are, Sennett and Cobb's (1972) research on everyday injuries of class and workers' strategies to avoid them, and Lamont's (2000) analysis of the "mental maps" of workers.

Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972) studied the hidden injuries of class, the lack of respect and of adequacy that hurts workers in their daily lives. They explained that workers in the United States are forced to leave behind the values of their ethnic communities and the fraternal respect that they find in them in their quest for individual respect. Class structure does not (always) allow these workers to succeed in their efforts of upward mobility and integration, leaving them unhappy and feeling powerless.

Furthermore when working-class men get a white collar job and/or move to the low-middle class, they experience "status incongruity" (p. 27): they feel like impostors and look for the respect of others but stop respecting themselves. Sennett and Cobb detailed that, in the United States, personal effort has become a code for respect, however workers are considered as belonging to one of several categories; there is no personal recognition for their work. Thus, workers feel responsible both for their economic position and for their feelings of inadequacy.

Sennett and Cobb (1972) also suggested that dignity is a human need and that the images of human dignity in the American society are very oppressive. The social function of this may prevent working-class men from challenging the class structure.

Workers are led to think that, in order to challenge the limits of their freedom, the class structure, they have to become legitimate through a type of badge. One badge would be that of ability, which would be demonstrated by their making it into the middle-class. Another badge would be that of sacrifice, demonstrated through becoming a hard-working, poor father. While trying to achieve those badges, they are reported to feel inadequate, and they are thought to lose any possibility of fraternity or solidarity with their peers.

A way of (apparently) regaining freedom from a constraining class structure and economic position that workers do not really control, is posited to be a belief that they chose to sacrifice for others, e.g. to give their children a better life. Production and consumption, in this way, become ways of proving one's worth.

Sennett and Cobb (1972) explained that workers fear that their children will not respect them. In order to protect themselves from suffering, the workers build a divided sense of self: they are, on the one hand, workers who look for recognition and, on the other, fathers who enjoy being with their families and peers. This form of alienation protects them from the injuries of class. Sennett and Cobb also found out that workers also talk about changes in their jobs in a passive voice. The problem of this way of dealing with the injuries of class is that it does not really change the conditions that cause the injuries.

A second study on workers' resistance for the conservation of their dignity and self-respect is presented by Michèle Lamont. Lamont (2000:3) explored the "mental maps" of working class men in France and the United States observing the way that they use different moral standards to maintain a good image of themselves and to build boundaries or bridges with other social groups. Lamont proposed that workers sustain worldviews that allow them to keep their dignity and respect. The objective of

these alternative worldviews would be to help the worker maintain a sense of order in a world that is changing fast, and that they feel unable to control. Thus, they reduce the uneasiness caused by changes in the economy, delocalization, unemployment, criminality, etc. through creation of a mental map that gives them the sense that things are as they should be.

Lamont (2000) also pointed out that both American and French workers detach moral worth from socioeconomic status. In the case of the United States, this means moving away from the “American dream” ideology. In regards to the upper-middle class, Lamont found that white American workers considered the upper-middle classes as lacking integrity and straightforwardness. American workers also thought that their personal relationships were stronger and better than those of the rich. The same finding occurred in France where workers used a class-based discourse to distinguish themselves from the middle and upper classes, which they considered exploitative. Lamont also suggested that people draw their moral strategies from the cultural rhetoric available to them and that workers “do not oppose upper-middle class definitions of the world as much as emphasize different aspects of reality” (p.246).

It has been argued in this section that three different groups of theories need to be combined if one is to achieve a rich and thorough analysis of the way that working-class people reproduce or contest dominant economic discourses. Specifically, it has been shown that bringing together the assets of organizational analysis, cultural theories focused on the prevalence or hegemony of the ideas and images of the dominant groups, and cultural theories regarding the dominated groups’ capacity for symbolic resistance are necessary for the study of how Spanish urban workers resist dominant economic discourses and develop explanations of their own.

In contrast to the theories that point to workers' unconscious reproduction of capitalism through unwarranted consent (Burawoy 1979), to worker's incapacity to challenge or even reflect on given explanations of the world (Bourdieu 1977, 1984) or to their active adherence to the dominant discourses from a particular social block (Gramsci 1971), the present research stresses the ability of Spanish urban workers to reflect on complex economic and social issues and to develop explanations that clash with those of the dominant groups.

The extent of ideological domination has been found to be much less than reflected on the literature. This capacity for contestation of workers is found to proceed from the existence of pro-worker cultural repertoires that provide another "tool-kit" to reflect on the economy, and from three historical processes of workers' struggle that gave importance and definition to these repertoires, over others. These results will be presented in detail in Chapter 4 through Chapter 7.

In line with Scott's (1990) research on "everyday resistance", the present research illustrates the importance of the embeddedness of cultural repertoires and specific discourses on the everyday life of a worker's community. This very embeddedness results in the prevalence of resistance over time. Chapter 4 illustrates how parties, festivities and other activities in a worker's community may strengthen and promote alternative definitions of the economic and social situation that are different from those supported by the establishment and transmitted through mass media and the workplace.

Likewise, the present research points to the working-class neighborhood as a space where the "hidden transcripts" become verbalized and used, and where they start to gain strength against the "public transcripts". The present study suggests, drawing heavily from Scott (1990), that workers who may seem compliant in the

workplace or other spaces of the city, may actually present very different, more rebellious, opinions when among peers in the working-class neighborhood.

“Rebellious” discourses, however, are not mainly directed toward social change, but to provide a positive identity for workers.

Thus, alternative economic discourses are not mostly intended to take down or challenge capitalism or the dominant groups, but to allow workers to keep their dignity when faced with other economic discourses that provide degrading and humiliating images of them. These results are in line with those of Lamont (2000) and Sennett and Cobb (1972), and can be read in detail in chapters six and seven.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population and Context

The empirical research that supports the present study was conducted in Spain, more specifically, in a working-class neighborhood of the city of Barcelona. The fact that the field work was conducted in Spain is *per se* an addition to the literature, as most studies of workers' reproduction of dominant economic discourses and capitalism are based on events and regularities in Anglo-Saxon countries. The population studied was Spanish workers. It was not possible to incorporate the economic images of immigrant workers as they may be inspired by cultural repertoires, leaders, referents, and experiences that are very different from those present in Spain and familiar to the researcher. Immigration to Spain was not significant until the late 1990s and early 2000s and, therefore, at the time of the research, there was still not a second generation raised and socialized in Spain.

In order to understand the context of the present research, some information has to be provided on the city of Barcelona and on the working class neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí. Barcelona, situated in the Mediterranean coast, in the north-east of Spain, is the capital of a region called Catalonia, and the second largest city of Spain. The region of Catalonia has the peculiarity of having its own culture and language (Catalan) and, in the last decade, it has seen a considerable rise of regionalist feelings and of the claim for the independence of the region from Spain.

However, and although Catalan nationalism is an important cultural repertoire that has inspired many other social mobilizations since the 14th century, the present research concludes that it does not have a relevant impact in the way workers understand the economy. All details about this point can be found in the conclusions chapter. Therefore, although there are workers in the selected neighborhood that

support the independence of Catalonia, the neighborhood is not the most pro-independence area of Barcelona. It is thought that this area is less committed to independence because a great part of the population comes from other regions of Spain, or their families do. Having family in other regions has been pointed out by the interviewees as an element that contributes to the feeling of being Spanish (instead of just Catalan), however this does not imply being against the independence of Catalonia. Interviewees actually provided many varied reasons for and against the independence of Catalonia, and it can be noted that there was little similarity of opinion between the participants on this issue.

Continuing with the peculiarities of the context, there are two official languages at use in Barcelona: Catalan and Spanish, and in Barcelona citizens of all classes interact in one or both of these languages on a daily basis. For this reason, the interviews and informal conversations were held in the two languages and every effort was made to ensure that interviewees could be interviewed in the language of their preference. As a result, fifteen out of thirty interviews were conducted in Catalan and the other fifteen in Spanish. In some occasions, interviewees switched languages to say a particular term or concept in the other language, but these changes do not follow a consistent pattern. Furthermore, the chosen language of the interviewees was not found to affect their explanations of the economy.

The empirical research was conducted in the worker neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí. This area constituted a singular neighborhood since its construction in the 1950s. However, in 2006, the neighborhood was divided into two neighborhoods (Sant Martí de Provençals and La Verneda i La Pau) for administrative reasons. In the present research, the whole area was considered a unit as it constitutes

a social continuum, and people from the different parts of the old neighborhood had an equal chance to participate.

Since its creation, the neighborhood has been inhabited by manual workers and their families and can, therefore, be considered a working-class neighborhood. Furthermore, the residents themselves identified their neighborhood as a workers neighborhood and this identification had a very important effect on their explanations of the economy, as illustrated in the results chapters. The neighborhood nowadays also houses workers of the service sector and workers with college degrees. Illustrations 1 to 12 portray different spaces of the neighborhood.

The selection of the space for the field work was determined by the time and resources available to the study: one researcher could not have attempted to interview workers from every neighborhood across a large city, so it was determined that having a focus on one neighborhood would increase the quality of the research. La Verneda – Sant Martí was selected as it is representative of the worker neighborhoods on the peripheries of the largest Spanish cities, and residents are largely from among the waves of immigrants from the rural provinces of Spain. Although the present study carefully considers the peculiarities of the selected neighborhood, the results from one neighborhood are believed to be similar to what would have been obtained across a wider selection of all Spanish working-class people who live in urban working-class neighborhoods.

Since the present study focuses on workers' attitudes towards the economic system and its justifications, it was important to interview people who are part of this system. In this regard, most of the residents of La Verneda – Sant Martí are engaged in the formal economy. The situation is different in poorer, lower-class neighborhoods, such as El Besós, Trinitat Vella, la Marina del Prat Vermell o Ciutat

Meridiana, where a greater proportion of the population survives on informal or even illegal activities, and had been left behind by the formal economic system even before the economic crisis of 2007/2008. Furthermore, in contrast to other traditional working-class neighborhoods, La Verneda – Sant Martí has barely experienced gentrification.

3.2 Data Collection Techniques

The main data collection technique used in this study is the semi-structured interview. Thirty interviews were conducted between February 2016 and January 2017. The interview was chosen as it is the best data collection technique to capture workers' discourses on the economy and to conduct an 'issue-focused analysis' (Weiss 1995). The interviews were conducted as 'active interviews', as recommended by Holstein and Gubrium (1995). Thus, the interviewees were not contemplated as "passive vessels of answers" (p. 7), but were invited to reflect upon their economic situation, and the general functioning of the economy from a plurality of positions (political, economic, cultural, etc.).

Gubrium and Holstein (2012:30) have referred to the United States as an "interview society," where the ubiquity of interviews implies that interviewees are usually familiar with the process of interviewing and have some expectations regarding the interviewer and the interviewee's roles in an interview setting. This was not the case in the present research. Although interviewees knew what an interview was, they were surprised of being invited to participate in one, especially of being asked about their views on the economy. Only two respondents, from the journalistic field, expressed being used to interviews.

Initially, the interviews were conceived as open-ended interviews and interviewees were given much freedom to reflect on the elements of the economy that they considered the most important. However, a lot of intervention of the researcher, prompting questions, was necessary due to the lack of self-confidence of workers when it came to sharing their views on the economy. This point will be developed below in more detail. In general, most interviewees asked for reassurance at the beginning of the interview: “So you ask questions and I answer, right?”, “Are you sure I will be able to answer?”, were some of the concerns.

For this reason, throughout the interview, the interviewer tried to offer a “helping voice”. The “helping voice” is a strategy consisting of helping the respondents to articulate their thoughts throughout the interview process (Lillrank 2012), for instance by encouraging them to reflect on one same issue from a plurality of positions (Gubrium and Holstein 1995). Thus, workers were invited to reflect from a variety of angles on their economic situation, the economic situation of the region, the country and Europe, the economic crisis, the functioning of the economy and recent changes, and related topics. Furthermore, interviewees were encouraged to shift positions during the interview (for instance, a person can talk as a mother, as a member of an association, as a teacher, etc. and provide different responses) to explore their different stocks of knowledge (Holstein and Gubrium 1995).

The interview questions were constantly adapted to the topics and terms mentioned in previous interviews and in the participant observation events, and were expressed with comprehensible vocabulary to people with low educational levels. The interviewer tried to use the same terms and expressions that the residents themselves used. Carter and Bolden (2012) suggest that using “insider language” may help elicit interesting responses. Likewise, the interviewer used her “background knowledge” on

the topics (Holstein and Gubrium 1995), which had been acquired through the participant observation events. Although the present research mostly focused on the economic views of the interviewees, it also considered the *hows* of the interviews, the way in which the opinions and explanations constructively unfold in the interviews, rather than in the substantive *whats*, the content of these opinions (Gubrium and Holstein 2012).

In contrast to a style of interview that takes the interviewees' responses at face value, the data were triangulated by interviewing a variety of people from and in different spaces. Likewise, the interviews were complemented with participant observations in a variety of organizations and festivities and with archival research. This allowed a double check of the elements, concepts, facts, etc. referred to by the interviewees. For instance, archival research allowed a contrast between the recent history of the neighborhood with the way the neighbors imagine and rewrite this past. Archival research allows the study to document and fully comprehend the importance that the glorified presentation of the past of the neighborhood has for interviewees in regard to their current economic discourses.

Initially, the sample of workers was to be selected using the snowball process. However, this strategy did not succeed as the inhabitants of the neighborhood were quite disorganized and barely knew anyone in the neighborhood besides their family members. For this reason, the fieldwork also took more time than initially calculated and extended for over a year. In the end, the sample was selected through a combination of a snowball sample, people met through my participation in a variety of events, and people from neighborhood organizations contacted via e-mail. The final group of interviewees included a wide variety of profiles. This diversity constitutes *per se* an addition to the study of workers' understanding of the economy

and of stratification as research on this area tends to focus mainly on active male workers.

In this research both men and women were interviewed and the ages of the participants range from nineteen years to eighty-five. The following table presents the names, ages, and professions of the interviewees. The names and professions have been altered to guarantee the anonymity of the participants. However, the pseudonyms and occupations cited are used and present in the neighborhood. The age and gender are original, with only one exception. In two interviews, a couple was interviewed together. For this reason the total number of interviewees is thirty-two.

[Table 1]

Besides the gender, age, and profession of the interviewees, it is important to point out the low educational level of most of the elder and middle aged interviewees and participants, as they did not have the opportunity to go to school, high school or college. At the time of the interview, nineteen interviewees were employed, eight were retired or pre-retired, three were unemployed or inactive, and two were studying.

The interviews were conducted in a variety of spaces. These included, bars (12 interviews), the home of the interviewees (8), within the premises of organizations of the neighborhood (8), and in the workplace of the interviewees outside of the neighborhood (2). The interviews lasted a mean of 1:25 hours, and were audio-recorded and then transcribed for their analysis.

As for workers' participation in the interviews, many interviewees showed an important lack of confidence in their ability to talk about the economy and the researcher had to reassure participants in regard to their knowledge base to convince them to participate and to keep them going during the interview. Workers' lack of confidence when providing their opinion on political and economic matters has been

previously illustrated by Bourdieu (1984). However, once the interview was finished, most interviewees seemed very glad to have participated, and some even verbalized their astonishment and satisfaction at the discovery that they are indeed able to talk about the economy. The interviews *per se* were, therefore, seemed to have a positive outcome for the self-esteem of many interviewees.

Regarding the presence of the researcher in the neighborhood, interviewees and participants expressed curiosity as to why someone from what they perceived as a much better-off neighborhood would care to study in their neighborhood. The renowned class mixture of the researcher's neighborhood was cited as a reason to prefer to study in a "proper" working-class neighborhood. Interviewees and participants accepted this excuse with understanding and laughter. In an attempt to gain the trust of interviewees the researcher also adjusted her clothing and style to the economic level of the neighborhood, and avoided items from expensive brands, so as not to offend the residents. Some interviewees also seemed intimidated by the fact that the researcher was studying in the United States, although many of them did not know what a doctoral program is. Studying abroad in their context is a signifier of extraordinary intelligence or wealth. However, after explaining that the researcher was studying on a scholarship and that she had spent the rest of her life in Barcelona, their insecurities dissipated.

Some interviewees and participants also expressed their feelings of vulnerability in regards to people with more formal education. They feared that these people would disregard their views and make fun of them. As the researcher was always very respectful, this fear disappeared or diminished during the interview or conversation. Altogether, although the interviewees were comfortable with the researcher, it was clear that she was not one of them. Sennett and Cobb (1972), after

conducting research with workers of the Boston area, suggested that the “bias” that their presence caused in the interviews (for being of a higher social class than workers) was actually a valuable angle of orientation. This was also the case of the present research as meeting a researcher from outside the neighborhood allowed interviewees to escape feared peer condemnation and to work hard on providing elaborated economic views.

The interviewer being a young woman also facilitated most of the interviews. Many interviewees and participants, not very sure of what a doctoral program is, assumed that the interviewer was working on her undergraduate degree. Therefore, it seemed that participants were predisposed to talk about their neighborhood and their views on the economy. The elder interviewees and participants were especially eager to help a young person who wants to learn. The researcher had some difficulties with three younger men of 19, 25, and 39 years as they were more focused on flirting than on answering the interview. In particular, some of their answers may have been embellished to provide a better image of themselves. However, triangulation with the data provided in other interviews and acquired through participant observation and archival research, and their own incongruities, helped identify the embellishment and made it possible to extract the truth behind them.

In order to constantly improve the interviews and to be able to provide a rigorous analysis of the interviewees’ discourses, participant observation was conducted on site in different organizations and at neighborhood events. For three months, March to June 2016, the researcher participated in a weekly class with adult participants in which economic issues were discussed. The class took place in a neighborhood organization and was mostly attended by elderly workers. This experience provided important insights on the economic issues that concerned elderly

workers and on the effects that the economic crisis had had on the neighborhood. For two months, March to May 2016, the researcher also worked part-time in the office of a neighborhood organization especially dedicated to people with low educational levels. The participation in this organization allowed the researcher to observe everyday conversations about the economy and the economic crisis, and to meet interviewees and people who could introduce the researcher to additional potential interviewees. The researcher also gained legitimacy in the eyes of potential interviewees, as knowing that she worked in the organization dissipated some of the questions regarding her presence in the neighborhood.

In the five months ranging from June 2016 to November 2016, she also participated in five meetings and events held by a recently established neighborhood organization that focuses its activities around economic and political issues. Finally, the researcher also participated in some popular activities including a fair, a popular walk, and a commemorative event. Besides the formal participant observation, the field work also included thousands of informal conversations with residents of the neighborhood. All the observations and insights were kept in a field work diary in the form of written notes and audio notes.

The past of the neighborhood was also taken into account and studied with the materials available at the Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí, the Photographic Archive of Barcelona, and the Historic Archive of the City of Barcelona. The digital archive of the newspaper *La Vanguardia* was also consulted. Chapter 4 includes photographs and news articles from two newspapers of that time (*El Diario de Barcelona* and *La Vanguardia*) that illustrate the concerns and social protests of the residents of La Verneda – Sant Martí from the 1950s to the early 1990s. Books and biographies on the history of the neighborhood were also consulted. Archival research

was not, however, the main data collection technique and was only used to check and to complement the information provided in the interviews.

3.3 Data Analysis

The interviews were coded using categories that emerged from the interviews themselves, as recommended by Weiss (1995). A first exploratory revision of the collected data suggested a list of codes that were classified into six groups (“Reproduction of dominant discourses”, “Alternative discourses”, “Cultural repertoires available”, “Consciousness of resistance”, “Topics that neither support nor challenge the dominant economic discourses”, “How working class people talk about the economy”, “Referents, leadership, mass media”, and “Independence and xenophobia”), which in turn were divided in fifteen subgroups. A total of 140 codes were identified. The transcriptions of the interviews were coded with the assistance of the software Atlas.ti for qualitative data analysis. The materials from participant observation (notes, leaflets, posters, etc.) were coded on hand using the same codes.

Once all materials were properly coded, they were analyzed by the researcher. A qualitative analysis of discourse was conducted as the study focused on workers’ discourse on the economic system and the functioning of the economy. A quantitative context analysis focusing on repeated terms and concepts would not have been equally rich as interviews that were conducted in two languages and interviewees, who were not familiar with economic terms, used a wide variety of images and words to answer.

CHAPTER 4: WORKING CLASS RESISTANCE TO THE DOMINANT ECONOMIC DISCOURSES

4.1 Chapter Synopsis

Chapters four, five and six address the main research questions of this study. They offer an analysis of working-class people's understanding of the Spanish financial and economic crisis and of the functioning of the economy in general at the local, regional, national and international levels. The analysis is based on the analysis of the discourses of 30 working class people who live in the neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí. Spain, and participant observation in the neighborhood in instances where the economy is debated. It is also supported with triangulation of relevant information of town's newspapers, photographs, city plans and other historical documents that illustrate the creation of a working-class consciousness in the neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí. The chapters put forward an argument regarding working-class people's resistance and reproduction of dominant economic discourses, their construction of an alternative discourse drawing from common cultural repertoires and historical experience, and their awareness of their alternative discourses as an act of resistance.

In Chapter 4 the argument that the working-class people of La Verneda - Sant Martí have developed a counter-hegemonic discourse that allows them to challenge the dominant economic discourses that they receive through mass media and the workplace is advanced. In Chapter 5, it is shown how, despite its critical character, the counter-hegemonic discourse actually prevents the current organization and mobilization of workers. Chapter 4 also explores other factors that explain demobilization. In Chapter 6, the argument is closed, paying especial attention to some elements of the counter-hegemonic discourse, particularly working-class

people's understanding of the class structure and their position in opposition to the upper classes.

This chapter presents an overview of the counter-hegemonic discourse used by the working class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí. In the opening section of the chapter, the urban development and the social changes of La Verneda - Sant Martí as the setting where this discourse was developed is presented. Then, the struggles of the neighborhood organizations movement and the organized labor movement are described. Next, the historical experience of these struggles that gave place to a counter-hegemonic discourse is explained, and the characteristics of this discourse are detailed. Finally, the way that working-class people use the counter-hegemonic discourse to challenge the dominant economic discourses in their everyday lives and how the new generations are socialized into this discourse is revealed.

4.2 Urban Transformations

The working-class population of La Verneda - Sant Martí largely resists the dominant economic discourses that they receive through mass media and the workplace, because there is a counter-discourse that has achieved a certain “hegemony” within their neighborhood. This popular discourse is generated in the neighborhood and draws from the cultural repertoires available, mainly Marxism, and the historical experience of struggle of the workers. More specifically, it comes from the historical resistance against the Franco dictatorship, the workers' mobilizations for the improvement of their neighborhood and their living conditions, and the struggle to achieve labor rights and to improve working conditions, as well as to achieve social rights, through the organized labor movement. In a nutshell, the counter-hegemonic discourse of the workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí includes praise of the organized

workers' movement and the neighborhood organizations movement, the defense of public services and the welfare state, the defense of labor rights, and the condemnation of the upper classes, especially politicians and bankers, for the economic crisis and the lack of response to it. The discourse also conveys workers' pride and an intuitive understanding of the class structure.

In order to understand the configuration of this discourse one must first pay attention to the state of living conditions in La Verneda - Sant Martí from the 1940s until the present day. In this section, the transformation of the living environment as well as to the presence in the neighborhood of public services and other services that represent an improvement in living conditions will be described.

The village of Sant Martí de Provençal became annexed to the city of Barcelona in 1897. It was mainly constituted by cropland. The southern portion of the neighborhood also contained a large number of factories that gave the area the name of the "Catalan Manchester". The village was comprised of industrial workers, mostly from the textile sector, who had very poor living conditions, and of people who lived and worked on family farms (Fabre and Huertas Claveria 1980; Nadal and Tafunell 1992; Oliva, 1995). With the annexation of the area to the city of Barcelona, there was an attempt at urban regulation, however, the new neighborhood grew outside of the guidelines imposed by the Pla Cerdà (Bogajo and Martínez 2010; Fabre and Huertas Claveria 1997).

The current neighborhood is still affected by its unplanned growth. For instance, all the main avenues and streets that cross the city have the change to their name when they reach the neighborhood, creating a sensation of periphery and marginalization. Likewise, the buildings that constitute the neighborhoods of Sant

Martí de Provençals and La Verneda i La Pau have up to 10-14 floors, much more than it was allowed in the city¹.

The current neighborhood of Sant Martí de Provençals occupies a very small portion of the land that belonged to the old village. This area as well as the neighborhood of La Verneda i La Pau were cropland until mid-20th century. Some of the oldest interviewees remember the rural past of the neighborhood. Josefa, 86, explained to me the lack of transportation and paved roads in the neighborhood. She lived in one the first blocks built in the neighborhood.

All this was a field with farms and my building, were I went to live. There was nothing else. When you wanted to go to downtown you had to walk a lot until Clot [*the adjacent neighborhood*], take the subway, or continue on foot and then take the streetcar. Taxis wouldn't come here. When you reached Espronceda street and Guipuzcua street [*the limits with the city*] it was all full of mud. So it has changed a lot... [...] The farms have almost disappeared. There used to be a farm near to the church. I remember that because we would go there to buy vegetables and eggs. It was a long trip because we only had stony paths. This was the countryside. And when we would go get the streetcar down in Pere IV road it was all the same. We would cross some fields and there was a farm in the middle. And you had to be careful because there had been problems sometimes...maybe an opportunist would appear there... You always had to be very careful. If you had to cross the field, you

¹ Sant Martí de Provençals and La Verneda i La Pau constituted one neighborhood "La Verneda" until 2007, in which there was an administrative division of the area into two. There is still confrontation among the neighbors around how the area or areas should be considered and called.

would wait for a while, see if you could get two or three people to go with you. It seems incredible that this happened here, but it was like this. [Josefa, 86. Original quote in Catalan]

The neighborhood was improved between the 1950s and the 1970s to cater to the arrival of waves of workers from other regions of Spain, to the city of Barcelona. The fields and the few factories disappeared slowly to give way to a residential neighborhood. One of the areas that experienced a greater than usual level of transformation was the shanty town of La Perona, situated at the northwest of the neighborhood. Formed in 1947 in response to a lack of housing in the city, for incoming workers. La Perona was the last shanty town of Barcelona (Camino and Díaz 2011). Shanties were built next to the railroad tracks, as can be seen in the following pictures of La Perona.

[Illustration 13, Illustration 14]

At the beginning, La Perona was home to around forty to seventy families, mostly workers from other areas of Spain that arrived in the city to work and could not find a better place to live. Conditions also led to a concentration of many supporters of the Spanish Second Republic who had to abandon their villages in fear of persecution. Living conditions were tough but there was also solidarity among neighbors. The situation became worst in the 50s and 60s as the number of families in the area increased. As the other shanty towns of the city were demolished, the concentration of people in La Perona became more and more unbearable. In 1966, La Perona consisted of about 200 shanties and around 5000 inhabitants (Bogajo and Martínez 2010; Camino and Díaz 2011). In the following picture we can see children playing on an unpaved road bordered by shanties.

[Illustration 15]

In the 1980s, La Perona became a marginal area mostly inhabited by Romanies who had been expelled from other parts of the city and who also experienced intense racism and exclusion from the mainstream of neighborhood life by non-Romani neighbors who lived in the new blocks that were being constructed in the neighborhood (Camino and Díaz 2011, Oliva 1995). An interviewee who lived in a block right next to the shanty town explained to me the situation in the 1980s:

This was a ghetto when we arrived. Beyond the Clot [*adjacent neighborhood*] ...even the streets have different names! It was something else. Of course there were still some country houses left, not many. Most of the land were waste grounds. [...] There was also a problem of hygiene, of security, of everything! We never had any problems, but some people from the neighborhood had had problems. This happened because all the shanties that had belonged to immigrants became inhabited by Romanies and many *lumpen*. Not even policemen would dare to go inside alone! A police car wouldn't go in alone! They would send two or three cars from one side, and two or three cars from the other side, because it had two entrances Espronceda and Labor Bridge.

There was a problem because they [*government*] would give apartments to Romanies but they wouldn't throw down the shanties, so other Romanies would come and start living there, so the problem kept on going. It was a problem of hygiene because they had animals and they didn't have tap water. This was in 1981. Here there was also an important struggle until the neighborhood organization, the different neighborhood organizations,

protested and demonstrated and they achieved that every shanty is emptied and torn down. Then the shanty town started to disappear and the area was urbanized. They built the Sant Martí fast way and the park. The park wasn't here. It was built after they cleaned all this. [Gloria, 61. Original quote in Catalan]

The newspaper *La Vanguardia* presented a similar recount of the situation. In September 1972, the newspaper published the racist letter of a neighbor², who stated the following:

Children, among them my children, have to go to school in groups because they fear crossing the shanty town as they get hit, they have their books taken and stepped on, they have their wristwatches stolen, as well as the money that they carry to buy school materials. [...] I have witnessed from my window how a group of gypsy³ children threw themselves over a little girl, from whom they took a medallion, leaving a wound in her neck as they pulled it.

In a similar tone, in April 1976, the same newspaper published a letter warning women to stay away from the bridge in Espronceda street as groups of “gypsy” women from the shanty town were attacking “non-gypsy” women as they came back

² M. I. R. 1972. “No Luchamos contra los Gitanos” [We don't Fight the Gypsies], *La Vanguardia*, September 14, p. 14.

³ In Spanish and Catalan there is only one word to refer to Romanies: “*gitanos*”. In this dissertation, I have mostly used the term “Romanies”. However, in the quotes that are clearly hostile against Romanies I have translated “*gitanos*” with the derogatory term “gypsies”.

home after work in the nearby factories.⁴ La Perona residents were finally evicted in the late 1980s following strong protests of the neighbors and even some episodes of (racist) violence. The last shanty town was torn down in 1989 under the pressure of “cleaning up the city” before the Olympic Games (Camino and Díaz 2011). The following picture shows the demolition of a shanty, in the 1980s.

[Illustration 16]

Besides the shanty town, which had been constructed by their inhabitants with waste materials, the first area of the neighborhood to be formally built was the eastern border, which is touching the adjacent city of Saint Adrian and constitutes the border of the city of Barcelona. This area was constructed by the Municipal Institute of Housing in the early 1950s to provide houses to the people who had been evicted from some shanty towns of the city. It is now known as Vía Trajana and constitutes one of the poorest parts of the neighborhood.

This first urbanization was quickly followed by the construction of some residential blocks in the area of Sant Martí de Provençals, the south west of the neighborhood, by the Catalan bank La Caixa de Pensions de Barcelona, and the construction of the group of blocks called Juan Antonio Parera, by the Obra Sindical del Hogar, the institution responsible for housing during the dictatorship. The blocks Juan Antonio Parera were built right next to the shanty town of La Perona and provided 1647 houses subsidized by the state (Bogajo and Martínez 2010; Fabre and Huertas Claveria 1997; Oliva 1995).

This rapid construction was captured in pictures. The following photographs are an example of it. The first one was taken in 1963 and shows Saint Martin church

⁴ A secretary. 1976. “Peligro en la Calle Espronceda” [Danger in Espronceda Street], *La Vanguardia*, April 7, p. 32.

surrounded by fields. We can also see tall blocks of apartments in the back. The second picture shows the same location a year after, 1964. The space previously occupied by crop fields is now being built up.

[Illustration 17, Illustration 18]

Another area worth mentioning is La Pau, also built by the Obra Sindical del Hogar. La Pau is situated in the south east of the neighborhood and constitutes one of its poorest areas. The blocks of La Pau were built in 1966 as a public housing project and provide 2499 apartments. They were part of a propaganda campaign by the Franco regime to commemorate the “25 years of peace” since the Civil War. The ceremony for the opening of the blocks was important enough to bring the participation of the dictator himself. The following photograph shows the neighborhood of La Pau, which constitutes a textbook example of the public housing projects of the 1960s with its tall, cheap buildings and no services.

[Illustration 19]

The apartments were given to a wide selection of groups of people. On the one hand, there were supporters of the Franco regime who were offered the house by other supporters with whom they were acquainted. On the other hand, the blocks also housed immigrants from other areas of Spain and people who had been displaced from other poor neighborhoods and shanty towns. An elderly neighbor who had lived in a shanty town explained his move to La Pau:

They had made the neighborhood of La Pau basically to put the people of the shanty towns. All the people who were visible here, to clear the entrance to the Tibidabo. So that man, Porcioles [*the mayor*], made an offer to the people from the shanty towns. So there was a priest, the priest of the neighborhood,

who walked around the neighborhood and told the neighbors that we go to the church that he would give the information about the apartments of the blocks of La Pau. So I told my wife: “well, we have to take advantage of this opportunity”. And that’s why I left my shanty, with my children and we came here to La Pau, and we’ve been here since then. [Miguel, 85. Original quote in Spanish]

In the 1950s and 1960s, after the construction of the buildings of La Caixa and Juan Antonio Parera, there was a rapid growth of the neighborhood that resulted in a lack of basic services and bad living conditions. The following aerial photographs of the neighborhood show its rapid development. The first photograph was taken in 1946 and shows a territory totally covered by crop fields. The only buildings are some distant farms. The second photograph was taken ten years later, in 1956. We can already see the first blocks of apartments of the neighborhood in the eastern border (Via Trajana) and in the south west of the neighborhood (La Caixa and Juan Antonio Parera). The photograph also shows the shanties of La Perona, lined against the railroad tracks. Finally, the third photograph was taken in 1986 and shows a neighborhood fully constructed. The shanty town is almost gone.

[Illustration 20-22]

The disorder in the erection of the neighborhood was allowed by the lax municipal laws that invited the intervention of large construction companies. Besides construction companies, there were also banks, companies, mutual insurance companies, and cooperative enterprises that built blocks for their workers or members. For instance, the company Montepío Textil built sixteen blocks in the neighborhood in an area now known as “the 1001 houses of the Textil”. In less than

two decades, the neighborhood was constructed. Blocks grew fast, but the basic infrastructures, equipment, and social services (education, transportation, etc.) were not provided (Bogajo and Martínez 2010; Fabre and Huertas Claveria 1997).

Two journalists who studied the history and living conditions of the neighborhoods of Barcelona in 1977 reported upon the lack of open spaces (Fabre and Huertas Claveria 1997). Fabre and Huertas Claveria (1997) specified that the twenty square feet of green space per inhabitant planned in the guidelines were not respected and that the neighborhood's open spaces were covered in mud and dust. They also pointed out the small size of the apartments of the neighborhood and the high frequency of respiratory and rheumatic illnesses, resulting from the pollution of nearby factories and the humidity of the river. Likewise, in 1976, the newspaper *La Vanguardia*⁵ reported the amazement of the neighbors when the Town Council cleaned some areas of the neighborhood as:

...the eldest locals cannot remember that the area had ever been cleaned; weeds and debris occupied the central promenade of Prim street and La Verneda square, any space was full of garbage and trash and their accompanying rats.

Two photographs from La Pau illustrate the poor living conditions in the neighborhood in the years 1974 and 1975. The first photograph shows the state of unpaved streets on rainy days. The street is full of mud and garbage and neighbors can barely make use of it. The second photograph shows a pile of garbage in the street, in front of a residential building. The lack of services caused a lot of social unrest and

⁵ *La Vanguardia*. 1976. Limpieza en el Barrio de la Verneda Alta [Cleaning in the Neighborhood of the Upper Verneda]. December 17, p. 34.

neighbors mobilized to improve their living conditions, as I will show in the next section.

[Illustration 23, Illustration 24]

One of the main architectural improvements in the neighborhood after its rapid construction was the creation of open spaces, especially the construction of the Saint Martin Park. In 1983, in order to give an answer to the lack of public spaces in the neighborhood, construction work started for the opening of a park. The first portion of the park to be completed was inaugurated in 1985, but the park was not complete until 1996 due to the lack of funds allocated to the project. Once finished, the park, which is situated in the north west of the neighborhood, occupied more than 14 acres and constitutes one of the main attraction of the neighborhood. The opening of a public green space in the urban neighborhood constituted an important improvement in the living conditions of the neighborhood, as it is mostly constituted by very tall buildings (up to 14 floors) and small apartments. Before the construction of the park, residents had to spend their free time milling about in the streets, many of which had no pavement or had dense and fast traffic. Several squares were also opened in the following years (Bogajo and Martínez 2010).

Another main improvement was the extension of two subway lines to reach the neighborhood and connect it both to Barcelona and to the adjacent city of Saint Adrian. The neighborhood of la Verneda – Sant Martí was cut out from the city of Barcelona by the train tracks and a river in the north and west of the neighborhood, and by a freeway in the south. For fifteen years the only path between the neighborhood and the adjacent neighborhoods was a bridge that crossed the railway tracks. The neighborhood was also cut out from the adjacent city of Saint Adrian by a river. Furthermore, the buses from the city that passed through the neighborhood

rarely stopped in it, as they were already full of passengers when they arrived at the neighborhood. Moreover, many taxi drivers would routinely refuse to go to La Verneda – Sant Martí.

The construction of the subway started in 1982 but the first train only arrived in the neighborhood in 1997. The interviewees and participants who lived in the neighborhoods in the 1990s mention the arrival of the subway as a life-changing event. With the subway, it only takes ten minutes to get to downtown, which has opened the neighborhood to the city (although visitors are still very scarce).

Regarding the freeway that cuts the neighborhood out from the city on the south, the freeway represented a barrier until very recently, in 2007, when it was partially covered. Although the situation is still not ideal (residents are still affected by noises and fumes), it represents an important improvement in living conditions. For instance, Bodajo and Martínez (2010) report a reduction of noise pollution from up to eighty dB to twelve dB. Buildings were also provided with acoustic screens and it is easier to cross to the adjacent neighborhood.

The architectural and infrastructure improvements in the neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí reflect the city-planning and mobilization changes in Catalonia in the 1980s and 1990s. Giner et al. (1998) explained that, with the arrival of immigrants to Barcelona in the 1960s and 1970s, the metropolitan area of Barcelona had one of the highest concentrations of working class people in Europe.

Since the 18th century, population in the Iberian Peninsula had tended to move towards the coasts (with the exception of Madrid). This process accelerated in the 19th and early 20th century. Likewise, from the 18th century until the end of the Second World War, Catalonia was an island of the bourgeois society and of industrialism in the south of Europe, which made it an attractive immigration

destination. Movement towards the coasts left some central areas of Spain almost depopulated.

Immigration, thus, explains the rapid growth of the population of Catalonia region that has otherwise a quite low fertility rate associated with its early industrialization. After the Civil War, Catalonia had almost three million inhabitants. In 1975, only forty years later, Catalonia had grown to 5.6 million habitants. Furthermore, more than half of this population lived in Barcelona and the cities that surround it (Giner 1998). As for transportation, Catalonia in the 1970s and 1980s had an outdated road and communications network due to the lack of development of these services during the dictatorship. With democracy, there was an important modernization of infrastructures and public services, as well as improvements in railroads, air and water transport, telecommunications, etc. (Bonal 1998). Bonal (1998) reported that the reasons for this development are unclear and that it could have occurred in response to either short term planning to modernize the region or to a more long-term political effort to reduce territorial inequalities within Catalonia. Prior to the end of the Franco regime, and continuing into the present time, improvements in working urban neighborhoods depended mostly on neighbors' mobilization, as will be illustrated in the next chapter.

Some of the architectonic changes in the infrastructures of the neighborhood have had and still have an important influence in the way the neighborhood is divided and in how the different areas of the city are perceived. One example of this is the previously mentioned freeway. The rupture created by the freeway has contributed to presenting the neighborhoods adjacent to La Verneda – Sant Martí as essentially being less well-off neighborhoods in some way. Interviewees and participants mentioned the freeway as a social and physical limit of the neighborhood that one

should not cross, as the neighborhoods that are in the other side are poorer, more marginalized, and maybe even more dangerous.

The researcher was instructed by some residents not to visit them as visitors risk “being in the wrong place at the wrong time” [Mireia, 22]. Interviewees also mentioned the adjacent neighborhoods to the south of La Verneda – Sant Martí when presenting their class constructions. Many distinguished themselves (“workers”) from the poor, who are represented in their imaginations by the people of these other neighborhoods at the south of the freeway.

Another social barrier of the neighborhood is Prim Boulevard, in the east of the neighborhood. This tree-lined road was initially planned as a portion of a beltway and was going to cut off the eastern part of the neighborhood from the rest of the neighborhood. This caused protests among neighbors from both sides of the road who saw the project of the beltway as classist (Societat d’Estudis de la Verneda de Sant Martí 2004). In March 1976, the newspaper *Diario de Barcelona* covered several mobilizations of the neighbors against the construction plans. For instance, a piece of news of March 5th reported that: “the neighbors have protested as they consider that its elaboration respond to certain interests that are not those of the people”.⁶ The following photograph shows the non-paved Prim Street in 1985.

[Illustration 25]

Finally, a boulevard was built. It opened in 1992 and included a central promenade with green areas and some services such as children’s play areas. Despite the construction of a much friendlier road, Prim Boulevard constitutes a social barrier in the neighborhood. Both interviewees and participants agree that, from Prim

⁶ T.R. 1976. “Los Barrios Siguen contra el Plan Comarcal” [The Neighborhoods Stay against the County Plan], *Diario de Barcelona*, March 5, p. 8.

Boulevard to the east, the neighborhood is poorer and may even present some areas of marginalization and social exclusion. Interviewees and participants who do not live in the area also expressed avoiding going there.

Another change worth mentioning that altered the social barriers of the neighborhood is the construction of the Guipúzcoa Boulevard. Guipúzcoa road, the antecedent to the current boulevard, was inaugurated in 1958 and was soon invaded by cars who used it to access the coast freeway from the city. The lack of lighting and traffic lights, and the fast-moving traffic made the street especially dangerous to cross and effectively divided the neighborhood into “*els de dalt*” [the ones above] and “*els de baix*” [the ones below] (Bogajo and Martínez 2010).

In the late 1960s, a diversion of traffic made the traffic in Guipúzcoa road diminish and it became very slow and almost inexistent. Later on, in the 1990s, the street was opened to build the subway underneath, a slow construction process that left it useless to the community for some years. Finally, in 1997, the street was re-opened as a boulevard with a promenade in the middle that allowed the neighbors to walk and socialize. Presently, Guipúzcoa Boulevard constitutes the main artery of the neighborhood and neighbors no longer use the distinction of the ones above and the ones below.

Residents have also mentioned that the area around the Palm Tree Square, in the south of the neighborhood and to the west of Prim Boulevard, is slightly better off than the rest of the neighborhood as the houses are newer (1980s) and more expensive, and they are inhabited by a higher proportion of young professionals. The following map shows the social barriers and different areas of the neighborhood as identified by residents. The dark line outlines the limits of the neighborhood. We can also identify the social barriers mentioned above, such as, Prim Boulevard (green) and

the fast way (red). The blue artery that crosses the neighborhood is Guipúzcoa Boulevard. As for different areas, the Palm Street Square and the adjacent “better-off” zone is represented in purple and the poorer area of La Pau is represented in red.

[Illustration 26]

In regard to services, one of the most important improvements was the opening of the Civic Center of the neighborhood. In 1982, after intense protests by the neighbors, the Town Council habilitated a once fascist residence into a Civic Center. This Civic Center contains a small public library, the Adult Education program of the neighborhood, a kindergarten, a space for elderly neighbors and other services and spaces for the community. It constitutes the center of social life of the neighborhood due to the scarce spaces and opportunities for leisure in the neighborhood. Some of the interviewees stated their wish that the Civic Center should be enlarged and extended because current services are perceived as limited.

In 1977, the neighborhood contained seven schools, two high schools (one for men and one for women) and a professional school. However, Fabre and Huertas Claveria (1997) report that these educational centers were not enough to accommodate the number of children and teenagers of the neighborhood. Likewise, the poor condition of the streets made the access to the schools difficult and several children lost their lives trying to cross busy roads (Bogajo and Martínez 2010). The lack of public schools and kindergartens was denounced by the neighborhood organizations and reported in a regional newspaper. In a series of news entitled “Neighbors Have a Lot to Say”, the newspaper *La Vanguardia*⁷ echoed the neighbors’ concerns for the lack of schools for their children, and reported their disagreement

⁷ *La Vanguardia*. 1976. La Verneda Alta, un Barrio que Precisa Escuelas y Guarderías [The Upper Verneda, a Neighborhood that Requires Schools and Kindergartens]. June 6, p. 32.

with the district councilor and their elaboration of a “popular plan” that specifies in which sites they would like the educational facilities to be built.

In regard to health care, the neighborhood contained a clinic, but there were neither an emergency service nor family practitioners. Thus, neighbors usually had to go to other neighborhoods to see a doctor. Initially the neighborhood did not have day care services for children nor elders, which led to mobilization of the neighborhood and demands for improved services. Demand for services for elderly residents became more pressing as the people who initially moved to the neighborhood grew older. La Verneda – Sant Martí is now an aged neighborhood. In the next section, the neighbors’ protests to achieve improvements in their area, which were to include a hospital, a residence for elderly neighbors and two schools will be shown. The neighborhood still does not have a hospital, but the access to the nearest hospital with public transport has improved.

4.3 Social Struggles

La Verneda – Sant Martí was built quickly over the span of two decades, as we have seen in the previous section. It was designed as a dormitory neighborhood for the waves of workers from other areas of Spain that were arriving to Barcelona. The new citizens came to the city mainly to look for a job and seeking better living conditions than they used to have in their native villages. Some of them were also running from police for their political thoughts or their involvement in the clandestine resistance against the dictatorship. The city provided an anonymity that was not available in smaller rural towns. The following quote by an elder neighbor illustrates this point:

I am from Andalucía, as so many others, it happened to me too, and we came looking for a job. I came for two reasons. Firstly, because I was already in the blacklist in my village. I don't hide, I've always said it. In Andalucía, I was organized in a party, the Communist Party of Spain. And in the 1960 they did a big raid. We went to Córdoba, 700 field workers⁸, and there we were judged. I was arrested for two months and then judged and released because I was only accused of military rebellion, but we only had our farming tools in our hands. [...] I joined the Communist Party again and, in the year 62, they arrested me again. Then I was in the blacklist in my village. I was marked by the landowners, by the farmers, by the people who could give me a job, then I decided that I could not subsist there. Then I headed towards Barcelona. I arrived here with nothing. The first days I managed to eat something thanks to the people who I had met that were engaged in the same cause. [Miguel, 85. Original quote in Spanish]

The composition of the blocks Juan Antonio Parera illustrates the importance of internal immigration in the neighborhood. Bogajo and Martínez (2010), using the scant data available at the time, explain that, in 1991, some 36.9% of the inhabitants from these blocks were from Andalucía, 19.7% were from Castilla, and 10.1% were from Murcia. The neighborhood was also inhabited by few Catalan families that required public housing or could not afford a place in their neighborhoods. This is how an elderly neighbor explained her arrival to La Verneda – Sant Martí:

⁸ He uses the word “obrero” (industrial/manual worker) to talk about himself, even when he was a laborer in a rural area.

I was born in Clot [*adjacent neighborhood*] and then they tore our house down because they widen Aragó street; they made underground stations for the subway. [...] We were displaced from the neighborhood and so... This was made for the people who were less able... These peripheral neighborhoods were for people who didn't make much money. Our case was different. We were going to be sent to a neighborhood that was nearer La Mina, which was also a very, very marginalized neighborhood. So the women of Clot went to talk directly to the governor of Barcelona and then we got to go to La Pau, which was a neighborhood where there were humble people, very poor... There even were people who came from shanty towns. [Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

The new inhabitants arrived at a neighborhood that lacked the basic services and infrastructures, so they got organized and led protests to improve their living conditions. Their organization was hard to achieve. The neighborhood had been conceived as a dormitory neighborhood and was formed by newly arrived neighbors, so it could not be built upon existing relationships and did not have a tradition of workers' organizations, such as existed in other working-class neighborhoods. The neighborhood organization movement had to start from zero (Bogajo and Martínez 2010). However, some of the new residents had previous experience participating in organizations. For instance, Mr. Miguel, from the quote above, had been an active member of a communist party and knew how to get involved and campaign for workers' rights:

I came here in the year 64, still in... I am a member of the Communist Party, I leave Andalusia, and I join the PSUC [*Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia*]. There were people who had been in Burgos, people who had been in Cáceres [*cities from different regions*], a cousin of mine who had been in France and Cáceres... We had met some times. So it was arriving here and starting to organize ourselves right away. We were in the commission of the PSUC and we were there fighting for the cause, right? [Miguel, 85. Original quote in Spanish]

Neighborhood organizations were not created until the 1970s, however some of the neighbors were members of the clandestine parties and unions. The first organization of neighbors was formed in the group Juan Antonio Parera, one of the first groups of public housing blocks of the neighborhood. The organization was not of a combative character, in contrast with the neighborhood organizations that followed it. As a public housing project created by the fascist government, the blocks of Juan Antonio Parera were given to some extent to people who were complaint with or supportive of the regime. The active membership of this first organization was small, but they achieved a negotiation with the public company that owned the blocks. The negotiation was successful, saving the inhabitants money through a waiver of the otherwise high repayment rents that would be due for their apartments. They also mobilized against the presence of Romanies in the shanty town of La Perona. I have mentioned above that some of the demonstration acquired a racist character (Bogajo and Martínez 2010; Fabre and Huertas Claveria 1977; Oliva 1995).

In September 1972, the newspaper *La Vanguardia* covered one of such mobilizations.⁹ Following the announcement that a temporary school was going to be built for the Romani children of the shanty town, a numerous group of women took a nearby bridge and organized watch shifts to prevent the school from being built. The construction of the school was seen as a sign that the shanty town would remain for a long time instead of being removed. The newspaper pointed out that the women of La Verneda had organized in groups of one hundred to a hundred and twenty, which gives an idea of the wide support for rejection of the shanty town and, more importantly, rejection of the Romanies. The following picture shows a demonstration against the presence of Romanies in the shanty town of La Perona, situated right next to the Juan Antonio Parera blocks. The banner reads: “All United against the Shanty Town!”.

[Illustration 27]

In 1972, another neighborhood organization was created in order to deal with the increase in the price of rent in some of the blocks of the neighborhood. In the following years, three more neighborhood organizations were created. Two more associations were formed in the 1980s. The neighborhood also had an (anarchist) libertarian athenaeum, from the 1960s until recently, when its doors closed. The neighborhood organizations were formed by a variety of people who had different political ideologies but who all wanted to make improvements in their neighborhood. This is how two elder locals explained it:

⁹ *La Vanguardia*. 1972. Manifestación de Mujeres en la Verneda [Demonstration of Women in La Verneda]. September 13, p. 32.

The neighborhood organization looked after the neighborhood. It was very active. It was very nice back then. Almost everybody belonged to a left-wing party, right? Most of the time, right? But there were also right-wing people. People tried... Because when we were given this neighborhood it lacked many things, there were shortcomings. Then the organization would bring the neighbors together, and they would go there, and they were combative, they were... And we achieved some things going to the meetings when there was a meeting, we would do demonstrations, and we would achieve more and more little things for the neighborhood. [Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

There's an important piece of information. In La Pau only 10% of us came from the shanty towns. The rest were plugged in by the Obra Sindical del Hogar: policemen, soldiers... There are five different types of apartments. They were not in the smaller apartments, which have 60 square meters. There're apartments from 60 to 130 square meters. And well, there was a lot of people from the regime, many people very, very attached to the regime, and the fight was complicated because they would resist against the neighborhood organizations movement, even if they had promoted it themselves. They promoted the neighborhood organization but cutting the traffic and that... Until leftist people started participating and... Well, thanks to that we have a school, we have a medical clinic, we have the "mastodon", as we call it, the "Piramidón" [*a big building*]. They wanted to privatize this and we stopped it and we have five floors that are managed by the Town Council, several floors that are managed by the Catalan government and some floors that are private.

Because banks wanted all of this... There has being a continuous fight for many years. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

Residents also remember the contributions of the Athenaeum:

The Athenaeum had some good, strong years right after its creation, during the dictatorship. I participated more from the 76 until the 80s. I was sixteen. And there was a moment of a lot of activity in the neighborhood. And we did activities... There were courses, conferences, movies, children activities... [Maria, 55. Original quote in Catalan]

We wanted to bring culture to the neighborhood through non-commercial movies. And we would go to the Romanies of La Perona and we would do recreational activities for the children. It was alternative. That's what we would do. [Montserrat, 53. Original quote in Catalan]

One of the first mobilizations of the neighbors responded to the lack of public spaces in the neighborhood. Designed as a dormitory neighborhood, the built environment had been created so as to minimize social interaction. Workers were to go back to the neighborhood after a long day of work only to sleep and leave the neighborhood the next morning to go to work. In 1976, a group of locals planted some trees in an unbuilt site in the north west of the neighborhood as a symbolic gesture to ask for a park in the neighborhood.

That same year two neighborhood organizations joined their efforts to create a proposal to present to the town council. The administration accepted the proposal.

However, their plan for the neighborhood was not approved by the neighbors. The park was to be formed by some unconnected pieces of land and would not provide the spaces for social life dreamed of by the inhabitants.

Thus, the neighborhood organizations mobilized again. This time they contacted an architect who helped them develop a project of the park that responded to the neighbors' demands and that was later approved by the administration. The final project for the park was approved in 1979 but construction work did not start until 1981. Likewise, the park was not finished until 1996, as explained above, and residents had to mobilize to keep the project going (Bogajo and Martinez 2010; Oliva 1995). Many organizations of the neighborhood, such as the neighborhood organizations but also athletic, sports, and cultural associations, participated in protests to ensure that the park was built as desired by the neighbors. Likewise, the inhabitants had to put up with years of dust and noise from the construction work in the nearby areas and with being unable to access that part of the neighborhood, which was closed for security reasons.

Locals also organized protests to save some of the old farms that were situated around the park in construction, as they represented pieces of the history of the neighborhood, and because they were seen as possible equipment for the neighborhood. For instance, neighbors wanted a play center and a museum of rural life. Mobilizations consisted of occupying the farm that was going to be torn down. During the day, the Adult Education program of the neighborhood organized lectures on the history of the neighborhood and at night neighbors would sleep inside the house to prevent construction work (Bogajo and Martinez 2010; Oliva 1995).

The following photographs illustrate this process. The first one shows a group of neighbors doing activities in the farm Ca l'Arnó in 1982. The banner in the façade

reads: “Let’s save Ca l’Arnó”. The neighbors organized watch shifts to prevent the demolition of the farm. The day the picture was taken neighbors encountered a demolition crew from the Town Council that had started demolishing the building and successfully stopped it. The second photograph was taken ten years later, in 1992, and corresponds to the official inauguration of a play center in the same farm. The inauguration occurred with the presence of the mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall. He is the second from the left.

[Illustration 28, Illustration 29]

Another important mobilization of the residents took place in order to claim a public building in the neighborhood for the community. The mobilization started with a group of fathers and mothers who organized themselves to establish a kindergarten, as this service was not available in the neighborhood. The neighborhood already contained an appropriate building, which had been the women’s section of La Falange, the only legal party during the dictatorship. The building provided housing for female civil servants and became obsolete with the end of the dictatorship. This building was especially coveted as it was the only public building of the neighborhood. The idea was to retrofit the first floor to house the kindergarten and then use the other six floors to house and provide cultural services and activities to the neighborhood.

In 1973, a group of parents together with some neighborhood organizations and other groups of locals held a demonstration that ended with the occupation of the building, which still lacked the basic services. For instance, elderly neighbors who attended the Adults School remember doing their first lessons lit only with candles, as there was no electricity in the building. A neighbor who participated in the occupation

of the building remembers how they broke the bolt and torn down the fences that surrounded the building.

After a lot of negotiation with the administration, the building was repaired to become a Civic Center. In August 1978, the newspaper *La Vanguardia*, announced that “the neighbors locked in the building will abandon their attitude when the corresponding documents are signed”.¹⁰ The following year, in the month of May, the same newspaper announced that the state had transferred the building to the Town Council, which was going to use the building to provide the services requested by the neighbors.¹¹ Finally, the Civic Center officially opened its doors in 1982. It still constitutes the center of social life for the neighborhood and provides a constant physical reminder of the struggles and achievements of the neighbors.

The following photographs show two protests of adult students related to the slow reform of the fascist residence into a Civic Center. The first photograph was taken in a demonstration of adult students in 1977-78. The banner reads, “160 adults want to study in La Verneda, we have classrooms and teachers, we demand the school places”. The second photograph, from 1982, show a group of students of the Adults School of La Verneda – Sant Martí doing class in the street as a protest for the recurrent delay of the opening day of the Civic Center.

[Illustration 30, Illustration 31]

The working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí also mobilized to improve their living conditions. As explained in the previous section, many of the blocks of the neighborhood were built as public housing projects or as residential

¹⁰ *La Vanguardia*. 1978. Acuerdo sobre el Futuro de la Residencia Gaudí [Agreement on the Future of the Gaudí Residence]. August 10, p.14.

¹¹ *La Vanguardia*. 1979. El Edificio Gaudí Cedido por el Estado al Ayuntamiento [The Gaudí Building Transferred by the State to the Town Council]. May 17, p. 29.

polygons for workers. Workers would rent their apartments and after a few decades they would become proprietors. This method's disadvantage was that the current proprietors had no incentives to improve and repair the buildings. A mobilization occurred in 1972 when the Montepío Textile, owner of 1001 apartments, decided to increase the price of rent. The inhabitants of the blocks considered this action illegal and protested in a movement called the Process 1001. The affected residents organized in commissions that represented the 16 blocks of the Montepío Textile and tried to negotiate with this mutual insurance company (Bogajo and Martínez 2010).

In 1991, almost two decades later, the inhabitants mobilized again as they felt that the new owner of the buildings, the General Social Security Treasury, was not taking care of the buildings and conducting the required repairs. The protests included several demonstrations, a pot-banging protest, and a collection of signatures. The protests were successful and several days later the Spanish Parliament voted a measure that made the central government provide the money for the rehabilitation of the 1001 houses of the textile. However, the repairs did not take place and residents mobilized again through demonstrations, meetings, a 24-hour occupation of a local church, the occupation of one of the Olympic stadiums, and a human chain around the blocks, among other protests. All these events were covered by the *Diari de Barcelona*.¹² In an article of May 21st, 1992, the newspaper recognized that “the

¹² DdB. 1992. “Més Protestes Veïnals a Sant Martí” [More Neighbors' Protests in Sant Martí], *Diari de Barcelona*, March 15, p. 7.

DdB. 1992. “Els Veïns de les Vivendes del Tèxtil es Tanquen per Reclamar més Ajuts” [The Neighbors of the Houses of the Textile Lock Themselves to Ask for more Aid], *Diari de Barcelona*, March 16, p. 5.

E.D. 1992. “Reunió del Director de la Seguretat Social amb els Veïns del Tèxtil” [Meeting of the Social Security Director with the Neighbors of the Textile], *Diari de Barcelona*, March 17, p. 5.

Domínguez, Eva. 1992. “Els Veïns del Tèxtil es Manifesten al Palau Sant Jordi” [The Neighbors of the Textile Demonstrate at Sant Jordi Palace], *Diari de Barcelona*, March 21, p. 5.

buildings, affected by the pathology of decay, have serious structural deficiencies”. It also stated that: “some pieces of the façades have fallen”.¹³

A similar protest took place in the buildings of Joan Antonio Parera. The buildings were left to fall into poor condition, including cracks in the walls and water leaks due to its poor construction. Furthermore, its owner, the Obra Sindical del Hogar, did not take care of the repairs with the effect that the blocks were increasingly falling into worse condition. More than a thousand families stopped paying the maintenance fees in protest. Similar problems were found in the blocks of La Pau. The use of poor materials in the construction of the buildings resulted in structural damage, what constituted a security risk for both inhabitants and pedestrians, as explained by José, 79:

Firstly, the Obra Sindical del Hogar, which is the one that built the blocks, abandoned the neighborhood. Then the National Institute of Housing took charge of it. The neighborhood organization, in the 84, did a protest: not to pay the amortization of the houses, and we didn't pay for six years, a very large group of neighbors, almost a thousand neighbors. And then, from 1979, with the democracy, with Suarez [*president during the transition*], the first democratic government, the Union of the Democratic Centre... Although we had their money, more than twenty millions of pesetas in the bank... But this for the state is not that much and they wouldn't sit to negotiate with us... And the neighborhood was completely paralyzed in regards the repairs of the damages, which were many already from the birth of the neighborhood. Then

¹³ Domínguez, Eva. 1992. “Els Veïns del Tèxtil es Manifesten al Palau Sant Jordi” [The Neighbors of the Textile Demonstrate at Sant Jordi Palace], *Diari de Barcelona*, March 21, p. 5.

we had to go to the streets, we had to cut the traffic, we did gigantic banners... It was very few of us cutting the traffic because the other people were scared. The banners said: “Codina, Serra [*politicians*], La Pau is in war”. And we were there for a long time, cutting the traffic, until we negotiated what is falling to pieces now, which is the renovation works. If Francoism robbed when making the houses, democracy also started stealing: the works were very poorly done and they are falling down again. And this is now the problem of the neighborhood. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

Another achievement of the neighbors was the construction of the Plaça dels Porxos (Square of the Porxes). The neighbors’ claim on the space of the square for the community extended for more than twenty years (1982-2007). The Town council wanted to build blocks for its policemen. The inhabitants of the area claimed the space for the community and prevented the construction work. This caused a violent police intervention, but protests continued. Neighbors finally achieved their goals but, as in other fights, they had to continue their protest for many years to ensure that the Town Council respected and carried out their agreements with the neighbors. The following photographs illustrate this process. The first two photographs, from 1982, show meetings of the neighbors in the square as a way to claim it for the neighborhood. The wall around the neighbors was popularly known as “the wall of shame”. The third photograph shows the act of the inauguration of the Square of the Porxes in 1994.

[Illustration 32, Illustration 33, Illustration 34]

One main focus of protest in the La Verneda – Sant Martí was transportation. As explained in the previous section, the neighborhood did not have a subway or

street-car, many roads did not have pavement, and many taxi drivers did not dare to go to the neighborhood (Bogajo and Martínez 2010; Oliva 1995). This made displacements very hard. Thus, locals held demonstrations and protests demanding the prolongation of the subway to the neighborhood. Construction work extended for five years, from 1992 to 1997, as the Town Council was focused on improving other areas of the city for the Olympic Games of 1992. Neighbors had to put up with noise, dust, and the cut of some main streets for years. Likewise, the work was sometimes interrupted for months. This caused many protests, especially demonstrations and meetings of the neighbors. The following photograph shows two neighbors collecting signatures “for public transport at the service of the neighborhood” in 1980.

[Illustration 35]

Neighbors also mobilized to make some major roads part of the neighborhood. In the previous section we have seen how the construction of the Guipúzcoa highway into a boulevard ended with a division of the neighborhood. The demonstrations of the neighbors were essential in the encouragement of this change. They also protested when the Administration took too long to do the construction work. Neighbors also mobilized to ensure the covering of the Gran Via fast-way. The following photograph, from 2000, shows a protest by the Civic Platform for the coverage of the Gran Via fast-way. The banners read “Noises and fumes no!! Coverage of Gran Vía yes” and “Noises and fumes no!! Promenade and green spaces yes”.

[Illustration 36]

The mobilizations described above represent just a small sample of the many protests led by the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí. Besides achieving the desired public spaces, repairs, and improved transportation for the neighborhood, workers also led protests to demand social services. For instance, in

1977 they claimed a site in the north of the neighborhood for public equipment. They wanted a school. The landowners of the site wanted to build on it, so neighbors did demonstrations, blocked the traffic, and established surveillance shifts to prevent any construction work. Several civic celebrations took place in the site as a way of claiming it for the community. The following picture shows an activity of the neighbors to claim the school. Children are building “a school” with waste materials. In the fence that surrounds the site we can read: “...free here. For a public school at the services of the people. School yes, speculation no”. The message is signed by a neighborhood organization.

[Illustration 37]

The protesters went as far as asking for the resignation of the mayor, who supported the landowners, through posters and leaflets that were distributed around the city. After a long negotiation between the locals, the landowners, and the Town Council, a professional school was built on the site and opened its doors in 1987. The whole process took ten years, during which the neighbors kept their demonstrations and other protests going.

Neighbors also mobilized to ask for a school to be built in an area of abandoned vegetable gardens and to have a hospital built in the neighborhood. The following photograph, from circa 1975, shows a protest of the neighbors to have a hospital in the neighborhood. The protests is taking place in front of a closed factory and the banner reads: “We demand a hospital here”.

[Illustration 38]

After years of protests, the neighbors achieved two public schools for children and a day center and a nursing home for the eldest neighbors. Residents also led smaller protests to gain equipment such as traffic lights and lamppost, to get pavement

for the streets, and to ensure proper sewage. The following photographs show three different protests of the working-class people of La Verneda - Sant Martí. The first photograph, taken August 31, 1977, corresponds to a protest to claim abandoned sites for the neighborhood. The banner reads: “Kindergartens and green spaces! Less buildings neighbor: It’s everyone’s problem, join up”. The second photograph, also from 1977, shows a protest of the neighbors against real estate speculation in the neighborhood. A man is playing guitar and singing. The banner that surrounds the stage reads: “Speculation no, schools yes”. The stage has being popularly built with four large tin cans and a wood plank. Finally, the third picture shows a protests of the neighbors in October, 4, 1982, that consisted of cutting the traffic of one of the roads of the neighborhood.

[Illustration 39, Illustration 40, Illustration 41]

Many working-class people were not only involved in the improvement of living conditions in the neighborhood but also in the fight for workers’ rights and better working conditions, and in the clandestine resistance against the dictatorship. In fact, these different fights would overlap in many cases. For instance, the mobilization of the inhabitants of the 1001 blocks of the textile was called Process 1001, the same name given to the judicial process of the regime against the leaders of the communist union Workers’ Commissions. The union was considered illegal as unions were forbidden during the dictatorship. Many of the affected inhabitants were also affiliated with the union and felt that all their struggles were part of one same process (Bogajo and Martínez 2010). Likewise, Fabre and Huerta Claveria (1997) explain that the neighborhood organization of La Pau was suspended for three months for its solidarity with the workers of the automobile factory SEAT. The workers of SEAT were having an important confrontation with the management and many of them were

fired. The neighborhood organization opened a bank account so its members could make donations for the workers. This led to the imprisonment of the leaders of the organization and to a substantial fine.

One example of the participation of workers in several social movements at the same time was provided by José, 79. As noted above, José had participated in protests and in a neighborhood organization. He was also active in a communist party. In fact, he suggested that mobilization in the neighborhood was largely possible due to the fact that many neighbors were also active members of communist parties and organizations:

Us, the immigration, it was all immigration from outside, we were almost all immigrants, there were very few autochthonous Catalans. We were all immigrants, ones from one place and the others from another, mostly Andalucía and Extremadura. That also made possible the entrance to the neighborhood of very organized people from the immigration, from the left. We were mostly communists and we joined the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia, the PSUC, and we were the ones who, together with other people, left the neighborhood dumbfound. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

One of the residents of La Pau was even chosen to represent a communist party in the first democratic elections as shown in a political poster. The poster reads: “My hand, my capital. PSUC my party”.

[Illustration 42]

The neighborhood also counted with people involved in the workers’ rights movement and in the creation of (clandestine) unions. One example of this is Miguel,

85. We have learned above that Miguel had emigrated from Andalusia to escape repression and that he had lived in a shanty town. He was also involved in unionism:

In the year 64 we created the first assembly of the CCOO [*the union Workers' Commissions, communist*], the first workers' commission is created. There was a commission, but it was not a union yet, it was a workers' movement. It was created in Sant Medir and there were people of all trades. I had friends, comrades, who had political jobs in the neighborhood organization, others in the workers' movement, and me, I took very seriously the creation of the union, yes, of the workers' movement. I'm founder, among other people, of the CCOO, a class union. We achieved, we achieved important social improvements. I was responsible for the branch of construction work and ceramics of Catalonia [...] We had a strike in the year 76 in all Barcelona and its province, not even leaves would move! [...] We achieved all that because the union cared about the issue of the class struggle. It had class consciousness, right? And the working class with so much discipline, with so much courage achieved... And they have taken from us 80% of what we achieved back then! We did strikes. We had a death here, in Saint Adrian, a colleague. We had three deaths in Granada, in the SEAT factory, another one in Madrid over the bargaining. Of course, it's war, and in the fight unfortunately there are loses, but we did it. [Miguel, 85. Original quote in Spanish]

Political participation and involvement in unions represented *per se* a form of resistance to the dictatorship as the regime only accepted one party and one vertical

union. The resistance against the dictatorship also took place in other settings, for instance, even in the Catholic Church. In fact, one of the most active organizations in the neighborhood was constituted from a Christian grassroots community. An elderly neighbor of La Verneda - Sant Martí recounted how he had been involved in the fight for democracy through a parish:

The neighbors mobilized for everything back then because there were no services. Do you understand me? People mobilized, very well, and there was also opposition to the dictatorship, opposition that would take place through the Church, through meetings in churches like the Capuchinada¹⁴. Many meetings... I was part of the Parish Pastoral Council in a parish for three years. I was there, I participated, and there the movement that was on was the fight for democracy. There was a lot of fight for democracy in the churches, through the Church. [Pere, 78. Original quote in Spanish]

As we have seen above, the neighborhood in the 1960s and 1970s was a center of political life and mobilization. This occurred in response to the needs of the neighbors but also to the environment of social compromise and the hope to improve society that characterized these decades (Societat d'Estudis de la Verneda de Sant Martí 2004). Núria, a 57-year-old shop assistant, explained the atmosphere of protests and politicization that would lead people into action:

¹⁴ Historical event in the fight against the dictatorship. A student union was created in a secret meeting in a convent. Police sieged and later assaulted the convent. The monks supported the students and professors.

I was very young then and I felt very comfortable. I shared the dream of changing things, we believed on it, we had many hopes and, well, we lived some moments... I think we did very nice things. We had a lot of fun. Yes, I think we did an interesting work. Things have to change... and it really was a time of change. It was a very intense time of change, nothing like today... Well, there's change now too but back then it was... You could see it. It would drag you to participate. It was a time of more enthusiasm for transformation, right? Moving from a dictatorship to a democracy... and everything was easier... well, it was not easy, it was harder, but it was very evident that you had to do something and you would feel it. There was a personal satisfaction because it seemed that you were changing things and you could believe it more easily. [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

The historical experience of struggle in the neighborhood and the presence of non-hegemonic cultural repertoires (communism, anarchism, etc.) has resulted in a counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood that challenges the dominant economic discourses.

4.4 The Counter-hegemonic Discourse of the Neighborhood

The historical experience of fight/struggle in the neighborhood, as well as a creative use of the cultural repertoires available, especially Marxism, have produced a counter hegemonic discourse that allows the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí to challenge the dominant economic discourses. One of the main elements

of this discourse is the praise of the neighborhood organizations and their struggle to improve the living conditions in the neighborhood. Interviewees, even those who are more critical of the current role of the neighborhood organizations, praise their past actions. The following quote by a couple of local workers explains some improvements done in the neighborhood thanks to the involvement of a neighborhood organizations and its leader:

Andreu, 67: There were two or three neighborhood organizations that had a very important role within the social movement. One of them was... I think it was called Sant Martí or La Verneda, and that's where García was. And that was an organization that achieved many transformations in this neighborhood: the Square of the Porches was saved because they were going to build blocks on it... There was a leader... I have to talk to you about García. This García was a person that if he go to Rome people could say "who's that wearing white that's next to García?" Because he was very well known, he was one of the men who cared a lot about social issues, he was the one calling the people, the one that would see the problem, the one who would denounce it, the one who organized the people, who made the leaflets, the one who handed them out, and when the day of the demonstration arrived, he was in front of it. And it's thanks to him...

Gloria, 61: To him and to a team that he made with very combative people. For instance, the subway, the subway line was stopped for nine years! Then... Well, we got some money from Europe too... All this, all the Guipúzcoa Street, was the material store of the construction companies, that was here. It was fenced, it was impossible to walk, to go for a walk, nothing. And this was

like this for nine years! Until the Organization started to shake it, to claim it, and claim it, and claim it. [Andreu, 67, and Gloria, 61. Original quotes in Catalan]

Other workers rely on the experiences of their family members and elderly neighbors to explain the transformations of the neighborhood. For instance, Núria, 57, combines her experience and that of her parents to explain the changes in the neighborhood:

I have seen many changes, many. I have lived all my life here and because of that I am conscious of... And then I also have all my parents' memory, they still live here. I still live these changes, I am very conscious of this transformation. Urban changes, architectonic changes, changes that also define a little bit the borders of the neighborhood. Also all the issue that was the protests against Francoism and the issue of the people who lived in the shanty town and who no longer live there. Well, some have remained in the neighborhood. But in that area of Sant Martí this was very important because there was a coexistence between Romanies and non-Romanies. All this is already history. [...] At the economic level what I know is what my family has explained to me. They came to the neighborhood because they were families with many economic difficulties. They were poor. My parents lived with my grandparents and there were several families in the same house. Then, the way to become independent was getting a subsidized apartment in Sant Martí; they could not stay in their neighborhoods. The neighborhood didn't have any services, nothing, as they explain. And there has being a huge transformation,

explained by them, and there's been progress. Many families that were poor are now families that have worked all their lives and have some resources, resources obtained through their work. [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

Núria's quote also illustrates how most interviewees introduce the recent past of the neighborhood. The praise of urban transformations achieved by the neighbors and the memory of the struggles have become a sort of glorified legend of the neighborhood that it is almost compulsory to mention. They constitute the identification traits of the neighborhood both within and outside its borders. This element of the counter-hegemonic discourse provides a sense of dignity and pride to the workers, who reported the struggles and transformations as a series of topics almost memorized by heart. These topics included the struggle against Francoism, the shanty town, the neighborhood organizations, the urban transformations, and more. Some locals participated or participate in the neighborhood organizations and refer to several additional specific activities, but, in general, interviewees and participants repeat, like a mantra, the several topics listed above that constitute this glorified past.

As shown in the previous sections, La Verneda – Sant Martí has indeed gone through major architectonic changes and there has been a subsequent improvement in the living conditions and the access to social services. Likewise, residents have been involved in innumerable protests to achieve these better living conditions. However, the analysis of the workers' discourses demonstrates that the praise of the past operates as an autonomous element of discourse. Additionally, it provides pride and a sense of importance to those who use it, even if they and their families were not involved in the protests, nor lived in the neighborhood at all. In a neighborhood that has been traditionally marginalized both by the authorities and the citizens from other

parts of the city, this discourse constitutes a source of self-esteem. Likewise, the former leaders and the neighborhood organizations, although sometimes challenged by the neighbors, are respected and admired as they personify this flattering discourse.

Even people who have moved to the neighborhood in recent years are aware of this discourse and repeated it to me as soon as I asked about their neighborhood. One of the aspects that seems important to most respondents is the social engagement of the older neighbors. For instance, Lucía, 38, compares the behavior of the older generations with the people of her generation and younger. Lucía arrived to the neighborhood eight years ago and reports not participating in any organization in the neighborhood due to her long working hours (outside of the neighborhood):

[She explains her participation in demonstrations against the cuts in social services] I feel personally satisfied and proud to see how old people that you say “OMG! You actually double or triple my age!”... These are still fighting! And frankly ashamed that people who is younger than me are just lying on the beach. [...] In this neighborhood, the people, in spite of having difficulties, are solidary people. If you pay attention when there is a food collection, you see it full. And you see people who have had to get food from neighbors, and you know they have difficulties because you observe them, maybe you coincide somewhere, shopping... And they are contributing their bit. They are people who have fought a lot to get where they are and they are very aware of their social class. The problem is the ones that come afterwards, they’re declassified, so to speak. [Lucía, 38. Original quote in Catalan]

Another example is provided by Iván, 25, who defends his labor rights by appealing to his elders' struggles:

Lowering the wages, no, because my grandparents fought for this, and my parents, and we're fighting so this doesn't happen to the next generation. So we are fighting for that, not to have our wages reduced [...] I think they [the government] should protect education and health, because without health and education we would go back to how our neighborhood was in the past, with our people, and we would lose a lot of education. I think they should cut on construction work instead. [Iván, 25. Original quote in Spanish]

This embellished representation of the past of the neighborhood also identifies it as a “working class neighborhood”¹⁵. Many interviewees even those who have more trouble describing the class structure or even identifying themselves as belonging to a social class, mention that the neighborhood is a “working class neighborhood”. This is how Iván, from the previous quote, explained it. Iván found it, in general, difficult to talk about the economy, but was quite sure about his class position:

I think that [the neighborhood] is working class. Yes, because I am working to earn money. I am working class. I think the neighborhood is working class.
[Iván, 25. Original quote in Spanish]

¹⁵ In Spanish “barrio obrero”. “Obrero” refers to manual workers and construction workers in comparison to “barrio trabajador”, which could refer to any type of workers. I did not use the word “obrero”. The neighbors suggested it to me.

Alberto, a locksmith in his forties, had a good laugh when he reported his social class as he was very sure about it:

Alberto: Working class¹⁶. [He laughs]

Researcher: And you are sure of it?

Alberto: Of course! [He laughs]

Researcher: And the neighborhood?

Alberto: It's a workers' neighborhood. I think all the neighborhood is a workers' neighborhood and one of the problems that I was mentioning before is that it is a workers' neighborhood and many people have believed and have wanted... Many have believed that they were middle class. I have talked to people who said: "Damn! What do you do?", "No, I'm a plumber", "Well what a lifestyle you're trying to have!" [Alberto, 40s. Original quote in Spanish]

In the next section, the understanding of the class structure of the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí will be explained. Workers' pride will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, as the topic requires a section of its own.

A second main point of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood is a strong opposition to neoliberalism (the interviewees and participants do not use this term) and to deregulated markets, as well as a praise and defense of the welfare state and the claim of the right to even more social services. Twenty-four interviewees

¹⁶ He uses the word "obrero" all along.

and many participants engaged in a passionate defense of the Keynesian welfare state, especially of the public education system and the public healthcare system, which are considered as the “base of society”. Likewise, most of interviewees protested against the cut of the funding for these systems as the future of the country is seen as dependent on it. This is how Emma, a 30-year-old primary school teacher, explained it:

They're [*the government*] cutting because they have sold us that they have to cut back from everywhere. So they cut from here [*the welfare state*]. But it's the basis for people's quality of life! I mean, you cannot allow... Because the welfare system, the public system from here was the basis of everything and they're destroying it, cutting all of this! I don't think they have to cut from here, I think there're interests, as I've told you, that there's more poor people and more riches. Then you stifle the disadvantaged, you stifle the working class, because you have interests not because you have to cut from here!

[Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

Likewise, Pilar, a 43 year-old hairdresser, suggested that by cutting on welfare state services the government is threatening the future of the country:

Man! I mean, especially education is for me the future of a country. I mean if you don't invest in educating... it speaks volumes about the leaders who are governing the country if they don't invest in the future of their country. And health! Imagine! I mean, it's life! [Pilar, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

As the quotes above illustrate, many workers are suspicious that the government does not cut the funding for social services because they actually do not have resources, but because they actively seek to disempower the working class, or because they want to use the money that workers pay through taxes for the benefit of the upper classes. For instance, Gloria, 61, who has been unemployed for several years, suspects that the funds for the public education system are devoted to private schools:

Okay, there's a crisis and there're cutbacks, but I think the cutbacks are a little bit induced, I mean, they've been manipulated, right? Education is a pillar... I remember that a long time ago we used to say: "Damn! The kids of the public system are in barracks and the kids of the semi-private system¹⁷ are getting excellent buildings!" And even here in the neighborhood there's a school run by nuns, subsidized, and the Jesuits from Clot [*adjacent neighborhood*] it's more of the same. I mean, they had a building and they got another building. Have parents put any money? Yes, of course they're putting money, but how much has the Generalitat [*Catalan government*] put? [Gloria, 61. Original quote in Catalan]

Concerns have also been raised in regard to the healthcare system with many interviewees who suggested that the government is using the cutbacks to transfer services to the private system. In general, all interviewees and participants seem to agree that austerity plans disproportionately affect the working class (or, as they say,

¹⁷ Private schools that are largely subsidized with public funds.

“the people”) and that privatization only benefits the rich. Juan, 64 and pre-retired, explained it with the following quote:

People talk about cutbacks. Hospitals don't have cutbacks, the cuts are for the people of the Social Security system. Why do they rent hospital floors and operating rooms to mutual companies? Because this is happening in Saint Paul Hospital, the Clinical Hospital [*public hospitals*] and there's gonna be more hospitals that we won't be able to use. Why are they sending so many patients to private hospitals? Because that man of the health [*the Catalan Minister of Healthcare*] was the director of the Hospital of Barcelona [*private*]! This is inadmissible! [Juan, 64. Original quote in Spanish]

Another common position is considering that health and education are an essential right that should be guaranteed by the state. This confronts the view that health and education are commodities that could be sold and bought in a market. The funding and provision of these services by public institutions is considered a form of solidarity between people and a much more agreeable way of dealing with social needs than charity. The following two quotes illustrate this point:

It's evident that if someone is hungry and you give him a small piece of bread he will welcome it, right? But if you go to the doctor because you have a problem here [*he points to his back*] and you're stooped over, and you get to the doctor and he says “don't worry” and they give you a cane, they've not solved your problem. They give me a cane so I can... What I want is to stand straight! It's a bit like this. I think that everybody should be ensured a roof,

schooling, medicine, and well, all basic elements should be guaranteed and they should be decent. [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

Charity? It's a beast! No one should be forced to humiliate himself for alms. The sick person has the right to a state-guaranteed decent housing and a decent wage so he can live. The sick person, the grandfather, the grandmother. That's what the state has to do. If you are poor, Caritas [*main charity organization*] comes and says they're gonna solve your problems. Every other week they give you a basket of food and, as you don't have any other resources, you go there, you get the basket of food. That's humiliating! [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

Concern has also been expressed in regards to the pension system for the retired population, probably due to the large number of elders in the neighborhood. Some of the retired local respondents reported that they had participated in demonstrations and movements of opposition against the cutbacks in retirement pensions and for the rights of retirees. Even the few interviewees with center and right wing positions, who say that people should accept even if they do not like the cutbacks, defend the welfare system and oppose the commodification of health and education. For instance, Pablo, 21, explained the consequences that neoliberalism could have for the inhabitants of La Verneda – Sant Martí:

There's a population from these neighborhoods that the market wouldn't be responsible for. The market wouldn't be responsible for these people when they are in this so precarious situation; this function has to be covered by the

state. With the neoliberal economy, as it's supposed to work with merits, and there's equality of opportunities and everything is ideal, I think there would be these gaps, these malfunctions. Because they start from a fake beginning, I mean, there's no equality of opportunities. It may exist now because the state makes it possible, it has public services so that these people have a good education. In a full market economy, with only private education, the people who are unemployed or working in precarious jobs, what future could they give to their children? [Pablo, 21. Original quote in Catalan]

When asked about their ideal economy¹⁸, many interviewees wished for a welfare system that works well and where there is plenty of funding for education, healthcare and retirement pensions. They also ask for more state intervention in areas where there are a perceived lack of services, especially daycare for children and services for families with children, and services for the care of the dependent elder and sick family members.

Furthermore, when asked to choose between the social-democratic welfare regime and the liberal welfare regime, the interviewees have a strong preference for the social-democratic model and they express that it is the model of welfare the state should follow. Some interviewees had learn about this welfare regime in documentaries on television. The interviewees report the virtues of this regime, reporting that it is more integrative, that it makes a better provision for possible future needs, and that it ensures more quality services for everybody.

¹⁸ I posed the question: If there was a miracle and the economy become as you wish, how would it be?

They also consider it is agreeable to pay more taxes if higher taxes are translated into more services for the population. However, they also reminded the researcher that the tax burden on Spanish families is already quite high. Some interviewees doubt that the system could work in Spain due to the recurrent misadministration of public money and a reportedly deceitful culture for which Spaniards would try to evade taxes.

These results are consistent with previous data from National Sociological Research Center. In 2011, after four years of severe economic crisis, 67.1% of Spaniards considered that “the State is responsible for the well-being of citizens and has the obligation of helping them solve their problems”. Only 7.9% considered that citizens are responsible for their own welfare and should have to solve their problems by themselves. Likewise, half of the population considered the public funds allocated to public health and public education insufficient. Some 97.20% of respondents were against the implementation of cuts in the budget for public health, and 96.81% rejected the cuts on the public education system.¹⁹

Along this line, interviewees and participants also reject the deregulation of markets as free markets are thought to have very negative consequences. First, interviewees reject the commodification of some main services such as healthcare, education or even housing, as we have seen above. Second, they describe how working conditions are deteriorating following the economic crisis and how employers take advantage of the economic downturn to exploit workers. Thus, they mainly reject deregulated markets because they are seen as conducive to damaging

¹⁹ Data retrieved from the *Barometer of opinion* of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas of September 2011.

working and living conditions or, as many interviewees and participants put it, to “exploitation”:

Businessmen, big or small, there are of all types, some may be humble and good people, they may do everything as they should, but there’s also those who won’t, who take profit. What we were saying: no contract, nothing, exploitation, whatever they want. Thus, I think that somehow [*the market*] should be regulated, because there are very bad people, with interests, they’re people who take a lot of advantage of others, so I think it should be regulated by the government. I don’t think we can do it, given that we’re so many people, let everyone do whatever they want. The worker has to be protected and someone has to supervise that everything is in order. [Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

Abuses on the part of business owners would happen not only through labor contracts but also with the artificial fixation of prices in the market through the constitution of monopolies and oligopolies:

I believe that the government has to establish the economy because it’s been shown that, with time, free trade has made that oil costs as much everywhere. Free trade has made than when someone raises the price of the milk... They have agreements! The big lobbies have agreements to raise the prices. Oil goes up today, prices raise today; it goes down tomorrow, prices don’t go down until after ten days! I mean, in all areas it’s the same. So I think the government is the one that knows the fair prices in all essential items. I can

understand that someone who can buy a Maserati won't get a two-person car, but there should be a difference on taxes between those who can afford the luxury of paying 10,000 euros for a car and those who can't. Right? The state can handle money, it can prevent some issues. [David, 59. Original quote in Spanish]

Some interviewees have also cited unions as an actor that could participate in the regulation of the economy. For instance, Núria, a 57 year-old shop assistant, suggested the need of collective bargaining:

What should be done? Well, control over contracts, a lot of control over contracts, very strong collective bargaining. Yes, powerful collective bargaining that regulates the functioning of companies. Then, also more support to small and medium-sized enterprises, and of course regulating, regulating the labor market, regulating, because we're deregulating the labor market. The moment you deregulate, the situation is brutal. [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

Despite the preference for regulated markets, most interviewees reject the idea of a central planned economy and many suggested that even protectionist positions are no longer sage. The strong preference for a solid welfare system and the intervention, to some extent, of the government in the economy contrasts with the indignation felt in regard to politicians and bankers, who are perceived as thieves and as abusing the people's trust. In this regard, Pierre Bourdieu (1998) has distinguished between the right hand of the state – technocrats from the government and banks –

and the left hand of the state – the social workers and other professionals who provide services to the population. Bourdieu suggests that the state is failing in this second role as the guardian of the public interest. This same claim is made by the interviewees, who believe that politicians are working for their own interest and that of the upper classes instead of looking after the citizenry. This is how Pilar, 43, explained it:

You find yourself in a country that could go well, because it's a country with resources, it's a country that could go well, and you see that those who were supposed to manage it didn't do it well. When I go to work I try to do my job well. And I see people who are leading a country who don't seem to think about the people who live in it, they don't think about the population, they don't think... That's how I see it, a fraud in their own benefit, to get benefits for themselves, their friends, their surroundings, and to be on the fiddle among them. Sometimes I think they're in a world of offices and they don't see the reality of the streets, they don't go down to the streets. They don't see the suffering, they don't see the problems of the streets. [Pilar, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Laia, a 35 year-old social worker, felt that “Government looks after power, not people”.

Bourdieu (1998) also suggests that the state exists in two different forms: in objective reality and in people's minds. In this second form, the state represents the social conquests of people and it is, therefore, not only an instrument of class domination. In the case of La Verneda – Sant Martí, working-class people challenge

politicians because they are failing to protect the highly respected welfare state and (some of them) are stealing public money, but at the same time they protect the state and their intervention in the economy because it is seen as a main instrument to protect workers' rights and to allow them to maintain decent living standards. Some of the elder workers stated that rights are conquests not concessions and that they are achieved "fighting":

We went on strikes, we even did one that lasted 23 days, and we achieved not working on Saturdays, we achieve the 8-hour journey, the increase in wages, the Social Security, the improvement of working conditions. We achieved that. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

Bourdieu (1998) suggests that in the countries in which state traditions have been stronger, there is more resistance to the neoliberal doctrine and policy. This may be the case in Spain. Most interviewees did not mention neoliberalism but expressed rejection of free trade and free markets. The few interviewees who talked about neoliberalism had a hard time providing a definition. However, they understood that it implies the deregulation of markets, that it is connected to globalization and that it started in the 1970s and 1980s with the policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. They also intuitively rejected it. The following example is from Paula, a 61 year-old informal caregiver:

I listen to economists but I couldn't say... I like them not to be neoliberal, you know? But of course, are there others...? If they are in favor of the market, I don't like them. I'm trying to remember... I don't remember which ones

aren't neoliberal. I don't like neoliberals, I prefer that the state intervenes more. I'm leftist. Thus, I prefer that the state intervenes more. Let's see, not that it intervenes in everything, not all, because it is also okay that there's a market, but I prefer... If it depended on me, the water and so on would belong to the state, but anyway... [Paula, 61. Original quote in Spanish]

Neoliberalism is also presented as a further or the last state of capitalism. The interviewees that mention neoliberalism explain that it presents itself as a more humane form of capitalism but that it is not. This is how Guillem, a 32-year-old writer, presented it:

Well, neoliberalism is definitely just capitalism, what happens is that it has a new face, a new way of doing things. It's the evolution of classic capitalism. In my opinion, neoliberalism is a scourge for most of the population. I mean, its postulates, the guidelines that it sets and the receipts that it puts forward end up affecting most of the population and only benefit a privileged minority that, in the end, the only thing they do is to accumulate capital and more capital. Then, I feel it's a very harmful social and economic system, especially for the working class, because it has no other objective but to make profit through speculation and through the exploitation of workers. And it has no consideration and no human face, even if it's said that it's a more popular capitalism, a capitalism with a human face, that it guarantees the basics to the population. [Guillem, 32. Original quote in Spanish]

In the same line, Héctor, a 43-year-old computer technician, was aware of the cultural power of neoliberalism and reflected on the difficulty of thinking beyond the frame provided by it:

Neoliberalism, as the word “neo” says, is liberalism that has come back to claim its territory. It had given ground from 1945 and it came back 30 years later, in 1975, in some places, but somehow not very strong yet. But since the 1990s, it has taken the hegemony and now even those of us who think that we have more social thoughts, sometimes we realize that we’re trapped inside this thought. I mean, we share things with this thought. Maybe income-based aid would be okay and sometimes you say “yes, man!”, but then you reflect about it again and you’re not convinced, because right now the dominant culture is the neoliberal culture. Just as in the 60s the dominant culture was socialist or social democratic and the other one was residual, now it’s the other way round: what is residual is social democracy and even the socialist party... and what’s cool... Well, the socialist party when we had Zapatero [*a past prime minister*] accepted the single tax rate, that everybody pay the same. Well done! Chapeau to the socialist party! [*ironic*] I mean, what is this?! It’s the hegemonic culture in which we’re now. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

The lack of reflection about neoliberalism in the interviews contrasts with the intense discussion of it in some meetings of the neighbors in newly formed organizations. Participant observation was done in one of these organizations. The organization was formed after the Indignados Movement as a form of reorganization

of workers and has strong ties with a communist party, with many of its members being members or voters of the party. In the frame of the organization, neoliberalism and globalization are largely discussed and blamed for the current economic situation of the country; however, this discussion has not impregnated yet the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood and remains a minority discourse.

A third main point of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood is the acknowledgement of the problems of the capitalist economic system and a claim for the reduction of social inequalities. Although most interviewees want a capitalist economic system or see it as inevitable, they are also aware of its limitations.

Interviewees mention, for instance, the formation of monopolies that fix the prices of products instead of engaging in competence, the existence of transnational companies that disregard labor rights and push governments to accept their terms under the threat of leaving the country, and the existence of warehouses full of stock that cannot be sold while there are people who are hungry and lacking decent clothing.

The element that preoccupied interviewees and participants the most is the rise in social inequalities. They perceived that, since inequality is growing, workers cannot expect their future to be better. Interviewees provided me with different versions of the sentence “the rich are richer and the poor are poorer”. The rise of social inequalities was also considered negative for the functioning of capitalism. This is how Isabel, a 59-year-old factory worker, explained it:

I had seen cyclical crises, but this crisis, with this depth, I think it matches what some thinkers define as a “change of epoch”. I think we start a change of epoch, that the paradigm is different. I was telling you before that we had fought for our rights... So I think the paradigm is different because capitalism

– at least that’s what I think – wants it to be based on some parameters by which the rich become very rich and the poor, very poor. I’m not saying they talk about slavery, but they do talk about very precarious conditions that force people to do extra hours and to be subject to the dictates of the entrepreneurship, the capital. This is tied in the end to messages of fear, that we won’t make it through, that we all have to tighten our belts... All these messages are constantly produced by this type of business or by those who dominate the market. Thus, it’s going to be a different paradigm, so we don’t know how this will turn out. I imagine it will be totally different from what we have now, unless we achieve..., going on strike maybe, or some other way, unless we achieve a social pact. [Isabel, 59. Original quote in Catalan]

Some interviewees even detailed how class stratification is produced:

They changed the education system and they organized it so well-off boys could afford higher education to become leaders, and so the commoners... The son of a commoner, grandson of a commoner, no matter how hard he tried, it would be super-difficult for him... He would have to be the first one, have honors in all courses, to be able to reach a white-collar medium management job, you know? [Antonio, 39. Original quote in Spanish]

A young religious leader of the neighborhood suggested that inequality may actually be fatal for capitalism. He feared the possibility of a resurgence of the extreme right in Europe: “If this thing goes on, that the rich are richer and the poor are poorer, it’s going to explode, it’s going to explode!”. There is widespread awareness

of this situation. It led to a third of the interviewees and many participants suggesting the need for a redistribution of wealth. This is how Isabel, from the quote above, put it:

A real redistribution of income! I ask myself many times when the government passes down to us the responsibility that people work less hours, make less money... if we have to redistribute what we have, what are they asking us to do? They are asking us to redistribute poverty. And then we have in the press all these cases of people who have tax havens, of people who have taken money that was not their own, Jordi Pujol [*he was president of the Catalan Government for many years*] and family, etc. Right? The first thing should be that these people return the money that they have kept, which belongs to the people, which they have unduly appropriated; pay taxes like everybody; if they have committed fraud, let them serve time and bar them from any public activity. I mean, these things are intolerable in a democracy, right? [Isabel, 59. Original quote in Catalan]

Virtually all interviewees indicated that crises are cyclical. Some cited Marx and other Marxist intellectuals as their source, the others could not remember where they had heard that but they suggested it is widely-known. In any case, workers suggested that this crisis is not one of the recurrent crises of capitalism but that it has been planned and provoked on purpose by the upper classes for their own benefit and to take advantage of workers. Interviewees went on to provide passionate statements about the culpability of politicians, bankers, employers and the rich in general. Discourses are also impregnated with indignation towards corruption in political

parties, tax evasion, and the public rescue of private banks. This class analysis of the crisis is one of the main elements of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood and is produced from a sense of class pride and self-assurance that comes from the history of the neighborhood and the cultural repertoires available. This point will be deeply explored in Chapter 6.

4.5 Everyday Challenge of the Dominant Economic Discourses

The residents of La Verneda –Sant Martí use the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood and their own experience to challenge the dominant economic discourses that they receive through the mass media and at the workplace, mostly outside the neighborhood. In many instances, the interviewees were also aware that they were challenging a dominant discourse and would specify why and how they did so.

Regarding mass media, most interviewees do not turn on TV to learn about the economy. However, they say that they get information about the economy when watching the news. The most watched news program is that of TV3, the Catalan TV channel, although other channels were also cited. Most interviewees stated watching any news program that is on while they have dinner or right after dinner, with exception of Tele 5, which some interviewees avoid. Half of the interviewees also watch programs of La Sexta tv channel, which addresses, although not specifically, topics related to the economy. Five different programs were cited. These programs address political news in a critical fashion and most of them openly discuss the corruption scandals that have affected some political parties and influential/famous people.

As for newspapers, interviewees and participants cite a wide variety of newspapers, especially *Ara*, *El Periódico* and *El País*. Many interviewees state that they switch newspapers often because they are biased. Some interviewees even buy newspapers of political groups different than their own to check what they say, as we will see below. The most cited radio station is Cadena SER. Some interviewees also listen to the news in other stations. However, interviewees do not listen to information related to the economy besides the news. Interviewees and participants combine the use of mass media with the use of alternative media. Interviewees have cited a diversity of alternative on-line newspapers that they use to contrast the information that they receive through the mass media. However, none of these publications stand as a reference to many of the interviewees. Very few interviewees use social media to learn about the economy, nor do they receive news or comments about the economy through these media.

As pointed out above, many interviewees are aware of the biases of media. Interviewees were much more critical about the content of newspapers than in regard to television programs. This is probably due to the fact that they read newspapers as an active effort to get information, whereas they use television as a source of entertainment or as backup noise while they are eating or cleaning. Many interviewees also mentioned the practice of surfing from channel to channel. Some interviewees mentioned that newspapers have “a tendency”, to not be objective but write in favor of a particular group. This is how Maria, a 55-year-old educational psychologist, explained it:

Newspapers... Well... It's complicated because I go out to buy the newspaper and I don't know which one to get. There was a time when I would buy *El*

País [*The Country*], then I bought the *Ara* [*Now*]... Sometimes *El Periódico* [*The Periodic*]. I change often because I don't like them. I notice that they have a tendency...It's not lack of trust in journalism... It's the lines: *Ara* can be very pro-independence because this works for them, *El País* is all for Madrid, *El Periódico* sometimes seems one of those gossip magazines... Then you say: "what newspaper?" "So I'll take this one." I'm not loyal, I like changing. [Maria, 55. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Alberto, a locksmith in his early forties, mentioned reading newspapers from a variety of political positions, even those different to his own, to get a better grasp of what is going on:

I don't really like any newspaper. I find them all hard to read because I find biases in all of them: *El Periódico*, *Ara*, *La Razón*, *ABC*...I read all a little bit because it's good. [Alberto, 40s. Original quote in Spanish]

The reported lack of objectivity of newspapers has also caused workers to become active readers who reflect on the interests behind the information that they receive:

There's a method of analysis that we use, it's not new. So when you read something you have to know what class interests are behind it. They say a man is manipulated and he will be for life unless we learn what class interests are behind each slogan and behind each discourse. So when there's a bomb here or something there, who benefits from it? And the one that's behind, the one

that's benefiting, that would probably be... Like they did with Atocha [*station were IIM terrorist attack took place*]. They said "it's been ETA". The problem is that they had gone to Iraq... We nourish from the only thing available, which is the right, the not-fascist right. [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

In this quote, Andreu, a retired mechanic, explained how he reflects on the class interests behind the pieces of news. Starting from a Marxist position, Andreu suspects that newspapers are on the side of right-wing groups. Similar analyses were provided by many interviewees. Some interviewees had the suspicion that the people behind the mass media, those who get to influence its content and to apply a censorship, are not of their social class.

In general, interviewees suspected the media to be in the hands of much more powerful groups, allegedly the same ones that would have caused the economic crisis, and to intentionally present biased information for the benefit of these groups. Some interviewees also identified the interests that lay behind the biases. This concern was sometimes voiced in terms of class interests and class struggle, as we have seen above with Andreu. However, even when this is not the case, there is the underlying understanding that the interests of the rich and the interests of the people of La Verneda do not match. In the following brief quote, David, age 59, a custodian, expresses his concern for the control of the mass media by the banks:

Banks are involved in the crisis and banks are tendentious. Banks control the press, banks control the mass media. They're the lobbies. [David, 59. Original quote in Spanish]

Gloria, 61, is also suspicious of the banks' control of the media:

[*Café amb Llet, an alternative newspaper*] made a complaint... Something we already suspected... That mass media, mainly newspapers, were in the hands of the banks. That was known, but none had been able to prove it, right? So maybe people in the field knew that but the average man on the street didn't know it. I mean, maybe we thought about how newspapers work, right?, when they give you the news you can already see... And then these people did a study based on smaller studies that already existed. They assemble them. They did a study, and they demonstrated to which bank each newspaper belongs to. That was huge! Behind them there were La Caixa, Banc de Sabadell, Bilbao Vizcaya [*names of banks*]... Everything matched! Wow!" [Gloria, 61.

Original quote in Catalan]

Citing the same alternative newspaper, Mireia, a 22-year-old college student, distinguished between people who write for "the population" and people who write for their own interests:

What makes me trust *Café amb Llet* is that they don't advertise themselves. I mean, they do advertise themselves but they do it for you, not for themselves, not for their own interests. It's so you know that [information], because they really care about the population, they love them. The other people don't really love you, they look for an audience for their interest, for their ego. [Mireia, 22.

Original quote in Spanish]

Interviewees identified different interests of the powerful groups that, according to them, control the mass media. As stated above, even if not all these suspicions are denounced in terms of opposed class interests, the idea of different interests for the two social groups, the population of La Verneda and the much better-off people, is underlying in all quotes.

One main interest that interviewees suspect the media to have is that of creating a state of fear that would allow the government to implement whatever policies they want, even if they are against the interests of most of the population. This goal would be achieved by “bombarding” the audience with alarmist messages that present the Spanish recession as an end-of-the-world-like situation. Núria, a 57-year-old shop assistant, related her experience of learning about the crisis in the mass media. In her testimony, Núria suggests that the crisis, apart from a real economic problem, is also a media construction:

I understand that I am in a society in which there are mass media that are the ones that transmit the message. I live like this, very conscious that I'm only one piece within a system that is manipulated. At least this is how I live it. So, I start from this position of distrust... Firstly, I saw the crisis as an alarming situation. I mean, what I saw were very apocalyptic messages and I think that they have provoked a lot of anxiety. Firstly there were mass media, because I wasn't in that situation. Firstly, the messages, but I thought “Uix! That won't happen to me, that won't happen to me”. I would live it as a faraway story. Then, I saw that it was coming, coming, closer, closer, closer. Then I saw the crisis as a ball that has become bigger, bigger, bigger, and I feel it over me. They are giving now messages that the crisis is over and now it's when I feel it more over me. [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

Similarly, Isabel, a 59-year-old factory worker, explains how the fear generated through the media leads people to immobility and to the loss of some important social conquests:

This fear that has been produced and that affects many people causes that we lose the defense of the rights that we have achieved throughout the years, because we don't keep the claim, the defense, the fight, whatever word we want to use, the attitude of defense of the rights that we're losing. [...] When it comes to the crisis, I think that there're many people who think that nothing can be done, right?, that this crisis is global. That's what they've told us, that it's global. But the people who were poor are poorer. And the ones who are currently working stay poor because having a 400€ wage does not guarantee your way out of poverty, right? So the crisis is also been constructed with "there's nothing we can do", "it must be this way", "but what can you do", but of course the rich are richer and the poor are poorer! [Isabel, 59. Original quote in Catalan]

Isabel criticizes the discourse that says there is nothing people can do about the economic crisis, and the expectation that they would therefore accept and support any economic measure from the government, even the reduction of social services. Isabel suspects that these measures would, in fact, keep the population in poverty. Isabel does not mention neoliberalism; however, this theory of political economic practices has been associated with the cut of public services, which are considered inefficient and unproductive. One of the main discursive strengths of neoliberalism is

that it presents itself as the only option and as inevitable, in our daily lives (Bourdieu 1998; Harvey 2005).

Although not always sure of what political decisions are best to address the economic situation, interviewees and participants reject neoliberalism and any economic position that implies the cut of social services and the limitation of the state's regulation over the market, as we have seen in the previous sections. All these are elements of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood. Moreover, even when they do not have an argument to contest the messages from the mass media, interviewees state that they do not believe them as people are aware that the media are lying. This conscious resistance against the "very apocalyptic messages" of the media and the presentation of austerity measures as "the only way" is exemplified in this quote from Guillem, 32:

I think that this has been presented as a life-or-death situation, right?, I mean, if we don't accept the loans of the International Monetary Fund, the country is going bankrupt and there's going to be a "*corralito*" [*bank freeze*], businesses are going to close, and everything is going to go down, so poverty is going to increase and there's going to be no way out. I think the discourse is this catastrophic because there's the interest of generating fear among the population. I mean, I don't think... I don't think that tomorrow there'll be a government... Well that happened... It seemed that it was going to happen in Greece and then it was clear that it wouldn't happen because the government ended up going back and now we're seeing they are just acting like their previous governments... But let's imagine there's a change here, in Spain, and that the new government, more progressive, determines that we should not

contract more debt nor receive loans from the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Central Banks. It wouldn't be a catastrophe. I'm of the opinion that it wouldn't be a catastrophe. [...] Thus, we shall not fall into the "life or death", into the "OMG! If we don't accept this what's going to be of our lives and the economy?!". I mean, it's not that catastrophic, it's more a discourse that they want to implant to generate fear and so we don't do those reforms that are evidently feared by the great capital. [Guillem, 32. Original quote in Spanish]

Guillem mentioned the case of Ecuador under the rule of President Rafael Correa to support the case that foreign debt can be handled in more ways than applying austerity measures and increasing taxes to pay back the debt.

Another interest of the powerful groups behind the mass media mentioned by the interviewees is the intention of destroying working-class leaderships and silencing dissent. Antonio, a long-term unemployed lathe operator, explained the role of the mass media in the dissolution of workers' solidarities:

In another time in history, the worker felt the company as its own. He would always be fighting the business man to improve his working conditions, but as a group and leading the business forward. SEAT, La Roca, big businesses... It's not the boss, the owner, the manager, it's a social conglomerate what moves the business forward, it's the families, it's a social avalanche. But a time came when the management started limiting the workers' power and people become demotivated. The worker said: "why should I work if another worker is going to do it. Taking into account the looming situation, I'm just going to avoid the work". And we split up. This comes from mass media and

advertising. They sell us: “have the car”, “have the coolest apartment”, “have the best holidays”. They keep bombarding us with messages through TV, and you don’t realize it but the messages make you increasingly demotivated, on the one hand, and then also make your work harsher, on the other hand.

[Antonio, 39. Original quote in Spanish]

Similarly, Núria, 57, denounced the involvement of the media in the dissolution of pro-workers leaderships through defamation campaigns:

I want to identify leaders as much as I want to identify culprits. The problem is that there’s a lot of social and ideological pressure so leadership cannot crystallize and then we have trouble to get organized because the media... There was a time when the communist party had that man, the mayor of Granada? Córdoba? It doesn’t matter. The thing is that this man, a professor, made very demagogic but interesting discourses. And they started to discredit him and they ended up presenting him as a fool. It doesn’t matter. That was the beginning, so it’s clear... When someone appears that makes these messages...they take them apart quickly. So there are already very organized campaigns so there won’t be strong leaderships. And now I think that we have this problem of how to get organized, right? We don’t want the historical leaderships and we don’t know... We need this more than ever, even more than in other historical times, I believe. [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

Later on the interview, Núria commented on the amount of information provided by the mass media and on the fact that information does not always translate into knowledge:

They seek ignorance. It's of their interest that we're ignorant of these topics.

It's easier to... There's a TV blitz... [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

An elder neighbor commented in turn on the recent “Law on the Protection of Public Safety” of March 2015, popularly known as “the gag law”. This retired construction worker considers this law another strategy to silence the dissidence:

Now they pass the gag law so if you get too...they apply to you the gag law and they flatten you. You get four or five years! This is the sole responsibility of the states. [Miguel, 85. Original quote in Spanish]

The perception that the mass media works for the interests of a social group different than their own led in some cases to annoyance and indignation on the part of interviewees. In Chapter 6 we will see how the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood celebrates workers and their lifestyle, and assures that they are not responsible for the economic crisis, but that all problems come from the upper class. This was the perception of Judith, a 42-year-old caregiver, who said that she cannot watch the news about the economy as they really upset her:

I watch the news but when they start with the economy I get really mad because... I mean... Ask Bárcenas²⁰ to give back everything he has stolen, ask Jordi Pujol²¹ to give back everything he has stolen, ask the Infanta²² to give

²⁰ Luis Bárcenas Gutiérrez, former senator and treasurer of the Popular Party.

²¹ Jordi Pujol i Soley, president of the Catalan Government from 1980 until 2003.

²² Infanta Cristina of Spain, daughter of King Juan Carlos I.

back everything she has stolen, everything that all of the high ranks are stealing! Maybe we won't overcome the crisis but there'll be more money for retirement pensions, okay? "There's no money in the funds". Okay, well ask for all they've stolen! And that's why I don't watch much TV, because on top of that they give you bad blood! [Judith, 42. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Guillem, 32, strongly opposed the strategy of blaming victims for their negative situation and, by extension, neoliberalism:

I think it's stupid, this discourse that has been expanded by the media but also by certain sectors of society...that is in the end the discourse that they want to introduce in the public opinion... And it's a neoliberal discourse, I mean from neoliberal thought, which says that the person who doesn't do well in this economic and social system is ultimately lazy and does not work hard, makes no effort or is insufficiently trained. [Guillem, 32. Original quote in Spanish]

Apart from mass media, another space where interviewees are in contact with the dominant economic discourses is the workplace. Most of the employed population of La Verneda - Sant Martí works outside of the neighborhood due to the very small number of jobs available in the neighborhood. Some interviewees related their conversations with their coworkers to illustrate how they oppose the dominant economic discourses. Furthermore, in many cases the interviewees are aware of their acts of resistance. One example is provided by Héctor, 43, who believes that his coworkers lack critical culture. Héctor is aware of the fact that a worker cannot simply believe everything the management says, as the management have their own interests:

I have a coworker who is an engineer but who is very open minded. What I'm trying to say is that even if he doesn't have much training in the social field, he has read a lot. I also have a friend who teaches math. And they care about social issues, and they are open minded and I love them both very much, but sometimes, to tell the truth, I find myself thinking that they are not critical enough because they say things like: "no, what the company is doing with the money is just diverting it". No, they really lack critical culture and not having so much credulity towards everything you're told. They look at things from away, as they didn't affect them, and sometimes they just believe everything. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

Héctor works in a large information technology company and considers that the stability provided by the company makes workers too conformist. In contrast to the conformist workers, Héctor tries to think critically and act accordingly to the point that he may become an annoyance to others:

In such a big company, people is conformist because they're doing just fine, and here the big unions such as UGT and Workers' Commissions have a close relation with the company. Just so you understand it, we have a retirement plan, well I don't but most workers do, and unions are in the control commission to protect the workers' money, what makes sense. The problem is that they are also in the management commission and they get a 20% commission of the benefits of the retirement plan. Then of course they can't protect workers! [...] I'm giving you my side of the story. I'm sure that if you talk with the coworkers from the UGT, they'll tell you something radically

different. [...] In my union, a very small union, we are a little bit like those groups from *Life of Brian*, very critical, almost critical with everything, but in a situation of so much conformity it's worth it to be annoying. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

Another example of discussion with coworkers regarding dominant media messages is provided by Maria, 55. Maria, an educational psychologist, has discussions with her workmates regarding their social class. While some of her coworkers seem to believe themselves to be middle class, she questions it. We will see in Chapter 6 that worker pride is an essential part of the alternative discourse used by the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí:

How do I classify myself? This is a discussion that I sometimes have with my coworkers and it's complicated, I don't have... It's complicated because the scale from when I was young... The scale has changed, okay? Then I have coworkers who consider themselves middle class. And I say I don't consider myself middle class because for me middle class is a status higher than the one I have. Thus, I'd consider myself of a class... well, lower than middle but it obviously wouldn't be a low class. [...] How would that be? If you live of your work and you survive with that, this means you have to pay for housing... If you don't have any other proprieties that provide you with an income, then you basically live of work. Then of course you are already working class. Then when the people from my job talk about this, I think: "Well, I have this apartment where I live and I don't have any other property." Right? But I have coworkers who do work but maybe they inherited

something or were able to buy it back in the day...each of them with their own circumstances consider themselves middle class. Maybe I would feel middle class too if I had another apartment that would give me 800€ a month but not this way, no. [Maria, 55. Original quote in Catalan]

The work place is one of the spaces where the workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí encounter people from higher social classes. Many interviewees have expressed astonishment and rejection of certain practices common among their richer coworkers or bosses. This contributes to their working-class identification and pride and will be developed in depth in Chapter 6. One of this experiences of astonishment in regard to her coworkers lifestyles is related by Pilar, 43, who compares her working-class experience to that of her much wealthier boss:

Once I had a boss who was in another, upper scale... That left me... Things I had never seen, you know? For instance... This is silly but I was deeply impressed... Well, she had had twins and, as she wanted to sleep through the night, she had hired a nurse, a girl, only to look after the babies at night. She could sleep because there was a person who would give the babies the feeding bottle, who would wake up if they cried... Wow! That was something I had never seen! [*Laughter*] And that really caught my attention, meeting people who have service at home, who have interim people...who are used to having service at home! I discovered a world that really shocked me! [*Laughter*]. [Pilar, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

In general, we can state that the interviewees and the participants are conscious that the dominant economic discourses are actually detrimental for them as they respond to the interests of people from other social groups, not workers. Furthermore, they use the alternative discourse of the neighborhood and their own experience to challenge these discourses. A quote by a neighbor summarizes some of these points:

We should be aware that behind each economist there's a social group. Then, you have to realize what your social group is, and what his/her social group is and make a little adjustment. I mean, going with the one that supports your interests more. This looks like class struggle, but in the end it is! I mean, there's a class struggle. We've seen class struggle so blatantly! I mean, they've defended the subsidizing of the banking system so fiercely: "you pay everything we've invested badly". "You're an idiot, you pay". "Okay, so I pay!" [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

This alternative discourse that allows working-class people to challenge the dominant economic discourses is learned and discussed through civic celebrations and activities in the neighborhood as well as through shared family memories, what leads us to the next section.

4.6 Socialization into the Counter-hegemonic Discourse of the Neighborhood

The working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí are able to challenge the dominant economic discourses due to the existence in their area of a common

discourse that glorifies the workers' struggles and defends workers' interests and lifestyle. This discourse, detailed above, is learned from the neighborhood organizations, as well as from events and celebrations and other spaces that promote debate among neighbors. Socialization in this alternative discourse is not a one-time process, but neighbors of all ages constantly revise their ideas on economic and social issues through their communication with other neighbors, as we will see below.

Socialization in the alternative discourse implies learning about the social movements and struggles that have taken place in the neighborhood for the improvement of living and working conditions for the residents. The past of the neighborhood constitutes a main element of the alternative discourse, as we have seen above, and it is constantly recalled and celebrated, becoming a constant in the present life of the neighborhood. The history of the neighborhood is remembered through the activities of the neighborhood organizations. These organizations were created in the 1970s to mobilize neighbors for the improvement of their living conditions and still remained active. Mobilization diminished considerably after the attainment of democracy in 1982 and some neighbors even suggest that these organizations have become obsolete, as we will see in the next chapter. Although not as active as in the past, neighborhood organizations are still referents for workers and they return to them when there is any problem in the neighborhood. The neighborhood also has two organizations devoted to the study of its history.

The past of the neighborhood is also recalled through community events. For instance, during the period of field work in the neighborhood in May 2016, one of the neighborhood organizations prepared a talk on the past of the "La Pau" area to celebrate their fiftieth anniversary. Flyers were hung out around the neighborhood and all residents were invited to attend. About twenty neighbors attended. The speaker

summarized the history of the blocks, putting emphasis on neighbors' mobilizations and on the role of neighborhood organizations. He also detailed the many recurrent problems of the blocks such as the structural damage of the buildings due to the deterioration of the cement used in the construction, or the persistence of petty crimes and drug trafficking in the area. He also explained how the intervention of the neighbors in all these issues has improved the area and listed the free services that the neighborhood organizations provides for neighbors. Elderly residents of La Pau also explained their experiences of mobilization and their fight for the improvement of the area.

The talk also offered a space of debate for the neighbors. A lot of confrontation arose about the current role of the neighborhood organizations. Many participants challenged the neighborhood organization of La Pau and its management and regretted the demobilization of workers. This topic will be covered in depth in the next chapter. The important point here is that, despite the disagreements, neighbors had some common ideas that defy the dominant economic discourses. In fact, their disagreement revolved around how to better organize and mobilize the community, but none of them complied with the dominant discourses.

The neighbors who were in attendance agreed that, as a retired construction worker put it, "Democracy comes from the struggles of workers, not from the Moncloa" [*Spanish equivalent to the White House*]. They also agreed that "We either face them all united or they are going to screw us". The discourse was clearly confrontational towards the upper classes, who are seen as in control of politics and the economy, and against workers.

Another community event where the past of the neighborhood is remembered is the festival of the neighborhood, which takes place each November coinciding with

Saint Martin's day. The festival lasts two weeks and has been organized for many years by one of the neighborhood organizations. The festival is currently organized by the Coordinator of Entities of La Verneda - Sant Martí, a network that brings together the organizations of the neighborhood and facilitates its communication. The posters that announce the festival each year constitute a piece worthy of analysis, as they clearly show how the community sees itself. The 2015 poster features a group of people partying and dancing in the neighborhood's park. In the background of the picture we can also see a banner that reads: "More facilities". It is a protest banner that claims more spaces and services for the neighbors.

[Illustration 43]

The historically protest focused character of the neighborhood is even clearer in the 2016 poster. This poster features a dense group of young people, some of which are holding banners that read: "Let's get the park back", "We want a youth center", and "Facility in the Pere Calafell". "Pere Calafell" was the name of a kindergarten that had to close its doors despite a lot of mobilization in the neighborhood to keep it working. We have seen in the section on social struggles that the park of the neighborhood has been a constant motive of mobilization for neighbors as the Administration failed to build it on time.

The park is currently undergoing construction work as a station for a high-speed train is being built. The lack of funds due to the economic crisis has slowed down the construction work, much to the despair of neighbors who want the park back. Likewise, the young people of the neighborhood ask for a space for young people as they feel that all the leisure activities in the neighborhood are devoted to the elderly residents. Thus, the poster summarizes some of the current protests of neighbors. We can also see in the background a banner that reads: "Welcome" [*In*

English in the original]. It refers to the wish expressed by many neighbors of opening the doors to refugees.

[Illustration 44]

In the foreground of the picture we can see a group of musicians that are wearing t-shirts with the logos of several organizations of the neighborhood, implying that these young people participate in them. It is also interesting to pay attention to the clothes of some of the young people who are in the crowd, as they convey a political message. More specifically, three t-shirts stand out. The first one pictures a pair of scissors surrounded by a red circle and crossed over by a red line. This is the logo used in protests to reject the cut of public services (hence the scissors). Another t-shirt displays the flag of Catalonia and another one the Tricolor, the flag of the Spanish II Republic, which would be the flag of Spain if the country stopped being a monarchy. This expresses a political position that contrasts with that of the central government for its regional and republican character.

The festival of La Verneda – Sant Martí always includes popular meals where neighbors share dinner as well as “alternative” (non-capitalist) activities like an exchange market for clothes, so people can renovate their wardrobe without expending any money, and a food collection campaign for neighbors in need.

In 2016, the festival also included a popular and cultural walk through the neighborhood, in which neighbors and other participants learn about the past of the neighborhood. Popular walks take place more than twice a year and constitute a way of socializing neighbors into the past of the neighborhood. The researcher participated in one of these walks organized by an institute devoted to studying the past of the neighborhood. The walk was guided by a historian who provided information on

significant points of the neighborhood. A free course on the history of the neighborhood is also offered in the Adult Education Program of the neighborhood.

Finally, another space where the history of the neighborhood is told is through a rotating photo exhibit at the Civic Center. The Civic Center of the neighborhood has a small corridor where organizations can exhibit photo collections. Many of these collections are about the neighborhood. For example, in October 2016, the library of the neighborhood, which is situated in the same building, organized a photo exhibit entitled “I Was There and I Want to Be There: The Neighbors’ Movement of our Neighborhoods”, which displayed pictures of the neighborhood organizations movement and the protests held in the neighborhood. The corridor of the exhibitions is next to the cafeteria and the entrance is free, which makes it more available to the neighbors. The Civic Center itself is also a reminder of the struggles of workers in the neighborhood as it was occupied and won for the community by a group of concerned neighbors, as explained in detail in the section on social struggles.

Besides learning about the history of the neighborhood and the role of neighborhood organizations, the working-class people from La Verneda – Sant Martí are also socialized into a pro-workers discourse that rejects neoliberalism and other pro-market economic positions. Socialization occurs in the neighborhood organizations and other organizations of the neighborhood that offer access to alternative cultural repertoires and interpretations, and promote social awareness. Likewise, some organizations of the neighborhood constitute a space that promotes debates and communication.

In regard to the role of the organizations of the neighborhood, some interviewees have related gaining social awareness through these institutions. One example of this is provided by Mireia, a 22-year-old college student, who explained

how participating in a neighborhood organization made her become aware of social and political issues:

Regarding social issues... Well, I only started paying attention to what is around me about five years ago. Yes, with 15 or 16 years I started opening my eyes a little bit and paying attention to what was around me. Also, I had done all my social life in La Sagrera [*adjacent neighborhood*]. Only two years ago I started to participate in the Civic Center, the Community Network, and all that, and to meet young people from the neighborhood. But hey, now I do. [...] And then, as I had always been in La Sagrera I say: “Well, I’m going to check what’s in my neighborhood. My neighborhood, where I’ve always lived. I’ve never been to the Civic Center”. And so I went there, I talked, and then I joined the Community Network of La Verneda – Sant Martí, which emerged from the 15M [*Indignados Movement*]. Then, from there, I got to meet more people from the neighborhood who are very involved in political and social issues and, simply talking, I grew up. Well not talking, listening, listening, it was not me who talked! And this is how it happened. [Mireia, 22. Original quote in Spanish]

Likewise, Héctor, 43, explained a similar awareness-raising process that took place when he was eighteen:

In 1988, when I was eighteen, as I was doing a research paper for high school, I got into contact with different people from different neighborhood organizations, and I contacted the people of Verneda Alta [*Upper Verneda*],

who worked on cultural issues, and I joined them. And I was lucky to learn some basic things such as what culture is. When you come from the classical culture, from the competitions of the people from above... But culture is more things, the popular culture, traditions, sociability...all of this. And there, I learnt a lot and I learnt from very anarchist people, both from grassroots Christians and the extra-parliamentary left, because politics can be done outside [the formal political system] and it's even necessary to do so. And, well, I was there from eighteen to twenty-eight. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

The organizations of the neighborhood also offer access to cultural repertoires different than those promoted by and through the mass media. For instance, the Popular Athenaeum of Sant Martí, organized by a group of workers in an administrative building in disuse, holds a small pro-workers, socialist library. The library contains books that have been donated and is opened to all neighbors. The books are organized by topics and include, as catalogued there, sections on “Workers’ Struggles, Unions”, “Lenin”, “Philosophy”, “Stalin”, “Trotsky”, “Marxism”, “PCE, PSUC” [communist parties], “Anarchism”, and “Political Movements”, among others. This small library also has two wide rooms, with tables and chairs where neighbors can sit and read. At the entrance of the building, there is also a cupboard with political leaflets from different organizations and social movements, which include a call for workers to unite to defend labor rights, a manifest in favor of the public healthcare system, information on the retirement pensions system, and calls of solidarity with Syria and Palestine, which are regarded as victims of Imperialism. In an inner room, there is also a large poster with the famous portrait of Ernesto “Che” Guevara.

The Popular Athenaeum also offers its conference room, a wide room with a stage and many chairs, to different platforms and organizations loosely connected to the Spanish Communist Party and/or the Party of the Communists of Catalonia. The conferences that take place in the Athenaeum are free and open to all neighbors, and are publicized in the neighborhood and through social media.

To provide an example, in November 2016, the Athenaeum welcomed two peasants from the Colombian Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reserva Campesina [National Association of Areas of Peasant Reservation] who explained the peasants' views on the Colombian peace process. Their stories provided information that does not appear in the mass media. Some elderly neighbors who had been peasants before coming to the city expressed their solidarity with these men and the participants, in general, regretted the lack of interest that government has for workers, both in Colombia and in Spain. Several days later, a book on the war in Syria was presented in the Athenaeum. The author, who self-identified as "Marxist-Leninist", provided a socialist reading of the situation in Syria. His recount of the situation, besides challenging the information provided in the Western mass media, also incited a pro-workers pride and sense of solidarity.

Another organization that provides alternative cultural repertoires is the Adults' School of La Verneda – Sant Martí. This school was organized and is still currently managed by the very same students who participate in it. The school is administered by two local NGOs formed by adult students. One of the characteristics of the school is its praise of cultural knowledge. In the school, all students, professors, and management are called "participants" and are deemed equally able to reflect, learn and enrich the other participants' knowledge through communication. For this

reason, classes are not organized in the traditional way but as an open discussion that incorporates the everyday-life knowledge of the participants.

For instance, during the two months that the researcher worked in the school, the researcher participated in a “Museums of the world” course. She taught the participants basic computer skills by helping them look for the websites of important museums. Every week a different famous painting was chosen and debated in class. The interpretations of the participants, based on their feelings, impressions, and experiences were considered to be more valuable than the experts’ interpretations of the painting. Later on, participants prepared Power-Point presentations of the pictures and exhibited them in front of the participants of other courses.

This form of organization of the school provides the adults that participate in it with a sense of pride and self-esteem that is not available for them in the formal education system and in some cultural areas from which they have been traditionally excluded. For instance, in the Adults’ School, adult workers with only an elementary education read books of the universal classical literature, such as Homer’s *Odyssey*, and reflect about it in communicative literary gatherings.

On Saint Jorge’s Day, in April 2016, the school organized a literary gathering in the street open to everybody. The gathering consisted of the discussion of fragments of the book *Romeo and Juliet* of William Shakespeare, combined with the listening and discussion of the opera with the same name by Charles Gounod. This form of organization teaches the participants basic values and forms of relating to others that contrast with instrumental rationality. For instance, Paula, a 61-year-old informal caregiver, advocated for deliberative democracy based on her experience in the school:

I like the policy of the School, its philosophy, its methodology. It's an example for all the country. All the country should be like this school: not a parliamentary democracy but...democracy... How do they call it? Deliberative democracy, that everyone participates. And not that thing of the representatives... You vote me and then I do what...as politicians do. But, well, it's what it is. [Paula, 61. Original quote in Spanish]

The organization of the school also encourages that the people who participated in the past as students become volunteers and teach classes. This has opened the door for some young people who had drop out from high school not only to get a degree but also to be able to transmit their knowledge to others. Although the school is open to people from all ideologies and social backgrounds, its location and form of organization and functioning have turned it into a left of center organization. It also offers a space for socialization into the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood, as it incites the discussion of social, political and economic topics among the participants, as we will see below.

The organizations of the neighborhood invite the discussion of social issues among neighbors, which contributes to the socialization of residents into the pro-workers discourse. This is how Guillem, a 32-year-old writer, explained it:

Actually, in the bosom of my family we discuss a lot about topics of politics, economy..., my family is much politicized in this sense. It only takes to be watching TV while we have dinner, the news, and constant debates arise. Yes, it happens daily. And then of course with the neighbors, especially those of us

who are already organized at the neighborhood level, it happens almost daily, we talk a lot, we debate... [Guillem, 32. Original quote in Spanish]

Socialization is a continuous process and the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí daily revise their ideas in conversation with other neighbors. One example of this is a discussion about “workers stealing” versus “upper-class stealing” that took place in a literary gathering in the Adults’ School. The participants, a group of about ten people among whom were the 60 year-old whose quote is shown above, had been reading and debating some of the short stories of James Joyce’s *Dubliners*.

At some point, the debate turned into the issue of social conditioning. The question being debated concerned whether a person’s background determines, somehow, the way they behave. Perhaps more importantly, the question arose as to whether background determines whether the person will engage in illegal actions. One participant suggested the example of Romanies.

According to this participant, Romanies grow up in communities in which people steal instead of work, so this is what the youth learn to do. She specifically suggested that Romanies steal bicycles. Another participant, who had worked in a bank, answered her, suggesting that what the different banks have stolen from the population is much more than any number of bikes. She said, “We have been robbed a lot in the banks and they are not Romanies and none of them is going to go to jail” – he stated. The discussion then derived into the topic of who steals more, the worker who takes something from a neighbor or politicians and bankers, whose crimes are less visible. The participants calculated how many bicycles they could get with the money stolen by the upper classes and they decided that, certainly, they steal more.

Thus, what had started as a racist comment, ended up as a realization that the participants, as workers, have been robbed and abused by the upper classes. There was also a consensus among participants that, although the crime of a neighbor of any ethnicity hurts them, it is the crimes from “the ones above” that hurt them the most and towards which they should address their actions.

Another example of socialization through communication with neighbors took place in a course of the Adults’ school in which economic topics were debated. On this occasion, a group of eight retired and pre-retired working-class people consciously challenged traditional intellectuals with the knowledge of their life-world. The participants were discussing the economic crisis and the inflation of prices and at some point suggested that banks and savings banks were led to bankruptcy by very well paid economists.

One participant specified that “even the president of the European Central Bank can make mistakes”. Thus, they challenged one of the most well-regarded economists at the European level. Likewise, they mentioned that a Nobel Prize in winner in Economics had suggested that unemployed people should not receive subsidies, a statement that they all strongly rejected. In the course of the discussion, this group of workers solidified their opposition to neoliberal economic positions and also reinforced themselves in the idea that it is okay to challenge traditional intellectuals who have many more college degrees than they do, if they consider, based on their experience and intuition, that these experts are wrong.

One of the participants was still dubious and suggested that, “It is intellectuals who have to create jobs”. The other participants did not agree: “Technocrats are just like you and me”. Through a further discussion, they decided that people, besides

intellectuals, can also understand and change their situation. This is the type of left-leaning pro-worker thought that is actively promoted in the Adults' School.

On another occasion, the same group of workers discussed the social responsibility of corporations. Participants had different opinions on whether workers were to blame for the bad practices of the companies they worked for. Two scenarios were considered. On the one hand, the situation of an employee who worked for a company that produced substances that caused cancer, but who did not inform customers about the danger. On the other hand, the situation of bank clerks who would receive an order to sell financial products to consumers that they knew were bad for the customers. After much discussion, the participants agreed that workers, although they do not have the control over the economic activity, are still responsible because they make a living from it.

The topic came up for discussion on different days and was discussed and revised over time. Finally, participants agreed that the underlying problem is that, in the current economic system, "people are at the service of the economy". They proposed an "economy at the service of people".

Socialization also takes place in the neighbors' meetings. For instance, the People's Assembly of Sant Martí, a group of people who became organized after the Indignados Movement, organizes meetings on the street on alternating weeks. In these meetings, working-class people discuss how to oppose the reduction of public services and how to achieve better living and working conditions for workers.

Socialization in these meetings occurs through two channels. On the one hand, the members of the Assembly, some of them with a clear communist background, offer their analysis of the economic and social situation in Spain and worldwide. These interpretations are welcomed by other participants who may feel less able to

understand the economic and social situation. The analyses offered in the meetings are not in compliance with the dominant economic discourses. On the other hand, some slogans are repeated in each meeting, in a process that promotes their internalization by participants. The slogans include statements like, “What are the instruments of the working class? The general strike and unions!” or “Rights are not concessions but conquests. We have to defend them because none else will”.

The discussions that take place during the Assembly’s meetings also reinforce the “us versus them” discourse that positions workers as different from and opposed to the upper classes. For instance, in one meeting in the street that took place on November 8th, 2016, one of the participants took the mike and suggested that what a young worker earns in one month is the same as what a rich young man expends in a night with prostitutes. It was implied that the money of the rich man was actually taken from workers and then misused. The comment was met with a round of ovations as participants agreed.

The processes of socialization described in this section – the evocation of the glorified past of the neighborhood, the access to different non-hegemonic cultural repertoires, and the discussion of economic and social issues among workers in the organizations of the neighborhood - explain the prevalence in La Verneda – Sant Martí of an alternative discourse that allows working-class people to challenge the dominant economic discourses. In the next chapter it will be considered whether this discourse can mobilize workers into action. Chapter 6 will explore in depth some of the constitutive elements of the discourse.

4.7 Conclusions

Chapter 4 offers a first approximation to working-class people's resistance to dominant economic discourses. Through the empirical example of the workers' community of La Verneda – Sant Martí, it becomes apparent that Spanish urban workers do not simply reproduce the dominant economic discourses, but are able to develop alternative explanations for their economic situation. This chapter illustrates how, through their participation in popular activities and organizations inside the workers' community, working-class people become socialized into a variety of pro-worker cultural repertoires. In turn, workers pick and choose from among these repertoires to develop elaborate explanations of their situation that defy the economic discourses of the political and economic establishment, broadcasted in the mass media and repeated in the workplace. Furthermore, neighborhood organizations and popular activities provide a space for the discussion and reflection on social and economic issues that help workers understand the effect of complex economic discourses in their everyday life.

Chapter 4 also illustrates the importance of the (imagined) history of the workers' community in the development of alternative economic discourses. In the case of La Verneda – Sant Martí, the neighborhood movement of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the resistance against the Franco dictatorship and the struggle for labor and social rights, have become glorified and are constantly made relevant to the present in the conversations of the residents. Popular festivities also contribute to keeping alive this (imagined) past of the community, which promotes the image of the “*barrio obrero*” [worker neighborhood] and provides a sense of worker pride to its inhabitants.

The present chapter also shows how cultural repertoires, such as communism and socialism, become long lasting and meaningful in a community as they become imbedded in its popular culture through its festivities, stories, and celebrations. This rapport between abstract cultural repertoires and the material and symbolic everyday life in the community explains the prevalence of pro-worker economic discourses in La Verneda – Sant Martí that are no longer dominant in most sectors of the Spanish and the Catalan societies. In the next chapter, whether these alternative and pro-worker economic discourses can actually articulate the working class and lead it into other forms of resistance will be explored.

CHAPTER 5: DEMOBILIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS

5.1 Chapter Synopsis

Chapter 5 offers an analysis of the demobilization of the working-class people of La Verneda - Sant Martí. In comparison to the high level of organization and mobilization of the residents in the 1970s and 1980s described in the previous chapter, the working-class population of La Verneda – Sant Martí is currently quite disorganized and there are no major mobilizations in the neighborhood. This change may be explained through a focus on three main factors. First, it is posited that the very counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood that allows the neighbors to challenge the dominant economic discourses prevents their mobilization. This is the second main result of the dissertation and is examined at length.

Second, the relevance of individualism and consumerism on the part of workers of La Verneda - Sant Martí is considered. Finally, the decline of extra-parliamentary politics following the attainment of democracy in Spain and the transference of responsibilities to the newly achieved political system are explored.

5.2 The Counter-hegemonic Discourse of the Neighborhood as a Demobilizing Factor

The first three decades after the creation of the neighborhood in the 1950s were characterized by intense popular protests and the participation of many residents in the neighborhood organizations movement. In contrast to this historical organization and mobilization of the neighbors, the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí are currently quite disorganized and there have not been important mobilizations since the start of democracy in 1982.

This demobilization can be explained by three main factors, (1) the current lack of mobilizing power of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood, (2) the effect of individualism, and of the promotion of a middle-class lifestyle in the neighborhood, and (3) the transference of responsibilities from the neighborhoods to the formal political system following the achievement of democracy.

We have seen in the previous chapter the importance of the neighborhood organizations in the struggles of the neighborhood in the decades of 1960s-1980s and their current importance in the imaginary of the neighbors. In this chapter, it is argued that the presence in the neighborhood of the generations that participated in those struggles, their control of the positions of leadership in the neighborhood, and their recurrent use of the 1970s rhetoric and forms of organization prevent the mobilization of younger neighbors.

The neighborhood organizations, mostly composed and led by people over the age of 65, do not give way to possible new forms of organization and union. Since the Indignados Movement of 2011, there have been some attempts by newly formed teams to create new organizations and to mobilize the neighbors, but their influence in the neighborhood is slim.

Thus, the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood, forged in three decades of struggles in the neighborhood and the factories, prevents dominant economic discourses from becoming hegemonic in the neighborhood and allows working-class people to challenge these discourses and to have a more positive vision of their person and their position in the economy. However, the rejection by younger generations of workers of the ideologies underlying this discourse, especially communism and to a lesser degree socialism, and of the “old” forms of organization,

leads these young neighbors to try to create new own ways of organization and mobilization, which are still very blurred and undefined.

One of the barriers to participation mentioned by interviewees and participants is the fact that the neighborhood organizations are most often formed by traditional manual workers who participated in the communist or socialist parties. Younger professionals and workers of the service sector who do not adhere to these ideologies feel that the neighborhood organizations are not a good fit for them. This is how Montserrat, a 56-year-old nurse, explained her frustrated participation in the neighborhood:

I'd like to participate in the neighborhood but I haven't found... This neighborhood is a little bit of "*viejos guerreros*" [old warriors], neighborhood organizations are formed by grandparents... That generation of pure and simple workers, who faced the neighborhood struggles, had a lot of courage, eh? This was a field that became a neighborhood! You have to recognize that, but then they are so self-important that they get stuck like in naphthalene, you know? [Montserrat, 56. Original quote in Catalan and Spanish]

Montserrat, who had once been anarchist and currently votes for a more moderate left-wing party, went on to mention the rigidity of a neighborhood organization:

There were neighborhood organizations of these lifelong proletarians, PSOE [*socialist party*], many people immigrated from Aragón and Andalucía... Fighters. They are very proud of having got the subway and so on, these lifelong socialist and communist fighters. There was also people more to the

left...rather unconscious.... more alternative... We wouldn't get involved in politics... The neighborhood organization was too rigid. [Montserrat, 56.

Original quote in Catalan and Spanish]

Montserrat uses phrases like “old warriors” and “lifelong socialist and communist fighters” in Spanish instead of Catalan. These are words used by the old members of neighborhood organizations to define themselves. Many of the leaders and of the members of neighborhood organizations immigrated to Barcelona from other areas of Spain and speak mostly in Spanish. The words used in Montserrat's quote to define workers are also part of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood as will be explained in detail in Chapter 6. At that time the neighbors' class-based analysis of their economic situation will be presented. José, a 79-year-old retired construction worker and a historical leader of the neighborhood, also uses the word “fighters” to describe his generation and expresses concern for the disorganized youth:

Well, some of us are very old, the others are already gone... More than half of the fighters of my generation have already disappeared. The ones leading this fight were labor unionists and they worked on their companies defending social rights and then they kept defending them in the neighborhood. [...] And this [*demobilization*] is a huge problem for society and I don't know how they're going to solve it because we're old and the future is theirs, so they have to defend it. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

In some organizations leadership is concentrated in one person, whereas in others it is shared by a team of people. The present research was given the opportunity to interview two historical leaders of the neighborhood, as well as the current president of a neighborhood organization. In addition relevant information obtained from speeches and publications from another historical leader and a team will be presented. The historical leaders share some characteristics. They are all male, manual workers, mostly immigrants from other regions of Spain, but there are also Catalan leaders. They were engaged in clandestine communist parties or the socialist party and in the organized labor movement. These leaders are praised for their very active participation in the neighborhood, as they not only led other neighbors into mobilization but participated in the front line of all protests, even when this meant putting themselves in danger. For instance, the two historical leaders that I interviewed reported having been arrested several times for participating in protests. They are also praised for making the neighborhood's problems their own.

After the first fully democratic election in 1982, the situation regarding leaders underwent a change. The triumph of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party favored the neighborhood leaders who were members of this party, whereas communist leaders, despite their initial strength in the neighborhood²³, lost momentum. The affiliation of the neighborhood leaders to the ruling party caused some conflicts of interest. This is how a computer technician described these processes. He denounces the way that

²³ The first local elections took place in April 3, 1979. Electoral results are not available at the neighborhood level. In the district of Saint Martin, to which the neighborhood belongs, the most voted party was the Party of the Socialists of Catalonia, with 40.4% of the votes, followed by the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) with 23.5% of the votes. This second party was actually a communist party. The next elections, in May 8, 1983, the PSUC only obtained 7.9% of the votes. The party never recovered its influence.

Data source: Town Council of Barcelona. Retrieved March 2017 from <http://www.bcn.cat/estadistica/angles/dades/telec/loc/locevo/clocev11.htm>

leaders allowed themselves to be co-opted, and defends extra-parliamentary political involvement:

I was very young but I was given this information. I joined the neighborhood movement and people, especially those in their 40s and 50s, this generation that was twenty when the *Transición* [*Spanish transition to democracy*] started, people from the left I mean, they explained this story. They tell that, in 1979, most of the locals who stood out for their ability to mobilize others or for their training, who were in the neighborhood movement –which back then was stronger than the labor movement and others-, were most of them hired by the socialist Town Council. This gave them the feeling of “Well, they are one of us and they govern.” But of course by joining them, and not having any trained critical element outside... Firstly, when you would meet them, they would have all the information and you would have nothing. Secondly, they would look at you like “Well, I represent the population and you don’t”. Furthermore, most of the people who remained in the neighborhood movement and other movements were the people who were less trained because the others had already joined power. This discouraged... [...] I have no doubt. I am very into politics but, if I can, I’ll never participate in professional politics because I think some of us, even if we aren’t the best ones, have to stay outside to resist. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

José, from the quote above, who considers himself Marxist-Leninist, also denounced cooptation. He suggests that political parties actively attempt to deactivate neighborhood organizations:

Nobody addresses this [*the increase of drug use and drug dealing in his section of the neighborhood*], not even neighborhood organizations. They are quiet because political parties have deactivated them. With this crisis political parties have... In the case of my section of the neighborhood it's clear, right? If you want to get a job, you join a party. And well they disarticulate people this way, buying their need of having a job. They have disarticulated them!
[José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

A current leader of the neighborhood also acknowledged the conflict of interests and expressed his loyalty to the neighborhood, explaining how he quit his political positions in order to be able to stand for the demands of the neighbors in front of local politicians:

I participated... I was in the executive board of a local political party. Now I'm just a member because I reached a point in which it was counterproductive to be in the neighborhood organization and then claiming the demands of the neighborhood to my party colleagues. They could say: "now it's not the time". Then you can't depend on that because here members are of all political colors and of all ideas, and things here are done with the group so... It was counterproductive... And in the end, I left positions that were not that important either. I have my affiliation card, which is from the left, and I'm no longer in politics. [Francisco, 35. Original quote in Spanish]

Although most neighbors and participants talk about the neighborhood organizations with great respect, some young people have expressed the feeling that they are disconnected from the current problems and needs of the neighborhood. This is how a 21-year-old student explained it. His concerns are connected with the above-mentioned impression that the neighborhood leaders had been co-opted:

Well, I would tell you... This is private, okay?, I just want to make this clear. Don't go to the president of any neighborhood organization because they're all politicized. Furthermore, since they've been so long in the organization... It's just like politicians, it's like they've lock themselves in their own world and they no longer see what the reality is. [Pablo, 21. Original quote in Catalan]

Criticisms of the neighborhood organizations and their management were mostly made very discreetly, off-record, and clearly stating that what was expressed was just a personal opinion. Furthermore, the interviewees and participants who presented their criticisms also made sure to state that neighborhood organizations had been great for the neighborhood in the past and even detailed some of their achievements. This shows the influence that these organizations still have in the neighborhood.

Neighbors, however, do in some occasions confront the leaders of the neighborhood organizations. The researcher had the opportunity to observe one of these confrontations. The dispute took place during a meeting of the neighbors.

The meeting was organized in order to celebrate the 50th anniversary of one of the sections of the neighborhood.²⁴ Thus, it was more intended to remember and to celebrate the recent history of the neighborhood than to actually address any of the current problems of that area. The speaker, the current leader whose quote we have read above, explained the past of the neighborhood, putting emphasis on the achievements of the neighborhood organizations. After his presentation, he opened the meeting for all attendees to participate. The neighbors of the affected area expressed a long list of complains and concerns.

First, they suggested that the organization had not had a meeting for seven years until that day and that, therefore, the concerns of the neighbors were not being heard. They also denounced that the leaders of the organization were never available. Second, they criticized the fact that the meeting was taking place outside of their area, in the building of another neighborhood organization, and pointed out that many neighbors had not been properly informed about the meeting and its location and had been, therefore, unable to attend. An old woman went on as far as to suggest that this disinformation about the meeting and its strange location had been planned on purpose to prevent the neighbors' participation. Third, the attendees also suggested that the neighborhood organization board had not presented their accounts to the members of the organization in years and that, therefore, neighbors did not know what they were doing with the money. Finally, an old man involved in a labor union demanded to know the relationship of the organization with the Town Council and whether the organization would make the demands of the neighborhood known to the new local administration.

²⁴ The first part of this meeting is explained in more detail in Chapter four in the section on the socialisation on the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood.

As the attendees were getting more agitated and louder, they turned to one of the historical leaders of their area, who was attending the meeting. This elder man stressed the importance of neighborhood organizations and neighbors' participation to take a stand for the neighborhood in a hard economic situation and to address unmet needs of their area. His intervention, although not fully supporting the attendees, had the effect of calming them, and they left the meeting angry but quiet. This experience shows that the younger leaders of the neighborhood (in their fifties) do not have the legitimacy and influence of the historical leaders. A quote from an older woman summarizes some of the complaints of the neighbors:

You saw me there [*in the above-described meeting*] because I now participate a little bit because we see some problems. It's been a long time... The man who did that hasn't done a meeting in seven years! He doesn't submit the accounts! This is a problem, a big one, because this has to be done every year. I can see that organizations have lost... Well, you saw it! It was a meeting for all the neighbors and how many were we? Fifteen? The memorial should have taken place here, I already told the one that's now the president of the organization. I don't know... There are many people who can participate, elder people that, if they were called, would explain the history... [Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

Another recurrent barrier to participation in neighborhood organizations mentioned by the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí is the self-importance of some of the main traditional leaders. In fact, many interviewees and participants have expressed their antipathy towards a specific leader, whose I-am-the-

neighborhood mentality prevented others from participating in neighborhood activities. This leader has been described by interviewees and participants as “a character” and a “true neighborhood leader” who was able to “create allegiances” but also “whose way of working drove others away” [Núria, 57]. He was also quoted as stating: “Someone has to be in the lead and I’ve always led the way”. This sort of comment infuriated some workers who felt that many other people besides this leader had contributed to the current state of relative well-being of the neighborhood. The following quote describes this mixed feeling of admiration and rejection:

Well, he was an institution, he was an institution but the problem was... I think it was this kind of character... I’ve seen this, eh? This “the neighborhood is mine”. I’ve seen it because when Barcelona en Comú [*local political party*] was campaigning, Ada Colau [*the current mayor of Barcelona*] and other people came here and, well, they wanted to ask questions...it was the attendees turn to speak, different people could give their opinion and so on... And García who was there said: “You don’t need to ask, Ada, let me tell you”. Can you imagine?! He thought he was the neighborhood! And that says it all, eh? He did do... You know these people who think that all the improvements... He thought it and said it: “I’ve done them. I’ve made the improvements”. Well, you and I don’t know how many anonymous behind you, right? [...] This was a person whose neighborhood organization... the neighborhood movement was him. [Montserrat, 56. Original quote in Catalan]

This quote summarizes the paradox presented in this section: the dedication and power of the traditional leaders were essential in the improvement of the

neighborhood in its first decades and these leaders still constitute a reference for the neighborhood and are highly praised. However, this very same power and influence prevent other people from engaging in neighborhood activities and from suggesting alternative forms of organization and mobilization that may be more suited to the current situation of the neighborhood.

Apart from stating the importance of the neighborhood organizations and the neighborhood movement, the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood also draws heavily from Marxism to contest pro-market economic discourses. However, and despite being very influenced by it, younger interviewees and participants (below 65 years old) mostly reject traditional communist positions and rhetoric. In the next chapter, a section on working-class men's and women's rejection of central planned economies and their preference for a tamed capitalism will be presented.

During the field work in the neighborhood, there was an opportunity to experience the rejection that the traditional communist rhetoric causes in middle-aged and young people. It was a cold November evening and a meeting was held in the street by a relatively new organization with a clear communist background. This organization holds meetings in the street every other week so as to incite neighbors to participate.

That night, the cold had kept many regulars away and there were only twelve people in the meeting. Most of the attendees were above the age of 65 years. Some of them were regular members of the organization who participate because, as they report, they believe that their economic and social situation can only be improved through "the mobilization of workers". They hope that their presence in the street will help others join their movement. With this objective in mind, they distributed leaflets with their political ideas to the people passing by.

A few other attendees came from the neighborhood and other poor areas and were receiving help from the organization to deal with some problems. Mainly, they were receiving legal assistance against the banks that own their homes as they were unable to pay the mortgage and were, therefore, threatened with eviction. They participated because they felt grateful and also in debt with the organization.

Before the meeting started, a poster was strung between two trees right behind where the speaker stood. The poster stated: “The apartment belongs to the “*obrero*” [manual worker], not to the banker!” The poster also pictured a wolf dressed with a suit and with a greedy expression on its face. The clothes of the wolf - a suit, a formal vest, and a tall hat - recall the vestments of nineteenth century bourgeois men. The wolf in the poster carried a suitcase full of bills and was stepping with its foot over a very small family house, which appears to be on the verge of destruction under its foot. The wolf clearly represents bankers or, in the terms of the participants, “capitalists”. The attendees explained, very proudly, that the wolf had been drawn by a member of their organization.

The meeting consisted of several speakers expressing their concern over the economic situation and calling to the union and mobilization of workers against the upper classes, represented by politicians, bankers, and the owners of big companies. The United States were also criticized as the main force behind neoliberalism and imperialism. The speakers repeatedly used words associated with Marxism such as “proletarians”, “exploitation”, and “class struggle”. Between the numerous speeches, an old CD player with an amplifier played (in Spanish) traditional songs of the labor movement, songs that call workers to mobilize. For instance, they played the Spanish version of the song “We Shall Not Be Moved”.

As the meeting was quite loud, people passing by in the street stopped to find out what was going on. Their reactions were very informative of the level of rejection of the traditional communist rhetoric by younger neighbors. Most pedestrians ignored the meeting and continued walking. A group of men in their twenties and wearing suits walked by and laughed. Some families composed of parents and young children or teenagers had the same reaction. They stopped to check what was going on, then just smiled or laughed, and left.

The laughter was neither challenging nor confrontational. Pedestrians just laughed for themselves, muttered some funny comments to their companions, and left. Only two Latina immigrants stopped and applauded at the speaker's statements against imperialism. Then, they laughed and left. Thus, the response against the traditional communist rhetoric was not confrontational; "younger" people just rejected it lightly as something that has nothing to do with them. This experience illustrates the fact that the ideologies behind the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood are strong enough for workers to reject the dominant economic discourses, but not enough to mobilize them as they used to do in the 1970s.

The Indignados Movement, which started in 2011 and had a considerable presence in Barcelona, and temporarily revived the neighborhood movement in many neighborhoods of the city. Organization and mobilization at the neighborhood level had greatly diminished since the achievement of democracy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Indignados Movement, also called 15M, mobilized many youth who had never been engaged in social movements, and united the strength of different collectives such as students and professional workers (Taibo et al. 2011; Velasco 2011).

In the neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí, the Indignados Movement led to the creation of new organizations that diverged from the traditional neighborhood organizations in their management style and the types of activities that they organize. These organizations have attracted younger neighbors who were not yet mobilized, but still do not have much influence over the economic discourses of the working-class people of the neighborhood.

Pilar, a 43-year-old hairdresser, explained her engagement in a new organization following the Indignados Movement and the importance that this movement had for her mobilization. The following quote also reflects the fact that the traditional neighborhood organizations are failing to include the middle-aged and young neighbors:

I think it [*the Indignados Movement*] was like a wake-up call for many people, right? I mean, you talk with friends in the bar, you discuss how bad everything is, politicians? they're all the same, and so on, these bar conversations, as I call them. But of course, we don't do anything either. We leave our destiny in the hands of some men...And I think we can do things too. [...] As a result of the 15M, an assembly was formed and I thought: "this is my chance because I identify with the 15M movement and I will also meet people". But I didn't know how to do it, right? Okay, I did know that there were neighborhood organizations but I doubted, do I go there and just knock at the door? "Hi, I would like to participate"... I wasn't sure. And the 15M opened the doors for me. There, I met people and I found a small group of people and we more or less share similar ideas. [Pilar, 43. Original quote in Catalan and Spanish]

For many young neighbors, the Indignados Movement marked a “before and after” in their participation in social movements and civic protests, and in organizations of the neighborhood. This occurred as they felt that their opinions and ideas were taken into account and could make a difference. This is how a 32-year-old writer explained his transition from a sporadic involvement in demonstrations to a more intense and regular participation. The quote points out the Indignados Movement as a clear turning point:

Before the 15M, I had participated, not in organizations, but I would go to some demonstrations. But it is true that from the 15M everything got more intense and participation increased a lot, right? It’s from that moment that I start getting involved expressing my opinions, getting organized and participating. Especially because of this. [...] It is true that there has been a before and after the 15M. This can’t be ignored. [Guillem, 32. Original quote in Spanish]

Some of the newly formed organizations represent an extension of the services already provided by the traditional neighborhood organizations to the community. These organizations also attempt to face new needs and problems generated by the economic crisis. For instance, they provide legal services to neighbors and, therefore, address a common need of many workers of the neighborhood, that of negotiating with banks and real estate proprietors the management and payment of mortgages or preferred stock. Guillem, the young writer from the previous quote who had started to participate in neighborhood-related activities and protests thanks to the Indignados

Movement, detailed the services provided by an organization in which he is regularly involved:

We have organized ourselves in commissions, for instance the commission for housing. The topic of evictions...the truth is that we've noticed it a lot and I can tell you about Sant Martí, Besós and Verneda [*neighborhoods*], there has been a very important increase in evictions. We've noticed it because we have a housing office where we provide advice and we try to mobilize the neighborhood to prevent evictions, and we have noticed a very important increase of evictions. I mean, of people who can't assume their mortgage and who come here asking for aid, advice, and the topic of evictions. And then there's another topic, which is the topic of the interruption of utilities, I mean of basic services such as water, light, and gas. Well, it's all linked, right? They can't assume the payment of the mortgage, they don't pay the community bill, the water bill or the gas bill either. Then we've also seen many times the cut off of water, light, and gas. [Guillem, 32. Original quote in Spanish]

Other organizations have focused on including and addressing topics that were not dealt with by the traditional neighborhood organizations. For instance, several new organizations consider environmental issues such as climate change, the need of recycling, or the provision of organically produced food to the neighbors. Newer organizations are also involved in a variety of non-capitalist activities such as time banks, exchange markets, and the free screening of non-commercial movies. These activities, although not unknown to the neighborhood organizations, are used in new and creative ways by the new organizations. Pilar, the hairdresser who didn't know

how to participate in the traditional neighborhood organizations, explained the activities that she had organized as a member of one of these new organizations:

We started with a barter market in one of the festivals of the neighborhood. You set tables and then get stuff you have at home so you can exchange it with your neighbors. Then this topic of solidary economy, social and solidary economy, that was gaining momentum... So we said let's do a time bank where we also exchange knowledge and services. This project is currently stopped because it sounds easy but it's actually very time consuming, it requires a lot of dedication. At the beginning, we launched it and it worked for a while but, of course, later on it required a lot of organization and dedication. And, well, we also did "docuforums" once a month for two years: documentaries about social issues followed by a participative debate. And well, activities that we thought could get people out of their homes and participate a little. We also did "leftovers lunches", as we call them. We went to the fruit shops to ask for vegetables that are already... that they won't sell but that can be used, and we did community free lunches, because the products that we use don't cost us any money. And that's the idea, we meet, we get to know each other... [Pilar, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

These organizations and activities, however, still have a very limited influence in the neighborhood and cannot make up for the void left by the traditional neighborhood organizations. This situation is partially responsible for the demobilization of the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí. There are

other factors involved, as well, such as a perceived rise of individualism in the neighborhood and the promotion of a middle-class lifestyle.

5.3 The Rise of Individualism

In Chapter 4, we learned about the construction of the neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí as a response to the waves of immigrants that were coming to the city of Barcelona in the search for a job. These immigrants came from poorer rural areas in Spain and became incorporated to the urban working-class. We have also studied the strong organization of these new urban workers in the neighborhood in the decades of 1960s-1980s, in order to face their hard living and working conditions. The situation of workers improved considerably in the decade of the 1990s. After a small economic crisis that took place at the beginning of the decade, the Spanish economy entered a period of economic growth that lasted until the crash of 2008.

The city of Barcelona particularly benefited from this economic growth as the host of the Olympic Games of 1992, as a cultural city, and as the new economic pole of the “sun-belt” or “golden banana”: the area that extends from the south of Catalonia to the north of Italy, including the Mediterranean coastal cities of France (Cardesín and Mirás 2017; Degen and García 2008; García 2008,). This epoch was characterized by an apparent intense upward mobility, as the children of manual workers gained access to education and became intellectual workers, and the newly developed welfare state prevented the marginalization of those workers left behind by the economic changes (Alonso and Castells 1992; Lacalle 2006). As expressed by a working-class woman of La Verneda – Sant Martí:

My parents started working when they were very young. They didn't have much time nor money to study. They came from a small village to the city because there was more work, and lived just for survival. My generation has been different. Virtually everybody who has wanted has been able to study, right? [Laura, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

The economic growth meant an important improvement in the living conditions of the new generations in comparison to their parents. This slight democratization of society led many people to believe that Spain was developing into a meritocratic society based on the equality of opportunities (Romero and Tirado 2017). Although the neighbors of La Verneda – Sant Martí challenge this discourse, many internalized the idea that the economy would always improve and that their children and great-children were going to be better off than they were. This idea is currently much challenged due to the persistent economic crisis, and many interviewees expect the life of the new generations to be tougher than their own. This is how Núria, 57, expressed it:

Then, of course, I have lived in a family that has always wanted and has told you so, that you would be better than them, and now I'm having trouble thinking, as a mother, that my daughter is going to be better than me, right? [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

The economic growth was mainly based on the expansion of the internal demand, as workers and the middle classes had increased access to appliances, leisure activities, and second residences. Furthermore, incorporation to the European Economic Community and, later on, to the Euro zone, and the influence of the

European Central Bank, led to a favorable financial situation, characterized by the easy access to credit (Rodríguez 2015). One of the fields that experienced a major expansion was housing, as the government promoted home-ownership as a priority, rather than rental, and workers and the middle classes acquired second and third homes outside of the city (Alonso and Castells 1992; Aramburu 2015,)²⁵. Having an apartment or a house at the beach or in the mountains was considered a badge of economic success and of access or consolidation in the middle class.

We will see, below, that the possession of second residences is an important topic of discussion in La Verneda – Sant Martí. The housing sector, profiting from a very lax legislation, expanded considerably and became the object of intense speculation (Cardesín and Mirás 2017). This led to the so-called “Spanish property bubble”, which is one of the main reasons behind the economic debacle of Spain following the financial crisis of 2007-2008 (Comín 2013; Rodríguez 2015).

Many interviewees and participants have reported that these economic improvements of the 1990s and beyond have led neighbors to focus more on themselves, their families, and their (scarce) properties, and have relegated the common striving for the benefit of all neighbors to a second place. This is how Lucía, a 38-year-old teacher, summarized this:

There’s no class consciousness! They have taken us for a ride saying that we are all middle classes. It’s a serious mistake. Then... It’s the egoism of the Spaniard: “my little parcel, my little parcel, I’m not moving from here. I may

²⁵ Aramburu (2015) specifies that in urban Catalonia, especially in Barcelona, the working-class (defined as people with a blue collar job) has been affected particularly by the state’s promotion of home-ownership, even more than the upper-middle class.

care about others but don't take my parcel away!" [Lucía, 38. Original quote in Spanish]

Attention should be paid to the fact that Lucía uses a real estate term to exemplify egoism and middle-class behavior. Interviewees recognize the process of the increase of individualism in their biographies and in those of their fellow neighbors, and regret this change as it is seen as detrimental for workers. The interviewees have used a variety of examples from their daily life in the neighborhood to report the increase of individualism and consumerism. For instance, Héctor, a computer technician, mentioned the extravagant birthday parties of the nineties and regretted the loss of a workers' culture as a result of a shift to a middle-class-like lifestyle:

To say it straight, and I'm just giving you my opinion, sorry, it's like this neighborhood was a neighborhood of new rich. You find that people... And I'm talking about the people of my generation, the elder have a different tradition, more... But my generation lived a brutal economic boom in the 1990s. There were people who... And you see this in stupid things such as in birthday parties. They were insane! And of course each person had to bring a gift... [...] Thus, I think that there was a misfortune in the 1990s, a break. There seemed to be a positive change involving the social growth of the cultural network, but that got broken, and now we just care about money. It sounds simplistic, but nowadays the idea is that what is more important is just having a good economic position and it's like the rest doesn't matter. For me, this is a misfortune. I grew up in a "*obrero*" [worker] environment where culture is preserved very well. My father and my mother... I don't think we've

moved forward. Maybe the physical environment and the economy have, but the social structure in my opinion has lost... And I'm not blaming any generation, eh? We are all to blame, it's transversal. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

Antonio, a 39-year-old, unemployed, lathe operator, described the same situation of excess referring to the acquisition by workers of a middle-class-like lifestyle:

There was a moment in which everybody had everything: a car, then another more, then after three years the newest Xbox and a travel package. I'm going out for dinner with my friends and I show off, I show off, I show off. Well, this is wrong, it's ostentation, ostentation. [Antonio, 39. Original quote in Spanish]

For Pere, 78, consumerism is better exemplified by workers' sudden desired to travel very far away. We will see in the next chapter that the ability to travel constitutes a class mark in the neighborhood associated with the middle class.

There are people who go on vacations to the United States, like this was already a rich country! And they go there on vacation and then have to pay for it all year long, you know? I'm not saying that we shouldn't go on vacation, but I go on vacation here, to Estartit [*Catalan costal village*], I haven't been to... There was a critique from a journalist that made me laugh. He said that people go far away, that they have to go far away. And he said like a joke: "they go to downer Madagascar because upper Madagascar is closer". Do you understand what I mean? It's ostentation. Ostentation that we also see from the

ones above, right? They should give a better example. [Pere, 78. Original quote in Spanish]

The neighbors' "individualist" behavior is discussed and reflected upon in the organizations of the neighborhood, what allows neighbors to develop a critical stand towards it. The researcher had the opportunity to observe one of such discussions while doing participant observation in a relatively new organization of the neighborhood.

It was a warm afternoon of June and a group of eleven working-class people of the neighborhood were engaged in a lively discussion, sitting around a table in the headquarters of the organization. Most of the attendees were above 65 years old and two of them were quite old. They were discussing the topic of "buying a small piece of land" to build a second residence on it. As pointed out above, having a house outside of the city to go to on the weekends was considered a mark of personal achievement, and of ingress in the middle class.

The participants in the discussion presented two opposing views on the topic. On the one hand, some of them suggested that people had bought "*un terrenito*" [a small piece of land] because their wages or profits had increased, and they had been able to do so. On the other hand, the other participants believed that these people had been fooled by the banks, which had offered them loans that they would not be able to pay off as "it is not appropriate for people in their class to have so much wealth". As the discussion was leaning towards the acceptance of the discourse that workers are to blame because they were living above their possibilities, a man offered his story as an example. He was in his fifties and was wearing a loose shirt, opened on the top, which

revealed a big golden crucifix, an appearance associated with construction workers from poor neighborhoods.

He explained that he had been a construction worker during the rise of the housing bubble, and that he used to make 3,000 euros (about 3,171 dollars) a month between his wage and the extra money that he would get through undocumented work, also in the field of construction. He recounted that he had bought a small piece of land because everyone was doing it and that, throughout the years, he had slowly built a house in that parcel. He explained that he had paid everything in cash, he had not been fooled with loans. With the financial crash of 2008 and the burst of the housing bubble, he explained, he lost his job and his undocumented activities, so he eventually had to sell the land and the house, losing money on the process.

This man offered himself as an example of the narrow-mindedness of Spanish workers who, seduced by the idea of having some land and a second home, had worked hard and devoted their money to achieve this dream instead of saving or getting some form of training or education. He confessed having economic difficulties since the start of the crisis, but he said he had not asked for any assistance because he deserved his situation, he had brought that onto himself.

The participants in the discussion agreed with him and offered their sympathies, they seemed to feel that many workers are in this situation, it is what it is. A woman, however, challenged this dominant discourse with an alternative explanation. This woman had been a factory worker and reported having worked for many years in conditions of exploitation (in her words), in work days of twelve to fourteen hours. Based on this experience, she confessed not having any patience with employers, banks, and other groups that she identified as abusing workers. This woman had white, curly, permed hair and was wearing simple but decent clothing.

She suggested that the government and the banks had promoted so much “*hacer terrenitos*” [working your small piece of land] so there would not be as much public life in the neighborhood. The idea is that in their free days – the weekend, or for some workers just Sunday – workers would be outside of the neighborhood, outside of the city, and they would not be able to talk with their neighbors and to develop a working-class consciousness nor to organize in the neighborhood. According to that woman, the “*terrenito*” was a way of promoting individualism (in her words). She summarized individualism saying: “Each individual with their little house or striving to pay for the little house”. On the meanwhile, these workers would not be occupied with activities that could be more subversive.

This second explanation surprised the participants so much that they remained in silence for a short while. Later on, they all agreed with the woman. Surprise opened the way to anger. The participants engaged in a lively recount of all the abuses that they had experienced in the hands of employers, banks, proprietors, and politicians. Thus, this observation constitutes one more example of socialization into the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood, which contests dominant economic discourses to place the blame for the economic crisis and the state of the economy on the upper classes. More importantly, this explanation also points out an interesting perspective on the increase of individualism: it constitutes a factor of demobilization of the working class.

The hard-working woman of the example is not the only one to identify the increase of individualism as a factor of demobilization. Many interviewees and participants have raised their concerns about this process. The critique of individualism takes place in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, the elder neighbors regret the loss of the solidarity among workers that, according to them, they enjoyed

in their youth. On the other hand, many interviewees and participants openly blame the elites (bankers, politicians, and businessmen) for the demobilization of workers through the promotion of a middle-class lifestyle.

In regard to solidarity, the elder neighbors remember a time of intense solidarity among neighbors, based on the fact that they knew and needed each other. The high level of organization and mobilization in the decades of the 1960s-1980s makes me think that the reported solidarity is more than just a romanticized memory of the past. Andreu, a retired mechanic, explained the spontaneous solidarity among neighbors with an example from his youth:

Just to give you an example of how people knew each other and how there was solidarity because they knew each other. And the old people were all acquainted... Well, let me tell you. One Sunday I go out. I wanted soda water I believe. And, shoot! I go to the bars because they are open and I couldn't find any. I go back and, when I arrive, I find the downstairs neighbor, Encarnación, with a bottle of soda water. We had only been there for half a year... She saw that we needed soda water... I mean, there was a sense of solidarity very, very... Very spontaneous. [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

In a similar fashion, Pilar, 43, explained how she lived the process from neighbors' solidarity to individualism when she was a child:

When we first came here, we lived in a block of apartments and I remember my childhood - it was from two to nine years old more or less -. I remember that there was a lot of contact between the neighbors. It was more of an "open doors" situation. Well, it's a childhood memory, but I remember that when we

moved to the other block of apartments everything was already more impersonal, right? It was no longer that situation in which neighbors knew each other so much, that you could hang out in someone's house and then in someone else's... [...] I guess we have moved towards a more individualized society. I don't know. I guess in the past time of prosperity people had everything, they didn't need anyone. Yes, we live in very big neighborhoods and we sometimes don't have time to hang out.... We go to work, we come back tired and then watch TV or read... [Pilar, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

In turn, José, a retired construction worker, blamed the loss of solidarity on individualism and partisan interests:

No, there's no solidarity as there was before. When we came here, there were people who had four, five or six children, and when the neighbors didn't have enough, my wife would feed them, buy them this or that, and there was a great solidarity. Not now. Now it's the other way around. Solidarity... It's broken. It's not totally broken, just a little bit. At the level of organizations, interests have been created. Political parties have created interests, and these partisan interests have made... this individualism of everyman for himself. Interests have facilitated this. Instead of preventing it, they have caused it even more. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

Some interviewees and participants directly blame the upper classes, especially politicians, for trying to disarticulate the working-class through the promotion of individualism. For instance, Héctor, 43, associates the rise of

individualism with the governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and their idea of individual responsibility:

In the epoch of Thatcherism that we lived when we were little... It was also when they started - Reagan in North-America and Thatcher in England - to talk about individual responsibility and to say that “you have to make yourself”. And books like those from Paulo Coelho and others saying “you can achieve what you want”. The commercials from Telefónica [*telecommunications company*] also did this. It’s not true! Of course you can do more things if you have... but individuality is not everything. If people help you, you also move forward. If people step on you, you become isolated. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, José, 79, explained how workers from public housing projects were pushed to buy their apartments in an attempt of the administration to spread a middle-class consideration among them. Workers were supposed to focus on their individual properties instead of mobilizing to improve the whole blocks area, as it was common in La Verneda – Sant Martí.

In England there was a whole neighborhood with public housing and Margaret Thatcher smashed it. She smashed it! She smashed it! And then all those neighborhoods became marginal. Why? Because they would say: “No, no, you don’t have the right to a State-subsidized apartment. You only have right if you buy it. Do you have the right to social renting? No, you don’t have the right. You buy it [*the apartment*] and, therefore, you’re middle class; you’re

not poor.” Then, they have impoverished these neighborhoods. If I told you about the public housing blocks of La Pau...Until next year, we shouldn't have paid anything! Until next year, which is when we should have finished paying back for the apartments, we shouldn't have paid anything! So what did the administration do? And people don't realize this... What did the administration do? The administration met the neighborhood organizations and told them: “We're going to sign a document. I promise to do that, and that, and that, and now sign the documents. You're buying your house.” So what do they do? They get rid of the blocks and they make the neighbors proprietors. How do they achieve this? By buying the neighborhood organization, the president and two or three more. How? The way I was telling you: “You're the president. I fix your house, I find your children a job. And in return you sign the document.” “I don't have to sign any document with you because, as the administrator, you have the obligation of solving the problem and, as a citizen, I have the obligation of demanding that you do it. But we're not buying the house!” But they sold this to people, and they would already picture themselves as proprietors of an apartment and I don't know what else... So it's being twenty years that the blocks are not practically public housing. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

This quote links the rise of individualism with the process of co-opting neighborhood leaders studied in the first section of this chapter. Despite the critical position of many neighbors, there are still many workers who consider themselves to blame for their situation. The idea that workers are somehow responsible for the

current economic situation of the country because they were living above their possibilities is part of the pro-market dominant economic discourses.

We will see in the next chapter that many interviewees and participants reproduce this element of the dominant economic discourses. In fact, it is the only element of these discourses that is widely echoed by the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí. However, the acceptance of this tenet is not complete and neighbors challenge it from the pro-workers pride contained in the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood.

This discourse praises workers and suggests that their lifestyle is not detrimental for the economy. It also stresses that the elites are the ones to blame and rejects the “living above the possibilities” tenet as a strategy consisting on blaming the victim. These constructs will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

5.4 Demobilization of Workers' Organizations Following the Achievement of Democracy

Another process associated with the demobilization of workers' organizations is the transferences of responsibilities from the neighborhoods to the formal political system following the achievement of democracy. During the thirty-six years of Francoist dictatorship, from the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 until the death of the dictator in 1975, labor unions and left-wing political parties worked very actively to improve the working conditions of the urban working-class. Their actions were clandestine and their members worked often infiltrated within Francois organizations so as to escape repression (Lardín 2007).

Likewise, neighborhood organizations and grassroots Christian groups mobilized to improve living conditions in the neighborhoods, achieving a real

influence over local politics (Castells 1983). The neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí was particularly active, as we have seen in Chapter 4. After the first democratic elections in 1977 and the electoral triumph of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party in 1982, mobilizations in the neighborhoods diminished and labor unions became less combative.

In this section, it is argued that the demobilization of workers' organizations in La Verneda – Sant Martí is partially due to two factors. On the one hand, it is due to the decrease of workers' participation in extra-parliamentary politics following the achievement of democracy, as people felt that they had achieved their objectives and as they trusted that workers' unions and parties would, from then on, look after their interests.

On the other hand, it may also be due to the institutionalization of workers' parties and labor unions, and their gradual development of their own interests, which act to the detriment of the interests of workers. First a brief summary of the historical events that frame the process of demobilization of workers' organizations will be presented. Then, both the demobilization of the working-class people of La Verneda - Sant Martí and the institutionalization of workers' organizations will be explored as causes of the change in neighborhood organization mobilization.

In order to understand the behavior of workers' organizations in twentieth century Spain, we have to consider the effects of the Civil War and the conditions imposed by the Francoist dictatorship. The Spanish Civil War ended on April 1, 1939, with the victory of the fascist troops of Francisco Franco. Resistance to fascism prevailed until mid-1940s, usually in the form of armed guerrillas and the clandestine organization of unitary platforms against the regime.

However, these organizations failed to restore the previous democratic regime and the fascist dictatorship consolidated its power in the country through the prohibition of civil rights and the violent repression of any alternative organization. Most of the organizations that were fighting against the new fascist regime were decimated or dissolved and many intellectuals and political leaders had to go into exile (Témime, Broder and Chastagnaret 1995). Repression was particularly hard in Catalonia, as a region with its own language, culture, and institutions. It represented the paragon of everything the dictatorship opposed. Every aspect of the Catalan culture was, therefore, punished and prohibited (Johnston 1991).

In this context, workers' and democratic organizations, forced into hiding, changed their strategy from the resistance to the regime to the clandestine organization against it (Lardín 2007). An example of this is the change of strategy of the communist parties Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) and Communist Party of Spain (PCE). Accepting that the war was lost, they abandoned the guerrilla fight (and, with time, the objective of an armed revolution), and moved into political action for the improvement of the living conditions of the working class, which was suffering the extreme poverty of the post-war era (Kaplan 1980; Lardín 2007).

These parties focused, therefore, on the everyday needs of workers, and took advantage of the legal options within the regime, infiltrating the Spanish Labor Union Organization, popularly known as the Vertical Syndicate, which was the only legal labor union (Lardín 2007). From the 1960s on, the PSUC and the PCE also stood out for their political opposition to the dictatorship. The PCE, which was close to the labor movement and also secretly controlled the bases of the Vertical Syndicate, became the main referent against the Francoist regime (Kaplan 1980; Témime, Broder,

and Chastagnaret 1995). The politics and strategies of the PCE have been studied at length by Temma Kaplan and José Rodríguez-Ibañez.²⁶

The late 1940s were characterized by labor unrest and struggles. Urban workers, who were living and working in very poor conditions, had shown, until then, a passive hostility towards the regime. However, the constant abuses of employers, and the perception that their situation would not improve in their future due to the strong consolidation of fascism, led to mobilizations (Lardín 2007; Témime, Broder and Chastagnaret 1995).

In Barcelona, the largest mobilizations were associated with the textile, the chemical, and the metallurgical industries. One of the main popular protests actually occurred in Barcelona. In March 1951, the city authorities arbitrarily raised the price of the streetcar ticket. Workers responded with a boycott against the streetcar company, as they felt that they had been mistreated in comparison to the citizens of Madrid, the capital, where the price had not changed. The boycott led to the first strike after the Civil War and to many different protests and mobilizations in the city against the Francoist authorities (Venteo 2011). Boycotts and strikes continued during the 1950s in different regions of Spain. Besides fighting for better working conditions, workers' mobilizations also had an anti-fascist character. The labor movement was joined by student dissidence in Madrid and Barcelona (Témime, Broder and Chastagnaret 1995).

From 1959 until 1973, Spain experienced a period of quick economic growth that is popularly known as "the Spanish miracle" (Kaplan 1980). Economic development was not paired with social and political improvements. The regime kept

²⁶ Boggs, Carl and David Plotke (Eds.). 1980. *The Politics of Eurocommunism. Socialism in Transition*. London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press.

its rigid ultraconservatism in politics, which clashed in occasions with economic growth, and prevented the significant improvement of the living conditions of the population. This led to more strikes and workers' mobilizations, being an example of those the powerful strikes of the Asturian miners, which were violently repressed.

These strikes were echoed with workers' mobilizations in the Basque Country and Barcelona, and led the way to a new, more combative labor movement. In Madrid and Barcelona, workers organized in Workers' Commissions that constituted an independent and democratic movement that fought in two fronts. On the one hand, they led workers' organization and mobilization in the workplace for the improvement of working conditions. On the other hand, they led the political struggle for the achievement of civil rights and the legalization of unions (Témime, Broder and Chastagnaret 1995).

We have seen in previous sections, how the Workers' Commissions came to be very influential for the workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí who participated in the organized labor movement. It is in this same timeframe, and especially at the beginning of the 1970s, when urban workers started organizing themselves in neighborhood organizations for the improvement of their living conditions (Castells 1983), as we have seen in Chapter 4.

In 1973, the armed, Basque nationalist group *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) killed the president of the fascist government, Luis Carrero Blanco. This event had an extraordinary impact on the fascist regime, as Franco, who was old and sick, had expected to leave Carrero Blanco as his heir. The end of the Francoist regime was characterized by extreme police violence. In November 1975, Franco died. His death marks the beginning of the period of transition to democracy, called “*la Transición*” (the Transition). Two days after the death of the dictator, Juan Carlos de Borbón was

proclaimed King of Spain and became the Head of State. Spain was not to have a republic (Morodo 2004).

Political reform took place in the 1970s with the intervention of the reformist sectors of the Francoist regime. In 1976, the ultraconservative President of the Government Carlos Arias Navarro was substituted by the reformist Adolfo Suárez, who elaborated an act of political reform (later on Law 1/1977, of January 4, for the Political Reform). This act proclaimed democracy and popular sovereignty, and called for democratic elections (Casals 2016, Gallego 2008).

The approval of the Law for the Political Reform was complicated due to the resistance of the fascists who opposed any change of the Francoist regime, popularly called “the bunker” (Morodo 2004). The approval of the law entailed certain concessions. Firstly, the participants in the fascist regime had to be guaranteed that they would not be held accountable for their actions during the dictatorship. Secondly, they would be allowed to keep their social position. And thirdly, communist parties and communist organizations would remain illegal. The Law was finally submitted to referendum and approved. The approval of the Law by the population meant renouncing to a rupture with the dictatorship and the acceptance of the monarchy (Casals 2016, Gallego 2008).

In June 1977, Spain celebrated elections to the constituent Courts. The elections were won by the Union of Democratic Center (UCD)²⁷, a party which consisted of reformist fascists, Christian democrats, and some liberals, and led by Adolfo Suárez himself.

²⁷ Congress of Deputies (Spain). 2003. “Elecciones Generales de 15 de Junio de 1977” [General Elections of June 15, 1977]. Retrieved Mar. 19, 2017 (<http://www.congreso.es/consti/elecciones/generales/resultados.jsp?fecha=15/06/1977>).

This period was followed by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). The leaders of the PSOE had remained dormant in the exile and somehow disconnected with the everyday conflictive reality in Spain (Rodríguez- Ibañez 1980; Témine, Broder and Chastagnaret 1995). By 1974, young socialists revitalized the party from the inside (Rodríguez 2015; Rodríguez- Ibañez 1980). In Catalonia the results were slightly different. The socialists won the election, followed by the communist party PSUC.²⁸ Although the communist parties PCE and PSUC were finally legalized, they did not count on the expected electoral triumph. In contrast to the renovation of the other main political parties, these parties kept their historical leaders and defended a radical anti-fascist position.

Finally, a democratic constitution was written and approved in 1978. At the Catalan level, the achievement of democracy meant the recovery of own institutions such as the Government of *La Generalitat*. Likewise, the Catalan language and culture were no longer (officially) persecuted. However, the Constitution of 1978 prevents Catalonia and any other Autonomous Communities (also called countries) from becoming independent or expanding their territory.²⁹

The Transition to democracy occurred in the context of an international economic crisis caused by the rise of the price of oil that seriously affected the Spanish economy (Tortella and Núñez 2011). In order to face the crisis of 1973, the main political parties, labor unions, and economic lobbies signed the Moncloa Pacts

²⁸ Nafría, Ismael, Carlos González, Juan Manuel García, gnuine, Paula Doumanian, and Marc Belzunces. "Histórico de Resultados Electorales en Catalunya (1977-2010)." [Historical Results of Elections in Catalonia]. *La Vanguardia.es*. Retrieved March 19, 2017 (<http://elecciones-catalanas.lavanguardia.es/interactivo/1977/generales/resultados-catalunya>).

²⁹ Constitución Española [Spanish Constitution]. December 28, 1978. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* [Official State Gazette] 311: 29313-424. Retrieved March 19, 2017 (https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1978-31229)

of 1977. These Pacts meant important changes in regard to monetary control and public expenditure. They also meant significant reforms in the functioning of the Social Security and tax collection (Rodríguez 2015). The signature of these pacts by workers' parties and unions caused discomfort to some historical workers' leaders of La Verdeda – Sant Martí, as these reforms were seen as a setback in workers' interests.

The end of the Transition and the beginning of the democratic regime were marked by the socialist triumph in the 1982 general election.³⁰ After few years of great divisiveness, including an attempt of coup d'état in 1981, and the persistence of police violence and of terrorist activity (Casals 2016; Gallego 2008), the socialist party managed to overcome the UCD, marking the end of the fascist regime.

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party had already abandoned its Marxist ideology and was focused on making reforms through pacts with the most powerful groups, such as the army, the Catholic Church, and the economic lobbies. This meant renouncing to other forms of change such as expropriation and nationalization (Rodríguez 2015). The Communist Party of Spain, despite its influence during the clandestine opposition to the dictatorship and its relevant involvement in the Transition, did not survive democracy. In the election of 1982, it only got 3.28% of the valid votes, and never recovered its influence.

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party remained in power for thirteen and a half years, until 1996, and was led by a Prime Minister (a figure that is called "President" in the Spanish political system), Felipe González. The long mandate of

³⁰ Congress of Deputies (Spain). 2003. "Elecciones Generales de 28 de Octubre de 1982" [General Elections of October 28, 1982]. Retrieved Mar. 19, 2017 (<http://www.congreso.es/consti/elecciones/generales/resultados.jsp?fecha=28/10/1982>).

this president served to consolidate democracy in Spain and to develop a welfare state. At the end of the 1980s, the country achieved the universalization of the public healthcare system and of the retirement pension system, promoted the expansion of the public education system and the subsidizing of the private system.

In 1986, Spain became a member of the European Economic Community, a much desired goal that had not been achieved before due to the requirement that stated that only democratic countries were to join the EEC (Alonso and Castells 1992; Rodríguez 2015). At the Catalan level, we also find a long mandate. The presidency of *La Generalitat* was in the hands of Jordi Pujol, from the liberal and Catalan nationalist party Democratic Convergence of Catalonia, from 1980 to 2003.

These historical facts are remembered by elder interviewees. This is how Elena, 73, described the transition to democracy. Elena suggests that people were deceived by politicians during the Transition:

The Transition was done with “*soroll de sabres*” [sound of sabers]³¹ because they wanted to do a transition but it didn’t happen. In my opinion, it wasn’t done as it should have because many fascist people still call the shots in places of great responsibility. I mean, it is said that there was a bit of...not violence, nobody wanted violence, but a little bit of purging... Those people already had their forty years of that... And then new people got into positions of great responsibility. It didn’t happen like this. No, it was a pact of silence. Nothing was denounced. Nobody paid for very serious crimes, very harsh things had

³¹ This expression is used to refer to the environment of unrest and conspiracy in the army during the Transition, and to the meddling of the army into the transition process. The army was one of the de facto powers of that time.

been done... And then after that, I think, came this [the economic crisis]. Because there hasn't been a... I don't want to say a clean-up, I don't want anything violent either, but we could have said: "here we finished a time of these politics..., now we start something new". They fooled us people to think that we had started something new, but I don't think we did. I don't think we did and now, of course, we're paying for it! [Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

Some interviewees had blamed this "fake" process of transition for the disarticulation or stagnation of workers' organizations. The following quote by Andreu, 67, illustrates this:

What does the Transition do? It recognizes the King, it ends with the topic of the Republic. So Franco wins. It [*the Transition*] denies Catalonia its right to be a nation, so the right to self-determination that had been achieved with the Republic³² - because it had been achieved! - is also denied. And it dismantles the labor movement, of course it dismantles the labor movement! Labor unions moved from being perseverant workers' unions to being bargaining

³² In April 1931, Francesc Macià, leader of the elected Catalan party Republican Left of Catalonia, declared the Catalan Republic within a Spanish Federal Republic. His acts were inspired by the crisis of the monarchy and of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Later on, representatives of the Catalan local governments came together to draw up a statute to regulate the relationship between Catalonia and Spain. This statute, called the Statute of Núria, was approved by the Catalan people in a referendum in August 1931. The statute recognized Catalonia as an autonomous state and defended the Catalan right to self-determination. However, neither the "state" status nor the right to self-determination were accepted by the Spanish authorities in Madrid. The final version of the statute, which operated during the short Spanish Second Republic, awarded much less autonomy to Catalonia than previously hoped by Catalans (Pujol 2013).

labor unions. With time, they occupied the same space as the OSE, the Vertical Syndicate of La Falange [The Phalanx]. Well, labor unions are doing the same role, the same role... [...] Franco said: “You legalize me”; Franco supporters said: “you legalize me and I let you participate in the distribution of the cake.” It was that simple! They have shared the cake, eh?, they have shared it out! [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

Disarticulation also occurred as workers thought that, with the achievement of democracy and the consolidation of a socialist government, their work was done, and they diminished their participation in organizations. During the socialist government, as we have seen above, people were granted civil, political, and social rights, and there were important improvements in the quality of life of people as well as in their acquisitive power. Many of the old participants and interviewees have expressed a sensation of success (“we made it”, “we won”). The idea was that from then on, they would not need to fight and they would live happily enjoying their new rights. Participation was, therefore, reduced to voting in elections every four years and the occasional participation in demonstrations as a way of communicating claims to the government.

The responsibility and the nurturing of workers’ rights was passed over to the government. Some elder interviewees and participants have reported this sense of victory or achievement following the constitution of democracy:

I was totally against giving in the way we gave in during the Transition. We ended up being the losers, us, the ones who had been fighting! And well, we’re not the only ones who fought and who have the privilege to say “we won the battle”, but we did! [Miguel, 85. Original quote in Spanish]

Mrs. Elena, from the quote above, even pointed out a link between the feeling of achievement that came with the instauration of democracy and workers' reduced participation in organizations:

[Participation in neighborhood organizations] has diminished a lot, a lot. Do you know what happened? That when the Transition ended, then people...my opinion, eh?, we all thought that we had done it, that everything would go well... And it was a moment in which there were jobs, because from the 1980s on there were some years... In the 1990s there were about ten years of prosperity and work, wages went up and we thought... [Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, workers reduced their participation in workers' organizations as they felt that they could trust the socialist government to look after their interests. This is how Isabel, a 59-year-old factory worker, explained it:

I think that this relaxation of trusting the government, the socialist government, right?, because they are our own... We relaxed too much and this excess of trust has also probably made us not to reclaim the rights that, as I was telling you, we had achieved fighting. And many people lost their lives, eh?, they lost their lives during the dictatorship. These are things that not everybody is conscious of, right? It's like we take rights for granted. Nothing is granted! And I think that's the responsibility that we have [*over the economic crisis*]. [Isabel, 59. Original quote in Catalan]

Another cause of demobilization of workers' parties and unions following the achievement of democracy is the institutionalization of these organizations and their development of their own interests. We have seen, above, that the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and its leader Felipe González, governed for almost fourteen years. This party significantly moderated its politics during the Transition and its long mandate. Created initially as a Marxist workers' party and after more than a century of being a force of the leftists, the PSOE became a moderate left of center catch-all-party (Kaplan 1980; Molas and Bartomeus 2001; Rodríguez 2015; Rodríguez-Ibáñez 1980). It was flexible enough to attract a variety of voters including working-class voters, but also intellectuals and professionals, both from liberal professions and civil servants, and the middle classes.

Felipe González, even suggested in the XXVIII Congress of the Socialist Workers' Party, held on May 1979, to remove "Marxism" from the statutes of the party and to renounce Marxism as a main ideology of the party. The term was thought to refer to antidemocratic practices and to be scaring away possible political allies. The proposal was rejected. However, the PSOE did keep its distance from communist parties and firmly rejected the idea of making any pacts with them (Rodríguez 2015; Rodríguez-Ibáñez 1980). At the present time, the PSOE is considered a center-left party.

As to labor unions, the Workers' Commissions and the General Union of Workers (UGT) were legalized in April 1977. The Moncloa Pacts of October 1977 recognized union rights, such as the right to strike and the participation of union representatives on the boards of public companies. However, the free right to unionize was not fully regulated until March 1978 (Rodríguez 2015). The Constitution of

1978³³ further confirmed this right as fundamental and, in 1985, the Organic Law 11/1985, of August 2, on Labor Union Freedom³⁴ was approved as the legislative development of this right. In contrast to other regions with strong nationalist feelings, Catalonia did not develop a nationalist unionism associated with the main pro-independence parties. This is explained by the historical importance in the region of the Workers' Commissions and their support for a federal nationalism (Baylos 2012).

Following their legalization, labor unions started receiving subsidies from the central government and the regional governments to rent their headquarter buildings, pay for some union activities, and do the work of defending workers' economic and social rights in the collective bargaining between the state, the employers' organization, and the labor unions.

Subsidies came from the portion of the general state budget assigned to the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and depended on the unions' degree of representation of workers, with the biggest unions such as the Workers' Commissions receiving most of the money (Köhler 2001). Labor unions continue to finance themselves through affiliate fees, donations, and commissions. To provide a practical example, in 2016, the Workers' Commission received 12,535,930.91€³⁵ (56.05% of its profits) from affiliated fees and 4,302, 339.81€ (19.24% of its profits) from

³³ Constitución Española [Spanish Constitution], Article 28, Section 1. December 28, 1978. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* [Official State Gazette] 311: 29313-424. Retrieved March 19, 2017 (https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1978-31229).

³⁴ Ley Orgánica 11/1985, de 2 de Agosto, de Libertad Sindical [Organic Law 11/1985, of August 2, on Labor Union Freedom]. *Boletín Oficial del Estado* [Official State Gazette] 128: 25119-123 (https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1985-16660).

³⁵ Data obtained and calculated by the researcher from the balance sheet, the profit and loss account sheet, and the annual report of CCOO for 2016 available at the website of the organization

(<http://www.ccoo.es/1395b531625227dcd9beb864a7e2364a000001.pdf> Retrieved Oct. 9, 2017).

These annual accounts have been audited by an independent audit.

subsidies. 96.53% of these subsidies came from the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. The labor union also received 93,090.66€ (0.42% its profits) from the services offered to workers. 69.09% of this retribution came from offering legal advice to workers.

Some theories have been formulated to explain similar processes of institutionalization and development of conservative interests in organizations. As early as 1974, Schmitter (1974) argued that corporatism was not gone but still was a main system of interest representation. Schmitter (1974:93-94) defined corporatism in the following way:

A system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands.

According to Schmitter, corporatism contrasts with pluralism in that it attempts to cope with the increase of a diversity of interests in the modern polity by controlling and limiting the emergence of interests, and by stratifying them and promoting their complementary interdependence. Schmitter argued that “state corporatism”, such as the Spanish regime during the Franco dictatorship, was increasingly incapable of generating consent and had to constantly revert to violent measures. Likewise, “societal corporatism” (e.g. the Spanish regime after 1982), was challenged and bypassed by social movements and other more spontaneous popular

protests. Chapters 5 and Chapter 6 of the present dissertation illustrate how societal corporatism, and especially some of its actors such as the main labor unions, are challenged and new forms of organization and mobilization start to develop.

Also, in regard to corporatism and demobilization, Robert Michels (1999) developed a law to explain the oligarchic domination of organizations, known as the “iron law of oligarchy”. Michels set out to demonstrate that all organizations are ruled by a “leadership class”. To do that, he observed an extreme case: socialist parties, which theoretically intended to manage their activity in a democratic manner. According to Michels, the complexity of organizations forces the appearance of experts able to resolve internal problems. These experts, in turn, acquire a technical superiority that sets them apart from the members of the base and allows them to exert and sustain their power.

The leadership of these experts relies on their control of information and knowledge that is not available to the other members of the party. Michels went as far as to suggesting that the masses – apathetic or indifferent - have the psychological need of having leaders to venerate, and that democracy is, therefore, not possible in a mass society but is just a facade. The law of oligarchy would also explain why organizations that work towards social change and towards the democratization of society become less and less democratic and perseverant, and develop goals associated with the conservation and replication of the organization.

More recently, Papakostas (2011) has observed that political parties are experiencing a process of “inert rationalization”, due to the creation of a boundary between the leaders and the members. In fact, both members and membership per se are being reduced, according to Papakostas, as organizations no longer draw the bulk of their resources from members but from other organizations (or the administration).

Cnaan (1991) has argued that the iron law of oligarchy also operates in neighborhood organizations. Through the secondary analysis of already existing research projects about neighborhood organizations, Cnaan reported that neighborhood organizations have actually achieved low levels of representative democracy and of participatory democracy. In fact, he suggests that they increasingly become elitist groups with strong ties with the local administration, resulting on their exertion of social control over neighbors. The iron law of oligarchy would also explain the appearance of racist and reactionary tendencies in neighborhood organizations that do, on the other hand, provide essential services for their communities.

Michels' iron law of oligarchy has also been extensively discussed and contested. For instance, Piven and Cloward (1979) show that social movement actors may actually prevent their bureaucratization. In fact, certain authority structures may have positive outcomes for social movements. Likewise, Voss and Sherman (2000) have proven, through a comparative study of social movement organizations associated with the American labor movement, that bureaucratic conservatism can be prevented in long established social movements. Without fully accepting the assumptions behind the iron law of oligarchy, the current research will examine how interviewees and participants experience the demobilization of workers' organizations following their institutionalization.

Many interviewees and participants have reported that the process of institutionalization and of development of self-conservation interests has actually taken place in the workers' organizations that they are familiar with, especially in labor unions. This has, according to interviewees, led to a demobilization of these organizations, which have become less combative and are failing to protect the rights

of the working-class people. Likewise, the feeling of being abandoned by labor unions is a repeatedly reported reason to stop participating in these organizations. Below, a synthesis of the main criticisms raised by interviewees in regards labor unions and left-wing political parties, as well as their testimonies will be presented.

Attention should be paid to the fact that criticism is directed to the current functioning of labor unions, not to the figure and role of the labor union per se. In fact, many interviewees highlight the current need of perseverant labor unions and praise their past work. Likewise, the importance of democracy and of a strong state is not challenged.³⁶ Criticism against labor unions is more intense and specific than criticism towards political parties as interviewees feel that they are (or used to feel that they are) closer to workers than are political parties. As a result of the long fascist dictatorship, a great part of the citizenry, especially those who lived through the dictatorship, have become detached from politics and consider themselves unable or unwilling to talk about politics. This disaffection is one of the main characteristics of the Spanish political culture (Vallès 1999).

One of the main concerns raised regarding labor unions is that, when labor unions receive subsidies from the state, they become dependent and they start looking after their own interests instead of after those of workers. This is how José, 79, explained it:

This crisis is provoked. What for? So all the conquests that workers achieved during the years of the Franco regime and the first years of democracy...

³⁶ These results coincide with previous statistical data (Vallès 1999) that shows that, despite the high degree of disaffection towards politics of the Spanish population and their distrust of the political class, the support for the democratic regime has been very wide and stable since the Transition.

Because, since 1979, labor unions are not fulfilling their labor union duty of defending the working people, because they're subsidized by the state, just as the neighborhood organizations are, and everything that is subsidized is caught by the administration. And this deactivation of workers at the national level, this disorganization, makes it possible for employers to have more benefits than ever, at the sacrifice of workers, of those who work plus those who don't work and, on top of that, risk losing their pensions. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

Gloria, 61, and Andreu, 67, an unemployed shop assistant and a retired mechanic, detailed the way that labor unions benefited from the Transition and how their interests diverged from those of workers:

Gloria: This is the problem that we have always had with the union, with the parties. Always! Here it became fashionable to say that it was all about negotiating the maximum compensation. So, when jobs were in danger, it was all about negotiating to get the maximum compensation. Then, we've always supported that the most important thing is keeping the job. [...] Then what happens with labor unions? That they would get paid... Well, they get paid! I don't know if it was a 10% or a 15% of the worker's compensation...

Andreu: Labor unions became millionaires with the Transition and until now, but no one has calculated the money that has gone to the labor unions. In the case of a dismissal, if you were affiliated, the union would keep a 10%, and if you were not affiliated, a 15%, just like regular layers. With the thousands of workers that have been sacked in this country, labor unions have gotten millions! This is a fact, eh?

Gloria: Because there are companies with just six workers, right?, they really shut down, you get layers... All good. Now, a company of 200-300 workers is a different story! And they charge the same, a 10% or a 15%. That's really a lot of money, a lot! Sometimes I reflect: "Well, what interests me more fighting for the job or getting a compensation and letting them have the 10% or 15%?" Of course, many times you just have to reduce things down to math and then you see who is benefiting from that and who isn't. [Gloria, 61, and Andreu, 67. Original quotes in Catalan]

Marta, a 37-year-old nurse, in turn reported not fully trusting her labor union as she is conscious that the organization and its leaders have their own interests:

I'm a union affiliated and that's it. [*Laughter*] I'm not into it. I do think it's useful but... Well, I don't like to participate in the labor union because I think there are also many interests. So it benefits me to be affiliated because they protect me, right?, so to speak, and it's always useful if you have a problem. And I do think that uniting would be the solution to many problems, but I'm not enthusiastic about the functioning of labor unions nor I trust them completely. [Marta, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

Another reason for criticism is the fact that labor union leaders remain in their position of power for many years. This is how Núria, a 57-year-old shop assistant, explained it:

I have taken some distance from labor unions because I have trouble figuring out their role nowadays. I do agree that there's a need... Now more than ever we need to articulate... But I don't see that the current labor unions... A change should be made but I don't know how. I see that the people who are there are still the same ones, the ones that I met, and they can't change this [*the economic situation*], so there has to be a change. [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

The leaders of labor unions do indeed extend their leaderships for many years. In the case of the Workers' Commissions (CCOO), the union with the greatest representation in Spain, there have been four general secretaries from 1976 until 2016, with leaderships extending for more than ten years³⁷. In turn, the General Union of Workers (UGT), the second biggest union in the country, only had two general secretaries from 1976 until 2016. Thus, their leaderships extended for about twenty years³⁸.

Finally, many interviewees have pointed out the current "uselessness" of labor unions, in comparison to their strong fights during the dictatorship and the first years of democracy. Josefa, an 86-year-old retired factory worker, suggested that labor unions ignore the workers' problems:

Work used to be more stable, even if it was badly paid, it was more stable, and there was also a labor union that would help you. Now, they don't do

³⁷ Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras. "Breve Historia" [Brief History]. Retrieved Oct. 17, 2017 (http://www2.ccoo.es/cscceo/Conoce_CCOO:Breve_historia).

³⁸ Unión General de Trabajadores. "Comisiones Ejecutivas de UGT desde 1888" [Executive Commissions of UGT since 1888]. Retrieved Oct. 17, 2017 (<http://portal.ugt.org/ugtpordentro/ejecutivas1888.htm>).

anything! And also, if you were moved for any reason, you would get a compensation. I think now they just pass. [Josefa, 86. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Miguel, 85, complained about the lack of response of labor unions to the labor reform of the conservative People's Party:

What makes me truly sad is to see that we have lost very easily what took so hard to achieved, it cost lives! That they have made us a labor reform and that labor unions haven't lifted a finger! Labor unions, and I'm telling you I'm the founder of one! [Miguel, 85. Original quote in Spanish]

Finally, Guillem, a 32-year-old writer, explained the need of reactivating labor unions as a way of improving the situation of the working class. In his quote, Guillem recognizes the discredit of labor unions in the eyes of the population:

I think that the working-class needs tools that help it to organize itself, right?, to achieve its own goals and interests. Nowadays these tools are totally disarticulated. So it's nothing new, it's not a new formula, but it has to be reconstructed again and be supplied with those tools. One basic tool, although it's no longer fashionable, and has been discredited, and people feel rejected by it, is the labor union. It can be called labor union or any other name, but workers need a tool, an organization framework to defend their labor rights, and especially in the current situation. Then, the topic of syndicalism has to be reconstructed, we need a combative syndicalism. Then, that front that had to

do with labor rights has to be reconstructed no matter what. Then, it is true that there's a movement of some minority unions that are trying..., but is an arduous job because the big labor unions don't feel up to it. Then, we lack that tool to overcome this economic situation, which by the way is not economic but social, it's of all types, of values..., of all types. [Guillem, 32. Original quote in Catalan]

Traditional workers' parties, which are now often catch-all-parties, were not criticized specifically and with the same fiery language used to attack labor unions. However, this does not mean that the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí approve of these parties. As we have seen in Chapter 4, political parties and politicians are, in general, heavily criticized as they are believed to be working for their own interests or for those of the upper classes instead of looking after the citizenry.

Politicians are also suspected of abusing their power and of using (“losing”) public money in unnecessary luxuries. All interviewees also referred to the multiple corruption cases reported by the mass media. Left-wing parties are less criticized than center and right-wing parties as they only participate in the political system from the opposition, but they are not free of suspicion. Despite this tendency of rejection of politicians, interviewees and participants have expressed that they are the ones that can and should take actions so Spain overcomes the economic crisis. Thus, at the same time that they express distrust for politicians due to the corruption scandals, they expect politicians to improve their economic situation, and they disconnect themselves from this responsibility. As Elena, 73, expressed it: “The state, the state, always the state. No matter whether it is a Catalan state or the Spanish state.”

All interviewees have had similar responses to this matter: they immediately suggest that politicians or the state are the ones that can, and should, overcome the economic crisis. They present politicians as the only actors able to do something to improve the economic situation, without doubts, and without any further justification of this statement. Then, they pause for a second and afterwards express their concerns for the corruption of politicians and political parties or for the lack of obedience of the private sector and the market to the mandates of the state. These responses show the force of stateism in Spain and exemplify the transference of responsibilities from extra-parliamentary politics to the formal political system following the achievement of democracy explained in this section.

5.5 Conclusions

Chapter 5 focuses on the demobilization of the working class. The case of La Verneda – Sant Martí provides an example of the reduction of social mobilization in working-class neighborhoods since the beginning of democracy in 1979-1982. Demobilization may be related to a variety of conditions and situations. In Chapter 5, the increase of individualism, the Spanish ‘Transition’ to democracy, the development of a formal democratic political system and other processes have been examined using secondary sources. More importantly, the chapter details how pro-worker alternative discourses may become a restraint against a working class community when the creative use of such discourse is limited.

The present research demonstrates that cultural repertoires, even when they take quite stable forms, such as in the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood, are not monolithic and unchangeable but provide a variety of skills, habits, stories and world-views that individuals can use creatively and adapt to their

life world. When the creative use of alternative discourse becomes immobile or restricted, it can prevent the mobilization of younger members of the community.

This was the case in La Verneda – Sant Martí, as illustrated in the chapter, that described the presence in the neighborhood of the generations that had participated in the social struggles of the 1970s, their current control of positions of leadership in the neighborhood, and their recurrent use of the 1970s rhetoric and forms of organization in such a way that it prevents the development of other newer forms of organization and mobilization. The next chapter delves more on the demobilization of the working class and also explores in detail some particular aspects of the counter-hegemonic discourse.

CHAPTER 6: DETAILS OF THE COUNTER-HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

6.1 Chapter Synopsis

The previous chapters four and five address the main research questions of the present research and develop an argument regarding the working class reproduction of resistance to the dominant economic discourses. It has been shown that workers develop an alternative explanation for the economic situation drawing from the shared memories of struggle in their neighborhood and from common cultural repertoires, especially Marxism. It has also been demonstrated that this discourse is, presently, unable to mobilize the residents of La Verneda – Sant Martí, and that workers' organizations have experienced an important demobilization.

In Chapter 6, the argument will be closed following an in-depth examination of certain important aspects of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood. The first two sections of the chapter refer to how working-class people talk about the economy. While the first chapters referred to the content of the discourse of the interviewees, the first two sections of Chapter 6 address the important question of the “how” and illustrate the way in which interviewees understand the class structure and the general functioning of the economy.

First, the class analysis that underlies the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood will be addressed. The analysis of the results shows that interviewees are able to identify a class structure and to situate themselves in it as workers and as opposed to the upper classes. The workers' pride that impregnates the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood leads workers to reject the explanations that point at them as responsible for the negative economic situation, and they are inclined to blame the upper classes instead. Second, the role of traditional workers'

organizations such as labor unions and parties, and neighborhood organizations, in the socialization of workers in the understanding of economic issues will be studied. In the final section, the expectations that the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí have for the future, as they may guide their actions in the present will be explored.

Despite the incontestable influence of Marxism in the neighborhood and the general wish for a more egalitarian society, interviewees reject the idea of socialism and of a central planned economy, and express the wish for a less harsh capitalism. This new capitalism would be more regulated and would respect the public character of some services, especially healthcare and education. This conclusion emphasizes the belief identified in previous chapters that the main problem is not capitalism *per se*, but the way the upper classes abuse this system for their benefit and against workers.

6.2 *Class Analysis*

Class structure

The working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí explain the economic situation of the country and their own economic situation essentially in class terms. In this section, the class analysis that underlies the hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood will be examined. As noted, first, the interviewees' description of the class structure and of their place on it will be explained. Second, there will be an exploration of how the blame for the economic crisis is allocated in the class structure according to interviewees. Finally, representation of deserving and undeserving recipients of welfare benefits and the controversial issue of the “Spanish cheating culture” will be explained.

Interviewees and participants were conscious that they do not live in an equal society but that there are different social strata, each with different access to resources and power. All interviewees incorporated class-related terms in their discourses, explained class relations based on their experience and observations, and even provided direct descriptions of the class structure. For instance, this is how Marc, a 37-year-old mailman, understood social stratification and the access to power.

Social scales. I've always thought that it's all entangled. All power scales, I mean all social scales are entangled and the higher you are, the more you can manipulate stuff. We can manipulate a little, but I think that at the scale of a worker from a "*barrio obrero*" [workers' neighborhood] at most people just get to survive. [Marc, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, we have seen in Chapter 4 that interviewees and participants were conscious of the increasing polarization of the Spanish society or, as they expressed it, of the fact that "the rich are richer and the poor, poorer". The class analyses provided by the interviewees vary in complexity. In general, all interviewees identified two major groups, "*els de dalt*" [the ones above] and "*els de baix*" [the ones below]. These two groups were also identified by the French workers studied by Lamont (2000). The group of the "ones below" comprises most of the population, although there are internal differences, as we will see below.

The lower class group is described with various terms. Most commonly, they are named through reference to their location in the class structure. That is they are "the ones below", "the people from below", "the class below", and variations that contain the spatial reference "below". Second, they are described by their position in

the economic sphere: workers (“*trabajadores*”, “*obreros*”, “*treballadors*”, “*obrers*”) and informal terms that mean “workers” (“*curritos*”, “*currantes*”). These terms not only refer to the active population but also to people who are not yet in the labor market, who are already retired, or who are unemployed or home-makers. They comprise all the people whose families depend on their work for subsistence and do not own a company.

Third, “the ones below” are called by their position in the political system: “*la gente*”/“*la gent*” [the people], “*la ciudadanía*”/“*la ciutadania*” [the citizenry], “*ciudadanos*”/“*ciutadans*” [citizens], and “*ciudadanos de a pie*” [the man on the street]. Finally, they are referred to by their lack of resources: “the disadvantaged” or “the most humble classes”. The term with which the interviewees identified the most is “*obrero*”/“*obrer*” (worker). “*Obrero*” refers to manual and construction workers but was generally used to mention all the workers of the neighborhood, even if they did not have blue collar jobs.

The group of “the ones above” are comprised of the upper classes, identified by interviewees and participants as politicians, businessmen, and managers from big companies, bankers (but not bank clerks), and anyone who has inherited enough wealth from their families as to have what interviewees considered an extravagant lifestyle. Quotes from the interviewees that critique of this lifestyle are provided, below. The group of “the ones above”, therefore, comprises the top one to ten percent (1% to 10%) of the population. However, in some occasions, the term “the ones above” expands to comprise a much larger group of the population constituted by all the people who are perceived as better off than the workers’ of La Verneda – Sant Martí. The group of “the ones above” is nevertheless much smaller than the group of “the ones below”.

They are referred to, just as we have seen in the case of “the ones below”, with reference to their position in the class structure. That is, “the ones above”, “the upper part”, “upper people”, and other combinations with the words “above” or “upper”. They are also described by their position in the economic sphere: “rich”, “capitalists”, “the bourgeoisie”, and “*el patrón*” [boss, employer]; and by their position in the political system: “elite/s”, “the people who make the law in a country” and “leaders”. Finally, they are also referred to alluding to their resources: “*los pudientes*” [the haves], “*los chicos bien*” [the well-off boys], and “*la casta*” [the caste].

These two groups, the ones above and the ones below, are defined in a series of dualistic opposites. These are, above/below, rich/poor, capitalist/worker, leaders/citizens, well-off/destitute. Mónica, a 37-year-old security guard, specified that in the social scale there is a “poverty step and an opportunist step”. The interviewee thereby distinguished two groups, one that works and is, therefore, poor; and another group which takes advantage of the one that works. This opportunistic group is rich, thanks to the group that works. The fates of these two social groups are seen as connected, and the power and resources of one group are seen as directly related to the lack of power and of resources of the other group, as we will see below.

Some interviewees also referred to a more complex class analysis that involves intermediate positions between the two main groups as well as internal differences within the groups. One strategy used by many neighbors to describe the class structure was to map it geographically using the city of Barcelona as their framework. Many interviewees used this strategy spontaneously. In the cases where they did not, the researcher asked them to do it.

All interviewees were very quick to identify the richest and the poorest areas of the city and they showed enough confidence when classifying the areas in-between.

Living conditions do change a lot from one area of Barcelona to another. The mayor of the city, Ada Colau, recognized in a speech of January 13, 2016, that there is a gap of up to six years in the average life expectancy of a person depending on the neighborhood in which they reside.³⁹ She also pointed out the increase of social inequalities in the city. In this regards, Jordi, a 72-year-old neighbor who used to own a bar, explained that people choose their friends and their neighborhood depending on their income and that this is what defines social classes in the city:

If you pay attention, you notice that people are a bit classified by neighborhoods. The very city... I mean, I'll never go to live to Pedralbes [*upper class neighborhood*], do you understand me?, because you need... Let's see, I think that classes are defined by economies, right?, because if someone hasn't much money and they consider themselves upper class...! And if they come from the upper class and they don't spend much, they also... Classes mark... I mean, even regarding your friends and your life situations, you adapt to those of the group you belong to, do you understand me? [Jordi, 72. Original quote in Spanish]

Jordi's intuitions are confirmed by Lefebvre (1991), who pointed out that space is socially constructed and that, in turn, it shapes other social elements such as class and class consciousness. According to Lefebvre, the social construction of space is not politically neutral, but reflects social interests. He specified that space can and

³⁹ Barcelona Town Council. 2016. "Colau Anuncia la Posada en Marxa del Pla de Barris de Barcelona" [Colau Announces the Start of the Neighborhoods Plan of Barcelona]. Retrieved Apr. 13, 2017 (<http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/alcaldessa/ca/noticia/colau-anuncia-la-posada-en-marxa-del-pla-de-barris-de-barcelona>).

has being defined in a way that serves the interest of the dominant groups. Likewise, Gerald D. Suttles' (1972) suggested that, although definitions of space are imposed from outside, they have very real effects. Suttles (1972) explained that society imposes categorical labels to specific geographical areas.

However, once a neighborhood label is affixed in a territory, it has real consequences. The labelling of the spaces of the city serves to develop a mental map that helps citizens to quickly determinate if an area is safe or not, whether one will find friends or enemies. It also serves to minimize the prospects of status insult and to simplify daily life decisions. For instance, the reputation of a neighborhood may attract or repel visitors from other areas, which in turn determines the success of local stores. For the people who live in a neighborhood, this space also becomes an important component of their individual identity. Thus, neighborhoods are not only segments of real estate but, more importantly, collective representations in the minds of their inhabitants.

Pere, a retired bank clerk, drew a map of the city that reflects the distribution of the social classes in two main areas. The area to the left of Balmes street, a big boulevard that extends from the mountain to the city center, would be, according to Pere, for workers, while the area to the right would house the upper classes. The map is available in the annex.

[Illustration 45]

This is how Pere described it:

The neighborhood of Gracia... How would I explain it to you? Do you know Barcelona well? [*He talks as he draws*]. You know this is Balmes street. It's clear that there's always been a distinction. If you look up to the mountain Tibidabo, this side is the right of the Eixample, and this is the left, the left of the Eixample [*central area of the city*]. And once you get to Diagonal Boulevard, you have Gracia and Sant Gervasi [*neighborhoods*]. Well, I think that there it is still elite, although they don't reach the level of Pedralbes [*upper class neighborhood*]. [Pere, 78. Original quote in Spanish]

Pere went on to explain that the social division of Balmes street was a historical one. He recounted that there used to be a street car in the boulevard that was popularly called "Maids-killer" because some maids had lost their lives when crossing the street on their free day from the right side, where they served, to the left side, where their families and boyfriends lived. Although La Verneda- Sant Martí is to the right of Balmes street, it would constitute a working-class area, according to Pere, as it was built more recently on a space that used to be crop fields:

Many people identify La Verneda as a neighborhood of Romanies because of the shanty town that there used to be, which homed many Romanies. But they were working people, just like me, a worker, a worker too, right? And this neighborhood...how could I tell you? It's not the same the price of the land and of the buildings here... they're not of the same quality as those of Pedralbes or Sarrià [*upper class neighborhoods*]. Do you understand? It was a workers' neighborhood, it was a neighborhood where there were working

people. The price of the land here is another story, I've already told you many things didn't exist, right? [Pere, 78. Original quote in Spanish]

In the system of stratification that they define, most workers and participants identify themselves as working class. The fact that La Verneda – Sant Martí has historically been labelled a “*barrio obrero*” [workers' neighborhood], as we have seen in Chapter 4, contributes to this classification. As we go through some quotes that identify neighbors as workers and as different from the upper and lower classes, we will also see more examples of the geographical description of stratification. Marta, a 37-year-old nurse, described her class position and that of the neighborhood the following way.

I'm a worker. I think that the neighborhood is a workers' neighborhood too. I mean, it's not a deprived neighborhood of the poor class. I've been working for some time in a nearby city, in a poor neighborhood with lots of immigrants and there're many more social problems than the ones I see here. Here, most people live half well. Then everyone depends on their personal situation and I live alone and work and I have a wage every month, so I'm a worker but I live well. I can travel, I can do my things... But I think that, overall, it's a workers' neighborhood. Then there're other neighborhoods with more social deprivation. [Marta, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

Lucia, a 38-year-old teacher, also identified the neighborhood as a “*barrio obrero*” [workers' neighborhood] and reflected on the effect of the economic crisis on the neighborhood.

Let's see, it's a "*barrio obrero*", a workers' neighborhood. But then it's true...well it's never been prosperous. I mean... but it's true that it has been getting worse because you find many families that say: "well, my kids..." The ones just a bit younger than me are unemployed! Some of them had left and they've come back to their parents', so the neighborhood has worsened during the crisis. [Lucia, 38. Original quote in Spanish]

Likewise, Judith, a 42-year-old informal care giver, confirmed that the neighborhood is a workers' neighborhood.

Almost all the neighborhood is "*obrer*" [working class]. But of course there's also people who may fool you because you see them on the street and think "It's a working person" but they have money. It's a workers' neighborhood, of people who work. There're areas where you can notice that people is middle or upper, but it's a workers' neighborhood. [Judith, 42. Original quote in Catalan]

Emma, a 30-year-old teacher, described the neighborhood in more detail.

Let's see, I consider that this neighborhood is quite a village. Although I come from a neighborhood that back in time was also pretty "*obrero*" [worker] and you could tell that it wasn't at the same level, in the four years that I've been here I haven't noticed that many changes because I don't hang out much around here. But you do indeed notice that the level is slightly lower than that

of other areas of Barcelona, because here, just as in the villages, there's a truck that goes around offering products, the truck of the mattresses and all that. So it comes around here a lot. And the knife-grinder also comes often, and it's a figure that you no longer see in cities easily. And these things shocked me when I arrived because they're things that I'd only seen in my village, but not here. And it makes me think that economically the neighborhood doesn't have a level... I think it's medium-low. [...] You hear people talking sometimes and they make jokes: "Ughh! You're going to the outskirts!" You know? I mean, "The limit is there..." And it's true. If you go there, far away in that direction [*to the east of the neighborhood*] there's more poverty, more delinquency, you see more people in the street... People who make you change sidewalks. [*Laughter*] I mean, it's true.... The youth is more on the streets, much more into drugs... [Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

Montserrat, a 56-year-old nurse, also presented herself as working-class and identified internal differences.

I'm working-class, but it's funny... Recently, I saw one *Salvados* [*TV show*]. And many young people said: "no, no, middle-class". Middle-class? Don't you have to work for someone else? And I think the years of prosperity made us think that there was a middle class that doesn't really exist, eh? If you work for someone else, right?, you're in the working-class. There's the more slave and the not so much. I'm a well-qualified worker, but still... [Montserrat, 56. Original quote in Catalan]

A young religious leader addressed the homogeneity of the neighborhood in a simple sentence: “The people around here are very accessible, very easy to reach. Well, we’re all in the same situation.” These are just some of the many quotes that identify the population of La Verneda – Sant Martí as working-class. Seven out of thirty interviewees classified themselves as middle-class. This classification was based on the fact that they can identify someone above them and someone below them and, therefore, they are in the middle. Interviewees also pointed out their middle class status to distinguish themselves from the poor or to indicate that they have a privileged status among workers. For instance, Emma (30) self-identified as “*clase media obrera*” [worker middle class]. This is how Alex, 19, explained it.

The neighborhood is middle class because it’s neither rich nor poor. I mean, it’s neither La Mina [*destitute neighborhood*] nor Pedralbes [*upper class neighborhood*]. It’s in the middle. I think I’m middle-low. [Alex, 19. Original quote in Spanish]

Mónica, 37, also considered herself middle-class as she is able to identify people who are much poorer than she is.

The middle class, I mean, a family with kids, for instance a normal family, let’s say, with a father, a mother, two children, four at the family level, the two parents have incomes or at least one, it doesn’t matter, but you have an income to go on comfortably, you know? It’s not the poor class that has to beg... La Verneda I think is more middle class... It’s always been said that it’s a “*barri*

obrer” [workers’ neighborhood], but well because it’s people who work, we work but we have an income, right? [Mónica, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

Some of these interviewees also considered themselves middle-class because they had a few possessions that made them proud, particularly an apartment or a company, no matter how small. For instance, Jordi, 72, who used to own a bar, answered without doubts: “I think it’s [*La Verneda – Sant Martí*] middle class evidently, middle class.” Laia, a 35-year-old, social worker identified her parents as middle class and herself as working class and explained the differences between them.

My parents, I would classify them as middle class from a few years ago. We never lacked anything but they’re still paying the mortgage... It’s like a mixture. I think that middle-class people may have a normal wage, not skyrocketing, but they’re people who have been able to finish paying their apartment, who in their daily life just spend on food, and who may be able to afford the luxury of doing outings on the weekends... I think that when you can devote, I don’t know, a 40% of your wage to leisure, for me that’s middle class. I can’t do that. I can’t just not consider dinning out. I have to think about it, I have to say: “ok, we’re three. How much does it cost?” Because of course I can pay it, but I can pay it today, but the next weekend I won’t be able so I have to look into it. Someone from the middle-class can act more freely. [Laia, 35. Original quote in Catalan]

As we have seen in the previous chapters, in general interviewees and participants criticize the idea that workers belong to the middle class, as this is regarded as a strategy of the upper classes to demobilize workers. In his research on

distinction, Bourdieu (1984) also found that French workers heavily criticized their counterparts who were perceived as trying to emulate or to pose as more than workers. This was considered an act of lack of solidarity towards the other workers. At the same time, as they criticize the middle class or the upper class, workers reinforce their solidarity towards their group and socialize themselves and others into the practices of their social class. The testimony of Josefa, an elderly woman from the neighborhood, illustrates workers' reaction to those who consider themselves better-off.

I lived in one of the first blocks for workers and almost [*all the neighbors*] were employees of the same company, family members, acquaintances, maybe some bosses... So they were all this type of people and there were also many people who were the maid of the boss, the driver... I'm talking about the ones that I had near. The driver of I don't know who... But with time things have changed, they had children, they lost some of the stupidity with which they came. There were people who thought too high of themselves. People became more normal, right? It was really just like a village and people were pretending to be what they were not. Everyone, eh? For instance, there was a woman who would go to the stores bragging about having worked in a German store. And we would say: "so what?". [Josefa, 86. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Andreu, 67, had a good laugh thinking about workers who consider themselves middle class.

There must be those who think that they are; “I’m middle class” and so on. A friend has said it to me sometime. We’re middle class? [*Laughter*] But well, no, this is working class. [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

Lucía, 38, also laughed as she considered that the whole concept of the “middle class” is an invention to fool the population.

No, there’s no middle class. [*Laughter*] There’s no middle class. The moment you work for a boss you’re working class, qualified or not but working class. The middle class is an invention they’ve made us all believe in. [Lucía, 38. Original quote in Catalan]

Isabel, 59, also considered that there is no such thing as the middle class and reflected on working class consciousness.

The issue is, do we have the consciousness of being working class or not? Right? A few years ago I discussed it with some other people. Do we have the consciousness of being working class? Well, maybe not enough. And then the issue is that - and it doesn’t matter whether your acquisitive power is higher or lower - you depend on your work, on your job. If you don’t have a job, you can’t make a living. I mean, the ones who live on their assets are the ones who can say that they’re upper class, the rest are working class. [Isabel, 59. Original quote in Catalan]

Judith, 42, also expressed her confusion in regards working-class people consumption patterns.

You can see the crisis in the terraces because before the crisis you would go to La Rambla and you would see that the terraces were full. You would go to the neighborhood festival and the terraces were full. And this year I went... the terraces are empty. Moreover, they are removing terraces from the street. The festival...there's no...you notice it, you notice it. In contrast, around Christmas you see that people buy a lot. I can't understand it, it doesn't add up! You either have money or you don't have it. [Judith, 42. Original quote in Catalan]

Only three interviewees identified themselves as poor. They specified that they considered themselves poor because their wage or retirement pension does not allow them to have good living standards. Another interviewee identified herself as being in the “precarious” strata of the working class. In this regards, neighbors recognized important differences within the working class in terms of education and stability. This topic will be addressed below as we consider how the interviewees and participants compare themselves to the inhabitants of neighboring areas.

In La Verneda – Sant Martí, the standard that marks a person's class, most often used, more often used than having a job, or owning a house or a car, is the ability to travel. Neighbors mentioned their vacation trips as a sign of their access to the middle class or of their accommodate position in the top of the working class as qualified workers with a college degree. Trips were also mentioned as a sign of excess

from workers who wrongly consider themselves middle classes when they are not, and the inability to travel was considered a clear mark of being working class.

Although interviewees had different opinions on the meaning of traveling for themselves and others, almost all of them mentioned traveling and trips as a signifier of a class status. The following quotes from the interviewees illustrate the many ways neighbors refer to traveling as a class mark. The first quote is from Jordi, a 72-year-old retired bar owner. Jordi uses the reference to traveling to distinguish himself from his richer friends.

I have friends who I don't want to classify as upper or middle-class but they do have, how could I tell you?, they are more able. So I have some friends, a couple, who have been to the United States, they've been here, they've been to India, things that I, well, I don't even dream nor indulge myself to do, and I can't afford these trips, this expense... [Jordi, 72. Original quote in Catalan]

Jordi is not the only neighbor who openly admitted not being able to afford a trip. However, some neighbors presented their inability to travel as a personal choice. One example is Elena, 73.

I don't have... I don't go on trips. I could go, but I don't. I'm not a traveler.
[Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

Showing a lack of interest for goods and opportunities that are not available for workers is a strategy identified by Bourdieu (1984) to deal with the shame attached to not being able to positively compare oneself to the upper classes.

According to Bourdieu, workers submit to what is necessary, and this inclines them towards pragmatic choices, while choices made for the sole purpose of self-realization or aesthetic pleasure are rejected as aberrations or “fancy nonsense” (p.379). An example of this is provided by Juan, a 64-year-old, pre-retired, construction worker. Juan explains that he travels to the United States, although this is economically hard for him, because his grandchildren live there. In contrast, he rejects trips in luxury cruises as excessive. In this quote and the ones below it is clear the interviewees’ preference for what is available for them and the active criticism of the trips that they cannot afford.

There’re people who may want to do a trip in a transatlantic cruise, a trip out there... I don’t like it, it’s something that just doesn’t grab my attention. And people are obsessed...people who can’t really... It’s 1500 per person, you’re not going to ask the bank for a loan for 3000! Cruises are on fashion, but I prefer to spend my money going to the United States to see my kids. I don’t know how much is going to be this year. Last year it was 1500 two people back and forth. It’s not bad but we feel it, we feel it. [Juan, 64. Original quote in Spanish]

Pilar, 43, also compared her trips to the desired trips and critically reflected on the creation of needs by the economic system. In this regards, Ritzer (1999) has suggested that monopoly capitalism is enchanting a disenchanted world through a revolution in consumption. Ritzer specifies that consumerism especially affects those living in

cities which, through “new means of consumption” or “cathedrals of consumption” (p.10) (commercial displays) push and even coerce citizens into hyper-consumption.

Vacation and trips constitute one of this enchantments, extravagances, and simulations. The following quote by Pilar, as the one above, shows that interviewees were aware of the trip choices that are considered to be desirable or fashionable, and that they were conscious that they were not meeting the standards. For this reason, they felt the need of justifying themselves to the interviewer who, on the other hand, did not ask any specific question about trips or traveling to any of my interviewees.

I can tell you about myself. Well, of course I can't travel to New York, well, so I travel to let's say Toledo [*Spanish city*] or I go to... It's just... They've also created some needs and I'm not sure whether that's sort of the engine of the economy, maybe not, I have my doubts. If you don't have money, you don't consume. If you don't consume, the economy doesn't move, right? I can't consume. I can't buy clothes every month. I can't renew my wardrobe every season. And I don't care, eh? [*Laughter*] I already have clothes and if I can't go to Menorca [*Spanish island*], I just go near here, to the Costa Brava [*coastal region of Catalonia*]. [Pilar, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

Interviewees also advocated for a “simple”, more “modest” lifestyle considering many of the luxuries that are valued in the neighborhood unnecessary. Antonio, 39, expressed this in the following way.

With time people have realized that is better to live more quietly, with less things, and surrounded with good people, than surrounded by a bunch of stuff

and angry because they couldn't go to Cancun [*Mexico*], complaining.

[Antonio, 39. Original quote in Spanish]

Finally, the reference to travelling and trips was also used to criticize workers who try to have a middle-class-like lifestyle.

I'm always astonished to see that people from here, old people, do those trips and they're loaded with money. [...] There's this woman that I know who's always crying: "Ai! I don't have money". And they provide her with a woman who cleans her house. She's also requested... Well, she has many aids, she has her meals delivered to her house... And then she says: "Now I'm going fifteen days to Italy because there's a trip". And I think: "In order to go fifteen days to Italy I would have to save for a whole year and I'm not sure I'd make it". You know? And I go through life looking like I'm okay. And I'm indeed okay and I don't care about money! [Josefa, 86. Original quote in Catalan]

Another widely used strategy of the interviewees to identify their social class was to compare themselves to those perceived as having a higher or a lower status. When it comes to "the ones above", interviewees were shocked by their luxurious lifestyle. The two main places where the residents of La Verneda – Sant Martí encounter people from a higher social class is college and the workplace. Laia, 35, shared her college experience, which was marked by class differences.

I went to a private college, which for me was like a different planet. I mean, I would go there to study but I didn't bond with my classmates... I didn't have

the same taste, I didn't care about the same topics, nothing, because they just lived in another world. I mean, I went there conscious that my parents were making an effort to pay for college and they went there conscious that, when they graduated, they would start working in their father's business. Eh! It's totally respectable, but I had nowhere to go afterwards. So in those years in college with the upper class I didn't really...but I have kept some friendships. We have things in common, we have a good relationship, but there're times - for instance when we go on a trip or want to do a present - that we don't... I don't know, it's a trifle but I really feel it, a lot. I don't know, let's say I just adapt better to people who are closer... [Laia, 35. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Pere, 78, explained his friendship with some upper class bosses and colleagues. Like Laia, Pere expresses his astonishment regarding the lifestyle of his wealthier friends.

I had friends at work and also bosses who were engineers and with whom I'm still friends. I even go to their house because they also have grandchildren and we share children books, you know?, and I'm friends with them. It's a neighborhood that when you arrive you already notice it's not my neighborhood. Pedralbes, La Bonanova, Sarrià, Tres Torres... [*Upper class neighborhoods*] Then I had a friend from work... His building required some repairs and he was the president of the block and there were neighbors who didn't want to do the repairs and he said: "Why don't you want to repair the apartments? If they're worth 150 million pesetas!" [\$961,085] He just said it like that! Oh my God! I didn't say anything but for me 150 million pesetas

was a brutality of money, right? It got stuck in my mind: 150 million pesetas!

[Pere, 78. Original quote in Spanish]

Encounters with the upper and middle classes can be unpleasant for the neighbors of La Verneda - Sant Martí. For instance, a 21-year-old student, felt the class stigma associated with his neighborhood when interacting with his college classmates. This student comes from one of the poorest areas within La Verneda- Sant Martí.

After some time it stopped, it's normal, but I mean, at the beginning you talk to them but you don't tell them where you're from. And when you say it, they say: "Ah! Well, you're normal". What? So the people of the neighborhood is usually abnormal or something...? They have some stigmas that make no sense. [Pablo, 21. Original quote in Catalan]

Some interviewees also had the experience of being looked down by people from higher social classes. Judith, 42, expressed not liking upper and middle class people for this reason.

No, I don't like to interact with...because they look at me with disdain, they... And I don't like it. I prefer interacting with people who are more like me, like me, workers. I don't like hanging out with people who are too full of themselves. I don't like it. [Judith, 42. Original quote in Catalan]

Interviewees also distinguished themselves from the poor and from marginalized ethnic and immigrant communities. The relationship with these groups

was more prevalent and intense than that with the higher social classes, as these groups live in neighboring areas and many interviewees had family members and friends who came from these areas. The distinction from those perceived as “below” was made in geographical terms. We have seen above that interviewees rely on the map of the city to explain the class structure. The neighborhoods at the south of La Verneda - Sant Martí were perceived as “lower” than this neighborhood. In fact, the highway that closes the neighborhood in the south constitutes an important social barrier, as explained in Chapter four. This is how Lucía, a 38-year-old teacher, described the “lower” areas.

It’s a neighborhood... My grandparents used to live there. It’s a neighborhood of “*obreros*” [workers], many of them non-qualified... What we call “*obreros*” are more qualified... Now it’s like an abandoned neighborhood. They never had... There was no improvement work for a long time... It’s a neighborhood that, in comparison to this one, barely has any play areas for the children... And there’re more and more immigrants. And of course these people have more economic difficulties than a working person who has been here longer. But it’s always being a relocated neighborhood, created out there... Many building may have sixty or seventy years... [Lucía, 38. Original quote in Spanish]

The concentration of immigrants and Romanies was expressed as a cause for concern:

The area that I find more problematic is between the fast way and the sea, and to the east. I mean, it’s really become a social ghetto. It’s the pull-effect, I

mean, there's many "ethnics" and I've always thought that when many people from the same ethnicity come together, when many people of an ethnicity live together in a way that's not taxable... Well, maybe we live differently and we don't like how they live and so in the end a ghetto is created. The buildings lose value, security is worse, there's not the same level of growth; it's deteriorated. It's the social scale: here there's a kind of people and over there another one. [Marc, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

Interviewees explained their social difference with "the poor" in three ways. First, some interviewees argued that they are all workers and that those who are poor have just had less opportunities or have only been able to access unstable jobs or work in the informal economy. A second explanation is that destitute areas are inhabited by people who make a living off criminal activities, especially stealing and drug dealing. Third, some interviewees suggested that the people who live in destitute areas, especially Romanies and some immigrant communities, have a culture that makes them despise hard work. These three explanations are combined in the discourse of the interviewees and racism is prevalent in most of the explanations provided. We have seen in previous chapters that racism against Romanies is intense in the neighborhood since the decade of the sixties when neighbors mobilized to convince the town council to remove the shanty town of La Perona. One example of the first explanation is provided by Alberto, a locksmith in his forties.

I think that they've started much below and they haven't been able to go up that much. Let's see how I explain this to you... Well, I think that the people who have less resources go to the cheapest areas and the jobs there are in

general... I don't know, they're not... Some of the people who live there just peddle or do other works. [Alberto, 40s. Original quote in Spanish]

In contrast, Miguel, 85, considered that the people from those areas are “Not that legal, a bit thieves, right? A bit *lumpen*, yes, a bit *lumpen*.” Miguel laughed a couple of times while he was telling me this. The situation of these destitute communities was not considered with pity or solidarity but with a bit of amusement, and neighbors enjoyed telling me about the illegal activities and the fights that had allegedly occurred in the neighboring areas.

However, they established less distance between themselves and the inhabitants of these somehow poorer areas than from themselves and the rich, and they did not criticize the “low class” as much. We will see, below, the heavy criticism of the upper classes. The solidarity among qualified (and some non-qualified workers), who work or have worked in the formal economic system, and the pride associated with being a worker, contrast with the contempt towards the inhabitants of destitute areas. Although being poor is not a main cause for shaming, as we will see later in this section, workers draw a clear line between themselves and those below them, who are identified as ethnically and culturally different. Solidarity would only be extended to those considered of their class.

Sometimes the criticism of illegal activities got tangled with racism, as ethnic minorities were pin-pointed as the ones perpetrating the criminal activities. In the following quote, Judith, a 42-year-old informal care giver, states that some areas are poor because they house Romanies, whom she considers thieves.

Well, we all know that, when it comes to work, gypsies... They don't make their money working. This is not being racist, it's being realist. In La Mina [*deprived neighborhood*], all the buildings of La Mina were for gypsies. And of course, you would go there with clothes and come back naked. It's true! I was told that a taxi driver had gone in and had left without anything. Of course, that area has always being a very bad area because of the people who lives in it. [Judith, 42. Original quote in Catalan]

Romanies are also suspected to have a special culture that prevents them from working and which even pushes them towards socially condemned activities, such as vandalizing and littering their neighborhoods, having many children, or working in not-quite-legal activities. This is how a 37-year-old nurse put it.

The cultural level, for instance, if there's a lot of Romani population, right?, the sort of jobs that they have... They have less income or less declared income. [*Laughter*] There're many women who don't work. Maybe they have eight children and cannot work but of course maybe is this, if you have a higher educational level, you have less children because you don't have that much time. [Marta, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, a thirty-five-year-old social worker stated the following.

There're working people, from the working class, but then there's also a whole sector of the gypsy ethnic group that were moved there. They're not from the neighborhood. They were given an apartment there and they destroyed

everything they could and that was it. But of course culture... The gypsy ethnic group has another way of living... [Laia, 35. Original quote in Catalan]

Finally, a quote by a young student summarizes the three types of explanations mentioned above.

They're as hard-working as we're because I'm sure that in that neighborhood there're people who are just as hard-working, and also people who are less workers and more thieves. I think that this may be an issue because it's one of the main points of drug dealing. And then maybe you just pass by when you shouldn't. [...] They [*Romanies*] don't have a level of culture and of civic education... I don't think they're bad people. They just haven't had the opportunities that other people... Or they had them and, due to family issues, they weren't able to appreciate them. I think that this is what happens there, they get into that neighborhood dynamic that goes on year after year and leaves this legacy: "We have to be vandals, we have to do this. We have to break this and that." And they don't think, they just do it. They don't think that we're all paying for this [*public equipment*] and that they are the most negatively affected. [Mireia, 22. Original quote in Spanish]

Who is to blame?

The class analysis that underlies the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood not only comprises the neighbors' understanding of the class structure but also addresses which social class is to blame for the economic crisis and for the increase of social inequalities. Current dominant economic discourses in Europe

suggest that all the citizens of southern European countries, especially those from the middle and working classes, are responsible for the current economic situation of their countries as they were living above their level of income (Hadjimichalis 2011).

This message has been repeated countless times in the Spanish and Catalan mass media, as reported by interviewees and participants and checked by the researcher. Most of the interviewees reproduce this aspect of the dominant economic discourses. In fact, it is the only element of the dominant economic discourses widely cited by the interviewees. However, this discourse is also challenged and contested as we will see below. This is how Pablo, a 21-year-old student, explained the responsibility of the citizenry for the economic crisis.

If you ask me, I would say all the citizenry is to blame because in the end when there was economic growth everybody wanted, for example, to have a second home and to sell it later for twice its price. Everyone has participated of this business. The largest responsibility is of the leaders but, if you ask me in general, I would say of all the citizenry because we've all wanted to participate in that show. [...] In my opinion, the citizenry is not critical enough with themselves and it's always more comfortable to blame the one on your side or the one above, right? But in the end politicians represent the citizenry. People are alarmed because all this time politicians have done nothing and there has been corruption... Then I ask myself, all these years were people just blind? I mean, they weren't blind but since they participated of this, they were happy with it. The moment when their participation ended is when they said: "Fuck! What's going on?" Then, even if they knew what happened, they did

nothing, and now they want something to be done. I find it...not unfair but... I don't know how to say it... egoist. [Pablo, 21. Original quote in Catalan]

A young religious leader also described the “above-their-means” lifestyle of the neighborhood in the time of economic growth.

At our level, the level of the people, I think in many senses we had gone too far, eh? I mean, we lived a life... To give you an example that really got stuck in my head: you would go to the street and you would see new furniture in the trash, next to the trash containers, and it would be almost new, right?, and just as the furniture there were other things... That was really a lifestyle that people had adopted that couldn't... That had to burst somewhere. [Francisco, 35. Original quote in Spanish]

Only one of the interviewees, who works for a liberal party, identified “the people” as completely responsible for their situation. The other interviewees qualified their statements and pointed out that, although most of the population had been living above their possibilities, this way of life was heavily promoted by the banks, the government, and by advertisement in the media. The following quote illustrates this point.

There were a lot of people who had lived above their possibilities. In the moment when the crisis hit... They were totally indebted, they weren't able to pay. They're indebted and that's horrible. On top of that, people have lost their job, how do they survive? How do they move ahead? Of course we're somehow guilty for being irresponsible, for not being humble with what we

have. People don't need much to be happy. Listen, what do you want me to say? Besides, being in such a big city, you can go anywhere using public transport. But the biggest fault is not ours. Because we also come... our parents, our grandparents have been workers all their lives. Workers who have also been working since they were 14 or earlier...and they have never...they lived much worse than we do, I mean much, much worse, but they were humble and they were able to move ahead. People had many more children than we have now and they raised them, I mean... Okay, we've been irresponsible, it's true, it's got completely out of hand, but that's what they sell us right?, the more you have the happier you are, and that's not true.

[Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

The blaming of workers for the economic crisis was assumed and was a statement reproduced by most interviewees but it was also (partially) contested. Most of the interviewees and participants agreed that, although workers may have acted wrongly, the bulk of the blame falls on the upper classes, as their power and resources are much greater than those of workers and they are, therefore, more able to affect or change the economic situation of the country. As we have seen in the section on the process of socialization into the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood, this discourse praises workers and their lifestyle and rejects the idea that their activities and debts are the cause of the debacle of the Spanish economy. This point is exemplified by a quote from Josefa, 86, who was convinced that workers were not to blame for the crisis.

It's not just an issue of the politicians but workers... They just can't have any responsibility! In my opinion, eh? Some of them may be more into doing protests, strikes, and all that, and others not as much, but it's not like we're to blame. There're people who are more conformists, there're people who don't know how to get mobilized, there're people who are very... [...] I believe... It's just my opinion, eh?, I think that working people don't have to save. You have to have some money just in case and you have to live! There will be people who criticize me: "yes, they've done all that". But it's just because they saw all in pink, they couldn't see what was going to happen next. But I don't think there was a bad intention, eh?, and they can't be blamed. No, I'm sure they can't. [Josefa, 86. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Marta, a 37-year-old nurse, suggested that workers were the victims not the cause of the crisis.

There're people who say: "no, they lived above their means". Well, they didn't. For instance, a family would buy an apartment and they had two wages. Maybe they paid the mortgage with one wage. The moment one stops getting paid, they can't pay. But it's not that they lived above their means, it's that their means have changed. [...] I think that they're more like victims. [Marta, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

In turn, Héctor, 43, criticized the idea of the individual responsibility over social problems and criticized those who blame workers as hypocrites.

There're people who say "we've lived above our possibilities", hypocrites many of them. Firstly, that would be a small proportion I think, and secondly, those who say this, who are above, have created these conditions so people behave this way. Because when you would go to ask for a loan, they would offer you another one. The very office manager would ask you whether you wanted a loan to buy a second car. They pushed people towards foreclosure, to say it clearly. So, even the people who have lived above their means should be helped, because the social culture in which they had entered was a negative culture. So let's not be so thatcherian about individual responsibility. We all have individual responsibility, but the social part should also be taken into account, not only the individual part. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

In fact, most of the interviewees believed that the national monetary crisis was provoked and used by "the ones above", as shown in this quote by a retired bank clerk, "*I would say that it's all the fault of the elites*", or this quote by a young teacher: "*The crisis per se is the bad management of the ones above. Ultimately the rest of us are just like little lambs who follow and who allow ourselves to be fooled*". The criticism of "the ones above" was generally made in a very impetuous and heated way, revealing the hard feelings that the workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí have towards those who they consider responsible for their economic situation. Most of the interviewees raised their voices and spoke more agitatedly when discussing the elites' involvement in the crisis and some of them openly stated their indignation.

It has to be taken into account that the interviews took place in a context of constant corruption scandals. Chapter 2 explained the incidence and mechanisms of corruption regarding development policies. Corruption scandals have also involved

local, regional, and national politicians, as well as the Royal Family. At the local level, one of the main corruption scandals was the case of Fèlix Millet, president of the foundation that manages the Palace of the Catalan Music, an institution with particular symbolic power in Catalonia. The corruption scandal was reflected in many newspapers. For instance, *El Periódico*⁴⁰ reported the suspicion of the prosecuting attorney that “6.6 million euros went to *Democratic Convergence*”, the Catalan party in office, as compensation for favors. Another noticeable corruption scandal at the Catalan level was the alleged implication of Jordi Pujol, ex-president of the Catalan Government, in tax fraud and money laundering. In May 2017, the newspaper *El País*⁴¹ announced that the Pujol family “allegedly hid in Andorra a total of 70.5 million euros between 1990 and 2014”.

At the national level, there have also been many corruption scandals. For instance, in January 2015, the newspaper *El Mundo*⁴² reported on the “Gürtel Case” and announced: “*The Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office presented yesterday in the National Court a tough bill of indictment in which they ask for total sentence of 52 year and a half of prison for three former treasurers of the Popular Party*”, the party currently in office at the national level. The alleged crimes as stated in the newspaper were: “*bribery, fiscal fraud, money laundry, forgery, misappropriation and attempt of*

⁴⁰ Albalat, J.G. 2017. “El 'caso Palau', visto para sentencia” [The ‘Palau case’, remitted for sentence], *El Periódico*, June 16 (<http://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20170616/juicio-palau-de-la-musica-millet-cdc-visto-para-sentencia-6109189>).

⁴¹ Pérez, Fernando J. 2017. “Los Pujol ocultaron más de 70 millones en Andorra” [The Pujol hid more than 70 million in Andorra], *El País*, Mayo 8 (https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/05/08/actualidad/1494274185_359077.html)

⁴² Marraco, Manuel, and María Peral. 2017. “El fiscal pide penas ejemplarizantes para Bárcenas y la trama de Gürtel” [The prosecuting attorney asks for exemplary sentences for Bárcenas and the Gürtel scheme], *El Mundo*, January 20 (<http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2015/01/16/54b8e7cf22601dad698b4572.html>).

procedural fraud". More recently, and at the international level, the Panama Papers scandal pointed to the Spanish Royal Family, as some members and friends of the family were named in the papers.⁴³

The irresponsibility or blatant bad faith of the elites was seen by the interviewees as directly related to the hard financial times that the interviewees and their families were going through. This is how Paula, a 61-year-old informal care giver, explained it.

Crises are capitalist, I mean, of capital, they happen because there's a capitalist majority because otherwise... Well, maybe... Formerly there were crises of some industries, those famines that used to happen, but now they're... They come from the capital, from the people who have money. They come a little bit from everything: the embezzlement of money, which we're just learning about, they're taking it away..., of the tricks that you see... And I believe that crises... We're the ones taking the rap, the poor take the rap, the worker, yes. And it's the same between countries: the poor country always takes the rap. [Paula, 61. Original quote in Spanish]

Some interviewees considered that the crisis is a plan created on purpose and perpetrated by "the ones above" to recover the power that they had before the organized workers' movement achieved labor and social rights. This was, for instance, the opinion of Andreu, a 67-year-old retired mechanic, who thought that the crisis had been created on purpose by the elites.

⁴³ *Público*. 2016. Los 'Papeles de Panamá' Cercan al Rey Juan Carlos I [The 'Panama Papers' fence in the King Juan Carlos I], April 19 (<http://www.publico.es/politica/papeles-panama-cercan-al-rey.html>).

For me the crisis is something induced. I mean, besides the fact that capitalism has to have these cyclical periods... I think that this has been induced. What has it achieved? So I guess there were important objectives that I think are being accomplished: to reduce wages... I mean, when I was fired in 2002, as many others, I was 53, when you left, the new worker, a young man, would win less than half of what I was paid. It started in the year 1981, which was the year I was fired. I said "There's no work". And yes, there was work, but the wages were much lower than half of what I used to make. Already in 1981! But I think that the system said: "if in order to produce I have to go to Hong Kong or Congo because the labor force is cheaper, so we lower the labor force here and we'll be able to produce here". I guess that's what they've done. But the thing is that wages keep going down there too. And I think this is the move. What change has there been here? That who use to make 10 now makes only 5. [...] Even people with a degree! There're people with a degree and they're working for 1500 euros a month and maybe a retired worker is getting 2000. I think that this is what's been achieved with this crisis. It's not only a typical crisis of the capitalist system, it's been induced. [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

Another example of this explanations of the crisis is provided by Isabel, a 59-year-old factory worker.

Actually, I've always thought that the crisis is a... is constructed, right?, by capitalism because it impacts everybody. It's constructed because I think they

weren't interested in the existence of a middle class in Spain and in other places, and that's what was going on because during the almost forty years of democracy... Well, thanks to the fights of many people during the time of the dictatorship but also in the democracy or the improvement of living conditions... We had achieved - me too, right?, because I also participated -, advocating for these manners, an income level with a good acquisitive power, eh? , and this generated consumption, this generated jobs, this generated a dynamic within capitalism... I think that this level of prosperity also distributed incomes. I mean, why am I telling you this? Because in these years of crisis, what has happened is that the incomes have disappeared from the hand of what was called middle class and have concentrated in the upper class; and in my opinion, in the distribution of the benefits at the level of companies or at the level of the society in general, benefits have gone to few hands. And this is why I believe... It has been constructed so there's more people with few resources. [...] The crisis, then, for me... I'm not saying it's just an imagination, right?, because it's real that we have a negative economic situation, but not everyone has suffered the crisis. Wealth has concentrated in some hand, in few hands, in that 1% we talk about⁴⁴, and at the level of society there has also being an abuse: they've cut right and they've generated fear.

[Isabel, 59. Original quote in Catalan]

⁴⁴ In Spain, in 2016, the richest 1% of the population was constituted by 473,000 people and accumulated a 27.4% of the total wealth (Oxfam Intermón 2017). This is almost as much wealth as the 80% poorest citizens (Oxfam Intermón 2016). In fact, the three richest individuals accumulated a wealth amount comparable to that of 30% of the population (Oxfam Intermón 2017). In 2014, the gross monthly average salary of the top 10% was of 6,640 euros (Oxfam Intermón 2016).

Other interviewees viewed the crisis as a fraud of the upper classes, who would have made money out of the misery of the population. This is how Maria, a 55-year-old educational psychologist, explained it.

The crisis is not something that has happened as an accident, something that none expected, and they've done nothing to prevent it. Announced, they had all the pieces to know it would happen, so none was surprised. And of course when they say this has happened, that we all have to tight our belts, of course, it's a fraud, because it's not the same, you know? Cutting on the basic services for the citizenry, I think this is intolerable! I mean, it's a fraud because everyone who has a wage pays taxes, right? And these taxes are to ensure some basic public services. Then, for me it's a fraud because you're paying and they ask you to pay even more, that you don't have right to the things you've paid for and that if you want something better you go buy it yourself. So if you're lucky... civil servants can modestly pay for something at a given moment if in need. If I have an illness and there's a lot of people in waiting list I can do something to be treated, but many people can't! It's a shame! [Maria, 55. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Emma, a 30-year-old teacher, considered that the crisis may be a farce orchestrated by the upper classes.

I'm not sure whether it [*the economic crisis*] happened because it [*the economy*] exploded or because there was the interest that we reached this point to really cut back from everywhere and make us pay more in theory to safe the

country, right?, because otherwise we'll all end really badly. I don't know whether it's a pantomime that was all organized from time ago so it would explode and so we would end up like this, or it is just simply something that they're trying to tell us to drawn us so that the ones who have more keep having more. [Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

Regardless of the explanation of the cause of the crisis preferred by the interviewees, they all agreed that the main social actor responsible for the financial and economic crisis is the upper class, described as comprising three main groups, politicians, bankers and, to a lesser degree, business men. Politicians were heavily criticized for cutting-off public services or privatizing them for their own benefit or that of the private sector. They were also accused of being an accomplice of “the great capital” instead of looking after the interests of the citizenry. This would have led politicians to allow financial and economic activities that were dangerous or detrimental for the citizenry and/or the environment, to ignore the first symptoms of the crisis, and to pass politics that harm instead of improve the economic situation of workers. Politicians were also seen as thieves and were accused of “robbing the people”. This is how Elena, 73, explained the situation.

I think the government allowed constructors to do what they wanted. The state didn't set any limit, nor did the Generalitat, all the powers that could have said: “No, there shouldn't be such a big bubble that impoverishes everybody, this shouldn't be, this is going to end badly”. In my opinion, this was not predicted... Neither the Generalitat, nor the town councils... Because they all made a lot of money, because there was a lot of construction, a lot was sold, and this grew

and grew until it exploded. I think this is one of the worst things that have happened, that has impoverished many families and many have lost their homes. Because the state has the responsibility to look after people, our government here, the Generalitat, the town councils. Now they're helping a lot of people as well as they can, but the harm is been done. [Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

All interviewees and participants brought up the controversial topic of corruption in political parties, explained above. The Panama papers scandal, as well as many other scandals involving political parties, politicians and ex-politicians, and the Spanish Royal Family, were mentioned. Corruption, or the excess of it, was identified as one of the main causes of the economic crisis and of the slow (if any) recovery of the Spanish economy in comparison to other countries.

Interviewees considered that the Spanish economy had experienced an important recession and was not improving because “this is the country of wiliness” (Marc, 37). Interviewees considered that corruption predated the crisis, “they’ve been doing that for so long” (Alberto, 40s), and became more evident with the economic crisis. Some of the corruption scandals were associated with the construction bubble, which was also identified by many interviewees and participants as a cause of the crisis. This is how Laia, a 35-year-old social worker, explained the meaning of “indignation” in regards corruption and the whole economic situation of the country.

How would I explain it? I guess we all have like a rage inside regarding the way things are managed. The first thing I would explain is that our politicians are thieves. Then I would explain, after having gone to some conferences, that

it's being proven that the economic system that we have here could work, but that since the managers above are not doing it right, the money is falling through some cracks and it shouldn't. [Laia, 35. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Marta, a 37-year-old security guard, explained how politicians appropriate public money and expressed how much this behavior distresses her.

I think they're all opportunists and they do an AVE [*high-speed train*], a station, in a junk town because... I expropriate some lands, I make a lot of money and then my colleague gets a lot of money from the expropriation of the lands and I get a bill for making the train go through a station where there're barely 50 people and not through a capital of 500 million. I mean... And when you turn on the TV and you see this... I read historical novel because it makes me happy, because if you turn on the news it's always the same. I'm so burn out! [Marta, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

A few interviewees also expressed their concerns for the relationship of Spain with the European Union or with some specific Member States, especially Germany. The relationship with these countries was seen abusive and as detrimental to Spain. Some interviewees expressed gratitude towards the European funds but expressed concerns that the costs of being in the EU may actually be greater than the benefits. Most interviewees, however, explained the crisis at the national scale and were unclear about the position and actions of the European Union, as we will see in the next section. This is how Juan, a retired construction worker, explained the abusive treatment of "the north".

The great problem of southern countries is that the north has taken advantage of us because they're the rich. They've taken the qualified people of the south because they didn't have, so they've left the unqualified people. This is going on since 1975. All qualified people from Spain, Italy, Greece, and Portugal... Furthermore, Germans complain. After the Second World War, Greece forgave an almost 200,000 million debt to Germany and now Germany doesn't want to forgive anything to Greece, and Greece needs it now. So that's how they get rich. They were given a money that was not given to Spain, Greece or Portugal; the Marshall Plan did not give us any money after the Second World War. They were given everything, so you cannot compare now... Germany has also rescued banks, and Holland, and France. That French-Dutch bank required more than all that's been used in Spain. I think it was given 80,000 millions of euros. England put money on its banks and none talks about it. Germany does the same with the Deutsche Bank. None says anything, they only talk about the southern countries. [Juan, 64. Original quote in Spanish]

Another elite group blamed for the economic crisis are bankers. This group includes the directors of the Spanish banks and "*Cajas*" [saving banks] but not the bank clerks, which were generally excluded for being themselves "just workers". Bankers were accused of giving mortgages to people who could not afford them and of pushing families to get more and more expensive loans and mortgages. According to interviewees, many people were fooled by bankers into buying products that they could not afford due to their misplaced trust in their banker. The relationship of trust between a person and their bank is, according to interviewees, now lost. Likewise,

interviewees blamed bankers for the real estate bubble that led to the crisis. They suggested that bankers had played with the labor intensive achievement of worker's savings and that, when management activities let them into crisis, they asked even more from workers in the form of the state bailout of banks.

Furthermore, bankers were depicted as being avid for benefits and devoid of compassion as banks were forcing people out of their homes when they were not able to pay the mortgage; even when the bank owned many empty buildings. Interviewees were also aware of cases where family properties were also appropriated by the bank to pay for the interests of a mortgage, leaving families with children and elder citizens homeless.

They were specially incensed by the fact that the laws and royal decree on mortgages in force do not contemplate the *datio in solutum*, the dation in payment, and therefore, force individuals to keep paying back the mortgage and the interests even when the bank had already appropriated their apartment. Finally, some interviewees had a loose idea of the globalization of finances and had learned through the media about the United States subprime mortgage crisis. The following quote by a retired bank clerk illustrates the blaming of the elites, and especially bankers for the economic crisis by the workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí.

I think that the blame of everything is on the elites. For instance, the political leaders, one. I will put them here. Second, the Bank of Spain... You know it's compulsory for all institutions of a nation to give real accounts of their accounting to the Bank of Spain. If the Bank of Spain had been checking the level of indebtedness... You can interpret a balance, right? In a balance you can see the debtors' accounts, who owes you money. Then you have to check

whether your patrimonial level can respond in case of a crisis. For instance, we're going to use an example to see some numbers. They owe you 10 million in housing, and your patrimony can face that, always taking into account how many people are going to fail you if there's a crisis. Well, then the Bank of Spain should have prohibited to the banks... not just give advice, do you understand? But you have to take into account that our country is structured in a way... Our way of life is organized around tourism and the brick [*construction work*]. So you have to build houses, you have to build hotels, you have to build communications to get there, right?, airports. You have to build... But you always have to have a criteria to evaluate...if something happens... [Pere, 78. Original quote in Spanish]

Even the usual activity of banks was considered a robbery and self-interested. This is how Marta, a 37-year-old nurse described it.

They're thieves! But they're legal thieves, so they do it in a way that's not illegal, but if you think in the amount of clients they have and the commissions they get from everyone, they win a lot of money in exchange for nothing. Because I use a credit card and they charge me a commission, they charge a commission to the shop owner and on top of that they make me pay for the card. Then you have to find ways not to get charged. Of course I try not to be charged, but they get money when you use the card and on top of that they get a commission. And they have also been in favor of the thieves. I think they've participated in this staging. [Marta, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

An example of the interviewees' suspicion that bankers fooled people into getting excessive mortgages is provided by Josefa, an 86-year-old retired secretary. The quote also implies that the debtors are not the ones to blame.

Why do people have mortgages? There're people that say "look at these people, they wanted to have an apartment outside the city!" Okay, but they've also been very defrauded by the banks. I've met people, I've met people who have bought those shares that have been... preferred stocks, and they didn't know what they were getting. If you buy it and it doesn't turn out well, they say "that happens because you didn't pay attention". That's just ignorance. And they've been offered a house outside the city, funded by the bank, the mortgages, they've been dazzled. [Josefa, 86. Original quote in Catalan]

Finally, Iván, an unemployed young man, provided a testimony that illustrates the emotional response of interviewees against the eviction of people from their houses by police following the non-payment of the mortgage.

Okay, we don't have all the money in the world but maybe we do a collection here, in the Adults School, and I think people would participate to prevent that person from been evicted. And especially people with children. Having babies... I don't know the law but I have a friend who does and if you have babies they can't kick you out, because a baby needs a house. And I've seen people being kicked out with babies! There should be some help for these families. And there is, outside, but not here. There should be a law preventing the eviction of people with babies. Because I've seen parents leaving the

house hand-cuffed and a policeman leaving with the baby. What?! They have a baby! Leave them alone!!! [Iván, 25. Original quote in Spanish]

Interviewees and participants also signaled businessmen and employers as responsible for the economic crisis. According to interviewees, the greed of businessmen leads them to force the public administration to work for their private interests, for instance to allow the construction of buildings in public land. Businessmen were also accused of involvement in corruption and bribery. Furthermore, employers were on many occasions represented as exploiters. However, interviewees also acknowledged that the exploitation of workers depended fundamentally on the logic of the capitalist economic system and that it is very hard for an employer to act differently, for instance to raise wages, as they would soon be out of business.

Interviewees also clearly distinguished the businessmen from large companies from the owners of family companies, suggesting that the last group may actually be of help to workers. In this regards, a retired mechanic insisted on explaining to me how a retired “little bourgeois” had helped his workers’ cooperative company by volunteering to run the financial paperwork for years. Likewise, several neighbors praised small local shops as a form of resistance to impersonal big shopping malls. Neighbors were very proud of the small commerce of the neighborhood, still very scarce, as it makes the neighborhood more amenable. The following quote by a teacher illustrates the neighbors’ feelings towards the businessmen of large companies.

For me, [*the ones to blame for the crisis are*] politicians, but businessmen too, huh? All the people who is... I think politicians because they're the ones that should change the laws, do something so bad management, fiscal frauds, and corruption disappeared, and there should be sentences for these people and nip it in the bud. And all that money, because actually there's money, should get distributed as it should. I'm not saying that there's no money, but that it's very badly distributed. On one side them, but on the other side there're many businessmen and many people who have businesses who handle lots of money, or they do the same and they put it somewhere else, in tax heavens, even in other countries, or keep it all for themselves, for their families. What do you do with so much money? Give it away! There's so many problems... Give it away, give it away, do good deeds for people who are really very bad. There's a lot of poverty here, even if we're more or less okay, there's a lot of poverty. And there's a lot of money that could go to these groups. For me, it's not the political class, it's the business class, which actually handles a lot of money. That money goes I don't know where and what this causes is that people in the lower-middle level have less and less. It's that way. [Emma, 30. Original quote in Catalan]

Interviewees and participants also expressed their intuition that “the ones above” – politicians, bankers and businessmen – together constitute a singular block, and that they help each other to protect their interests to the detriment of workers. Mireia, a 22-year-old college student, explained the links between the upper class groups with a metaphor from college life.

The government, the banks, which believe it or not are much entangled... by friendships. I think it's like the college cafeteria. You go to the terrace maybe at lunch time, okay?, and you always see the same people. And when you've been there four years... there've been situations in which one person met another, and another person met someone else, and this one another one... And you end up knowing half of the terrace, without having a profound relationship but you know who they are and what they study, or if they've played in that band, or if they party at that club... So I imagine at the upper level of the population... I say upper because they are really much higher than I am. Not morally, eh? But it's the people who manage the banks... Multinational companies are more international so I don't know if they have good relationships with the national banks and the central government of Spain... And well, if someone is not here, they may be at the bank, and when they are fed up with the bank, they go back to politics. [Mireia, 22. Original quote in Spanish]

The following quote from a retired mechanic also illustrates the relationship between the different groups of the upper class identified by interviewees.

So there's a complicity between the big capital and politicians, and then they're all involved, all who participate in politics, from the upper levels to the lower ones, even if their participation is small, they're involved... Or leaders of workers' parties... Not the one that's fighting the work council, but for instance the one that it's on the bank control committee. So they have to make a meeting, the account control commission, so maybe they hold the meeting in Istanbul and they go there for a week of holidays and do the meeting. Why

don't they have their meeting here? Because they're involved... There's also been people with name and surname who've been involved with black cards and all that. This [*the crisis*] is mainly created by Imperialism, the national bourgeoisie – not the small bourgeoisie because they have also been affected -, and the direct implication of the political parties. [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

Solidarity and the pride of the poor

A final aspect of the class analysis of the interviewees refers to workers' solidarity and to the consideration of the "needy". Despite of the fact that they recognized their disadvantaged position in the class structure, many interviewees and participants manifested the belief that there is no shame associated with being poor or unemployed and that the people who find themselves in these positions are not to blame for their situation. Instead, the neighbors of La Verneda – Sant Martí blamed the economic system or the class structure, as well as actors such as employers and the unemployment officers.

In contrast to previous instances, the interviewees in this case did not rely on the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood to challenge the dominant economic discourses, but relied, instead, upon their own experience or on that of a friend or of a family member. Interviewees gave extensive details regarding their negative working and living conditions and their dependence on a wage, and emphasized how hard it is for a worker, even for a qualified worker, to find a job in the midst of an economic crisis. They also protested that many times workers are fired against labor laws. In fact, many interviewees had required union assistance at some point.

This is how Emma, a 30-year-old teacher, explained the situation. Emma actively challenges a discourse that caught strength in Europe in the last two decades that presents young people from southern Europe as neither studying nor working, “nini” (NEET in English). According to this stereotype, young people in countries like Spain and Italy abuse their parents’ goodwill and stay in their homes for years with no interest for education or the labor market⁴⁵. This discourse has been intensively challenged by southern European researchers (Instituto de la Juventud de España 2011). However, Emma relied on her own observations to exculpate the unemployed population and to place the blame on “the system” and “the functioning of society”.

I think unemployment is more due to the functioning of society. Because despite of what they now tell about the “ninis” and all that, we’ve also been told for many years that we have to educate ourselves because education is increasingly important when looking for a job, and we have people who are unemployed or working as a cashier and they have two degrees and a master’s degree. Now there’re actually many people who don’t find a job because they’re overeducated. You say: “how can this be?” I won’t take it, I mean, the blame is not on people for being uneducated, the blame is on the system. For whatever reason, because the small and medium companies have had to close,

⁴⁵ For a couple of examples of these stereotypes see: Govan, Fiona. 2012. “Spain's Lost Generation: Youth Unemployment Surges above 50 per Cent,” *The Telegraph*, January 27. Retrieved May 2017 (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/spain/9044897/Spains-lost-generation-youth-unemployment-surges-above-50-per-cent.html>); *The Guardian*. “The 'Ninis': No School, No Job and No More Bank of Mum and Dad?”, June 6, 2016. Retrieved May 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2016/jun/06/spain-ninis-no-school-job-bank-mum-dad>)

because they have to lay off workers, they have to cut-back, and then they fire people because there's no other option. And if they don't fire people, they cut the wages! Then, in my opinion, it's the system what pushes and provokes this to happen. It's not that the people are not educated, because there's a lot of people who may not have a title but have many years of experience, and if you pay attention to job offers, they do ask for the experience. I think that maybe it's easier to hire a worker with experience and then train him or her in the company. Maybe the person can say: "Look, I know that I have to improve my training but I do have experience on this". I think that it's easier to hire a person with experience and that he or she gets some training, than getting someone with an education and no experience. It's what I'm seeing, eh? I'm very sure that the fault is on the system. [Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

Some of the testimonies of the interviewees were based on their own experience or on that of family members and were, thus, very emotional. In the following quote, Gloria, a 61-year-old unemployed woman, explains her experience with the unemployment office during four years of unemployment. This experience led Gloria to believe that the government is to blame for the situation of unemployment of the country, as well as for the alleged gap between workers' qualifications and the training required by the labor market.

My experience is that the unemployment offices are terrible. I mean, they don't offer training courses, they don't look after their clients... Their behavior... You go in there and you feel like a criminal. Furthermore, it's

really like a war because they don't help you at all, right?, they just look into whether you're lacking any condition so they can cancel your subsidy. Instead of training you or trying to make things easier for you, nothing. I've been four years, four years and nothing... Not just me, with the other people as well. Any paperwork that I have to do, I do it in the unemployment office even if I could do it on the internet, and they really don't help you, there's no kindness. And the behavior is sometimes quite denigrating. But not just with me, eh?, with the people, right? I mean, I've seen people asking for courses, almost begging for courses and being treated like: "Listen, there's nothing. Look over the internet and you'll see when they open again". How can you treat a young person who's asking for courses, who's asking for training, this way? At least have a little... In my opinion, it's the responsibility of the government.

[Gloria, 61. Original quote in Catalan]

In regards living and working conditions, interviewees explained, providing details of their own experience, the hardship of depending on a wage and of being at the mercy of the labor market. This experience made them more solidary and understanding with the workers who were unemployed and/or receiving poverty subsidies. Likewise, it helped them challenge liberal meritocratic ideals as well as the idea of personal responsibility. In the following quote, Andreu, a 67-year-old retired mechanic, explained his adult life as a constant search for a job in a situation of general job insecurity.

How has the crisis affected us? Since we got married we've always been waiting for the wage. I've closed some companies, they closed! I left, they

downsized, or I saw that they were going...and I changed. Constantly, it's being like a general trend in our married life. She's been unemployed, I've been unemployed, constantly, constantly. In my generation, you'll see many people who have been in this situation. I was a mechanic for fifteen years, and once the guy who interviewed me said: "We're not hiring you", he was from Madrid, "Oh, why?", "Because your curriculum shows that wherever you go, the business closes!" In fact, he was fired. The [name of company] closed and he lost his job. And then we were bought by [name of company] and they downsized. So sometimes they would say: "wherever you go, companies close". [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

This quote illustrates that the working conditions of the neighbors of La Verneda – Sant Martí were already sub-optimal before the economic crisis, however job insecurity has increased and this has had a toll in workers' morale. Alberto, a locksmith in his forties, explained these changes.

We used to be more or less like this, right?, maybe a little bit better, but we didn't have the pressure of not knowing what was going to happen the next day. And now we have the crisis much closer. We have so many warnings... We all have someone who's become unemployed, someone who can't pay the mortgage, someone who's been kicked out of their home. In the workplace, this pressure multiplies. You feel much more pressured, you have much more fear, and it's worse. It really affects your quality of life. [Alberto, 40s. Original quote in Spanish]

The experience of some interviewees also includes the feeling of being exploited, as shown in previous chapters. In fact, some interviewees and participants had required union assistance due to the abuses of the management. All of these interviewees reported having won the case but still reported having to have gone through very hard economic situations. A few interviewees become involved in unionism after their first experience with labor conflict. This was the case of Núria, 57, who was hired with an abusive contract taking advantage of the isolated character of her job.

I started in a situation of job insecurity and I couldn't understand why. It was a very specific situation of some irregularities in the contract. We were fifty people around Catalonia with these contracts. They made me this contract. And we were isolated. And then at that moment I become aware; I said that that couldn't be, and I started to organize, to connect all the people at the regional level, and from there we built, we negotiated, we organized the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement. And from there we organized the improvement of... I mean the legalization of our situation. The link [*with the union*] was totally instrumental, to solve our situation. [Núria, 57. Original quote in Catalan]

Núria went on to join one of the main labor unions and she even had a paying job in the union for some years. At the time of the interview, Núria reported having moved away from unionism as she had developed a critical attitude towards the biggest unions and considered them not to be dedicated enough to the goal of social change. A similar case of lack of labor regulation was recounted by Héctor, 43, who,

in his youth, contacted several labor unions in order to achieve a collective bargaining agreement for himself and his co-workers.

I had a time of daily contracts, of daily settlements, because the contract would finish and they would hire me again, in a call center. I spent many years answering a phone. And then I switched to another field and to another company and they had contracts without collective bargaining agreement and with unregulated working conditions. [...] For example, just an example, I started working in September and they told us that we had to work on the afternoon of December 25th. So we said: “Ok, we want to know the work calendar so we can know which days are holidays and which are not”. And they told us that, if we wanted the work calendar, they would show us the door. Just a work calendar, eh?! So then I started getting organized because I come from my father’s labor union tradition. I went to see people from the Workers’ Commissions, people from the CGT who are more anarchists, to see whether they could help us. In the end we got organized and, in a year, we called for a big strike and at least we achieved a collective bargaining agreement, a very pathetic one because we would make half or less of what other workers were making for the same work. But at least you had something on paper to refer to and they couldn’t order you whatever they pleased.

[Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

Héctor finally found a stable job in a big company. At the time of the interview, he was participating in a perseverant independent labor union as he considered that the biggest labor unions were inactive and conservative. In the cases

of Núria and Héctor, we see workers who become conscious of their negative situation in the labor market and of the fact that they, as workers, could be easily abused by the management. These workers, then, who engage in trade unions and organized protests to improve their situation and increase the bargaining power of workers within the company were, in this case, workers who experienced work related abuse.

In other cases, interviewees found themselves abused by the management and, feeling vulnerable and disoriented, went to a labor union for help. This was the case of Antonio, who required labor assistance as he was fired while on a sick leave. This more punctual intervention and more instrumental engagement with the unions is found in the cases where the interviewees thought that the labor regulation laws had been broken.

I contacted the union following a problem that I had in the company where I was working. I was time off sick, I wasn't feeling that well, and I don't know whether there was a pick in production and it was indispensable that we all were there... They couldn't afford to have me and they fired me in the middle of my sick leave. This is not allowed by law so I went to the Workers' Commissions, I sort of joined it or I paid a lawyer on commission, and we went to the Labor Court. We had a trial and I won because that wasn't allowed by law and... that was my only contact with the union. [Antonio, 39. Original quote in Spanish]

Antonio's field of work was significantly affected by the economic crisis and, at the time of the interview, Antonio had been unemployed for almost ten years. This

situation eventually isolated him from his friends and, when I interviewed him, he only had regular contact with his family. Antonio expressed his interest in the idea of a universal basic income that would allow all citizens to live with dignity even when they did not have a job.

The working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí respond to these situations of insecurity and of hard working and living conditions with solidarity. Interviewees preferred “*solidaridad*”/“*solidarity*” [solidarity], described by them as help among equals, to “*caridad*”/ “*caritat*”, which was considered top-down help and implies the humiliation of that who receives it. This topic is discussed in detail in Chapter 4. However, as a reminder, it is useful to consider the following quote by David, a 59-year-old custodian.

I'm not okay with charity, it doesn't seem decent. I'm for solidarity, not charity. I think that what distinguishes them is the way of living. I think charity is a way of cleaning one's consciousness. When you go into the subway and you see someone begging, and he's missing the arms and so on, I think it's very compassionate, right?, but you don't solve anything. I think maybe that person, if he has friends and they're able to get him some sort of job or a warm meal, if he's a neighbor or a family member... I don't believe in charity. [David, 59. Original quote in Spanish]

Another peculiarity of the interviewees' discourses regarding the unemployed and the poor is their distinction between deserving and undeserving individuals; that is between individuals who should legitimately receive help from the state, charities, and non-governmental organizations, and individuals who should not. As stated

above, the interviewees of La Verneda - Sant Martí specify that there is no shame associated with being poor or unemployed as the people in these situations are not to blame for them. We have also explained before that the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood is very pro-workers and places the blame for poverty and unemployment on the upper classes. In this context, the interviewees suggested that workers who are willing to work but cannot find a job as well as those who work but not make enough money to support their families should receive governmental help to ease their situation and help them find a job. This temporary aid, in the form of unemployment benefits or even of a guaranteed minimum income, is considered a right and is supported by the interviewees.

This position towards welfare benefits does not come from a top-down process in the Spanish social democracy, as it often happens in other countries, but it comes from a process of affirmation of workers values and workers' rights. As we have seen in previous chapters, the welfare state and all welfare services and benefits are considered to be obtained as the social conquests of workers, and some of the elder neighbors even cite their direct involvement in the struggle to achieve them. Furthermore, neighbors felt that they had already paid for these services through taxes and that "the ones above" should use the money to provide for the citizenry instead of sending it to tax havens.

In fact, although neighbors quickly suggested that charity involves a humiliation of the person who receives it, they could not understand why a deserving worker would feel ashamed for receiving help when needed. This is how Emma, a 30-year-old teacher, explained it.

If you really need it, why wouldn't you receive the aid? It is what it is. And that doesn't mean that you haven't worked all your life but that now, occasionally, because you lost your job, your situation has changed and you can't move ahead alone. So what? Aren't you going to be respected because you have to ask for this aid? Are you going to be less? Well no, you're going to be the same person, it's alright. [Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

In a similar way, Elena, 73, was horrified at the idea of leaving families in need without welfare benefits. Elena felt solidary in regards to these families because her own family had been tight on money in her youth.

Noo! I find it very unfair that they don't receive anything. There're people who have two or three children, how does the family make it? And you know that now there has been the problem of fuel poverty. They have to pay all that and that costs money, it's become very expensive! In a few years it has gone up two, four, five, maybe ten times of what we were paying before, to give an example. I mean, we weren't okay. When we got married my husband wasn't making much; I didn't work; I had four children, but all those services were so minimal, so cheap, that we could pay them and we could eat, but that's no longer possible. And on top of that the Spanish government has refused to help people against fuel poverty. Then they leave these people totally unprotected. This is a crime, a crime. [...] What would they do, not give them anything? No, when someone just can't go on, they have to be aided. When that person finds a job then you control it. In my opinion, we lack control. It's not so much about giving welfare benefits but about giving them while they are

needed. When people have found a job, then you can remove the aid. That's how I think it should be, right?, my opinion. [Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

The recipients of aids were even referred to with a special respect. In a quote that has also been used in Chapter four, Lucía, a 38-year-old teacher, admired the people who help their neighbors even when they are in a tough situation themselves.

In this neighborhood, the people, in spite of having difficulties, are solidary people. If you pay attention when there is a food collection, you see it full. And you see people who have had to get food from neighbors, and you know they have difficulties because you observe them, maybe you coincide somewhere, grocery shopping... And they are contributing their bit. [Lucía, 38. Original quote in Spanish]

The present research includes interviews with two past recipients of the Guaranteed Minimum Income, a means tested economic aid aimed at reducing poverty consisting of a pay of 400 to 500 euros per month. The amount provided changes every year. In 2011, the base payment was of 423.70 euros per family, but families could get additional aid for each additional member and for particular characteristics of the family, such as being a single parent household, having disabled minors, or things of that nature. Furthermore, some of the oldest interviewees had lived or are still living in public housing.

None of these interviewees had experienced any shame nor had they been discriminated against for having received welfare benefits. However, it must be

pointed out that the study only interviewed working-class people from La Verneda – Sant Martí and that, as seen in previous sections, some people from other better-off parts of the city may have prejudices towards the inhabitants of (some of the areas of) the neighborhood.

One of the interviewees who had been recipient of the Guaranteed Minimum Income was Juan, a 64-year-old pre-retired construction worker. In a welfare state that privileges universal services and benefits on the one hand, and a contributory and compulsory model, on the other hand, means tested monetary aid could potentially lead to a shaming of the poor. However, Juan fits the stereotype of the deserving worker. We will see further down that the treatment of Romanies and immigrants who use welfare services is completely different.

Juan had worked as a construction worker since his youth and considered himself a good worker. Then, in 1992, in the eve of the Barcelona's Olympic Games, he lost his job due to an economic crisis and found himself without means to support his three children. His wife had lost her job as well and they were, therefore, also having difficulty making the payments on the mortgage installments on their home. Juan remembered those times with bitterness and believed that this life experience changed him. As an unemployed worker with young children in a family with no income, Juan received the Guaranteed Minimum Income. He also had to rely on his siblings to make it through. After a bit more than a year in that situation, Juan found a job and never required welfare benefits again. Juan based his opinions on welfare benefits and the crisis on his own experience.

I had a mortgage and I lost my job. I had to ask for the Guaranteed Minimum Income and they gave it to me because my children were little. I had to do

some courses... We lived with that and then my siblings helped me pay the mortgage installments on the house. This was in 1992, a bad time. My daughter was nine and my sons were little. So, when I talk about this, I know what I'm talking about. [Juan, 64. Original quote in Spanish]

The crisis that affected Juan was not the recent crisis of 2008 but that of the 1990s, which he describes as very bad.

Maybe there's more unemployed people now, but I still think that that was worst because companies would actually close. You would leave on Friday and on Monday it was closed. Not now, now they do regulations and there're people who are fired but the company goes on. Then companies would close and everybody would lose their jobs. Now they fire you... everything is more controlled. All crises are bad and that one hit me, it hit me with my children still small. July 7th, 1992, and on the 15th the Olympic Games started. Man, please! I will never forget that! In Barcelona! [Juan, 64. Original quote in Spanish]

Juan appreciated the guaranteed minimum income very much as he believed that it is essential to help families in need. As he put it: "*The Guaranteed Minimum Incomes is okay because, unfortunately, there're families who have nothing.*" Although he did not think himself any lesser for receiving this aid, Juan acknowledged that there is a certain stigma attached to the unemployed.

A person who is unemployed can very hardly get a job unless he knows someone because people think: “He’s unemployed”. But they don’t think that the company has downsized or closed, they just think: “Bad worker”. [Juan, 64. Original quote in Spanish]

Juan had very strong opinions about the underserving poor who receive welfare benefits, namely Romanies and immigrants. In his world view, the undeserving will only be considered for assistance after the deserving workers.

Another interviewee who benefited from the guaranteed minimum income and who was considered a deserving worker is Paula, 61. Paula was born in a humble family and became homeless in her youth. She reported not remembering her late twenties and thirties and having trouble explaining what was going on in the country or even in her neighborhood at that time. Paula received a guaranteed minimum income for a while as well as charity aid. She also counted upon having assistance from many participants of a neighborhood organization who helped her get an apartment and a job. Paula has been working as an informal caregiver ever since. Her pay is minimum and her home and clothes need improvement but she has not needed the guaranteed minimum income for a long while (about 17 years). Although Paula could not be portrayed as the traditional worker, the neighbors felt solidary towards her and considered her deserving of state help and even of their own help. In fact, she reported not having felt any shame deriving from her reception of state aid.

I don’t think so, at least it didn’t affect me. Man! There may be some opportunists, right?, but well, no, in general I don’t think so. Let’s see... What you can’t do is leaving people without a pay just because there’re a few

opportunists. We can't do that, the pay has to be given! What they have to do is avoiding opportunists, I mean, controlling it more...but the pay has to be given! [Paula, 61. Original quote in Spanish]

However, Paula acknowledged that some "rich people" may not want their money to go to the more destitute. She considered that she had right to this aid as she herself had paid for it in advance in the form of taxes and believed that rich people attack the poor and the programs that target the poor as a way of hiding their own involvement in the downfall of the economy.

The rich! The rich! This way they do nothing: "it's all your fault". Me guilty? Come on, what the fuck! [...] Yes, they blame the poor, yes. "Oh! I don't want my taxes to go to these people!" Yes. This kills me; it makes me sick; I don't like it. Sincerely, I mean, I want my taxes to go to help people. Man! And also for the country, you know? What I don't like is them going to weapons, what I don't like is them going to..., I don't know, bad things, but for these aids? Yes! [Paula, 61. Original quote in Spanish]

Furthermore, Paula was convinced that unemployed people should not be blamed for their situation because it is actually "the system" that puts them in this position.

It's not the people's fault. I think that unemployment is due to the way the system is put together. Let's see, if you don't have more education, it's because the system is badly mounted. [Paula, 61. Original quote in Spanish]

This lack of shaming of the poor and the unemployed, and even of the people who receive means-tested, monetary aid in La Verneda – Sant Martí contrasts with the results of other studies on the shaming of the poor. Gubrium, Pellissery, and Lødemel (2014) point out that poverty produces a profound feeling of shame and they prove, with data from a wide variety of countries, that anti-poverty programs can only be effective if they take into account the psychological toll of poverty. Their research includes countries as different as Uganda, South Korea, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. Esping-Andersen (1999) identified different types of welfare regimes in Europe with different orientations towards welfare. Thus, while liberal countries such as the United Kingdom emphasize individual responsibility and focus their help in the most deprived citizens, economic aid for the needed in Scandinavian nations and statist countries generates less shame.

In this regards, it must be pointed out that La Verneda – Sant Martí is a traditional working-class neighborhood and that there are poorer neighborhoods in the city with a higher proportion of recipients of the guaranteed minimum income. The difference between La Verneda – Sant Martí and these poorer neighborhoods is that, in La Verneda, most workers have a legal, regulated job with a contract, whereas in other neighbors there is a higher proportion of population with unregulated and even illegal “jobs”. Living in a neighborhood with people of their own social class who consider them as equals and as worth of solidarity, and which also has a clear pro-worker character, may shield the poorest members of the community from shame. In this regard, it should be noted that when all the community is in a similar economic situation, the feeling of shame associated with poverty is less intense than when a family is poor in a somehow better-off neighborhood (Putnam 2015).

Likewise, and as shown in Chapter 5, most of the elderly population of La Verneda – Sant Martí had experienced an improvement in their living conditions and in their acquisitive power – they moved from being poor to being workers – and they had been able to provide their children with a much higher standard of living than they had had when younger. This process of improvement provides a feeling of satisfaction and strength of character (Sennett 2000). Likewise, the children, although affected by the economic crisis and with little prospects for the future, were conscious of having prospered in comparison to their parents.

Solidarity in La Verneda – Sant Martí is defined in terms of class and race. We have seen in previous chapters that the neighbors of La Verneda – Sant Martí wish for a more egalitarian society and for the improvement of the working and living conditions of the population. However, when paying close attention to their discourse, it becomes apparent that their wishes and plans for the future do not refer to the population as a whole but to “the workers” of their neighborhood and other similar neighborhoods.

As we have seen in previous sections, the interviewees explicitly exclude the upper and middle classes from their concerns and solidarity, as they are seen as idle and abusive. In fact, while doing participant observation in an organization of the neighborhood of a political and economic character, the researcher had the occasion of verifying the solidarity of the group that the neighbors considered their own, and for whose improvement they strive. A numerous group of neighbors from different ages were participating in a popular lunch and discussing who they were working for. After some discussion, they reached the agreement that they work as “workers” for the benefit of workers, because saying that they identify as “everybody” or “the

population” would just be “insincere populism”. Then, they went on to criticize left wing politicians and new political parties that do this.

Also excluded from this solidarity are some specific groups of workers and poor: the Roma people and the poor immigrant population. The fact of belonging to a different “ethnicity” - the way interviewees call racial and cultural differences – already sets these groups apart from the workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí in their minds. We have seen in Chapter 4 that, in fact, some of the first actions of the neighborhood organizations were to mobilize against the Romani population of the shanty town. Racism has not diminished in the neighborhood and the researcher witnessed open racist commentaries and observations both in the interviewees and while doing participant observation.

In fact, ten out of thirty interviewees made openly racist comments and another nine interviewees reported having observed racist behaviors and comments on others. These two collectives, Romanies and immigrants, constitute the population considered not deserving of state aid. The following quote by Iván illustrates this point. At the time of the interview, Iván was twenty five years old and was neither working nor studying. Iván reproduced the complaints that he would address to the social workers who administer the Guaranteed Minimum Income. His quote exemplifies the perception of immigrants as less deserving than Spaniards.

I'm for the guaranteed minimum income but I think it's wrong to give it to the foreigners who have just come and not give it to help those who are already here. I mean, you just give all possible aids to people who come from abroad, foreigners, and what about us? We got here before, we were here before. Why would they help...? Okay, very well, help must be provided, we live in a

united world, very well, but help Spaniards too, right? No, they bring a document saying that they're a large family and that's it, you help them. Me, my mom, my little cousin, and you don't help me. Excuse me! Give me the aid and don't ask me for so many papers! You ask foreigners for two papers and me for eighty! I mean, come on! [Iván, 25. Original quote in Spanish]

Immigrants and Romanies were also perceived as abusing the welfare state services. This quote illustrates the power of rumors as well as the fact that Romanies and immigrants are considered in the same “undeserving” pack.

Immigrants should be included [*in the welfare state*], of course, whether they pay or not. Well, they should be included but, for what I've heard, they're very demanding too. I mean they get to a line and they immediately want to be the first ones! That's what I've heard, eh? I haven't really lived it myself, but people say it... Well, I have had nurses, well not in the past, I do have nurses and they talk about this. There's one who has just retired and she said: “Careful! If you're looking after a gypsy he better not die during your shift, eh?” She meant to say that the tribe gets... [Jordi, 72. Original quote in Catalan]

Juan, the recipient of state aid from the quotes above also suspected Romanies of receiving too many welfare benefits.

What can't be is that my wife was told that a gypsy, just for being a gypsy, gets an aid after eighteen. This is not legal! That must be finished! They now complain because before there used to be a lot of money for them and now it

has to be distributed more. But they didn't have a right to it either! If you don't work, you don't have right to anything. [Juan, 64. Original quote in Spanish]

We have seen above that Juan identified himself as a deserving recipient of state help. He suggested that he was a worker who needed help in a specific moment of his life for reasons that escaped his control, but that the situation of Romanies is different because they never work. Believing that the “culture of gypsies” prevents them from working and from being honest and having a legal lifestyle is one of the most recurrent racist positions among interviewees and participants, as shown above. As for immigrants, they were seeing as stealing the jobs of Spanish workers as illustrated by the following quote of Judith, 42.

I don't know whether we're lazier [*than the people from other European countries*], but we're more idiots because we let in too much garbage and of course... Healthcare, they use it, they won't pay for it. And instead of saying: “Just as you've come here, go back to your country”, we give them clothes, lodging, everything, everything. [...] It's very sad that you have to leave because you don't have a job and that your job gets done by a foreigner. It's very sad. It's very sad to see that your job is being done, and it's being badly done, by one from abroad. But as companies get money from the government for having people from abroad... You only have to pay attention... You go to any cleaning company and you'll see two Spaniards and five immigrants. In any shop, most of them immigrants, eh? And the companies get money for

having immigrants. Man! They don't get money for having a Spaniard.

[Judith, 42. Original quote in Catalan]

Immigrants' entrepreneurship was also regarded with distrust. For instance, Laia, 35, wondered where immigrants get the money for their businesses start-ups. She also lamented the disappearance of traditional stores instead of the new immigrant-owned stores.

There're many people who don't trust the Chinese community, for instance. It's like they're going to invade us, right? But of course, these people arrive break even and they buy establishments, they buy bars, they buy buildings of 4,000 square meters! Of course, this doesn't make me racist. It's not a matter of racism, it's a matter of saying: how do they do it? Why can they do it and I can't? Why can they buy an apartment and buy and establishment and I can't? Then, this generates a bit of mistrust. And here in the neighborhood, like in any other neighborhood, this happens to. You walk around and: "Damn! This bar, is it already Chinese?!" Why does the notions store that has always been here close, and the Pakistani store that's next to it, which has brown bananas from three weeks ago, doesn't? How? I don't get it. How can it be that a super cool establishment that there was here, very modern, of cakes or something... I didn't go in because I didn't have the occasion but it was cute. Why does this store close and not the Chinese place next to it that stinks like a toilet? I really don't get it. I don't understand it. Then this creates mistrust. Well, not towards them; I don't have anything against them. [Laia, 35. Original quote in Catalan]

However, and besides all the racist and xenophobic concerns illustrated above, immigrants and Romanians were depicted as weak and powerless and were not expected to have any control over the functioning of the economy. Claims regarding the economy and the improvement of workers' living and working conditions were directed to "the ones above", the middle and upper classes.

A final consideration in regard to the perception of deserving and undeserving individuals, and the importance of work refers to a seemingly paradox. On the one hand, interviewees praised workers' hard work and workers' solidarity, and on the other hand, they suggested that there is a "cheating culture" in Spain for which we admire those who achieve power, wealth, and/or recognition without having to work for them. Regarding the first part of the paradox, the admiration of hard work and solidarity, interviewees heavily criticized the people who evade taxes as unsupportive and even as unpatriotic. Special emphasis was put on a disparagement for the practice of paying for services and goods "under the counter" to avoid taxes. All interviewees pronounced themselves in this topic as the effects of the economic crisis had made evading taxes more appealing. This is how David, a 59-year-old custodian, criticized small tax evasion.

I don't think that in general the neighborhood is responsible for the crisis nor for part of the crisis. But we are a very complicated country in the sense that we are not patriotic. Sometimes I say it as a joke but it's true, in countries like Germany, England, or even France, the worker that makes an improvement in your home does not even consider asking whether you want to pay under the counter because, if he asks that, you'll probably call police to tell them he is a criminal. We're a country of pirates; we're a country where people love to

cheat in every sense, thus I think we're all quite guilty. There're four million unemployed people in Spain, and we've always had a mean of two millions. And these two millions have always been able to live on clandestine work, on evading taxes... I think that we need a more patriotic culture because we have taxes so people live better and have more services. [David, 59. Original quote in Spanish]

This quote lead us to the second part of the paradox, that is, the praise of those who achieve wealth or other benefits without having to work for it. Interviewees and participants referred to “*una cultura de si sale gratis mejor*” [a culture of if it's free all the best], of “*trapicheos*” [scheming], “*cachondeo*” [partying], “*picaresca*” [guile or wiliness], and of “*ser espavilat*” [being smart]. Spain was also described as “*un país de piratas*” [a country of pirates]. The people who participate of this lifestyle were called “*listillo*” [smarty-pants], “*caradura*” [shameless], “*jeta*” [who has a lot of nerve], “*pillo*” [rascal], “*espavilat*” [smart, sharp], and “*picar*” [swindler], among others. Interviewees also cited popular sayings that refer to this culture: “*quien no corre vuela*” [he who hesitates is lost] and “*tonto el último*” [last one in is a rotten egg].

The idea that Spain has a “cheating culture” is part of the dominant economic discourses and has been used to explain the situation that resulted in a financial crisis in the south of Europe. The suspicion of the south as being less hard working and less efficient than the north (and continental Europe), derived from the tension of integrating countries with very different economies in one common market, is a constant source of discussion in the European Union. The need of some southern European countries for loans to recover from the 2008 financial and economic crisis,

as well as the irregularities in the control of public debt in some of these countries, have increased these tensions.

In this discourse, southern European countries are seen as endangering the economic level and the life standards of the entire European Union (Talani 2015; Van Hecke 2017). In fact, these countries, which include Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece are sometimes derogatorily called PIGS, playing with the acronym formed by the first letters of these countries. Sometimes an extra “I” is included to refer to Ireland, another of the poorest countries of the union (Brazys and Hardiman 2015; Talani 2015).⁴⁶

The interviewees of La Verneda – Sant Martí reproduced this aspect of the dominant economic discourses, as we have seen, above, in David’s quote. According to interviewees, Spaniards, due to their culture, try to benefit from other people or from the state and to obtain free products and services, even if this implies engaging in a behavior that is morally wrong such as lying or leaving others without the possibility of receiving those benefits. This is how Laia, a 35-year-old social worker, explained it.

Here it’s like “*quien no corre vuela*” [he who hesitates is lost], “*tonto el último*” [last one in is a rotten egg]. This is how this works. That they say they’re going to give rental assistance for young people but it’s only until 25, it doesn’t matter, I say I’m 25, I’m 35 but I say I’m 25. I mean... It’s cultural and I don’t think we’re gonna get rid of it in one, two, three, nor four generations. [...] Last one in is a rotten egg. If you do it, I do it even more.

⁴⁶ Newly incorporated eastern European countries are not considered.

Can I get in the subway without paying? In Germany they don't even have barriers in the subway! It's cultural. [Laia, 35. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, Maria, a 55-year-old educational psychologist, emphasized the existence of such a culture.

There are people who are receiving unemployment benefits and they also get money under the counter. Then of course this is part of the inherited culture. The culture of being "*espavilat*" [smart, sharp], right? If you declare everything, you're a fool. What do we have to do to weasel out of this, right? If you go to buy something and they don't charge you the taxes, well better. Why are you fool asking for the bill?! [Laughter] I mean, it's like a generalized culture in which that who declares less or who doesn't ask for a bill, right?, and that who does some small under the counter jobs is super normal and cool. What I mean to say is that this is going to take time to change. [Marta, 55. Original quote in Catalan]

This paradox of valuing hard work and workers' solidarity and, at the same time, supposedly valuing the people who do not work for some services or resources and evade taxes illustrates the internalization by the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí of some of the aspects of the dominant economic discourses, more particularly of some of the prejudices against Spaniards. This aspect of the dominant economic discourses was particularly important for the neighbors due to the country's debt to the European institutions and also because many young people of the neighborhood had left and were leaving to work in other countries of Europe.

All the elements cited above constitute the interviewees' class analysis. In previous chapters, we have seen that the organizations of the neighborhood and the neighborhood itself are important spaces for the learning of and discussion about social, economic, and political issues. Traditional workers' organizations such as unions, workers' parties, and neighborhood organizations stand out as a key space for the socialization of workers regarding economic issues, and this brings us to the next section.

6.3 Unions, Parties, and Neighborhood Organizations as Spaces of Socialization

Chapter 4 presented an in-depth analysis of the socialization of the working-class people of La Verneda - Sant Martí into the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood. The data analysis also shows that the traditional organizations of the labor movement, such as the labor union and the workers' party, and also the neighborhood organization, constitute a privileged space for the socialization of workers into the understanding of economic and social issues.

The interviewees who had been actively involved in unions, parties or neighborhood organizations were more confident when talking about the economy and provided more complete explanations. That is, they cited more social actors and knew how these actors were linked and what they did, and they could reflect about the economy at different geographical levels. The socializing role of traditional workers' organizations will be illustrated in this section comparing quotes from interviewees belonging to three different groups. The first group is constituted by three interviewees who had participated in organizations of a communist character: Andreu, Miguel, and José. The second group includes three interviewees who had participated in other organizations: Maria, Montserrat, and Héctor. Finally, the third group

consists of three interviewees who had not participated in economic/social organizations: Alberto, Laia, and Emma.

The discourses of all the interviewees are very similar and have many common elements that allow us to talk about a “counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood”. The discourses of all interviewees include some common elements. These are, the blame of the financial and economic crisis on the elites and the heavy criticism of these, the defense of the welfare state, a statement of their preference for the regulation of markets, an important dose of indignation in regard to corruption and evictions, and the expression of uncertainty towards the future.

The only main difference in the interviewees’ discourses is that the interviewees who had participated in organizations provided an international explanation of the crisis and blamed economic powers for the situation of the economy, whereas the other interviewees explained the crisis at the national level and blamed national politicians, at the same time that they expected these to improve the economic situation.

The first group of interviewees, constituted by interviewees who had participated in organizations with a communist background, presented the most complex explanations of the economic crisis. Their explanations were mostly situated at the international level and contemplated the financial and economic crisis as the result of the functioning of the capitalist mode of production, as well as of the intentioned actions of “the capitalists” and their organizations in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s.

These interviewees cited a wide variety of actors. Besides national politicians, bankers, and businessmen, they mentioned international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the role of political and economic

powers such as the United States, the European Union, and the past Soviet Union, as well as the role of processes such as globalization and the mechanization of production. These “communist” interviewees blamed national politicians as much as the other interviewees but they suggested that economic powers impose themselves over political powers and, therefore, there is not much national and local politicians can do to overcome the economic crisis besides not stealing public money. The explanations of these interviewees abound on Marxist terminology and explanations and fall in some occasions into economic determinism. The three interviewees of the first group expected the eventual end of capitalism on the hands of the working class as we will see below.

José, a 79-year-old retired construction worker, provided a complex and colorful explanation of the crisis in which he blamed the International Monetary Fund and the United States for organizing the world economy in a way that facilitates the exploitation of workers for the benefit of capitalists. A fragment of his explanation is provided below. Other fragments have been provided as quotes in other sections of this dissertation. José, a natural citizen of the south of Spain, came to La Verneda – Sant Martí in the sixties looking for a job. He participated for many years in a neighborhood organization and in the communist party Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC), and described himself as “leftist” and “communist”. José did not have the chance to go to school in his childhood and did not receive any further education, but he is literate. This is how José understood the economic crisis as well as the recent economic history. The security with which he talks about economic issues and draws connections between different economic and political actors stand out in his quote.

The United States, which want to rule the world, were the ones that used to accuse others, the Soviet Union, of expanding throughout the world, of wanting... this is exactly what they're doing. And the European Union is created, but it's not created by workers but by the International Monetary Fund. Who are the International Monetary Fund? Well fundamentally the rich countries: England, the United States, France... And behind these are, well, the far-right governments, which are all over the world. Then of course, it becomes globalized. What for? To defend its interests. It's curious... The slogan of workers since the International: "Workers of the world, unite!"... So united proletarians are accused of wanting to unite to stand for their interests, and then what does capitalism do? It makes it its own and then it gets organized internationally and all countries become involved. The International Monetary Fund are the United States plus the most powerful capitalist countries of the world. And then there're some that aren't in the International Monetary Fund but are also involved. Of course, and it's been globalized, why? Because capitalism, of course, doesn't let go of its privileges. It does it to protect its privileges, just like workers wanted to organize themselves internationally to stand for their rights. To take that away from workers, capitalism has become organized. And then the economy... Who controls it? The International Monetary Fund. It tells Greece: "you're not leaving the euro, you're going to buy me money at the price that I prefer". And with this you have them caught. And what happens to Spain? Well the same, that we're stuck, just like someone who has a mortgage. You go to the bank and you say: "Excuse me, I don't have money but I need an apartment. Give me a loan to buy an apartment." And he gives you an apartment but he gives it to you at the

50% of what the house costs to you; you accumulate interests; you first pay the interests, not the apartment, and they have you caught. And this is just the same, just as simple, at the international level, where capital, the banks, the bankers, the ones who organize it, are the ones who control the banks of all the world. [...] They're preventing workers from organizing and at the same time they're buying the management of labor unions, as we're saying, so they don't call a protest that puts employers at risk of losing their privileges. No, no, no, no way, they're going to keep them, but not even with that they're happy! They're so savage; they're so savage; capitalism is so savage that what the left is currently asking for is just jobs with a decent wage so everyone can eat, that's what they're asking for. I mean, they're not asking for a revolution! Nevertheless, what's capitalism doing? They accuse them of so many things, of communists, of I don't know what... Why? Because they fear that that can generate a... And what can happen? Well I don't know but there might be another disappointment because if the left governs and they are not tough, what will happen? Well, that there will be another election and people will say: "you see?, they're all the same", which is what talk shows are doing now... The International Monetary Fund is organizing this, they're organizing even our everyday life! Because the talk shows from TV, well many of the guests are paid, they're being paid from the state reserve fund. And people don't know about this! Not only are they being paid, but they're being paid from the reserve fund! What for? To confuse people, to say: "Look, they're all the same", but we're not all the same, hey! [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

Another interviewee of the first group is Miguel, an 85-year-old retired construction worker. Like José, Miguel came to La Verneda – Sant Martí in the 1960s and worked as a construction worker. Miguel did not go to school as a child and learn to read and write in a fascist prison when he was already an adult. Miguel was one of the founding members of one of the largest Spanish labor unions and participated in the PSUC. After the division of this party, he joined the pro-soviet Party of the Communists of Catalonia (PCC). He also participated in a neighborhood organization. At the time of the interview and after having survived a pneumonia, he kept participating in workers' protests with an organization originated in the Indignados Movement. Miguel described himself as “Marxist-Leninist” and as “nothing but left” and stated his attempt to “practice class struggle”. Miguel does not sympathize with the idea of an independent Catalonia but he respects those who want independence.

Miguel's explanation of the economic crisis also shows a lot of security when discussing social and economic issues and the ability to cite many different actors and the relations between them. He understood the crisis as the triumph of neoliberalism and hoped for the mobilization of the working class. In his quote, he emphasizes the international character of the crisis.

The crisis is, of course, internal and external, internal of the country's production and external of what comes from abroad, because not only Spain is in crisis but we can say that the crisis is nowadays global. “Find a solution!” Well, how? If wealth is production, production makes wealth... but there's so much production! Why is it, that wealth is not distributed? But that, that they don't say. [...] This is something I understand and I think it can't be solved by each country because the crisis is not internal, just for the motives and the reasons of one country, but the issue is global. But Europe... I remember an

intelligent man who repeated constantly, in 1990 or so, in an election...he was a leader of United Left [*political party*], who said: “the issue of Maastricht”. And people said: “What is Maastricht?” Maastricht is what we have. Thatcher promoted the issue of globalization and they couldn’t because the working class was more organized and strong. Reagan also had an attempt of globalization but he couldn’t... “But now the issue of Maastricht” – said Anguita [*leader of United Left*] – “is here and there’s globalization.” Thus, the issue of the crisis is not only of the Catalans, the Andalusian, the Galician, the Spaniards, it’s a general crisis and if we don’t find a general solution, if there isn’t a big mobilization... I hoped that there’d be a big mobilization but it doesn’t arrive, it doesn’t arrive... And if there isn’t a big mobilization, the ones that have will take their wealth away as we can see every day that they are doing. [Miguel, 85. Original quote in Spanish]

Despite their preoccupation and their surprise when confronted with the lack of mobilization of the population and disappointment with the worsening of living conditions, the interviewees of the first group thought that the economic situation would necessarily change and that the working class had an essential role in this endeavor. This was the opinion of Andreu, a 67-year-old retired mechanic.

Andreu obtained his secondary education in La Verneda – Sant Martí and later on, when he married, moved to live in the neighborhood. He started a technical college degree but he abandoned it without finishing. During his active life, Andreu worked in ten different garages because the companies kept closing. Regarding political participation, in his youth, Andreu participated in a workers’ cooperative organization from another neighborhood which was important for the neighborhood movement. He was also a member of the labor union Workers’ Commissions and the

PSUC. After the division of the party and after having participated in some others communist parties that stem from it, Andreu withdrew from active participation as he become suspicious of the interests behind the parties. Andreu defined himself as “a worker” and “feminist”. He was also an ardent Catalanist and had great hopes for the independence of Catalonia. In the following quote, Andreu states the importance of the working class as a motor of history. In his quote we can detect a certain historical determinism.

Working people are fundamental as a class because otherwise there's no movement. Take the topic of the independence [*of Catalonia*]. Well there's a process in motion and we're curious to see how far it'll go. There will be a moment in which we'll have to disobey and, from that moment on, I think that the economy becomes annulled. Well when we reach this point, there's only... We would have to stop the country, do a political general strike and stop the country. Only two things can stop it: business owners, and I doubt they would do it, and the labor movement. The labor movement is a fundamental piece of the capitalist system. It's a fundamental piece for all systems. It's what makes the factories work and it's what can stop them. It's fundamental. Besides, history moves through the class struggle. This is it. [Andreu, 67. Original quote in Catalan]

The second group of interviewees, which comprises three interviewees who participated in other, non-communist organizations, presented similar explanations to those of the first group, but gave less emphasis to the capitalist economic system. They also cited fewer actors and the relationships they identified among the different actors are less clear. There is a subtle attempt in the explanations of this group to

distance themselves from Marxism and from the people who would belong to the first group. An example of the second group's explanations is provided by Maria, a 55-year-old educational psychologist.

Well, all economic policies increasingly tend to look for the cheapest economy, with a cheaper labor force, more badly paid, and in some working conditions... And this also generates a chain reaction, right? The products that you end up buying come from far away. They come from paying people really badly. And then the products that are national, even local, which have higher prices so people can live of them, fall. This is also a factor of the crisis.

[Maria, 55. Original quote in Catalan]

The main characteristic of the second group is that, despite their active effort to abandon economic determinism, they stressed the strength of economic powers and their prevalence and imposition over political powers. In contrast with the communist group, which expected an improvement of the economic and social situation of workers in the long run, the second group is characterized by a profound pessimism as they felt that economic powers are so strong and prevalent that not even "the people" can oppose them. In contrast to the first group, they did not refer to the labor movement.

Maria, from the quote above, provided an explanation of the crisis that stresses the power of the economy to shape social life. Maria moved to La Verneda – Sant Martí in the 1990s but had previously participated in a libertarian (anarchist) athenaeum of the neighborhood in her twenties. Later in life, she supported the anarcho-syndicalist labor union General Confederation of Labor (CGT) but she was never a unionist. At the time of the interview, she voted United Left or other left

parties. Maria did not consider herself Spanish but only Catalan. In Maria's quote we can also detect the pessimism about the future that characterizes the second group.

Let's see, I don't believe those who have said that politicians are to blame because there's a machinery and the economy is actually what rules it, okay?, and then this machinery is very perverse and strong and it really swallows you in. This is my perception. Because sometimes you say: "Well, it's those who govern, it's a more neoliberal party or a left party". But there's actually a very strong machinery in the economy. And then the models provided have a lot of support... Let's see, either they fall, like there's a revolution, or we can hardly do this. [...] I have no idea! [*Laughter*] Besides reading the newspaper, listening to the radio... My profession has nothing to do with the economy! I mean... Let's see, I think that policies are conceived at the international level, eh?, and the big powers have agreements among them that have allowed a growth that has often passed over ecologic, environmental, and other issues of a minimal respect for workers. Well, all of this is happening so how do we stop it? It's no longer a politician or a specific set of policies, everything is completely connected and involved. It's like a wheel that's very hard to break. I don't know how to explain it to you well. [...] The economy is something so important that it's what marks life. It's huge! For me it's like the maximum power, eh?, because it's above what we're saying before, it's above policies from one color or another, of intention... I mean, it's like above. Then this machinery is so huge that I don't know... If the same machinery goes on, I don't know where we'll get. [Maria, 55. Original quote in Catalan]

It is important to mention that, while the communist group spoke firmly about the economy, the second group qualified their statements and showed some doubts with expressions such as “I don’t know much about it” or “I have no idea!” They also made clear that their statements were only an opinion with phrases such as “it’s my perception” or “I believe that”. The interviewees of the first group did not use these phrases as they were sure to know how the economy really works, as opposed to the dominant economic discourses.

Another example of the second type of explanation of the economy is provided by Montserrat, a 56-year-old nurse. Montserrat moved to the neighborhood four years before the interview, but she had participated in her youth in the same libertarian athenaeum as Maria. Montserrat, however, moved away from anarchism and, at the time of the interview, considered self-management and direct democracy to be impossible. She identified as “leftist but not radical” and was pro-independence although she also considered herself a bit Spanish. In her quote, Maria criticized the lack of democracy in the economic sphere.

Well, I believe that they have a very short margin. I believe that the economy is not even in the hands of politicians. What is true is that poverty, the crumbs, can be distributed one way or another. Then governments can choose how to distribute the little money they have. Then maybe we could live better with the small money they have... [...] I believe there’s no margin. Eduardo Galeano⁴⁷ said this. He’s a thinker that I really like and he says something like: “Well,

⁴⁷ Eduardo Galeano was a Uruguayan left-wing writer. His most famous books “Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of Pillage of a Continent” and “Memory of Fire” (a trilogy) present the history of Latin America stressing the damage occasioned by the domination and exploration of the people and the land by European empires and the United States.

democracy at the political level is all very well, passable, as far as there isn't a democracy at the economic level, right?" No joke there, eh? I think this is it. They have interests in corporations that have the oil, the weapons, the medicines... everything! The transgenic products! Yes, they're the same. I think that there're a few families that have businesses in four things that are of great importance for humanity: food, weapons, energy... They're a basic pillar! And this is in the hands of a few families... I don't know which... Well, families and something more, right? There's that club Bilderberg, right? I don't know much about it. But it is clear that there isn't much democracy in these fields; this can't be touched. So these people force politicians to legislate so this pro-business way of functioning is not touched; some transactions that don't meet our interests. Then I feel that the margin is very slim. But it's true... The people of the voluntary sector are told when they do demonstrations that misery can be distributed in other ways. But it's true, in the end the only thing to distribute is destitution. I don't think they can achieve more economic nor social justice this way, eh? Only the crumbs. [...] I believe that, at the small scale, you can always do things, more collective things. Or you can always stand shoulder to shoulder and do an exchange of things for free... But this is the micro-economy. The macro I think... As I've told you, it can't even be touched, not even touched. And it doesn't matter who governs, eh?, because it's not politicians who govern I think, and since the economy is at the basis, in the form of budgets, it can... If the economy is not democratic, politics can only appear to be. [...] You know I don't think that economy is democratic, you don't choose it, but you can distribute in a different way. And that's what the town council of Barcelona is doing, I believe, a slightly

different distribution. I don't know when big corporations started, maybe the 1960s or 1970s, I'm not sure, but they become multinational and they work in different places and different areas so no one knows... [Maria, 55. Original quote in Catalan]

Both the communist group and the second group considered the crisis to be the result of the functioning of the current economic system, and of a series of political and economic decisions of the last few decades. The interviewees from these groups presented the crisis as the result of an historical process. One example of this from the second group is the following quote by Héctor, a 43-year-old computer technician.

Héctor is a natural native of La Verneda – Sant Martí and, in his youth, he participated in one of the neighborhood organizations of the area. He had also been involved in several parents' organizations and, at the time of the interview, he participated in a cultural/social organization in the neighborhood and in a small, active labor union. Héctor defined himself as “leftist but not radical”. This self-description was very common among interviewees.

When I was studying back in the 1980s, I used to find very funny... well not funny but I felt like: “OMG! How can the IMF control so much?!” Because then I was in a voluntary organization about Third World issues and you could see how the IMF conditions all the politics to be implemented in Latin America and you could see that the IMF had prepared the policies. The IMF is just the name. Behind it there're some big business powers and the politicians, who are just representative. Actually, what's behind the IMF is the large companies. It may sound like the nineteenth century but this is pure and

simple capitalism. Yes, we're in a moment of rearmament by capitalism and of loss of consciousness by workers. I think that the ones to blame are these large financial, multinational, companies and the large companies that come with them such as the oil companies, Google, the large banking industry, and some strong governments that have given their support. But behind everything we find the economic part. [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

In contrast to the first and second groups, the interviewees of the third group provided much more simple explanations for the economic crisis. In many cases, causal explanations got entangled or substituted by first-hand descriptions of the effects of the crisis. The explanations of this group also contemplate a smaller amount of actors and the relationships among these actors are usually unknown or unclear. However, the main difference between the groups is the territorial scale in which they situate their explanation. Whereas the first and second groups provided a global explanation of the crisis, taking into account the relations between different countries as well as the role of international organizations and multinational companies, for the third group the crisis was essentially national or it affected Spain particularly. Interviewees knew that Spain belongs to the European Union but had trouble explaining how this may/may not affect the country. These interviewees also relied on the nation-state to explain the economy as if productive processes were constrained within the Spanish borders, and they expected national politicians to fix the regional and worldwide economic situation. One example of explanation at the national level is provided by Emma, a 30-year-old teacher.

I think the crisis in Spain is very bad. There's crisis in other countries... Of course, at the European level we have many similar things, but I believe that in

Spain it's exaggeratedly out of control. In contrast, in other countries like Switzerland or Sweden, there're other countries outside the European Union that have a better level of management of the economy and of social issues and everything is better distributed and controlled, and people have much better life standards, the quality of life is much better. I think the crisis is more national. [...] Besides, there's also all that corruption that has been discovered and no one is doing anything about it. I mean, it's something that is allowed and that even we, the people, allow, even if we see that the economy is not being managed in the way it should. The people who occupy political posts should do something and they do nothing. On the contrary, they sponge of the people and on top of that they send the money abroad and they live here in hotels that cost a lot of money per night, with all their bodyguards, going to places they shouldn't go to because they're average citizens just like us. And on top of that people keep voting them. They're allowing these rascals and this bad management to go on. I'm not okay with this. Then, of course, I believe there's an accumulation of badly done, and allowed, things. I don't know how we're going to make it out. In other countries this would just not happen.

[Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

The interviewees of the third group considered that the crisis was mainly the result of the burst of the real estate bubble and of the corruption of the Spanish politicians, bankers, and businessmen. The main actor for this group was not the economic system nor central economic powers, but national political leaders. Likewise politicians were considered as the only ones who could do something to improve the economic situation of the country. Emma, from the quote above, blamed the crisis on the mismanagement of money by both the public administration and the

population. Emma moved to La Verneda – Sant Martí four years before the interview. She considered herself “leftist but not radical” and voted for a green party.

I don't know exactly how it started, but I'm very sure that the money has been very poorly managed. I mean, the banks and the public administration. People got used to live in a level above their possibilities. They asked for many loans, without being able to pay them, being able to pay them only in the very long term. “Listen, I want a second home”. “I want a car”. “I want a motorbike”. “I want that”. And this happened in a moment when banks couldn't really give all the money that the people were asking for. People were no longer able to pay the monthly installments and we reached a moment in which everything fall down. People started to realize that they couldn't live the way they'd done it the previous years. They couldn't pay the apartments either because the real estate prices went up a lot. Many banks also closed. I think that here there was a brutal mismanagement on the part of the public administration and the banks and all that, and then also an excessive lifestyle on the part of the people who, without having an economy that allowed them to live in a certain manner, were attempting to do so, and then all this broke. I think that, in general, this is my conception of the crisis. [Emma, 30. Original quote in Spanish]

Another interviewee from this group, Laia, explained the crisis as a result of real estate speculation and of the corruption of politicians. Laia was a 35-year-old social worker, natural citizen of La Verneda – Sant Martí. She had not participated in any workers' organization. However, she once joined a neighborhood-based protest. Laia is Catalan nationalist and pro-independence and defined herself as “all the way to the left”. This is an extract of Laia's explanation that shows her contempt towards

politicians and her feeling that workers are unprotected as the law is made for the benefit of the elites.

Well I think this must have begun with several focuses. The focus of construction and of real estate speculation. I'm paying eight hundred euros for this apartment and I find it outrageous! And it's even more outrageous that it is allowed by the law. Here this explodes! [...] Then there's the issue of the amount of politicians who live out of politics and it shouldn't be this way. There should be... I'm making this up: if there're five hundred politicians, there should be 10. There's no need of five hundred politicians to rule a country! So the crisis also comes from this. Wages don't raise and businessmen have golden parachutes. The law is always against us, all the time! Then if we invest in our education then... Of course you can't expect to make three times more but you pay to have a good living. And then you find out that the employer doesn't let you and on top of that you're unprotected. It doesn't matter whether you're self-employed or a salaried employee, you're unprotected. I don't think this is a cause of the crisis, I think that the whole thing went on exploding from everywhere. [Laia, 35. Original quote in Catalan]

Another recurrent topic in the interviews of the third group is mortgages. Alberto, a locksmith in his forties, considered mortgages to be at the core of the economic crisis. Alberto grew up in La Verneda – Sant Martí. He dropped out of high school and completed his secondary education as an adult. Alberto considered himself “to the left”. This interviewee struggled to provide an explanation of the crisis and

eventually did so referring to the scarcity suffered by families and to the precariousness of work in Spain.

Let's see, what I feel closer is the issue of mortgages, which has hit very hard. Many people had wages that allowed them to cover the installments and to more or less make ends meet, and their jobs have been failing or their overtime and so on, and now they have problems to make ends meet. So they've stopped paying some things or consuming as much and, well, they've also been affected by taxes... I think this is a part of the crisis, not everything, but it is where it shows, right? Ordinary people only have enough to pay the mortgage installments and their few expenses. And when they lose their stability, they lose their calm. This is the biggest thing. The consequences of this are the taxes, the cut-backs, which have been felt in the healthcare and a little bit everywhere. And then the crisis is also felt very much through job insecurity and in the way companies use workers. Because I'm lucky to have kept my job but there has been more pressure, right? Now they ask for much more; they give you less; they respect you less; they crush you. And this gets you down emotionally, right? [Alberto, 40s. Original quote in Spanish and Catalan]

Most of the interviewees have provided simple, national explanations as those of the third group. The number of interviewees that were able to situate Spain as a participant in an international sphere and to cite a variety of relevant actors as well as their connections was more limited. This ability is associated with the participation in traditional workers' organizations, which acted as socializing agents in regards social

and economic issues. Sometimes the responses of the most able interviewees were quite ideological and unyielding, but allowed them to understand the functioning of the economy. As the case examples provided in this section show, the age of the interviewees who were able to provide complex responses was also quite advanced.

Paradoxically, some of the most confident interviewees when discussing economic issues were elder people who did not have the chance to go to school as children. In contrast, younger interviewees with university degrees and professional jobs had more difficulty explaining the economic situation. This is due to the demobilization of workers' organizations studied in Chapter 5.

In fact, a young interviewee who was participating in a recently new organization with a communist background provided responses similar to those of the elder people from this section in terms of complexity and security. Traditional workers' organizations, although they still inform the discourses of the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí, as shown by the fact that there is a counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood, no longer educate as many workers in the understanding of economic issues as they used to. This has left a void in the education of workers who have scarce opportunities to learn economics or discuss about the economy anywhere else.

Many interviewees and participants expressed difficulty when explaining the economic crisis and the general functioning of the economy. After almost ten years of hard economic times, most interviewees only had a very vague idea of what was going on. It is important to stress that we are not referring to the discussion of abstract economic principles but to an economic situation that has been suffered and experienced by interviewees in their daily lives for almost a decade. The interviews are full of expressions such as “*I don't know, I don't know, I have never thought about*

it” (factory worker, 59), “*Well, I had never considered that*” (social worker, 35) or “*it’s very difficult for me to explain*” (shop assistant, 57).

The researcher found that it was necessary to be supportive and encouraging during the interviews and participant observation in order to get the interviewees and participants to talk about the economy. The neighbors of La Verneda – Sant Martí presented the economy as something complex and difficult to understand. In fact, when the potential participants were first contacted prior to an interview, many initially declared their inability to talk about the economy and specified that there are other people, economists, who do that and not them.

Bourdieu (1984) has suggested in this regard that the resources to produce discourse are in the hands of a few, and that what he calls “common people” (p. 397) silence their opinions because they do not feel that they have the “right to speak” (p. 411) about certain topics, such as economics. Working-class people may feel that they are unable to produce a personal opinion. Bourdieu has also pointed out that indifference many times actually hides the impotence of the workers for their inability to produce an answer. This has led Bourdieu to talk about “status-linked incompetence” (p.417).

After some encouragement, however, interviewees completed lengthy interviews and reflected about the economic crisis from a wide variety of angles. When the interview was over, most interviewees expressed being very happy as they had just found out that they are actually able to talk about the economy.

6.4 Beyond Socialism, the Wish for a More Humane Capitalism

The present section explores the perspectives and wishes that the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí have for the future of the national and the global economy, and expands the analysis of the role of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood as a demobilizing factor initiated in Chapter 5.

Despite the longstanding influence of Marxism in the neighborhood and the general wish for a more egalitarian society, interviewees rejected the idea of socialism and of a central planned economy and expressed their wish for a “more humane” capitalism. This further demonstrates the neighbors’ rejection of the traditional communist positions and rhetoric⁴⁸ and the effect of a pro-business dominant discourse in the neighborhood. These discourses, although not strong enough to become hegemonic in the neighborhood, have succeeded in making other economic discourses that had historically being important in the neighborhood such as socialism, communism and, to a much lesser degree, anarchism fade away.

The interviewees expressed three main criticisms of central planned economies. First, these economies were perceived as being unproductive, inefficient, and generally unable to generate wealth with the same speed and the same amount as capitalism. The following quote by a retired bank clerk illustrates these concerns.

Marx said that capitalism... But pay attention to this. The 1989 sinking of the Soviet Union is an evidence that communism doesn’t work either. Capitalism

⁴⁸ As we have seen in previous chapters, there is a minority of neighbors who consider themselves communist and who wish for a central planned economy as they think that it is not possible to solve the current economic problems within the capitalist economic system. These interviewees, however, represent a minority and most interviewees adopt positions that move away from communism.

is good because it's able to generate wealth. What doesn't work is the distribution of that wealth. [...] I don't believe in communism either because, as it was demonstrated in Russia, in order to distribute something, you first have to create it. If you don't generate wealth, you won't be able to distribute it, you know what I mean? [Pere, 78. Original quote in Spanish]

In turn, Paula, a 61-year-old informal caregiver, demonstrated the lack of productivity of central planned economies by comparing the speed of production of the Soviet Union with that of the United States.

Let's not follow Russia, which exploded in the end. They were so bureaucratic, right? Someone said: "Russia went down because, of course, they were so bureaucratic that, while the United States would make a plane in a very short time, they would go open a file, decide to put a nail here or there... And when they would finish the plane, the United States would have completed many more". [Paula, 61. Original quote in Spanish]

A second criticism referred to the forced uniformity in "communist countries". A few interviewees suggested that communism implies an annulment of individual traits and peculiarities. This is how a 37-year-old nurse explained the "lack of freedom" in Cuba.

Communism no, because we aren't all the same and not all of us... I mean, in communism it doesn't matter whether you like green or not, everyone gets a green T-shirt. [Laughter] I mean, maybe I'm given a fridge – like in Cuba,

right? –, everyone is given a fridge, but maybe I don't want a fridge because I prefer... I mean we aren't all the same. Communism, the model that we've seen, there's not much freedom. What I would love is, being all free, that everybody wanted to be good people. [*Laughter*] [Marta, 37. Original quote in Catalan]

Mireia, a 22-year-old college student, was of the same opinion, as she believed that capitalism offers more “freedom to choose” than communism.

Capitalism gives you a lot of freedom to choose. That's also great. For instance, a friend went to Cuba on her honeymoon and, of course, there she felt that tourists were like in another dimension, in the resorts... She's not one to ignore locals and just enjoy swimming and eating... And then the population of Cuba, she says they're extremely poor and they have to wait in line for food because supermarkets are empty. Then, of course, I prefer capitalism. [Mireia, 22. Original quote in Spanish]

A final commonly stated negative evaluation of central planned economies alluded to their association with dictatorial regimes. As expressed by Paula, the informal caregiver from the quote above: “*Cuba is very well, very well, but it's another dictatorship, so I don't know... The state controlling everything no.*” David, a 59-year-old custodian, was more precise in his criticism and expressed his rejection of extreme-left dictatorships. The existence of these dictatorships led David to think that communist revolutions do not really succeed and that, therefore, capitalism is going to last forever.

The problem is we thought that capitalism wouldn't last forever but it will because, when there've been coups d'état and policy changes, ultra-leftist policies appear: the Chavez system, the Iran system, the China system, the Russia system, Fidel Castro's system in Cuba... They're still dictatorships. I believe that there has to be an equilibrium and this can't be found in any extreme. [David, 59. Original quote in Spanish]

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí fear the increase of social inequalities and the effects that this trend may have on workers. When considering the future of capitalism, many interviewees expressed their desire for a more humane, less harsh capitalism. This new capitalism would be more regulated and would respect the public character of some services, especially healthcare and education. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the interviewees strongly resent the commodification of what they consider essential rights. In front of this looming perspective, Elena, a 73-year-old retired secretary, hoped for the union of people to soften capitalism.

I think that, if the people get started and sum their efforts, capitalism will go... not disappearing, because it doesn't seem to be possible to make it disappear, but getting softer. Everyone says capitalism is savage, and it has been, it has been! They look after their things; they don't care if people are hungry, if people die! [Elena, 73. Original quote in Catalan]

In a similar way, Juan, a pre-retired construction worker, considered the possibility of educating capitalism.

Capitalism, whatever we think, it's going to last forever. It can be called one way or another; the governments of Cuba or China are, nevertheless, capitalist. Barter... Like when I would go to my parents' village and I would see the elder exchanging things. Barter works like this: I give you something and you give me something else. But what are we supposed to exchange in the city if we have nothing?! They can do this in the villages: someone has fruits, the other one vegetables, another ones has meat, eggs, milk... But us, man!, this is capitalism. But we should educate capitalism. We have to educate capitalism. If someone has to make ten, they can't charge fifty. It's that simple. And the prices! There're things that only wealthy people can buy; that makes no sense!

[Juan, 64. Original quote in Spanish]

One main step for the transformation of capitalism suggested by the interviewees is the reduction of social inequalities. This was also considered essential for the overcoming of the economic crisis. As a factory worker put it:

In my opinion, the defense of a fairer society involves leftist positions rather than rightwing positions, without going as far as utopian socialism and those things because nowadays they're unconceivable, right? But in order for it to be fairer, wealth has to be distributed, not poverty. [Isabel, 59. Original quote in Catalan]

Despite the criticisms named above, capitalism, in general, was perceived as desirable or inevitable, and the same happened with social stratification. For the

workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí achieving a society without inequalities was no longer a goal. Literature shows that this is a trend throughout Western Europe, where there is a push towards diminishing social inequalities and palliating the hardest situations but not towards eradicating poverty and inequality, per se. One example of this trend is the Third Way of the United Kingdom’s “New Labour” Party proposed by Anthony Giddens and supported by Tony Blair in the 1990s and early 2000s, which attempted to move British social democracy from its socialist positions to a “radical center”, and actually accepts a high degree of social inequalities (Giddens 1998).

Some historical trends explain this move from the desire of socialism to the wish for a more humane capitalism. First, we must remember that the Spanish Transition implied a series of stated and unstated pacts, including giving up the struggle for a revolutionary break with capitalism. The Communist Party of Spain (PCE) had already declared, as early as 1968, its commitment for democracy and its rupture with the Soviet Union. These changes are explained in detail in Chapter 5. Eurocommunism in Spain did not fare much better. In contrast to the predictions of Boggs (1980), Kaplan (1980) and Rodríguez-Ibañez (1980), Eurocommunism did not achieve enough electoral support to be a democratizing and an active socialist force within the bourgeois political system.

In contrast to Leninism, Eurocommunism is characterized by the acceptance of the political structures of advanced capitalism and the search for a democratic transition to socialism. In the case of Spain, communist parties and organizations were firm proponents of democracy and took the lead in the anti-fascist clandestine opposition. Boggs, in 1980, suggested that the situation of crisis and of partial legitimization of capitalism in southern European countries, derived from their

subordinate position in the international division of labor. He believed they could lead to the consolidation of the PCE as a democratic candidate. However, he also augured that the Eurocommunist agenda would not succeed in Europe. The situation of the PCE was weaker than that of their Italian and French counterparts due to the fact that Spain had not yet achieved a modern democratic state and that the PCE did not count with the support of the middle classes. It has been already explained in Chapter 5 that the communist parties, both pro-soviet and Eurocommunist, had an unexpected electoral debacle, and that the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party went on to govern for the following thirteen years.

A second trend, deduced from the responses of the interviewees, is the loss of faith in the communist project after the downfall of Easter Germany and the Soviet Union in the late eighties and early nineties. Some interviewees actually cited the Soviet Union as an example of the failure of central planned economies, as mentioned above. With no strong communist alternative on sight, although interviewees knew about other central planned economies such as Cuba or China, most interviewees assumed capitalism would last forever.

Finally, as shown in Chapter 4, the workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí, and in general most of the Spanish population, are ardent defenders of the welfare state, especially of the public education system and the public healthcare system. The support for the welfare-system does not only come from the Spanish social democracy but from all political forces in the left, including those that ideologically reject capitalism.

As explained in previous chapters, this appreciation comes from the fact that the welfare state and social citizenship in general are considered achievements of the labor movement, historically led by Marxist, anarchist, and socialist forces. In fact,

when in recent legislatures the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party attempted to liberalize some services and cut back on the expenditure for the public system, it was heavily contested by the population and by the political parties to the left.

Furthermore, support for the welfare state is comparatively high in Spain, as already shown in Chapter four.

Data from the European Social Survey of 2008 confirms that Spanish citizens present a high degree of support for the government's intervention in the economy and for higher taxes and social spending (Svallfors 2012). Regarding the request for a wide-ranging government responsibility, measured in a scale from zero to ten, with ten being the maximum intervention, Spain is a bit above eight, whereas Sweden is a bit below an eight and the United Kingdom a bit above a seven. As for the support for taxes and social spending, also measure from zero to ten, Spain is slightly above five, whereas Sweden is about five and a half, and the United Kingdom is nearer to five.

6.5 Conclusions

Chapter 6 presents in depth some relevant aspects of the counter-hegemonic discourse of the working-class people of La Verneda – Sant Martí. The chapter reveals that, besides providing workers with a sense of pride and self-assurance, pro-worker discourses also impose limitations and restrictions. These two potentials unfold at the same time because they depend on only one mechanism. That is, the definition of boundaries.

On the one hand, pro-worker discourses allow workers to identify their peers, other workers, and to set them apart from other social groups. Developing a class consciousness allows workers to contest economic discourses that come from other social classes and that provide a humiliating representation of them.

On the other hand, pro-worker discourses also indicate those groups that should not be included in workers' efforts and solidarity. "The ones above" are heavily criticized and rejected as abusive of workers. Likewise, those perceived as "below" workers also receive an exclusionary treatment. In the case of La Verneda – Sant Martí, the analysis has revealed the prevalence of open racism against Romanies and immigrant workers. These "lower" groups are seen as making an abusive use of the rights and privileges achieved by workers.

This analysis of workers' understanding of the stratification system points to some conclusions that are confirmed by the analysis of workers' expectations for the future. First, workers only care and work for workers, instead of for all unprivileged groups. The counter-hegemonic discourse, although progressive in nature, is more focused on reproducing the idea of belonging to a social class than on considering the potentials for change. Second, workers' criticisms and hopes are centered in the national political elites, rather than in the capitalist economic system. It is not as much capitalism, but the misuse of it by the dominant classes which is condemned. These results coincide with some of the earliest works on the development of class consciousness during English Industrial Revolution (Thompson 1966, Jones 1983). Classical works such as Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* suggest that the first discourses of class were directed to the political sphere rather than to the economic system.

Chapter 6 argues that Spanish workers' abandonment of the idea of a post-capitalist economic system and of a society without social inequalities is the consequence of the decreasing socializing role of workers' organizations: especially the workers' party, the labor union, and the neighborhood organization.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Brief Summary of the Empirical Research

The present research puts forward an argument regarding working-class people's resistance to and reproduction of dominant economic discourses and their development of an alternative pro-workers discourse. Field research in the worker neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí has shown that workers do not reproduce the dominant economic discourses, such as neoliberalism and the neoconservative discourses, because an alternative discourse has achieved a certain “hegemony” in the community. This discourse, with clear Marxist influence, opposes the further privatization and deregulation of public services in Spain. The discourse also provides a complex understanding of the class structure, and a much simpler one of the economic crisis and of the current situation of the Spanish economy.

The explanation of stratification resulted in praise for working-class people's hard work and lifestyle and set workers apart from the “lazy” and “corrupt” upper classes and the also “lazy” and “frightening” Romani and poor immigrant communities. Likewise, it places the blame for the economic crash of 2007/2008 and for the slow (or none) recovery of the economy on the Spanish elites.

This counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood was generated through three different historical processes, (1) the resistance against the Franco dictatorship, (2) the neighborhood movement for the improvement of the living conditions in the community, and (3) the workers' struggle to achieve labor and social rights through the organized labor movement. These processes have marked the community since its generation in the 1950s.

The counter-hegemonic discourse has become part of the popular culture of the community of La Verneda – Sant Martí and neighbors are socialized into it

through the neighborhood organizations and other organizations, as well as through popular parties and activities, and through traditional spaces of the labor movement, namely, (1) the union, (2) the workers' party, and (3) the neighborhood organization. The greater their socialization in traditional labor movement organizations, the more the interviewed workers blame the economic system and international organizations for the state of the economy, instead of blaming national politicians and bankers. The counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood also allows workers to challenge the dominant economic discourses promoted in other spaces, especially the workplace and the mass media.

However, although this discourse enables the neighbors of La Verneda – Sant Martí to challenge the dominant economic discourses, it is unable to mobilize them. In fact, the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood acts, together with the increase of individualism and consumerism and the demobilization of workers' organizations following the achievement of democracy in the late 1970s, as an element of demobilization of the community. The glorification of the existing neighborhood organizations and of their leaders for their historical contributions to the community as well as the maintenance of the protest rhetoric of the 1970s discourage the participation of younger generations in the neighborhood organizations and prevents the generation of new forms of organization and mobilization. The present research has also shown that, despite the strong influence of Marxism in the community, workers have abandoned the ideal of a society without social inequalities and prefer a kinder version of capitalism instead. Finally, the research shows that the definition of a community of pertinence favors the development of a class consciousness and of intra-class solidarity, which in turn prevents unemployed and impoverished workers from being shamed by their peers. However, this same

boundary work defines workers' coldness and lack of identification with the poor and immigrant communities.

7.2 Theoretical Conclusions with Empirical Examples

This empirical basis allows us to propose a theoretical approximation as to how working-class people contest dominant economic discourses and develop alternative, more pro-worker, explanations of their situation. This research is in line with and based on previous studies on workers' reproduction of or resistance to capitalism, and on workers' development of a class consciousness, such as Michael Burawoy's acclaimed *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*. It also draws from literature on monopoly capitalism and neoliberalism.

One first key finding of the dissertation is that participation in workers' organizations and in neighborhood activities socializes working-class people into certain cultural repertoires that, in turn, provide them with the resources to critically reflect on dominant economic discourses. These cultural repertoires provide guidelines for the interpretation and categorization of everyday experiences that defy the system(s) of meaning encouraged in other spaces, especially the mass media and the workplace. The participation in these organizations also facilitates the interpretation and adaptation of the cultural repertoires to the everyday reality of the workers, relating politics to everyday life.

This theoretical point is illustrated by the story of José, a retired construction worker. José moved to one of the poorest parts of the neighborhood in his youth and immediately joined the neighborhood movement, which demanded infrastructures and

services for the neighborhood. Likewise, he joined the labor movement and a workers' party, and participated intensively in the popular activities of the neighborhood. In these spaces, José learned about communism. Using it, and although not having any formal schooling, José was able to elaborate an explanation of the world economy that challenged the dominant economic discourses. More specifically, José saw the economic crash of 2007/2008 as the result of a world-wide strategy of the elites to further exploit workers and to preserve their privileges.

This strategy consisted, according to José, of uniting their forces and preventing workers from doing the same. In fact, José contemplated the internationalization of the productive process and of finances as a form of union of capitalists. Here is a fragment of José's explanation of the economy in his own words. The full example can be read in pages 282-283.

So united proletarians are accused of wanting to unite to stand for their interests, and then what does capitalism do? It makes it its own and then it gets organized internationally and all countries become involved. The International Monetary Fund are the United States plus the most powerful capitalist countries of the world. And then there're some that aren't in the International Monetary Fund but are also involved. Of course, and it's been globalized, why? Because capitalism, of course, doesn't let go of its privileges. It does it to protect its privileges, just like workers wanted to organize themselves internationally to stand for their rights. To take that away from workers, capitalism has become organized. [José, 79. Original quote in Spanish]

A second key finding of the dissertation is that cultural repertoires and, more concretely, specific meanings, concepts, symbols, and images of these repertoires become relevant and long-lasting in a workers' community when they become embedded in popular culture. This allows these elements to survive once they have lost their dominance in most sectors of a society. This finding was further confirmed by Temma Kaplan's research (1977, 1992) on Anarchism in the 19th-century Andalusia and on social movements in Barcelona in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Kaplan suggested that the prevalence of social movements, especially of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, and of Catalan nationalism, depended on the involvement of women on both the social movements and on the everyday life of their communities. She also acknowledged the importance of civic rituals for the socialization of workers into some specific values and identities.

The fact that some cultural repertoires, and more particularly communism, have become deeply ingrained in the neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí was evident in the interviews, especially in the class analysis of the neighbors. Neighbors constantly referred to themselves as “obreros” (manual workers) even if they had a college degree and worked in white-collar jobs. The figure of the traditional, manual, factory worker, an image that is also masculine and white, was recurrently used as a class mark and it also constituted a source of pride, as it referred to the combative past of the neighborhood. This image was evoked by women as well as men, and by young people as well as by the elder, even when women and young people were quicker to identify the limitations behind this representation.

The term “obrero”, the use of which is detailed in pages 102 and 209, was used in opposition and confrontation to that of “the ones above” or “the elites”, which were perceived as abusing workers, and interviewees and participants made an

explicit effort to point out the ways in which they are different (and better) than this upper class and how they confront the elites. The clear confrontational position towards the upper classes was constantly repeated in several neighborhood organizations in which the researcher conducted participant observation.

A third finding of the present research refers to the inclusion in the discourse of some episodes of the history of the community. The analysis shows that working-class people's alternative economic discourses are not only formed by a particular and local interpretation and adaptation of historically available cultural repertoires but may also include reified pieces of the (imagined) history of the community. A particular time in the past of the community may become glorified and brought to the present everyday life of the community.

In the case of La Verneda - Sant Martí, the counter-hegemonic discourse of the neighborhood includes the glorification of the neighborhood movement of the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, almost all interviewees referred to the combative past of the community and praised the leaders of these movements as well as the generations who participated in it. This historic episodes of the community have acquired a materiality in the discourses of the neighbors and constitute, to this day, one of the identifying traits of the neighborhood. Here is a quote by a retired mechanic and his wife that illustrates this point. The example can be found in pages 98-99.

Andreu: There were two or three neighborhood organizations that had a very important role within the social movement. One of them was... I think it was call Sant Martí or La Verneda, and that's where García was. And that was an organization that achieved many transformations in this neighborhood: the Square of the Porches was saved because they were going to build blocks on

it... There was a leader... I have to talk to you about García. This García was a person that if he go to Rome people could say “who’s that wearing white that’s next to García?” Because he was very well known, he was one of the men who cared a lot about social issues, he was the one calling the people, the one that would see the problem, the one who would denounce it, the one who organized the people, who made the leaflets, the one who handed them out, and when the day of the demonstration arrived, he was in front of it. And it’s thanks to him...

Gloria: To him and to a team that he made with very combative people. For instance, the subway, the subway line was stopped for nine years! Then... Well, we got some money from Europe too... All this, all the Guipúzcoa Street, was the material store of the construction companies, that was here. It was fenced, it was impossible to walk, to go for a walk, nothing. And this was like this for nine years! Until the Organization started to shake it, to claim it, and claim it, and claim it. [Andreu, 67, and Gloria, 61. Original quotes in Catalan]

This materialized past acts not only as a reminder of a certain history, or of the way a community remembers its history, but also as a representation of how certain cultural repertoires or elements of these repertoires were applied and can be still applied to the everyday life of the community. Following with the example of the interviewees’ identification as “obreros” (workers) and what it means to be a worker, Héctor, a computer technician in his forties, mentioned his parents’ time when, according to him, neighbors cared about culture instead of caring about material

possessions. Héctor evocated the past of the neighborhood as a guideline for behavior in the present day. The full example can be read in pages 172-173.

There seemed to be a positive change involving the social growth of the cultural network, but that got broken, and now we just care about money. It sounds simplistic, but nowadays the idea is that what is more important is just having a good economic position and it's like the rest doesn't matter. For me, this is a misfortune. I grew up in a worker ("*obrer*") environment where culture is preserved very well. My father and my mother... I don't think we've moved forward. Maybe the physical environment and the economy have, but the social structure in my opinion has lost... [Héctor, 43. Original quote in Catalan]

A further result of this study is that cultural repertoires, although they may take a quite stable form in the discourses of the members of a community, as it is the case in La Verneda – Sant Martí, should not be understood as monolithic and unchangeable but as a complex “tool kit” (Swidler 1986) from which working-class people can pick and choose, and that is constantly adapted and interpreted based on the cultural knowledge that workers have about their community.

In the neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí, the creative use of concepts historically associated with communism and anarchism to explain ones' everyday experiences as well as the combination of these concepts with other cultural repertoires was quite common. For instance, David, a 59-year old custodian who declared himself a member of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and took a stand against communist ideals because he considered them no longer feasible, combined

Marxism, Catholicism, and a reference of the neighborhood fight against the Franco dictatorship to explain his position about religion. David stated that he was very convinced that Jesus was a communist who rebelled against the Roman dictatorship, and that he respected him for that. Similar combinations are found in the discourses of many interviewees.

Another example is provided by Juan, a pre-retired construction worker. Juan presented himself both as a socialist and as a past participant of an anarchist union, and he acknowledged that he had recently voted a right-wing party. Juan was against communism “because the communists made their savage deeds” and because he considered that some so-called communist countries – he mentioned China and Russia - are actually capitalist.

Furthermore, Juan explained that his motto, when it comes to the economy, is “the worst enemy of a worker is another worker, never the boss”. However, he complained about the cyclical character of economic crises in capitalism, and considered that the current crisis could have been prevented if the real estate companies and the national banks had been less obsessed with “collecting more surplus value”. He also considered that national banks should be expropriated and that the politicians and businessmen who had wrongfully appropriated money should be severely punished.

Juan’s image of the economy was also molded by his fervored rejection of Catalan nationalism and independence claims, as well as by his racist positions towards immigrants and Romanies. He also relied on his experience in the construction sector and on information about how the national economy is organized in other countries, provided by family members who had emigrated and lived abroad.

All these elements were combined in creative ways to provide a somehow coherent economic discourse.

A sixth result of the dissertation is that, besides empowering workers, pro-worker cultural repertoires and the alternative discourses that derive from them also impose limitations and restrictions. These two potentials unfold at the same time as they depend on one and the same mechanism, that is, the establishment of boundaries. Pro-worker cultural repertoires, organized in the form of alternative economic discourses, provide workers with an understanding of social stratification that celebrates workers and that defines a pertinent group to which they can devote their efforts and solidarity.

Being conscious of belonging to this group and opposing the discourses produced by and for other social groups is a form of resistance that provides workers with a sense of belonging and of self-worth. On the other hand, the delimitation of the boundaries of the group to which solidarity is addressed also defines those who are excluded, and workers may present open hostile positions towards these people, namely the upper and middle classes and those perceived as “below” workers. Both of these groups are perceived as endangering workers’ lifestyle, the upper and middle classes through exploitation and abuse, and the lower classes by “stealing” the privileges gained by the workers. This can also partially explain the prevalence of xenophobia in some working-class neighborhoods.

The definition of group boundaries was particularly clear in the working-class neighborhood of La Verneda - Sant Martí. Although most interviewees and participants expressed their wish for a more egalitarian society and for the improvement of the working and living conditions of the population, when paying close attention to their discourse, it became apparent that their wishes and plans for

the future did not refer to the population as a whole, but only to working-class people. Solidarity among qualified workers and the pride associated with being a worker contrasted sharply with workers' contempt towards the inhabitants of destitute areas and their mistrust of the upper and middle classes.

Interviewees expressed pride in belonging to the working class and made fun of the workers who considered themselves to be middle-class. The following quote by a 56-year-old nurse illustrates this point. The example can be found in page 216, together with other examples of workers' pride.

I'm working-class, but it's funny... Recently, I saw one *Salvados* [TV show]. And many young people said: "no, no, middle-class". Middle-class? Don't you have to work for someone else? And I think the years of prosperity made us think that there was a middle class that doesn't really exist, eh? If you work for someone else, right?, you're in the working class. There's the more slave and the not so much. I'm a well-qualified worker, but still... [Montserrat, 56. Original quote in Catalan]

Likewise, the resentment and suspicion towards the upper and middle classes, called "the elites" or "the ones above" by the interviewees, was also evident in their discourses. In the following quote, a 61-year-old informal caregiver explains that these elites are the ones to blame for the economic crisis and expresses her suspicion that they are going to make the working class pay for it. This example and similar others can be found in page 239.

Crises are capitalist, I mean, of capital, they happen because there's a capitalist majority because otherwise... Well, maybe... Formerly there were crises of some industries, those famines that used to happen, but now they're... They come from the capital, from the people who have money. They come a little bit from everything: the embezzlement of money, which we're just learning about, they're taking it away..., of the tricks that you see... And I believe that crises... We're the ones taking the rap, the poor take the rap, the worker, yes. And it's the same between countries: the poor country always takes the rap. [Paula, 61. Original quote in Spanish]

Working-class solidarity in La Verneda – Sant Martí also excluded the lower classes as they were seen as lazier than workers and as abusing the privileges won by workers. The following racist characterization of Romanies by an informal caregiver of the neighborhood illustrates this boundary (page 234). In fact, the first organization and mobilization of neighbors in La Verneda - Sant Martí had the objective of expelling Romanies from a shanty town within the neighborhood. The fight for their expulsion went on for over a decade (pages 65-68, 81-82).

Well, we all know that, when it comes to work, gypsies... They don't make their money working. This is not being racist, it's being realistic. In La Mina [*deprived neighborhood*], all the buildings of La Mina were for gypsies. And of course, you would go there with clothes and come back naked. It's true! I was told that a taxi driver had gone in and had left without anything. Of course, that area has always been a very bad area because of the people who live in it. [Judith, 42. Original quote in Catalan]

Finally, the present study has also shown that economic alternative discourses may even become a restraint for a worker community when they become immobile and when the creative use of them is restricted. This may happen, as we have seen in the case of La Verneda – Sant Martí, when the presence in the neighborhood of the generations that participated in those struggles, their control of the positions of leadership in the neighborhood, and their recurrent use of the 1970s rhetoric and forms of organization prevent the mobilization of younger neighbors. This stagnation was described by Montserrat, a 56-year-old nurse, in the following way (page 153).

I'd like to participate in the neighborhood but I haven't found...This neighborhood is a little bit of old warriors, neighborhood organizations are formed by grandparents... That generation of pure and simple workers, who faced the neighborhood struggles, had a lot of courage, eh? This was a field that became a neighborhood! You have to recognize that, but then they are so self-important that they get stuck like in naphthalene, you know? [Montserrat, 56. Original quote in Catalan]

7.3 Discussion

The previously stated theoretical conclusions, derived from extensive empirical work, contribute to the literature on class and formation of class consciousness, as well as to the study of workers' reproduction of and workers' resistance to the capitalist economic system. More concretely, they address the research questions: *How do working-class people contest dominant economic*

discourses? And How do working-class people develop alternative explanations for their economic situation? The reproduction of capitalism by workers had been previously studied by Burawoy (1979), who argued that consent towards the capitalist economic system and towards the exploitation of workers is produced at the point of production, the workplace, and independent from previous variables such as education, community, or religion, which are seen as being of lesser importance.

The present research showed that the working community of La Verneda – Sant Martí did indeed support, or in some cases at least resign, to capitalism, and that dominant economic discourses were mostly promoted in the workplace and also through the mass media. However, this dissertation also proves that participation in the organizations and the civic rituals of a working-class neighborhood provides workers with the tools to critically reflect on the dominant economic discourses and to develop alternative explanations of their economic situation. In this regard, Hochschild (1981) has indicated that the way people think about distributive justice varies from one domain of life to another and that people are more likely to develop a sense of moral outrage and to ask for equality in the socializing and political domains than in the economic realm, where they are more likely to accept inequality.

In contrast to Burawoy's acclaimed work, which studied workers' unconscious acceptance of capitalism due to a particular organization of the labor process, the present research studies the explicit and conscious economic discourses of workers. Burawoy (1979) suggested that the previous consciousness and values of workers only became relevant in times of crises, when they were used as ideologies. The current situation of crisis in Spain may have given relevance to the economic explanations of workers and to the values and explanations acquired in their community.

In fact, several interviewees from La Verneda – Sant Martí did mention that, in times of economic growth, the community was less politicized than it is now and that people would challenge some negative changes less, such as the increase of corruption and the escalation of speculation in the real estate market, because they were somehow benefiting from that situation themselves. However, although the research has pointed out to the importance of these previous values, it has also shown that they are not sufficient by themselves to lead to action towards social change.

The present research has also stressed the importance of popular culture for the relevance and duration of specific cultural repertoires in a worker community. As mentioned above, this topic has been developed by Temma Kaplan (1992, 1997). Although her research focuses on the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the present research fully supports the previous results of this author.

Temma Kaplan (1992) studied the development of solidarity among the citizens of Barcelona in the turn of the 20th century and she suggested that a strong sense of regional solidarity and a wish of freedom, as well as a strong opposition to the national authoritarian government developed in this city through shared experiences of civic culture. Civic rituals included strikes, demonstrations, and working-class organizations, as well as diverse forms of artistic expression. In fact, in the city of Barcelona, artists and folk succeeded in creating a new shared identity for immigrant workers and local workers in opposition to the Catalan upper class as well as to the Spanish authorities. Kaplan also demonstrated, and this research confirms it, that it was by becoming imbedded in popular culture that some cultural repertoires, particularly communism and anarcho-syndicalism, remained relevant along the years.

The community, more concretely the working-class neighborhood, has actually been identified in the present research as a very important variable for the

development of alternative economic discourses. For instance, as explained above, the neighborhood is the place where the consolidation of specific cultural repertoires occurs through the constitution of workers organizations and the celebration of civic rituals. When the researcher started the field work, the selection of the neighborhood was merely analytical. She needed to demarcate a space to conduct research. However, the community turned out to be a very relevant factor.

The importance of the community and the workplace for the development of community activism has been studied by Katznelson (1981). Although Katznelson's study focuses on the United States, the results of his research are also relevant for this dissertation. Katznelson (1981) suggests that the main cause of the failure of 1960s community activism was the split that American workers mark between the workplace and the community. According to Katznelson, the American working-class consider themselves workers when they are in their workplace and, in this area, they mobilize based on solidarities of class. However, they do not consider themselves as workers when they are in their residential communities. Instead, they identify themselves as ethnics and mobilize based on their ethnicity or territorial affinities. Mobilization in these two spaces uses different organizations and different vocabularies, which makes effectiveness and success more difficult.

In contrast to Katznelson's research, the present study suggests that, in the Spanish context, workers' class identity is no longer mainly constituted in the workplace but in the community. The research has also shown that the loss of importance of the traditional labor movement organizations and the lesser participation of workers in them make socialization into alternative cultural repertoires difficult. This also challenges workers' ability to reflect on their economic situation and to develop alternative economic discourses. In a context of a decrease of

worker solidarity in the workplace due to the increase of internal competition and the diversification of the working class (Anglietta 2015; Burawoy 1979), the neighborhood or community are essential for the maintenance and promotion of a working-class identity. Suttles (1972) has suggested that for the people who live in a neighborhood, this space also becomes an important component of their individual identity and represents a standard against which they will be judged. In the case study of La Verneda – Sant Martí, the historical identification as a “barrio obrero” [*manual workers’ neighborhood*] clearly contributes to maintaining a class identity in a context of great demobilization of labor movement organizations and neighborhood organizations.

As for the ethnic identification of workers, the current research, a case study of a neighborhood only focused on Spaniards (non-immigrants) and suggests that neither Catalan nor Spanish nationalism are an important factor in the economic discourses of the interviewees. The same was true about the preference for or against the independence of Catalonia. In this regard, Kaplan (1992), identified two different political axis in early 20th century Barcelona that are still relevant to this day.

On the one hand, there was a division between those who identified as Catalans and those considered Spanish, especially the Spanish authorities, and on the other hand, a class division between workers and the regional bourgeoisie (the right-left axis). It was this second political dimension that guided the responses of the interviewees.

Suttles (1972) has suggested that proximity makes a group of people vulnerable to the same events, regardless of their cultural similarity and their sense of solidarity to one another. This may explain the common mobilization as workers of people who may consider each other culturally different. In the case of La Verneda –

Sant Martí, the residents of the neighborhood mobilized together for the improvement of their living conditions for a couple of decades regardless of their nationalist identification. Nevertheless, further research is needed regarding the influence of Catalan nationalism and the Catalan pro-independence movement, both its history and its very recent manifestations, on class consciousness and collective action.

The present research also suggests that workers' economic discourses are not only conformed by a variety of cultural repertoires but also by reified pieces of the past of their community. Hence again the importance of the community. Previous works on community narrative confirm these results as they suggest that the shared stories that people (not only workers) tell about themselves, about their origins, past and possible future, are essential tools for their social and personal transformation (Rappaport 1995). In this line, Polletta (2006) suggests that past movements define the stakes for later ones through the stories that they put forward.

In a classical work on community imaginaries, Anderson (2006) presented the term "imagined community" to emphasize the socially constructed character of the nation. Anderson, through an historical account about the creation of a national feeling or sense of nationalism in the territories that are now Nation-states, showed that the imagined community is based on shared cultural meanings. The expansion of these shared cultural meanings was possible through the divulgation of books in vernacular languages (for instance Spanish and Catalan as opposed to Latin) and by the alphabetization of the population. Other authors have suggested that community narratives provide tools for sense-making for the members of the community, who draw upon shared templates of events, actors and actions to understand their situation (Stapleton and Wilson 2017).

Stapleton and Wilson (2017) have illustrated with a recent case study of Belfast that working-class interviewees repeat set tropes and representations borrowed from shared templates to explain the political devolution process in Northern Ireland, and that they also use them in new creative ways. A similar process was identified in La Verneda – Sant Martí where interviewees and participants reported information about the recent past of the neighborhood using the same words, expressions and representations, almost as if they had memorized a script on the topic. The constant repetition of this past has provided it with a certain materiality in the present life of the workers. Likewise, this past serves as a guideline for action for the residents of La Verneda – Sant Martí. Accounts of physical and socio-cultural transformations of the past into an imaginary future have also been documented by previous scholars (Rappaport 1995).

In the case of La Verneda – Sant Martí, a particular combination of the available cultural repertoires and of the remembered history of the community gave place to an alternative economic discourse that was shared and repeated by many neighbors. However, despite of the stability of this particular counter-hegemonic discourse, it is important to remember that neither culture nor even cultural repertoires constitute solid and unchangeable blocks of ultimate values, but that they offer a “tool-kit”, a range of skills, habits, stories and world-views where individuals “pick” from to inform their action (Swidler 1985).

Swidler’s (1985) concept of the tool-kit is useful for my research because it suggests that it is possible to understand workers’ discourses and the cultural repertoires behind them without having to engage in deep psychology (see Burawoy’s [2012] critique of Bourdieu’s theory of practice). Likewise, it leaves room for the study of the subordinate groups’ resistance to the practices that favor the dominant

group as well as for the subordinates' critical reflection on their situation and ideas, as opposed to theories that conceive culture as fairly static.

The tool-kit theory allows a position of analytical dualism in the study of the relations among the different parts of the cultural system, the relations among different actors in the socio-cultural sphere, and the relation between the cultural system and the socio-cultural sphere. This contrasts with forms of understanding the relationship between culture and agency that overemphasize the power of cultural norms and values, that consider the dominant groups as able to completely manipulate discourses or that conceive agency as unrestrained, and with forms that do not take into account the different ways in which the socio-cultural world shapes the cultural system and vice versa (Archer 1996).

The present research has illustrated that workers make creative use of the available cultural repertoires instead of engaging in a passive reproduction of them. The idea of the "tool-kit" allows us to understand that there are a variety of values and explanations available to the interviewees and that they creatively combine them and adapt them to their situation. This creative and changeable use of cultural repertoires challenges the idea of quite stable and immutable "mental maps" (as used by Lamont 2000).

The tool-kit can contain, using Bourdieu's terminology, the cultural capital appropriate for a specific field. However, it can also be made up of unrecognized cultural currency (Lo 2015) and other symbolic strategies of the subordinated (Scott 1990). Swidler's (1985) emphasis on readily available courses for action and pre-fabricated links between ideas is supported by the workers of this research's constant use of set tropes and shared templates to refer to the functioning of the economy and to the past of their community. One major critique of Swidler's work is that it focuses

on conscious thought (Lizardo and Strand 2009). Since this dissertation focuses on the openly-stated discourses of workers, this approach is actually useful.

The present research has shown how some world views, explanations, images, and ideologies become part of the tool-kit of Spanish urban workers due to specific historical processes and social movements. Likewise, it shows how the different explanations available are used in a creative manner in everyday life and how the new generations are socialized into them. This represents an advance in regards Swidler's original theory as she did not explain how the tool-kit becomes shaped and structured. The current research, without any intention of engaging in a theoretical discussion of the relationship between structure or culture and agency, nor to discuss the different cognitive theories, shows how some historical processes and social movements that challenged the power relations in the socio-cultural sphere, incorporated some specific cultural repertoires to the available tool-kit for Spanish urban workers.

The fact that culture is like a tool-kit rather than like a collection of ultimate values was clear in the present research as working-class people demonstrated their ability to adapt abstract values and concepts to their everyday life and to find creative new meanings and uses for the available cultural repertoires. Furthermore, the research illustrates that neighborhood organizations and civic rituals in the working-class neighborhood are essential to make the translation from abstract and complex economic explanations to the everyday life of the neighbors. Along this line, Racionero and Valls (2007) and Gómez et al. (2011) have demonstrated the ability of non-academic people and of people with low educational levels to adapt scientific and academic knowledge to their everyday life using knowledge from their lifeworlds.

The concept of "cultural repertoires" applied to "resistance" has also been used by Tarrow (2011), who talked about "repertoires of contention". A "repertoire of

contention” is a set of contentious actions with which actors are familiar. They are available in the cultural background of the actors. For instance, French citizens started using barricades in 1789. In the revolts of 1848, barricades were part of the repertoire of contention available to the French citizens: they knew how to use them and when.

Despite the usefulness of this concept for the study of physical/material forms of resistance, the present research focuses only on symbolic/discursive resistance. Within this field, a lack of mid-range theories that explain the engagement of dominated groups in a specific form of resistance was identified. Specifically, in open counter-hegemonic discourses that circulates in the underground (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). Previous literature has focused on symbolic resistance or reproduction at the societal level (see Bourdieu 1977, 1984 or Gramsci 1971) or at the micro-level (see Scott 1990). More attention should be paid to meso-level (imagined) communities.

When it comes to the development of class consciousness and to workers’ understanding of social stratification, the present research shows how pro-worker alternative explanations of the economic system provide workers with a sense of dignity and belonging. The development by workers of economic explanations and other strategies that allow them to keep their dignity in an unequal society have been explored by different authors (Lamont 2000; Lucas 2011a; Lucas 2011b; Sennett and Cobb 1972). Lamont (2000) has suggested that French and American workers provide themselves with worldviews that allow them to keep their dignity and respect and that this implies emphasizing different aspects of reality than upper-middle class definitions of the world rather than directly opposing them. She also suggested that the objective of these alternative worldviews would be to maintain order in a world

that is changing fast and that workers feel unable to control. Thus, these worldviews are essentially conservative even when they are stated in class terms.

Research in the worker community of La Verneda – Sant Martí provides different results. It must be taken into account that the present research was conducted after the important economic crash of 2007/2008 and in a different country than that of Lamont. The case study at hand offers the example of a pro-worker alternative explanation of the economy, widely shared by the residents of a working-class neighborhood, developed in clear opposition to the worldviews of the upper-middle class. Class, in this case, was understood in confrontational terms and workers described themselves in opposition to the upper classes. Likewise, upper-middle class' economic discourses were rejected as abusive towards workers.

Furthermore, the objective of this discourse was to resist the abuse and exploitation of the upper classes as well as to prevent workers from falling into the also feared lower classes. This explanation occurred at the level of the nation state and workers suggested important changes that would prevent the upper classes from abusing what they perceived as a not-so-bad economic system. The present research concurs with Lamont's in the identification of workers relationship with the upper and middle classes. Lamont suggested that white workers both in France and the United States consider the upper and middle classes as lacking integrity and straightforwardness and as being less hardworking than themselves. This attitude was also found among Spanish workers.

In a somehow more complex analysis than Lamont's, Lucas (2011b) identifies a powerful class discourse shared by American workers that praises the working class and that it is based in four core values: hard work, provision for basic and other needs through hard work, humility, and the dignity of all workers. This discourse creates a

more positive class identity for workers than that allowed by other discourses, especially the American Dream ideal, which question the dignity of workers. The positive discourse, which Lucas calls “the Working Class Promise”, places the working class in the highest social strata but is more focused in the maintenance and reproduction of the working class identity than in the transformation of the stratification system.

Similar results have been found among Spanish workers in the present research. The counter-hegemonic discourse of La Verneda – Sant Martí praises workers and their lifestyle and, through the remembrance of the past of the community, celebrates and maintains a working class identity. Although the elder members of the community were proud of the college degrees and the professional jobs of younger family members – as they had provided for this education – it was the elder neighbors who were still considered the true image of “the worker” and the example to follow. Likewise, the counter-hegemonic discourse was good at providing a positive and dignified image of workers and of their position in the economy but failed to mobilize workers against the current social structure. Another similarity of the two studies is the means through which the discourses were reproduced. In both studies, socialization occurred through communication with parents, family and other workers and, more importantly, through the folklore from previous generations.

Lucas (2011a) has also suggested that working-class workplace dignity is define in comparison to other two groups of workers: workers in low paid and unstable jobs and higher-status workers such as lawyers or doctors. According to Lucas (2011a) the working-class strategy to have a positive workplace dignity consists of defending the dignity of all workers and, therefore, their own.

This strategy involves, on the one hand, asserting the importance and recognizing the jobs done by the lower class and, thus, up-lift this social group and make it closer to workers. On the other hand, it involves criticizing higher-status professions so as to make them closer and comparable to manual workers, and at the same time to praise their social importance. This last process would up-lift the status position of all workers. Thus, Lucas suggests that blue-collar workers and their families are engaging in social creativity not only for their own benefit but also on behalf of poorer workers.

The results from the present research contradict Lucas'. In fact, one important finding is that, rather than advocating for universal solidarity and working towards the improvement of all social groups, the workers of La Verneda – Sant Martí were only interested in the improvement of the working class and regarded the other social groups with contempt. Professional workers were considered as belonging to the greedy and less hard-working upper-classes or as workers who thought too highly of themselves and were, therefore, laughable.

Interviewees and participants also expressed contempt towards the lower classes, even for workers in positions only slightly worse than their own. These lower social classes were identified as culturally and ethnically different, with many interviewees engaging in blatantly racist discourses against immigrants and Romanians. In fact, immigrants were all imagined to be poor and also undeserving of state aid. All this suggests that solidarity is also defined in racial terms and is constrained to national, white, Spaniards. Dignity was, therefore, only sought through hard work and the other values identified by Lucas (2011a) and through the acknowledgment by peers. Sennett and Cobb (1972) suggest that this is an important

difference in the way European workers and American workers do working-class solidarity.

Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2001) have highlighted the importance of taking emotions into account in the study of social movements. How worker pride and the rejection, indignation, and hate towards other social classes contribute to the economic discourses of Spanish urban workers has been an important feature of the present research. Likewise, the research stresses that a great proportion of the motivation to develop alternative economic discourses comes from workers' need of images that allow them to keep their dignity and self-esteem in the face of demeaning representations of workers. Along this line, the present research shows that workers distinguish themselves from other social classes highlighting the moral superiority of workers. However, this way of defining the working class and the emotions attached to it are more focused on the reproduction of the working class than on the development of collective action oriented towards social change.

The final theoretical conclusion from the present research presents a paradox: the alternative explanations of the economy developed by workers and which provide them with a sense of self-respect and dignity may contribute to their demobilization and, therefore, to their maintenance of a working-class status. This finding is further sustained by Gough's (2002) research on socialization in North America and Western Europe. This author understands socialization as the "nonmarket cooperation between social actors" (2002:58) and suggests that neoliberalism reshapes old forms of socialization, prevents their politicization, and extracts from them any socialist potential. Gough also warns that the new forms of socialization, although they are formally against neoliberalism, end up internalizing neoliberal social relations and deepening social divisions. They are, in fact, more effective than neoliberal urban

projects for achieving neoliberal goals such as class discipline and having a reserve army of workers.

Likewise, McQuarrie (2012) suggests that civil society cannot protect society from neoliberal institutional transformations as it has been rationalized as an element of urban politics. McQuarrie's findings are similar to those of the present research even if they refer to different societies. The present research suggests that the ossification of neighborhood organizations and the lack of renewal of old rhetoric, forms of leaderships, and forms of organization and mobilization prevent, among other factors, the mobilization of the community.

Similarly, McQuarrie (2012) discovered in a case study of the civil society of Cleveland, that the mobilization of community-based organizations in the 1970s was key in securing government and charity resources during a general neighborhood crisis in the United States' Northeast and Midwest. However, the success of these organizations had an unexpected result: the civil society became rationalized around market-oriented values and narrow practices and it lost its creativity and capacity for change, what in turn contributed to making the neighborhoods even more prone to foreclosures.

In this regard, Tarrow (2011) has suggested that when social movements develop a hierarchical organization, this may negatively affect their capacity to disrupt, but that without an organization, the movements lack the infrastructure to sustain interactions with allies and authorities. Although the present research focuses on symbolic rather than on material resistance, Tarrow's contribution usefully allows us to understand how neighborhood organizations may be constraining the creative definition, crystallization and construction of new and different collective identities, and the shaping of workers emotions regarding the socio-economic situation.

7.4 Extrapolation and limitations

The results of this research can be generalized to the cities of Spain. The neighborhood of La Verneda – Sant Martí was chosen as the location for the fieldwork as it is representative of the working-class neighborhoods that surround the cities of Spain in terms of the demographic characteristics, class position, labor status, and political color of the inhabitants, and even similarity of the building environment. Furthermore, many of these neighborhoods underwent the three historical processes that set the basis for the development of La Verneda’s counter-hegemonic discourse: the neighborhood movement of the 1970s, the process of resistance against the Franco dictatorship, and the resurgence of the organized labor movement.

Manuel Castells (1983), in a thorough research of urban social movements, studied the mobilization that took place in the decade of the 1970s in the neighborhoods of Spanish cities. Castells qualified this process as “the largest and most significant urban movement in Europe since 1945” (1983:215), and his results further support the claims of generalization of the present research. Although the neighborhood movement was not constrained to working-class neighborhoods, it draws its main support from these neighborhoods due to the harder living conditions in these areas.

In the 1950s, following the abandonment of economic isolationism by the Francois regime and the increase of poverty in rural areas, waves of workers from rural Spain moved to the industrialized cities (Castells 1983). These workers found jobs but not housing, and established themselves in illegal settlements. Castells explains that the arrival of thousands of immigrants to the city of Madrid led to the quick construction of new housing to host them, construction that took place with little to no planning and with cheap materials.

The new areas were not provided with amenities nor infrastructures (no water, no sewage, no lighting etc.) and the provided housing soon began to crumble. Likewise, the rapid boom of construction brought in real estate companies that engaged in speculation and pressured the administration to sell the public housing apartments (Castells 1983). We have seen in this research that all this process also occurred in Barcelona, and Castells points out in his book that the process also took place in the industrial cities of the Basque Country.

The hard living conditions in the neighborhoods soon led to the organization of the residents in neighborhood organizations and to their mobilization for the demand of more services and better living conditions. In the case of Madrid, and as we have seen in the case of Barcelona, these organizations were heavily influenced by grassroots Christians and communist parties, although they were not controlled by them.

Mobilizations not only led to considerable improvements in the neighborhoods but also to the revival and creation of new street festivals, popular fairs, and other forms of local cultural expression. Castells (1983), studying in detail the mobilizations of the shanty town of Orcasitas, Madrid, observed the development of a “community culture” “founded on the shared experience of struggle” (1983:246). These results confirm both the importance of the neighborhood/community variable and the generalizability of the results of the present study to the workers of other Spanish, urban, working-class neighborhoods.

The present research focuses exclusively on working-class people who live in neighborhoods that are mostly composed of other workers, so that they are among peers. Research on the resistance and/or reproduction of dominant economic

discourses should be extended to the study of working-class people who live in neighborhoods mostly composed by people from other social classes.

Likewise, more research is needed regarding women's role in the community and regarding women's role in building class consciousness. In this regards, Steedman (1987) has warned that working-class women's experiences and everyday relations were not captured in all their complexity by bourgeois feminism and by a "gender blind" Marxism. Both gender oppression and class oppression would intersect to frame the everyday life experience of working-class women and girls, an experience ignored by the social sciences' theories on workers' psychology and attitudes.

Studying the labor movement in Spain during the II Republic and the Civil War, Mary Nash (1981) suggested that women are historical agents that have actively participated, not only in their own liberation, but also in the labor movement. Thus, she suggested that it is not correct to consider women as passive in front of oppression or as mere victims of history who only react against patriarchal repression. Nash suggested that, in order to understand women's liberation movement, it has to be taken into account that a woman belongs to a specific social class, which may be different than that of other women.

For this reason, Nash suggested the need for analyzing gender struggles within each social class. Nash distinguished between a "bourgeois feminism", focused on suffrage, and a "worker or proletarian feminism", which would take place within the labor movement. According to Nash, women's liberation movement depended largely on women's active involvement on the left.

Along the same line, Kaplan (1980, 1992, 1997) has suggested that women were essential in keeping communist, anarchists and nationalist ideals as they

participated actively in these movements and in the every-day life of their communities. Focusing on the early twentieth century Barcelona, Kaplan also found that alliance among women was stronger than the alliance between women and men.

Kaplan talks about the strength of the solidarity among women from poor neighborhoods, as they were aware of the economic situation of their neighbors. She found that women from poor neighborhoods felt that it was their responsibility to stand up for the rights and well-being of their communities. They considered this to be part of their feminine duties. They also demonstrated more solidary and understanding with the poor, the unemployed, and with prostitutes, as they were conscious that their own economic situation was not good and could easily change for the worse in the future (Kaplan 1992).

Furthermore, Kaplan also identified the important role of women in the working-class resistance against the bourgeoisie. She highlighted that fact that Barcelona, as early as the nineteenth century, contained many powerful women. This group included nuns, who ran the social services of the city, as well as prostitutes, who led urban rebellions against the authorities.

Kaplan (1980), focusing on the labor movement and on Eurocommunism, also suggested that neighbors organizations were a very important space for the development of the feminist movement in Spain and that women had a key role in the labor movement. However, she also acknowledged that some labor unions, especially the communist Workers' commissions were particularly sexist. In the present research, feminism has not been found to be a major discourse informing workers' understanding of the economy and the imaginary of the "obrero", a male manual worker, was very present in the everyday life of the community. More research in

other neighborhoods is needed to understand women's specific involvement in the development of class consciousness and community solidarity.

APPENDIX

Illustrations

Illustration 1-12. Spaces of the neighborhood of La Verneda - Sant Martí



Authors of pictures 1-12: Anna Carrillo (the researcher) and Bernat Pallares
Date of pictures 1-12: August 25, 2017













Illustration 13 - Shanty town of La Perona by the railroad tracks



Author/Producer: Unknown

Date: 1980s

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 14- Shanty town of La Perona



Author/Producer: Unknown

Date: 1979

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 15- Children playing in the shanty town of La Perona



Author/Producer: Unknown

Date: 1980s

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 16- Demolition of the shanty town of La Perona



Author/Producer: Francesc Farriols

Date: 1980s

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 17- View of the crop fields of La Verneda and Saint Martin church



Author/Producer: Empresa Batlle (company)
Date: 1963
Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 18- Construction work in the once crop fields of La Verneda



Author: Empresa Batlle (company)
Date: 1964
Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 19- Blocks of La Pau



Author: Unknown

Date: Unknown

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

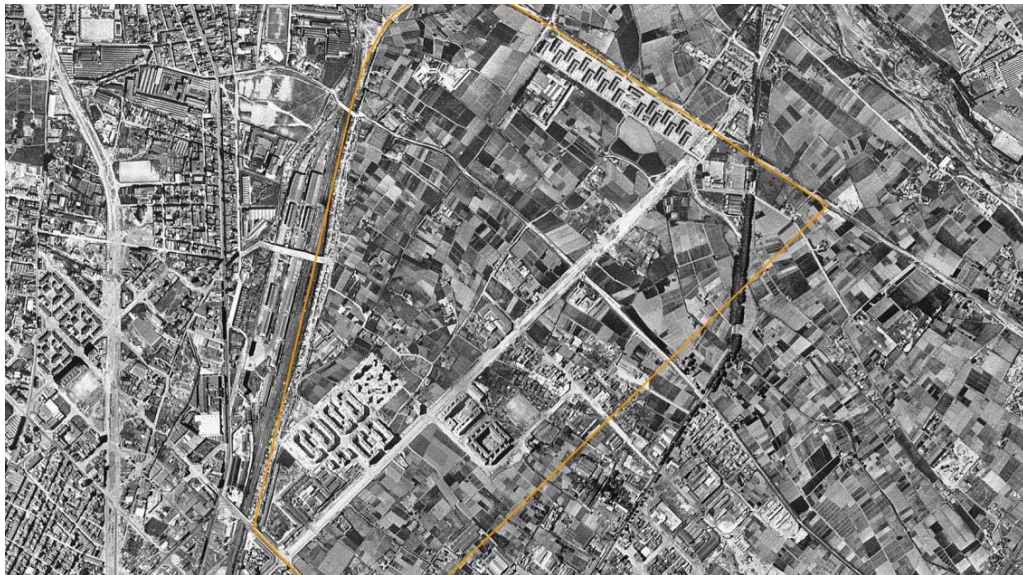
Illustration 20- Aerial photograph of La Verneda – Sant Martí in 1946



Date: 1946

Source: Cartographic and Geologic Institute of Catalonia
(Yellow delimitation line drawn by Bernat Pallares)

Illustration 21- Aerial photograph of La Verneda – Sant Martí in 1956



Date: 1956

Source: Cartographic and Geologic Institute of Catalonia
(Yellow delimitation line drawn by Bernat Pallares)

Illustration 22 - Aerial photograph of La Verneda – Sant Martí in 1986



Date: 1986

Source: Source: Cartographic and Geologic Institute of Catalonia
(Yellow delimitation line drawn by Bernat Pallares)

Illustration 23- A street of La Pau on a rainy day.



Author: Unknown

Date: 1975

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 24- Accumulation of garbage in front of a residential building in La Pau



Author/Producer: Postius
Date: 1974
Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 25- Unpaved Prim Street

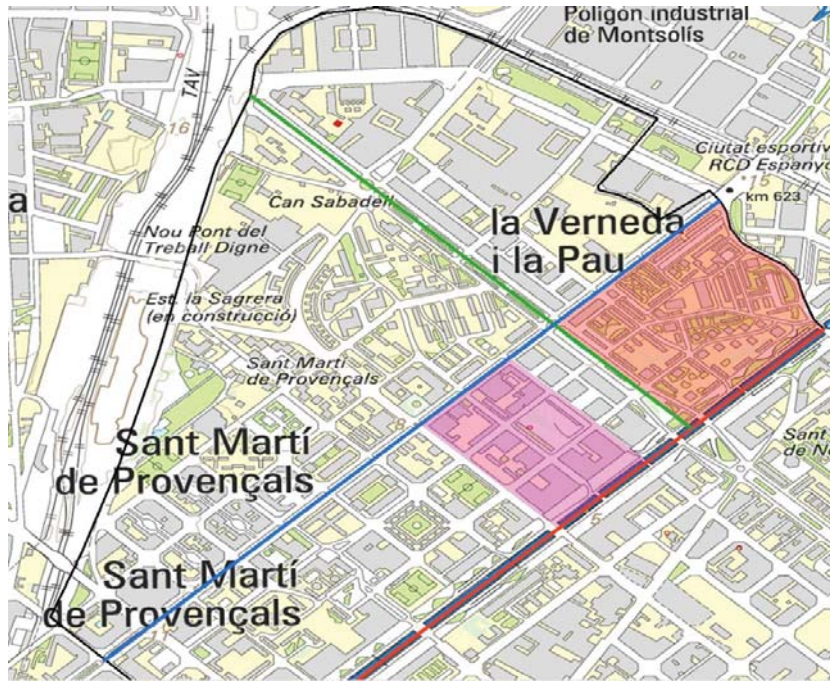


Author: Unknown

Date: 1985

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 26- Social barriers and different spaces in the neighborhood of La Verneda- Sant Martí as perceived by residents



Date: 2017

Source: Cartographic and Geologic Institute of Catalonia

(Delimitation lines and coloring by Anna Carrillo and Bernat Pallares)

Illustration 27- Neighbors of La Verneda demonstrate against the shanty town of La Perona



Author/Producer: Jordi García

Date: 1980

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 28- Neighbors of La Verneda watch a farm following the Town Council's attempt to demolish it.



Author: Unknown

Date: 1982

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 29- Inauguration of a play center in the farm Ca l'Arnó



Author/Producer: District of Sant Martí

Date: 1992

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 30- Demonstration of adult students of La Verneda for public education



Author: Unknown

Date: 1977-78

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 31- Adult students of La Verenda have class in the street as a protest for the delay in the opening of the Civic Center.

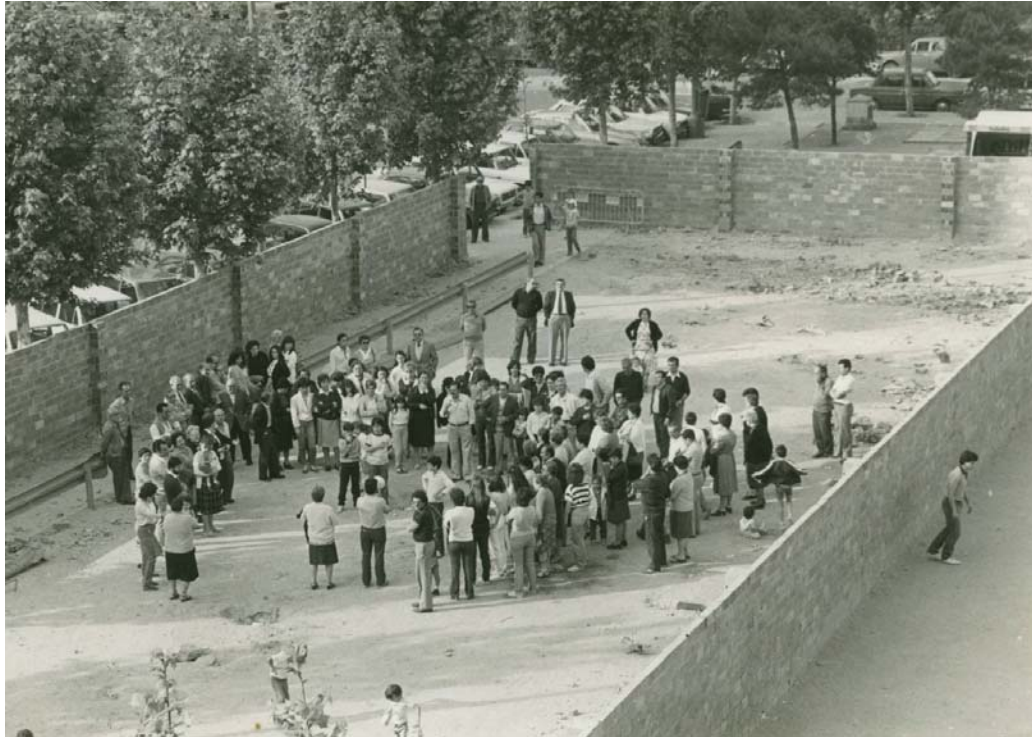


Author: Unknown

Date: 1982

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 32- Neighbors' meeting in the Square of the Porxes, surrounded by "the wall of shame".



Author/Produce: Jordi García

Date: 1982

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 33- Neighbors' of La Verneda claim a square for the neighborhood



Author/Producer: Neighbors' organization Sant Martí de Provençals
Date: 1982
Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 34- Inauguration of the Square of the Porxes



Author/Producer: District of Sant Martí

Date: 1994

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 35- Neighbors collecting signatures for public transport at the service of the neighborhood.



Author/Producer: Neighbors' organization Sant Martí de Provençals

Date: 1980

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 36- Protest for the coverage of the Gran Via fast-way.



Author/Producer: Neighbors' organization Sant Martí de Provençals

Date: 2000

Source: Municipal Archive District of Sant Martí

Illustration 37- “Building a school”, neighbors’ demand a public school.



Author/Producer: Unknown

Date: 1977

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 38- Neighbors' protest for a public hospital



Author/Producer: Unknown

Date: c. 1975

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 39- Neighbors' protest to claim abandoned sites for the neighborhood



Author/Producer: Robert

Date: August 31, 1977

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 40- Neighbors' protest against real estate speculation in the neighborhood



Author/Producer: Unknown

Date: 1977

Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 41- Neighbors' protest blocks the traffic

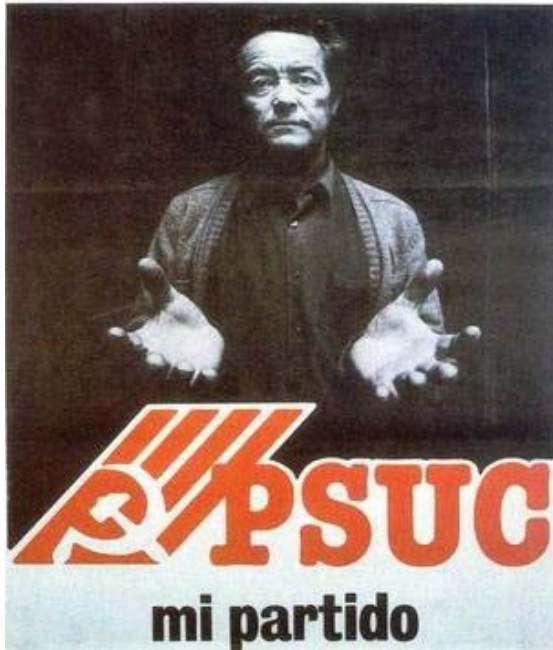


Author/Producer: Unknown

Date: 1982

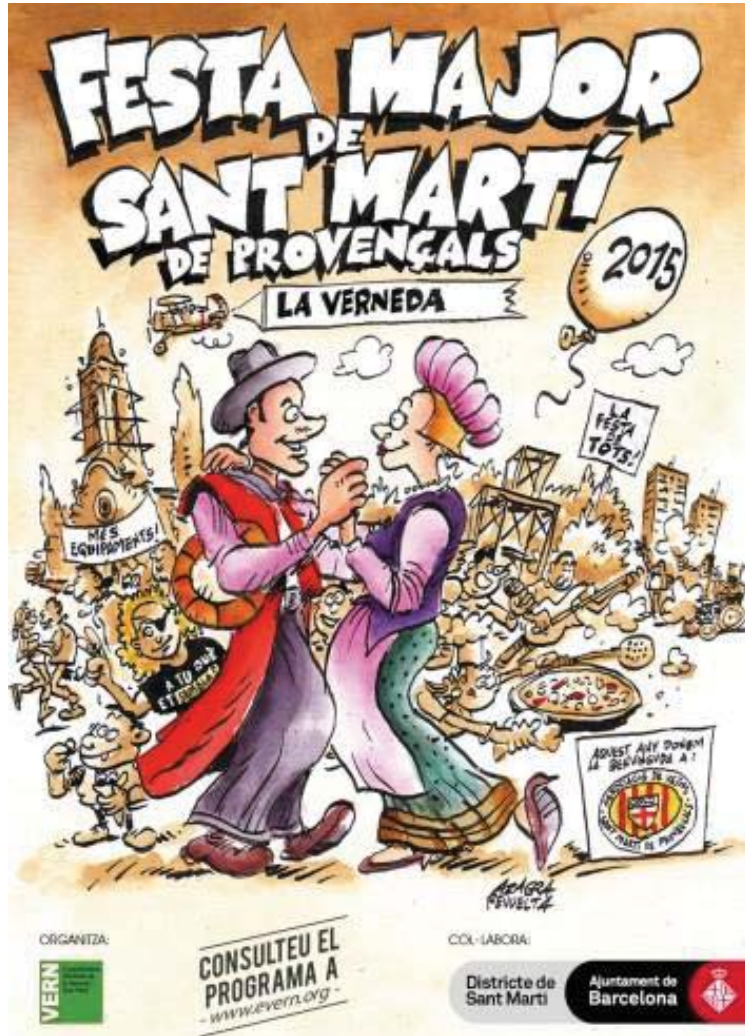
Source: Photographic Archive of Barcelona

Illustration 42- Electoral poster of the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia
Mis manos: mi capital



Source: Image copied from Romero, Luís. 2010. *Luís Romero, Textos Biográficos* [Luís Romero, Biography]. Written by Meritxell Diez. Barcelona: DeBarris.

Illustration 43- Poster of the Festival of La Verneda – Sant Martí 2015



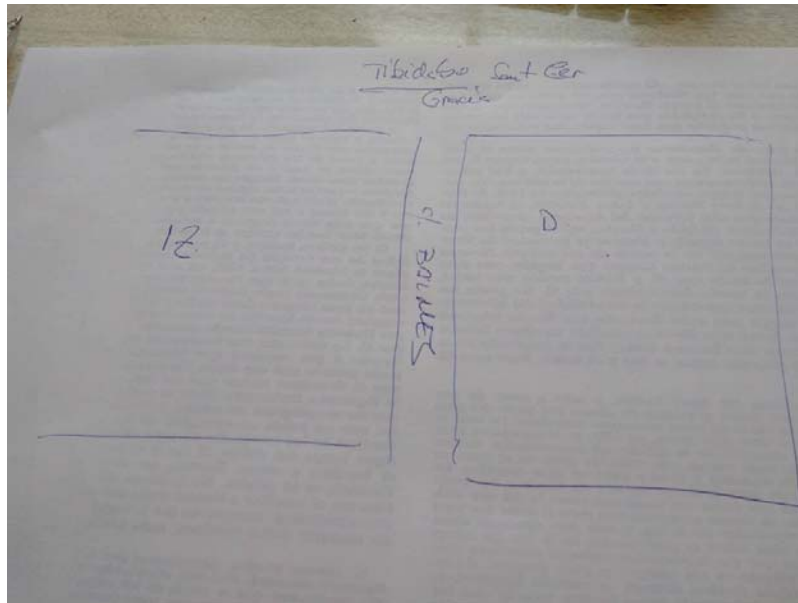
Source: Website of the Coordinator of Entities of La Verneda - Sant Martí.
<http://www.evern.org/?cat=13>

Illustration 44- Poster of the Festival of La Verneda – Sant Martí 2016



Source: Website of the Coordinator of Entities of La Verneda - Sant Martí.
<http://www.evern.org/>

Illustration 45. Barcelona's geographical distribution by social classes according to one interviewee.



Author: One interviewee. Photography taken by the researcher.
Data: April 6, 2016

Tables

Table 1. Name, age, and profession of the interviewees

Pseudonym	Age	Profession
Alex	19	Worker in family business
Pablo	21	Student
Mireia	22	Student
Iván	25	Unemployed
Emma	30	Primary school teacher
Guillem	32	Writer
Francisco	35	Religious leader
Laia	35	Social worker
Marta	37	Nurse
Marc	37	Mailman
Mónica	37	Security guard
Lucía	38	Teacher
Antonio	39	Inactive lathe operator
Alberto	40s	Locksmith
Judith	42	Informal care giver
Pilar	43	Hairdresser
Héctor	43	Computer technician
Maria	55	Educational psychologist
Montserrat	56	Nurse
Núria	57	Shop assistant
Isabel	59	Factory worker
David	59	Custodian
Gloria	61	Long term unemployed shop assistant
Paula	61	Informal care giver
Juan	64	Pre-retired construction worker
Andreu	67	Retired mechanic
Jordi	72	Retired bar owner
Elena	73	Housewife and retired secretary
Pere	78	Retired bank clerk
José	79	Retired construction worker
Miguel	85	Retired construction worker
Josefa	86	Retired secretary

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