ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	DEFYING EXPECTATIONS: ASSOCIATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN POOR COMMUNITIES IN ARGENTINA
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Alexis de Tocqueville noted that the key to democracy is "knowledge of how to combine." This dissertation focuses on the following question: Can participation in associations facilitate democracy within the communities in which they exist even if such associations are not democratically organized – *i.e*., vertical, hierarchical organizations. To consider this question, this dissertation explores a poor community's transition from a sparse to a highly developed associational space, and examines the impact of this process of democratization on social relations at both the associational and the personal levels (between leaders, participants, and non-participants). Specifically, I compare three different associational settings in a barrio in Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina -- *i.e*., a non-governmental organization, a religious network, and a political party network -- to assess whether democratization can occur with the construction and communication of symbolic meaning and objective practices by vertically structured, hierarchical

organizations. I analyze the interplays between inclusion and exclusion; solidarity and

generalized distrust; and inequality and protagonism. Ultimately, this dissertation

demonstrates how the configuration of social relations serves to legitimate and reproduce

civic life in poor communities.

DEFYING EXPECTATIONS: ASSOCIATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND
DEMOCRATIZATION IN POOR COMMUNITIES IN ARGENTINA

By

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Writing a dissertation is a process ridden with conflict. Before entering the Ph.D. program, I had no idea how hard it was going to be to create a dissertation proposal. I have always been full of ideas. Later, while I was in the field and collecting data for my dissertation, it was both at times nerve-racking and wonderful interspersed with moments of loneliness and company. Writing this dissertation was the most difficult step.

Of course I could not have done this alone. First and foremost I would like to thank my adviser, Patricio Korzeniewicz, who gave me constructive and critical advice along the way. I appreciate the wide latitude he gave me during my fieldwork to explore new ideas and directions. David Crocker, a member of the dissertation committee, provided guidance and support throughout the doctorate process and is a person full of humanity. Michael Woolcock, another member of the committee, originally inspired me to work on a doctorate in sociology and has provided guidance throughout the process. He has the marvelous combination of a strong work ethic, an incredible capacity to memorize and synthesize information and to see what is next on the horizon, along with a deep sense of responsibility and caring that makes him top in his field. I also want to acknowledge and thank the other members of my committee who provided constructive and helpful guidance: Reeve Vanneman, Jerald Hage and Judith Freidenberg. I would also like to thank Ken Conca, who for personal reasons could not be on my committee but still continued to provide guidance nevertheless. My utmost gratitude goes out to Joseph Lengermann who shouldered my teaching responsibilities during my fieldwork thus enabling me to travel to Argentina. I also was fortunate to have conversations with Javier Auyero which helped me incrementally due to his expertise in the area.

Kevin Minsky. It is no exaggeration to say that his incredible encouragement, tolerance, patience, understanding, respect, and financial support were critical for the production of this dissertation. He is a light in my life and I am very lucky to have him as my partner.

This dissertation is dedicated to two women Delia and Vicky. The works of these women were both subtle in fact that neither of them brought notice to themselves and yet their efforts had palpable effects in the community. Vicky remains an icon in the community and is an icon for me personally, in terms of her gentle and wise leadership style. She works tirelessly and has deep knowledge of community organizing. Even though she was extremely busy, she took out time to guide and converse with me for which I am ever grateful. Although I thought of her as the most important leader in the community for all sorts of reasons, I was surprised to find out she was paid very little compared to others. In addition, I saw that she was regularly looked over by outsiders perhaps due to very humble origins and gender. This did not bother her as much as it did me, an indication of her lack of personal pride.

Delia is the wonderful woman with whom I shared a deep friendship and respect. She was the main inspiration of this dissertation. She became personally involved in this dissertation, and helped me establish contacts and gave me advice. I had almost daily discussions with her about my ideas and thoughts on life in this shantytown. Though we were deeply divided along many social lines, we consciously strove to be together as equals. This was no mean feat as it meant that I had to learn how to wash clothes by hand and she had to learn to leave the house in my care to do her school work. She taught me so much about courage, love and social responsibility, and her presence in my life is a profound blessing.

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Prologue

In 2006, I lived in one of the many *poor neighborhoods* that had sprouted in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. It was approximately 40 kilometers from the capital of Argentina, Buenos Aires which meant a two hour bus and train rides in order to arrive in the center of Buenos Aires. The inhabitants were impoverished or lower-class, some were migrants from the interior, and there were also a large number of immigrants from neighboring countries. This place I call *Villa Campo,* because it was at the time I was there a cross between town ("villa") and countryside ("campo"). The residents had recently suffered from an economic crisis which climaxed in 2002, whereby the national unemployment rate rose above 25% and poverty levels skyrocketed. Since that time poverty levels have decreased to 23% in 2007 from 48% in 2003.[1] In 2001, the average *Villa Campo* resident had a 40% chance of being in extreme poverty (2001 national census).

The political party in power at the time was Justicialist political party led by Néstor Kirchner. The party was founded in 1945 by Juan Peron and is the largest political party in Argentina. This party generally promotes strong central government and freedom from foreign influences. According to peronists, one of their main missions is to assist and campaign for the causes of the poor which made this political party very present and popular concretely and figuratively in *Villa Campo*.

Villa Campo's growth from a rural area with limited avenues of civic participation to an urban area with a large number of associations and the changing social relations that have accompanied this shift provides an excellent context in which to consider the

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[1] Argentina Country Brief, worldbank.org, 7/23/2008.

relationship between *interactional* participation and expressions of citizenship. Indeed,

in the eighties, when residents had few choices and politicians had an almost

monopolistic stranglehold on the building of infrastructural development, there were far

less opportunities than there are today. Before there was a very different participatory

logic, one, I argue, that remains in place in some large, non-governmental organizations,

such as the one I studied.

Chapter 1: The *Relational Civic Process* and Democratization

In the dusty streets of *Villa Campo*, a poor barrio in the province of Buenos Aires, a small group of residents, including a middle-aged woman, Flor, stood on the side of the road of where people expected the president of the nation to pass. They planned to hold up placards pressing for paved roads that the municipal government promised during the last elections.

A woman working for the municipal government passed by and repeatedly told them, in an authoritative manner, to take down their placards. When they refused, she threatened to take their names. It was then that Flor replied saying that the national Constitution said they had the right to protest.

Just a few days earlier Flor had asked her civics teacher in a night school for adults run by the municipality, why, even though she paid her taxes, the government was not paving the roads in the barrio as they promised. He told her that it was because no one took the initiative to do anything. It was then she started to organize others to participate in a demonstration during the president's upcoming visit.

Several years earlier, a Catholic nun had formed a committee to build a daycare center (*guardería*) and community kitchen, the first in the area. In this project, Flor received training and became involved in the decision-making, the proposal writing, presentation and the accounting of the center. She had also received training on how to network with other *guarderías* and similar organizations both outside and inside the community.

The *guardería* was one of the many small initiatives that the nuns had started in the community giving informal education. Flor is presently one of the coordinators of another program of Re-evaluation counseling for women, explained as a liberation program based on the idea of self-help. Flor, who had participated to various degrees in the program according to the circumstances of her life at the time, explained how the program allowed her to see herself and the world around her differently and helped in her in other community work. "Because I was listened to, because there are things from childhood that you need to let go; if not it is a *cargo* (weight). Letting things go frees your manner of thinking. I decided I could return and finish my schooling at night despite of all the difficulties that it entails … It helped me to see *más allá* (further ahead), things I had not seen before. There are some people with a lot of studies, and so on, but everyone has their problems."

Meanwhile, a non-governmental organization (NGO), called "*Manejo*," organized a community effort to get the houses on the streets where Flor lives to an innovative "water for all" project. Neighbors chose Flor as a volunteer representative for her block for this NGO initiative. Her job was to circulate information on the association's activities, and in turn communicating to the association the opinions of neighbors. Another woman from the community exclaimed that participating in *Manejo* allowed her to leave the house, learn about her community, and gave her an opportunity for public speaking. The NGO describes itself as "an inter-institutional network of 45 distinct organizations and is a fundamental part of a Management Model allowing poor

communities to have access to infrastructure services" (translated from the organization's website).

These opening vignettes set up the main story of this dissertation. Associational networks, even when not democratically organized, can be crucial in promoting democratization processes and giving vulnerable populations with both human and symbolic capital in order to participate in public life.

I am not only suggesting that hierarchical associations do not limit democratic processes, but, like one of the many paradoxes of human life, may even help support democratization, limiting dependency on external institutions, increasing spaces for choices and preparing the way so that people can treat each other as truly equal. This argument is supported by the numerous interviews and observations of the persons in *Villa Campo* as I will demonstrate throughout this paper.

Another point that comes from Flor's history of civic participation is that she gained different qualities from participating in each of these associational networks. An important reason that Flor's active civic life was so varied was that there were diverse associational networks, there was not a monopoly. These associational networks had different objectives and practices. Furthermore, these associational networks were all in communication, relating, with one another, directly and indirectly. Each association's activities, practices and rhetoric were often in response to the activities, practices and rhetoric in other associations.

The Setting: Villa Campo

In 2006, I lived for six months in a poor *barrio* on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and witnessed the everyday obstacles that local residents faced in trying to have a dignified life -- *e.g.*, their isolation; the fear that outsiders have of them; the garbage that outsiders bring into the community; the polluting smoke from all the garbage that causes residents to get respiratory illnesses; the violence at every level; teachers who don't even bother showing up to classes; outsiders coming in taking credit for the work that the community had done; the dirt roads that make travel next to impossible when it rains. Especially notable the overbearing dirt, dust and the stench of garbage in the air that all symbolize the complete lack of respect these local residents receive from the outside world. If struggling with the outside world was not enough, the residents' daily struggles with fellow neighbors were; from violent burglaries as well as theft, to the promiscuity that fuelled constant suspicion between couples. The worst cases of physical violence occurred in the homes where physical and sexual abuse was almost considered normal. Neighbors, as well as family members, insulted each other; calling each other names like "*bruto*" (dumb one) or "*negro*" (dark one). This is a common picture of the harsh reality lived in a poor community and was often how people from *Villa Campo* described it. Their description, in my experience does contain some truth, but it is ultimately coated in one color and therefore is only part of the reality. Despite all of the general distrust and suspicion, the people living in *Villa Campo* formed a sense of community. They did this by sharing food and medicine, chatting and joking, minding one another's houses and children occasionally and, most importantly, recognizing their common location in the social map of Argentina.

In this dissertation, I will focus on how both associational participants and nonparticipants promoted democratization within their community (despite the named influences) through their interactions with support--albeit often indirect--of associations. As this is the focus of the dissertation, I do not want to alternatively convey that the community was a virtuous spot of sunny yellow in an area of squalor. Outlining all of the complexity of the community is far beyond the reach of this dissertation.

My home during my ethnographic research was situated in a municipality near *Villa Campo* where some community leaders helped me to find a place. My host was a woman in her fifties named Flor, the same woman whose stories introduce this chapter. In many ways, Flor was a well respected woman who lived in the community. She was a widowed grandmother and very helpful to *Villa Campo* and her fellow neighbors. Different from many others I met in the community and others shared my opinion, was that Flor was independent, she was her own boss and did not want to be seen as working for anyone else or under anyone else's rules. She ran a little shop out of the window of her house (the kiosk), and occasionally cleaned houses on her own terms and received orders to cook food. Flor, a native of Santiago del Estero Province, was taken out of school at a young age, and at the time of my research was trying to finish high school classes at night. With the support of her neighbors, she was able to start her own business (the kiosk) when her husband was disabled by a stroke. Flor strongly valued responsibility and independence, and she tried to exemplify these values by avoiding handouts (government or otherwise) except in emergencies, and by having only one child in a community where the norm was for women to have many. During my time living in her house, I wondered if her business was a financially successful one, in part due to her

lack of bookkeeping and her generosity with neighbors. Yet, Flor never said anything

that insinuated that she felt that she lacked options or felt trapped in this poor *barrio*. She

was impressed with my life choices and independence ("*son muy independiente*

Ustedes") and often stressed the importance of education and her desire to pursue her

own education.

<u>*The Three Associational Networks*</u>

The NGO Network

There are three major associational networks in this community: they are non-

governmental, religious and political. The NGO network (*Manejo*) became well-known

after winning extensive funding for a project submitted implementing a water project in

the community. Although *Manejo* received much of its funding based on claims that it

was grassroots, in many ways, it appeared to function as a vertical associational network.

There are a core group of five representatives who issue press releases, circulate plans of

action, and formulate ideas for community development, the slogan "*Unidos Para*

Crecer" (united to grow) is used to symbolize the solidarity of many member

organizations. This centralized coordination committee indicates centralized decision-

making practices even though non-governmental organizations are known for being

decentralized structures. The associational space also showed the relative polarity

between community members and leaders, and vertical civic interactions predominated.

These features of civic life at *Manejo* also served to identify the association, in the minds

of Villa Campo residents, as being connected to politicians (*politicos*).

The Religious Network

In 1983, a parish was built in Villa Campo by the Catholic Church to develop the spiritual life in the community by setting up the first chapel in the locality. The priests and nuns serve the community in a personal capacity by participating in associations other than those explicitly associated with the Catholic Church. Community members who were instrumental in establishing the parish had a history in community organizing, and in particular, many were involved in the Community Council established in the mid-eighties. These activities included holding discussion groups, providing food for the poorest in the community, and picking up garbage in community centers. In *Villa Campo* today, religious associations, and by extension their members, are involved in the most vigorous civic work. In many cases, relations between leaders and community members in this religious associational setting were consciously designed to produce social democratization at the level of personal interaction. Personal interactions--combined with acts of deference, reciprocity, and mutuality--were recognition of citizenship. Ultimately, the religious associations served as spaces where community members developed civic entitlements and civic recognition. The civic meanings produced by their work served as a powerful collective undermining of social inequalities–*i.e.,* every person deserves respect. The nuns, particularly, supported the idea that poor people have the right, and the duty to basic necessities and to speak out for their rights.

The Political Party Network

Within *Villa Campo's* field of associations, the political party members occupied a low position. Their activities included organizing rallies and teach-ins, getting people to vote for their parties during elections, as well as implementing municipal programs in the community such as housing and literacy classes. Political brokers and the people

associated with them were strongly viewed as dishonest and disreputable people. *Villa Campo* residents viewed their activities as necessary at times, but of low quality in contrast to associations where oversight, leadership, and associational policies ensured at least a demonstration of professionalism. It was the bad image of the political network and their unscrupulous, unrestrained political brokers that made religious associations and non-governmental organizations appear as a sort of haven by comparison.

For political party members, the boundaries between "authentic"' participation and theatre were muddled. Though participants of the better-regarded associational networks were not necessarily regulars in the political network, they were from the same class that was "struggling-to-make-ends-meet." Sometimes they needed to patronize the extensive political network. This very real socio-political competition, particularly between the NGO network and the political party members, had begun to drive new development in *Villa Campo*. The NGO leaders also recognized the symbolic capital their association had commanded was threatened by their social similarity to the political parties. NGO leaders in the community began to create new civic practices, seeking to distinguish themselves from untrustworthy politicians, yet, many times, with many of the same language and practices.

In *Villa Campo*, there is a saying among the residents with respect to participation in formal institutions: "*no me vendo,*" or "I don't sell myself." Residents often repeated this to me when describing their participation in these associations. They wanted me to know that they were participating in these associations in a conscious manner and, more importantly, were not supporting something that they do not believe in just to get material

goods that is so commonplace in clientelism. In this dissertation, I will demonstrate that the participants in these associations used the ideas and insights they gained in their own civic initiatives and through interactions with their fellow neighbors.

Argument: As opposed to what Existing Literature tells us, Vertical Organizations Can Facilitate Democratization --

According to Robert Putnam (2000), the lived experience of civic life can be an integral part of what participation produces, as he demonstrates in his study of participation in American bowling leagues. Putnam argues that bowling leagues serve as sites for the enactment and legitimation of democratic relations and understandings through participants' social engagement. Part of what participants do, Tocqueville and others (Ammerman 2005; Putnam 2000; Tocqueville 1939) argue, is to *recognize* themselves and others as part of a greater network; a recognition that in fact constructs a sense of collective civic responsibility. Indeed, because civic *structure* simultaneously affects civic *relations*, Putnam argues that bowling leagues and other similar settings "explore the challenge of reconciling cohesion (bonding) and heterogeneity (bridging)" (2000:10) and hence can reconstruct relations and boundaries between social groups. Looking at the structure of the organization is important because, as Putnam argues in his study, *civic dispositions are constituted through networks* and "a wide range of empirical evidence that the quality of public life and the performance of social institutions (and not only in America) are indeed powerfully influenced by norms and networks of civic engagement" (1993:66).

In addition, and in response to Putnam's work, a number of other studies consider how beliefs about fellow citizens shape the organization of participation and participatory

strategies in associations (Ulslaner 2002) or how civic engagement shapes the patterns of civic norms (Putnam's 1993 study of political institutions in Italy is exemplary; *see also* Ikegami's exploration of Japanese aesthetic associations). These and other works not only challenge the division of structure and culture into separate theoretical and research agendas, they raise questions about how we theorize and empirically study civic life.[2]

This dissertation builds upon these works by proposing a particular approach – *i.e.,* a comparative ethnography of democratization and civic processes. Specifically, I make a three-way comparison of these associational settings in this poor neighborhood in Argentina--a NGO, a religious network, and a local political party network –and argue (based on empirical ethnographic data)–that existing literature analyzing vertical organizations fails almost always to predict that democratic tendencies can be facilitated in the participants of these organizations.

As I will discuss below, the existing literature that focuses on local democratization processes typically concludes that there are profound differences in social outcomes between vertical-type and horizontal-type organizations. Vertical-type organizations are identified as hierarchical, inegalitarian, centralized, in which participation is limited and leaders only have authority to decide how the organization is run. These organizations are viewed, in essence, as anti-democratic (authoritarian). Horizontal-type organizations are defined as being participatory, decentralized, where participation is rationalized, and viewed, in essence, as democratic. In horizontal-type organizations, participants are more likely to gain public action skills and make social connections. Vertical-type organizations, on the other hand, rather than having civic

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[2] There are parallels between research that challenges the civil society/identity divide and feminist critiques of the division between collective action and identity.

goals, are seen as being more oriented towards providing services, create dependency and not giving their members the opportunity to increase their capacities to be protagonists. In sum, horizontal-type organizations lead to more democratic outcomes than vertical-type organizations. In reality, organizations have both vertical and horizontal elements.

Typically, associational structures and practices that are horizontal in nature are viewed as being more democratic. The criteria for whether practices and structures are horizontal or vertical are summarized in Table 1.1 below:

TABLE 1.1: Associational Structures and Practices

	Horizontal (commonly viewed as democratic)	Vertical (commonly viewed as non-democratic)
Associational structures and practices	Decentralized; responsibility is dispersed; accountability and transparency	Centralized; rules of participation are defined according to roles; servicing; paternalism
Decision-making processes	Deliberative; inclusive; transparent	Authoritative decision-making; exclusive
Leadership	Democratically elected by the general membership	Appointed
Information	Information is widely dispersed	Only information approved by authorities dispersed
External Relations	Wide network with similar associations	Links with more powerful bodies: the state, national and international religious authorities, international organizations

Below are simple organizational maps of the three associational networks in order to show their organizational relations (both horizontal and vertical):

Community NGO Network
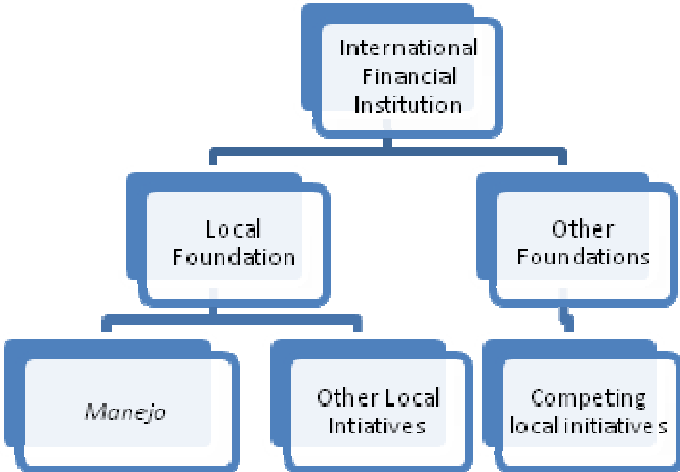
Catholic Church Network
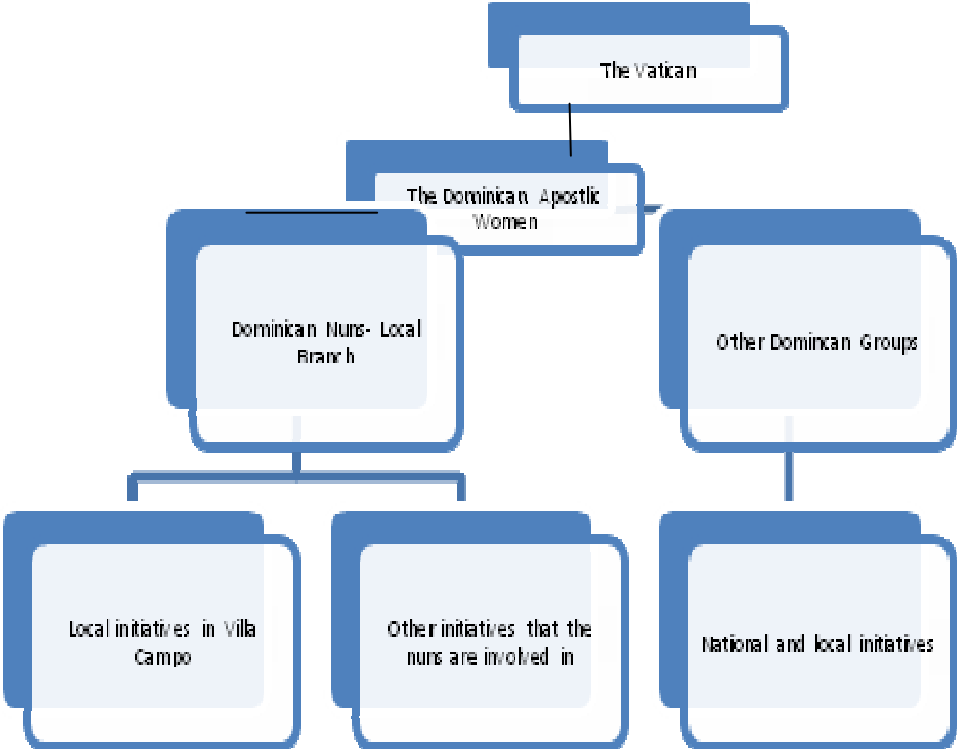
Peronist Political Party Network
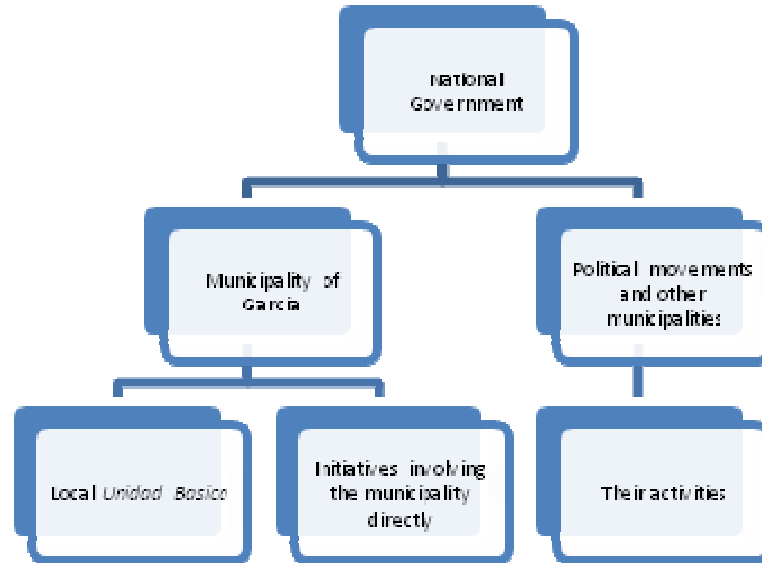
Each of these associational networks has a different style of engagement within *Villa Campo*. I argue that the distinctions the literature normally makes between associations about the quality of participation – vertical vs. horizontal -- are oversimplified and incorrect (see for example Tilly 2004; Levine 1993, Ireland 1999; Putnam 1993; and Bain et. al. 2002). Specifically, much of the prior literature argues that participation of members in vertical-type associations is limited and leaders have the ultimate authority; whereas horizontal-type associations are viewed as more supportive to the formation of citizens as members are more likely to gain public action skills and form egalitarian relations. This argument is presented by Robert Putnam's study of Italy (1993). He argues that horizontal ties—those that bridged groups but not strata—were more useful for democracy than vertical ties—which tended to embed individuals into narrow patronage relationships.

In contrast, my research demonstrates that these distinct types of associations (including vertical-type organizations) all play a role in a larger process of democratization and social change in this *barrio*, and in poor communities in general. Vertical connections may be valuable for their ability to gather and disperse civic information or mobilizing for collective action (see Lazarsfeld, et al. 1948; Dahl 1961; Robinson 1976; Huckfeldt 2001).

Evidence suggests that even in vertical, hierarchical structures there may be room for some form of horizontal-like, grassroots participation and vice-versa. As all associations have formal models of participation – *i.e.*, rules and regulations for the engagement of members – there are also forms of participation in both "vertical" and "horizontal" associations that take place "unregulated by rationalized conventions" (Lipset 1956; Stark 1989:644-645). Therefore, horizontal "web-like" networks may form within formally vertical-type organizations, and vertical hierarchical networks may form within formally horizontal-type associations. Such variations of participation suggest that local-level democratization is a process that may include both horizontal and vertical networks associations.

Throughout this dissertation, the working concept of "democracy" will refer to the conditions in the left-handed column of Table 1.2. This table demonstrates how I will operationalize civic outcomes as democratic or undemocratic. Democracy, in this project, is a set of indicators that demonstrates if there is more or less democracy, but does not treat democracy as an end product. These primarily individual-level indicators stem primarily from that literature on social capital and democracy as well as the literature on clientelism (see for example, Crocker 2007; O'Donnell 1996; Putnam 1993).

TABLE 1.2: Indicators of Democratic Outcomes

Democratic	**Non-democratic**
Generalized trust	Categorical distrust
Equality of participation and voice	Inequality of participation and voice
Decision-making practices are deliberative and inclusive	Decision-making practices are authoritative and exclusive
Protagonism and respect for others	Paternalism and righteousness
Heterogeneous membership	Homogeneous membership

The tensions and potential conflict between the practice of democracy and the development of modern and effective bureaucratic associations have long been of great concern to scholars of socio-political development. Max Weber suggested that "'democracy' as such is opposed to the 'rule' of bureaucracy, in spite and perhaps because of its unavoidable yet unintended promotion of bureaucratization" (Weber 1946: 231). By this he meant that the cornerstone of modern bureaucratic organization, the separation between the leadership entrusted with shaping policy and the personnel charged with enacting it, may be undermined by democratic principles as well as simultaneously promoting bureaucratization. In principle, democracy's egalitarian disposition proscribes the emergence of an insulated group, making it difficult to not set up an alternative hierarchy (Gingrich 2007:2).

In reality, associational networks demonstrate these tensions, containing both bureaucratic and democratic elements, centralized and decentralized practices. As bureaucracy is efficient but exclusive, and democracy is time-consuming and inclusive,

theoretically it can be assumed that associations combine both bureaucratic and democratic elements. For example, in the case of the Catholic Church network in *Villa Campo*, the associational network may be conceived as simultaneously containing both bureaucratized and hierarchical and democratic features.

Over the past 20 years, *Villa Campo* has gone through a rapid rural-to-urban structural transition because of a large increase in population. It has a high density of civil society associations and a record of very successful projects that have developed over a span of just over two decades. During this period, there have been severe economic and political crises. In the process, *Villa Campo* has shifted from a "monopolistic" associational climate to one that is pluralistic, and in many ways, multidimensional. New socio-economic conditions in *Villa Campo* are reconfiguring social relations and citizenship in particular. These social changes are increasingly understood through a discourse that depicts the rise in the number of associations as both positive and important while portraying government (especially at the municipal level) as a tarnished institution and not part of *Villa Campo*'s success.

Some associations are more "hierarchical," and others are more "democratic." A reason for this vertical-horizontal spectrum may be related to the diverse associational activities. An association dedicated to providing public services to its members (*Manejo*), for example, will face a different mixture of verticalities and horizontalities than would an association intended to educate or distribute information (the *Religiosos*). This is partially because of the exclusionary and bureaucratic problems endemic to service provision which favors efficiency over open participation, and partially because of the funding needed for the goods to be produced. Namely, service provision has very

specific needs such as money. Consequently, we might posit that the greater the funding the more likely vertical factors will be needed (Williamson 1985:53-54).

Associations have relations with other associations; some connections are much more bonding than others; some are hierarchical and others more egalitarian. Not a lot of attention has been paid to relationships between associations (Cornwell and Harrison 2004) in terms of the influence that they have and the associational context and the influence they have on non-members. In the case of *Villa Campo*, for example, there is a high level of embeddedness; meaning that many community participants are involved in various initiatives and therefore create linkages between associations, as well as to nonparticipants. A lot of this has to do with the historical work of the nuns; for example, it is important to note that most of the community leaders, particularly the female ones, had been trained by the nuns on issues such as leadership and human rights. The complex mix of associational networks is not only at the level of leaders, but is carried out through the participants' own networking within the community. It is a way for people to trade opinions and information on various associations. Through these linkages, a particular associational culture has developed. Various associations are embedded in a particular associational context; the links are created by members. Leaders are always viewed as important, but community volunteers are also doing civic work.

In this dissertation, the relationships between leaders and members, and between members and fellow residents in the community (including other members) amongst themselves (see Figure 1.1) are the focus in order to assess how different associations do different types of civic work in terms of influencing relationships.

Figure 1.1: The associational networks will be compared on the basis of these relationships. The purpose of this comparison is to assess not only how associational participation influences the civic lives of community participants, but how they in turn impact the civic process in Villa Campo.
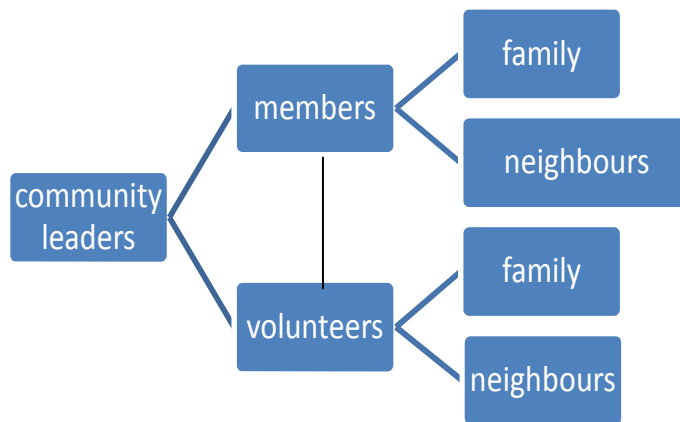
Influences of Relations Within and Between Associations

This dissertation explores how everyday experiences of relating are organized and understood in a poor community, *Villa Campo*, by focusing upon settings where people from differing social backgrounds encounter one another and combine in different ways: associations. It is mainly within associations and settings of civic participation more generally, that civic relations consciously happen and are strengthened. *Villa Campo* is a social context where new ways of organizing and social interactions arise and existing patterns are challenged. This "unsettled cultural" period (Swidler 1986) provides a unique opportunity to understand how systems of social change are constructed and justified on a daily basis. In poor communities' associational settings, performances of

social relations and of civic difference in particular, shed light on the experience of social change in everyday life.

This dissertation is not only a study of relations in poor communities; it is also an investigation of participation. In the last few decades, scholars have turned their attention to civic participation identifying a host of issues either specific to or neglected by the established literature on institutional, or "top-down" democracy (Tilly 2004:4). These scholars have argued that in order to understand civic participation, an expanding and dominant topic in democratic countries, we need to think about how associations are organized, what kinds of participation practices leaders use, and even what might be deemed "participation" in the first place.

While the concerns explored in studies of civic participation have opened up a range of new and important questions for scholars of civil society, at the same time linkages between the organization of civil society and the broader structures of social relations remain unclear. As Michael Edwards (2004:53) has argued, "the connections between a strong civil society (measured by a healthy associational ecosystem) and a society that is strong and civil (defined as one considered "good" by the majority of its citizens) are complex and contingent." Critical studies that understand the effects associations have within a context of civic relations are small in number.

New Analytical Tool: Relational Civic Process

At the heart of this dissertation lies the central argument that relations through associations--*among* leaders, participants, and nonparticipants--and *between* associations play a key role in the construction and reproduction of broader social relations. To make

this argument, I examine these relations in order to determine how they influence relations between neighbors (participants and nonparticipants). I found that associational relations influenced conversations, activities and social networks. I develop the concept of the "*relational civic process"* in order to explore how democratization can be created around the developments and the impediments of associational life.

The *relational civic process* occurs when engagement and participation activities are organized in relation to —and distinct from — other similar associational settings, placing associations in direct dialogue with one another. As I will explain below, *relational civic processes* are embedded in broader social relations and draw upon wider social, cultural, and historical meanings. At the same time, I argue, what Bourdieu called a "field," a relational configuration of actors and the settings in which they operate (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1992), creates any given set of *relational civic processes*. The actual relationships of the field are always determined by a specific context, in this case a single locality.

Development, in the form of "democratic development," is a key aspect of "knowledge of how to combine" that produces, and is in turn produced by, objective and subjective social structures (Tocqueville 1939). The construction of democratization, then, is closely tied to structures of human relations.

Associations in a *relational civic process* do *civic work*, in two senses. First, associations produce combinations at the organizational level as leaders engage and manage participants in ways that either distinguish or relate their association to other *associational settings*. Second, participatory interactions create social relations among categories of *individuals* — especially leaders and participants — that both draw upon

and help construct and reconstruct broader patterns of social relations. Social distance and boundaries in civic participatory settings are key indicators of civic democratization, according to the literature on social capital (Putnam 1995, 2000). These social boundaries may be deteriorated or strengthened at the associational or individual level.

When and where might we expect to find civil society organized relationally? Below I explore two key conditions for the *relational civic process* and democratization. The first is the existence of a diverse population, and the second is the existence of a diverse associational field.

More specifically, the first condition refers to interactions between different social categories—for example, in cases where the participants and leaders are from different social categories. The second condition requires that participatory interactions be contained within a relational field of participation in which leaders, participants, and non-participants in one setting consciously organize their actions *in relation to* other settings and groups of people in their field.

Participation and Democratization

Tocqueville's work on the social creation of democracy, along with sociological traditions such as social network theory (Bearman 1993, Gould 1995) and political sociology (Fishman 2004; Skocpol 1979, 1992, 1994; Tilly 1978, 1986, 1990) remind us that the construction, distinction, and maintenance of social combinations is embedded in every facet of social life. Associations are also spaces where social democratization is shaped and civic dispositions carried out. The argument, however, goes further: with the right combinations, certain forms of participation *create* new social relationships, and for

this reason, they are especially powerful sites for influencing and establishing democratic development. We must take this creation of democratization into account when examining such forms of participation.

In this dissertation, I demonstrate that in interactive participatory settings civic education is a critical result of these interactions. I argue that democratization happens on two levels: the *institutional* and the *interactional*. In the institutional, associations engage in practices of civic engagement, relying upon leadership and participation practices to distinguish themselves from other institutions, which, in turn, causes associations to change their practices to be more popular. In the *interactional*, associational leaders create democratic or undemocratic outcomes in the course of participatory interactions by recognizing, or not, participants' civic capabilities and circumstances in which they live which define these capabilities. Both levels of my argument assume that participatory settings are spaces where residents are able to seek and gain control over their own lives and thus are important spaces for acts of citizenship. Associations organize and manage participants' actions as they attempt to secure residents' participation.

Tocqueville by no means argued that democratization took place in diverse associational settings. However, as my research reveals, participation is especially likely to be organized relationally to increase democratization when there are diverse associational types.

In a diverse associational environment, I suggest, that interactive participation -- compared to participatory processes with limited interaction between different social groups -- engages not only participants and leaders but also residents who did not

participate in associations. The interaction itself, and the civic meanings contained within it, are an integral part of what is created and learned.

The Forces in Civic Work

Analyses tend to be divided between democracy as certain outcomes in the socio-political order vs. democracy as a set of meanings, power, and experiences. In light of this, my discussion on civic relations and participation includes three key points. First, I suggest that the customary separation of democratic development into structural and cultural modes of analysis, and the consequent separation of studies of civic structures and outcomes from studies of lived civic experiences and knowledge, results in an impoverished understanding of how civic work operates in the social environment. This is largely because, as I have argued, interactive structures of associations produce specific civic meanings and experiences—meanings and experiences that are indirectly learned by non-participants.

Two additional points follow from this. Second, we need to follow Tocqueville's lead and understand the democratic citizen as the result of the complex mediation between socio-political (material) and cultural (immaterial) forces. Third, to understand how citizenship is created, maintained, and experienced through interactive forms of associations in a context, we need to adopt an *interactional* approach to understanding associations. This simply is looking at the interactions that take place in institutional and personal spheres.

In what follows, I argue that while the distinction between socio-cultural beliefs and the organizational structure is useful, the relationship between the two, especially in

civil society, must be conceptualized as closely connected. The relationship between

culture and structure needs to include both how socio-political spheres structure cultural

understandings as well as how ideology shapes the socio-political realm, including the

outcomes themselves. It is difficult to distinguish between the material world and

immaterial forces because they are hard to separate one from the other.

Splits in the literature on democracy are reproduced in social scientific

explorations of political parties and clientelism.[3] Indeed, works on clientelism, such as

James W. McGuire's (1997) *Peronism without Peron: Unions, Parties and Democracy in*

Argentina and Javier Auyero's (2000) *Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival*

Networks and the Legacy of Evita, argue that the key factor shaping the organization of

participation is leaders' need to extract participants' active support. Participants and their

civic activities are defined by their positions in the social hierarchy, and the poor are used

as a source of electoral support. Civic engagement is understood as when "destitute

people who do not *mobilize* in the usual sense of the term, without, however, being in any

way *passive*" (Auyero 2000: 217). Poor communities are sites where political

expropriation of political power actually takes place. Such studies by no means neglect

the cultural aspects of political domination, and poor communities, as a site, become the

key locale for analyzing socio-political relations.[4]

Studies of civil society that consider socially-constructed identities also tend to

retain an emphasis on structure (McAdam and Snow 2000). Many scholars have detailed

how identities formed outside the associational setting — *e.g*., class, racial, generational,

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[3] The primary example of how these clientelistic networks are operationalized is when political party
members (brokers) provide desired goods to poor women and men (clients) in exchange for votes and
demonstrations of support (Auyero 2001; Gay 1990).

[4] A large body of work expands on the insights and questions raised in the literature on clientelism. For
recent work on the topic using Argentina as a case study see: Auyero (2003), Calvo and Morillo (2004),
Merklen (2005), and Stokes (2005).

place-based (nationalism) — impinge upon associational cultures and participant

identities (Levine 1993; Ireland 1999; Paxton 1999, 2002; Putnam 1993, 2000) and even

how these "external" identities may be deployed by leaders to bolster participation

loyalty or may be drawn upon by participants to organize their own civic lives (Barber

1998, Edwards 2004, James 1988). In some instances, associations may be designed in a

manner that challenges hierarchies from outside the associational environment (Gibson

and Woolcock 2008). In the end, however, the actual organization of associations

remains largely independent of, even if influenced by, cultural forces in these studies.

The central dynamic of civil society remains that of participation, and cultural forces

simply interact with associational environments that are assumed *already* to have a

certain structure.

By contrast, cultural analyses challenge the primacy of the structuralist paradigm

(Sewell 1994). These studies have argued that patterns of identity are crucial elements of

social coherence, delineating boundaries between social groupings (Bourdieu 1999,

Brubaker and Cooper 2000, Ikegami 2005, Moore and Kimmerling 1995, Sewell 1994).

Nevertheless, when the sociology of identity considers questions of development,

inequality, and citizenship, it tends to ignore the connections of these phenomena to the

organization of civil society.

The separation of studies of civil society from those of culture, a split that creates

and sustains the division between structural and cultural definitions of democracy, has

shaped the study of civic life. In part because the individualistic bias in the literature on

citizenship in the public sphere, studies of participation usually avoid questions of civic

relations altogether, instead exploring issues of autonomy and control over one's own

affairs. The result, Henri Englund (2006) has argued, is a focus on the individual and questions of individual rights and selfhood rather than issues such as domination and subordination, power relations in associations, and broader structures of inequality.

The presence of non-participants (residents) in associational settings also complicates considerations of civic life in what Ernesto Sabato (2001:13) labeled "nests of democracy." While sociologists have produced innovative research on the complexity of manipulative strategies on the part of leaders, participants' passiveness, and the role of non-participants in such settings (Auyero 2000, Ireland 1999, Levine 1993, Mann 2005, Putnam 1993, Tilly 2004), none of these studies highlights the ways in which participation and interactions between participants and non-participants may also, and centrally, involve what Almond and Verba term "civic culture" (1963) as well as the construction of varying shades of 'civicness.'

How then to investigate the relational and subjective aspects of "civicness"? One strategy for linking culture (beliefs of what is legitimate, acceptable) to associational structures (and the organization of civic action in particular) lies in Rogers Brubaker's explorations of symbolic power and, through his efforts, bridging socio-political and ideological definitions of citizenship. In *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992*)*, Brubaker theorized the concept of citizenship. Citizenship, according to this formulation, is not reducible to state (or in this case, associational) functions, for example access to certain programs, but rather through the interaction between structural and cultural factors and the complex mediation between the political environment and culture. Brubaker portrays all of these different institutional functions as minor to the idea of who is, and who is not, a citizen (1992:182). A growing body of research that

explores the social dimensions of the construction, maintenance, reproduction of civic action and identity rejects what Giddens calls "the duality of structure" (1984:25) between individual agency and the social practices.

Ariel Armony (2004) points to civil society as a key site of investigation into exploring the specific ways in which social (and moral) categories actually operate to differentiate and distance people. If we are to take seriously the connections that Tocqueville identifies between political participation and culture, then we must recognize that civic dispositions and distinctions can be produced and reproduced through civic interactions and through the organization of civil society as much as they can at the state level.

Performing Participation

In a book entitled *Citizenship* (2000), Keith Faulks portrays both ideal and empirical conceptualizations of citizenship. He writes, "It recognizes the dignity of the individual but at the same time reaffirms the social context in which the individual acts" (2000:5). Social structure and objective, material conditions limit and shape individual dispositions through what Bourdieu (1977) terms the *habitus*, but structures do not mechanistically generate social practices. As Faulks has suggested, "a key defining characteristic of citizenship, and what differentiates it most from mere subjecthood, is an ethic of participation" (2000:4). Perhaps we can even go further than that and view citizenship as "an activity in which categorization, structures, dispositions, and social

choice combine" (Wilkes 1990:123; note that he was discussing the concept of social class).[5]

This formulation of civic work as a way of realizing citizenship as a social practice directs our attention to social interaction as a fruitful site for exploring how citizenship operates in everyday life. Brubaker (1992:23) has suggested that the symbolic boundaries that inform civic identities can be located in Weber's idea of open and closed social relationships, an idea that can apply at both the interactional as well as the macro-sociological or structural levels.

Exploring citizenship as a social practice can be found in scholarship that seeks to understand how politics is recognized and reproduced through social interaction. Javier Auyero (2000) takes this approach in his study of clientelism in Argentina, which draws upon Goffman's and Bourdieu's work and symbolic interactionism more broadly to construct a performance view of the culture of clientelism. Auyero argues that Goffman's work can provide an interactionist approach to politics in which "actors present themselves and their activity in public interactions that serve to influence any of the other participants in the interaction" (2000:123) and involves the "perpetuation and/or reinvention of cultural traditions" (2000:124).[6] Auyero reinserts broader social forces and structures into Goffmanian, micro-level observations by suggesting that "restored behavior" is performed in institutional settings and is shaped by social structures (2000:122, 150-51). Ultimately, the expression of citizenship and civic (political) identity occurs through social interaction.

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[5] The notion of social structure as constituted by and reproduced through action (though not mechanically or inevitably so) is echoed in many theorizations of social structure and human agency, including Anthony Giddens' (1984) concept of structuration, William Sewell's (1992) theory of structure and agency, Ann Swidler's (1986) cultural tool kit model, James Coleman and Jeffery Alexander.

[6] Auyero is specifically referring to interactions between Peronist party brokers and their clients, but this idea can be applied to the more general face-to-face interaction that occurs in the civic sphere.

According to Auyero, the "symbolic labor" done by political brokers consciously or unconsciously reproduces social structure through social interaction and "the circular reproduction of social hierarchies" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977:208, quoted in Auyero 2000:127). "Performance" acknowledges agency in the sense that position in social structure does not automatically translate into civic behaviors, practices, and identities. The unconscious and self-conscious performance of civic life occurs through social interaction. Auyero contends: "brokers present themselves and their activity to their clients and shown how this public presentation re-creates a powerful tradition in Peronist political culture. … The performance masks domination that … brokers exert owing to their structural position and functions" (2000:151) and is part of the everyday politics of poor people.

Brubaker (1992) has suggested that citizenship, which involves social relations, involves the marking of symbolic boundaries. My research recognizes the interactive associational sphere as a site of both structure and culture as shaped by political and ideological objectives. As such, there is the cultural production of distinct types of 'civicness' in this sphere. Civic performances, organized at the level of the institution and enacted at the level of leader-participant and participant-nonparticipant interactions, are key aspects of democratization and civic processes. At the same time, they are important mechanisms in the production of experiences of relating in everyday life. Differences among leaders, participants, and nonparticipants become powerful agents for civic differences in *Villa Campo's* new, urbanized social structure. I will return to this point.

Associations, Fields, and Relations

The relational civic process and the civic work it entails are not simply the product of individuals' actions, for interactions *among associations* are also what make the civic process relational. In what follows, I suggest that by setting social-political understandings into its associational context — and, in particular, recognizing what Bourdieu labels a "field" — we can draw more concrete connections between experiences of civic life and the associational forces that help create and maintain it. The concept of field also provides a way of thinking about the relational civic process and the specific context in which civic work is organized and performed.

Similarly, the civic work performed in *Villa Campo's* associations makes little sense without taking into account their larger social context or "field." Here, the field of interest is what I call the "socio-political field." The socio-political field is not simply a sphere of political, social and economic alliance, conflict and competition. As I hope to demonstrate—and this is the essence behind the concepts of relational civic process and civic work—the "gains" to be attained and competed over in this associational field are as symbolic as they are political and economic. The symbolic side of civil society is important in part because it is so closely connected not only with social, political and economic relations among associations, but, also with the broader changing socio-economic relations and positions of social actors within poor communities, including *Villa Campo*. The associational field in *Villa Campo* is *not* autonomous from the larger social changes taking place in the social environment, the majority of these changes directed by external forces. It is a field in which the democratization process and the creation of social relations tell us much about the society of *Villa Campo* as a whole.

Bourdieu stated, "To think in terms of field is to think relationally" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:96). A field can be thought of as a social space, "a network" made up of "objective relations between positions" occupied by individuals or by organizations (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:97). A field is simply not an array of positions, for the relations between positions simultaneously entail an "organization of forces"—a distribution of power and the rules by which relations are recognized and used—and a battle over that distribution and those rules (Martin 2003). As Raka Ray notes: "A field can be thought of as a structured, unequal, and socially constructed environment *within* which organizations are embedded and *to* which organizations and … (social actors) constantly respond" (Ray 1999). For Ray the concept of a field enabled her to consider social movements as embedded in a network of relationships that both limit and facilitate collective action. Indeed, much like the relationship between habitus and individual action, the concept of field enables us to view relations as forces that structure associational and individual actions and behaviors. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:16) explain that whereas habitus describes "a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies", the notion of field refers to a "set of objective, historical relations between positions"; both habitus and field "designate bundles of relations." The concepts of habitus and field "function fully *only in relation to one another*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:19) in the sense that a field requires inclinations toward certain actions, and habitus requires a structured environment to be expressed, changed and reproduced. Similarly, as DiMaggio and Powell (1991:26) have argued, institutions must be recognized as "inseparable from the distribution of dispositions," for an organization "only become(s) enacted and active" if, "(it) finds someone who finds an interest in it,

feels sufficiently at home in it to take it on" (Bourdieu 1981, quoted in DiMaggio and Powell 1991).

The Configuration of Associations in a Field

An associational setting, as a micro-universe, is a field in which to examine daily experiences of civic life. The idea that associations operate in relation to one another, makes the concept "field"[7] especially useful for this study. In particular, an associational field can be seen to provide boundaries for the relational civic process. Associations (here, associational networks in *Villa Campo*) organize their participants' activities (in this. case primarily social welfare activities) in relation to other associations that they recognize as doing a similar activity.

In addition, because Bourdieu conceived of fields as constructed not only by positions but also by a struggle over positions the concept of field is not static but instead allows a conceptualization of social relations that undergo changes. In *Villa Campo*, associations and participation are changing as new actors enter the field and new ideas of civic work are introduced. Many of these changes are driven by growing population and changing socio-economic conditions in *Villa Campo*.

In order to be clear, I will define the field that will be analyzed in this dissertation: the associational sector and residents within a single geographical area—the locality of *Villa Campo*. Clearly, this field is not "an autonomous … field capable of formulating and imposing its own values and principles of legitimacy while at the same time rejecting external sanctions and demands" (Bourdieu 1993:21). The study is limited to

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[7] As noted, one of the problematic aspects of defining the concept of field for Bourdieu was that the boundaries of fields are always contested (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:100). In this study, the concern is less with the contests over boundaries of the field than the contests that occur within it.

associations within a single locality, this being the reasonable geographic bounds for *Villa Campo* residents (though certainly this field could also be considered to extend across the Conurbano region of the province of Buenos Aires where *Villa Campo* is located). Within this field, within the three major associational networks, I identify three specific key players—a non-governmental organization called the *Manejo*, a local group of nuns, and the local activities of the Peronist party network—that illustrate the relational civic process and the creation of new civic relations and capacities in *Villa Campo*, a poor community.

Villa Campo, Social, Economic and Political Changes in the Current Democratic Period

The political and economic reforms that the new democratic state implemented starting in 1983 brought changes to the country. Political restructuring, and in particular, the dismantling of the authoritarian military state and new participatory and localized programs, has been a basis for many reform policies. The effects of these reforms have penetrated many facets of contemporary Argentine society, reshaping everything from population movements to employment patterns, but several aspects of these changes hold particular relevance for this study. First, Argentina's new democratic-era has witnessed increasing gaps between socio-economic categories. Second, social and political reforms have given birth to a growing localized political culture and booming "civic" participation where civic meanings are produced and performed.

Political and Economic Changes

Civic participation, of course, did exist prior to this period of the return to democracy (see, for example, Sabato 2001). Argentina's industrialization period (approximately from 1932 to 1974) lead to massive internal migrations from the rural areas to urban

areas, such as Greater Buenos Aires, where people established and settled in *barrios* and

villas miserias (shantytowns) (Auyero 2000:49-50). The Peronist government at that

time was not prepared for the sudden urban growth, yet there were plenty of employment

opportunities in the industrial plants nearby (Auyero 2000:52-55). These communities'

access to public goods and services was largely determined by their collective claim

making, individuals' efforts and connections with the state (Auyero 2000:58). In the

Greater Buenos Aires region during the 1950s and 1960s, residents felt that they had

higher levels of social capital and job opportunities than they did near the turn-of-the-

century (Auyero 2000:54-56).

Over the past two decades, however, economic disparities have increased. It has

been demonstrated that a gap between rich and poor has been exacerbated by economic

reforms (World Bank Country Brief 2007). In Greater Buenos Aires, the median

monthly income for the top 10% is 3180 pesos and for the bottom, 10% the median

monthly income is 115 pesos (INDEC 2006). Income inequality has risen since the

return to democracy. One recent study showed that the incomes of Argentina's richest

10% went from representing 33.8% of total wages in 1992 to 38.9% in 2001 (World

Bank 2003). This study compared different Latin American countries and found the rise

in inequality in Argentina to be significant: "Some relatively equal countries, including

Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela have experienced rises in inequality--Argentina

dramatically so" (World Bank 2003).[8] The growth in inequality is accompanied by rising

poverty as numerically shown in Table 1.3.

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[8] According to the Human Development Index (2006) on income and wealth distribution in Argentina in
2001 the estimated Gini coefficient—where 0 represents absolute equality and 100 absolute inequality--was
52.2. All studies show growing income disparities in Argentina.

Table 1.3 Poverty and Growth in Argentina

Time Span	US $1-a-day poverty line		US $2-a-day poverty line	
	Total	Growth	Total	Growth
1992-98	1.8	0.0	4.1	-0.1
1998-2002	6.4	3.2	15.3	10.9
2002-4	-3.8	-2.7	-8.6	-5.0
1992-2004	4.7	1.0	11.9	4.3

Source: Gasparini, Gutierrez, and Tornarolli (2005)

Most studies of inequality draw upon large data sets. Important as such studies are, ethnographic approaches offer a different perspective. By focusing on the texture of *relations* of inequality and of civic relations—"what powerful people can get others to do" (Stinchcombe 1965:180)—ethnographic studies highlight civic differences through everyday social interactions. In particular, attention to daily life not only provides fresh insights of civic relations, it also highlights the nature of performances of civic life.

It is important to outline this larger context of rising poverty as a background in order to understand the social dynamics in civic work in *Villa Campo*. This relates to the inequalities in the relations between paid leaders and community volunteers, and to the real desperation of the population due to material deprivation. Inequality and poverty are commonly perceived as detriments to democratization, although the empirical evidence that supports this idea is mixed (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006:61). This dissertation supports the idea that even in a context of inequality and poverty, there can be democratization.

Social Categorization and Social Norms in the Democratic Era

The social dynamics of civic life involve power, and often operate in tandem with certain participation norms and expectations for certain social groups.[9] The exercise of specific norms in an institutional environment also involves the creation of associational structures and practices that directly engages social networks in processes of elaboration of efficiency, social legitimation, and access to resources (Meyer and Rowan 1977). This idea is useful for understanding civic work, where identity serves as a key resource in how civic work is done.

The interconnectedness in civic settings also means that norms and identities directed at participants in one associational setting are constructed *in relation to* other groups of participants. In other words, norms and normative behavior operate comparatively and serve to create differences *among* participants as much as between participants and non-participants. The participant communicates civic differences by performing forms of certain behavior governed by certain norms. Social norms are key resources in the organization of civic work.

Field Sites and Methods

In this dissertation, I primarily rely upon ethnographic data gathered during six months of field research in *Villa Campo*, conducted between March and December

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[9] Feminist and Marxist scholars have produced a rich body of research on the ways in which gender, race, class and sexuality are integral to the organization of work and the reproduction of inequality. Organizations create jobs that incorporate employers' assumptions about social categories, while workers bring their identities with them to work (Williams 1995). Studies demonstrate that norms, practices and identities are both powerful resources for control as well as sources of resistance (Freeman 2000; Salzinger 2003).

2006.[10] The project began as a comparison between three different associational

networks — one non-governmental, one political, and one religious — in the locality of

Villa Campo, in the municipality of Garcia, in the periphery of the province of Buenos

Aires. My time in these settings convinced me of the necessity of understanding from the

perspective of the residents. I lived in the locality for six months while conducting my

fieldwork and participating, or volunteering, in these networks. I also spent time

observing interactions between neighbors in a number of settings in the locality. I

supplemented ethnographic work with over 42 formal interviews with participants,

community leaders, people who work for the municipality, the bishop and directors of

NGOs, and I conducted document research on changes to *Villa Campo*'s associational

sector since the introduction of political reforms in 1983.

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[10] The effects of my physical presence, as a white, Canadian woman, in the field raise important
methodological issues that cannot be adequately addressed in this chapter. I devote space to these issues in
a methodological appendix (Appendix A).

Table 1.4: Record of observations, interviews and documents

	Participant Observations	Interviews	Documents
Non-Governmental Network	Meetings - 16 Activities (ppt. pres., gardening, outdoor events) 10	formal - 7 Informal conversations - 24	- Studies and interviews from academics and the NGO's own studies. - - newsletters
Religious Network	Meetings and Activities- 17	Formal – 13 Informal – 17	Books written by the nuns; pamphlets of programs
Political Party Network (including municipality)	Participated in the milk program; day center (3); negations with *sociales* (1); project proposal (5)	Formal – 22 Informal - 14	Pamphlets, documents on municipal programs

Villa Campo

In many ways, the locality of *Villa Campo* is taken as a case study of Argentina's

peripheral urban settings in the way that economic and political reforms have reshaped

the locality's political, economic and social structures. Villa Campo is a locality, with a

population of roughly 50,000 people, relatively isolated from the capital of the

municipality of Garcia, in the eastern part of the province of Buenos Aires. *Villa Campo*

over the past 20 or so years has witnessed innumerable changes, including the rapid raise

of self-help organizations and local businesses, the increase of infrastructure, and in

particular an increasingly visible gap between the circumstances of the municipality's

richest and poorest residents. *Villa Campo*'s increasingly stratified associational field

serves as a barometer of these changes. In addition, political and economic changes came

later to the periphery of the province of Buenos Aires than the Federal Capital; in this regard, *Villa Campo* is similar to the areas outside of the Federal Capital of Buenos Aires.

Within the locality of *Villa Campo*, the position occupied by any given association is simultaneously a political, economic and symbolic one. Because I was interested in the relations between and among positions, I identified three critical locations around which civic work was constructed: an NGO serving and directed by members of the community, a Catholic Church network guiding members according to their faith, and a political party network linking local and provincial governments with community residents, particularly the poorest. These three networks were organized across the social map of present-day *Villa Campo*.

My first field site was an NGO network that I call the "Naranjas", which was where *Villa Campo*'s established, and largest non-governmental organizations are and approximately 30 people are employed. Ever since the Naranjas was established in the 1990s, the area has symbolized the bounty of grassroots collective action. Physically, the land is a "hive" of non-governmental organizations, three small buildings scattered on about an acre of land in one of the few places in the locality that is without garbage. Inside, community leaders held meetings between themselves, with outsiders, and with participants. Here I participated as a volunteer attending and helping out with meetings and working in community gardens. Within the Naranja network, I focus on the most popular organization that has as a main objective to support public infrastructure in *Villa Campo*; this organization I will call *Manejo*.

One of the most respected associational networks--my second field site, highly integrated within the personal lives of residents--was a network made up of a number of

Christian groups that I call the "Religiosos." Houses of worship are located throughout *Villa Campo* where residents from different backgrounds met regularly. The Catholic Religiosos first arrived in the mid-1980s and since that time approximately 50 Christian (Catholic and other) churches have been established, and have initiated and supported many groups and individuals in *Villa Campo*. Connected with international and national organizations, the Religiosos were generally acknowledged by residents and leaders alike as *Villa Campo*'s most dedicated, and probably most important, participatory network. Here I participated in a number of projects and services.

Conveying its low status and socially dubious position in the locality, my third site is called the "Politicos" and was quite hard to uncover. Politicos were usually sitting in on "community" projects, occasionally directors of schools, and mostly connected with *Villa Campo*'s residents in an almost secretive manner. The Politicos were a large diverse network where members of political movements or representatives of the municipality (*politicos*) borrowed associational space to give their ideas and inexpensive government goods to people. Here I spent time observing and interviewing members.

Having previously been in *Villa Campo* and Buenos Aires generally, I gained access to field sites through personal connections with community leaders and academics, to which I presented myself as a graduate student from Canada conducting research on civil society and seeking a volunteer position at their association or project. At my first site, the Naranjas, leaders viewed my arrival both with a little skepticism and as an opportunity to gain an "outside perspective," frequently asking for my opinion at meetings from the beginning. I definitely found myself in the position of the "observed." Interest in me faded a little and I found the initial excitement of being a stranger in *Villa*

Campo made my research and purpose in the Naranjas generally known, easing my entry into other field sites, especially the Religiosos.

Although I never blended into any of the three sites nor in the neighborhood I was living, in each setting my presence achieved a kind of normalcy as I became another fixture in the environment. My foreignness meant that my research was never covert (despite sensational rumors to the contrary), that I could take field notes openly, and that I could raise all sorts of issues and questions with my informants. However, as a North American white woman biking and walking around *Villa Campo*, I was without question an oddity. Within the Naranjas, leaders' gossip gave me a lot of attention. Within the Religiosos, participants frequently took me for a young nun driven by will to help the poor in *Villa Campo*, and the work that I was doing was viewed as respectable; it was compared to being on "mission." By contrast, with the Politicos, I was generally read as a suspicious outsider—outsiders are typically a fairly despised group by the people seeking power in *Villa Campo*—and frequently the subject of disparaging and even prejudicial comments by leaders both in this network and with the Naranjas who assumed I could not understand because of my mediocre Spanish. These variable perceptions of me in each site also reflected the power and dynamics of the three associational settings.

The Chapters that Follow

There are many networks within *Villa Campo* that I could have focused on for this dissertation. The range and types of collective action found in urban Argentina have proliferated rapidly over the past 15 to 20 years, with some initiatives targeting very small and specific groups of people. The three associational sites examined here,

however, hold special symbolic weight in urban Argentina as the spaces identified with the popular classes, the working majority, the unemployed and those in conditions of acute poverty. These three locales, and the organization of participatory interactions within them, were also very much in dialogue, albeit sometimes symbolically, with one another.

The small, local associations I studied conceived themselves as belonging to the bottom rung in the hierarchy of development, dominated by international agencies and the national government; an image (albeit often misleading) of them as struggling to "do good" while battling others who are more powerful. Instead of viewing positions as locations of an associational hierarchy, I suggest that these positions are in fact *stances* that leaders took vis-à-vis one another. These stances translated into relational civic processes in which participants expected to distinguish themselves and the volunteer service they provide from that found in other settings. In this way, the stances or positions community leaders and outside leaders took within the associational field could be quite literally transposed onto the stances participants were directed to adopt in their relations with their neighbors.

I explore the broader, historical context in which this particular associational field is situated in Chapter 2, where I describe changes in associational life during the course of political and economic reforms. Chapter 3 turns to the Politicos, the scattered, hidden political arena, busy but of low status. I characterize the Politicos as a space mainly attempting cross-category organizing, where leaders and participants challenged the external legitimation of settings like the Naranjas by emphasizing the similarities between the goals and activities of both political (themselves) and social leaders. By

contrast, Chapter 4 demonstrates how the Religiosos, an expansive, established network sought to develop and recognize indications and opportunities of civic work. In this chapter, I argue democratization occurs in symbolic dialogue with the nonparticipants, as leaders seek to mold sufficiently empowered participants to, in turn, serve their neighbors and their community.

Subsequently, Chapter 5 then explores one site — the Naranjas, the NGO network — in detail, arguing that because this network was originally organized under conditions of a centralized, planned system, civic work there was often not democratic.

In Chapter 6, I return to *Villa Campo* and explore how the diverse associational environment — and the types of relations between the associations in particular — reshaped residents' practices and ideas in this "poverty-stricken" community. I argue that the community members themselves began to create elements of civic work as they attempted to convert their *barrio's* — and their own — civic knowledge and skills into civic capital. Finally, I conclude with Chapter 7, where I draw out more clearly the implications of the links between civic outcomes, civic knowledge, and civic relations explored in the earlier chapters.

Chapter 2: Transformation and Change: The *Juego* of Community Development in *Villa Campo*

Introduction

The National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons' report released during the early years of Argentina's democratic reemergence begins with a stark description by Ernesto Sabato of life during the recent military dictatorship:

> A feeling of complete vulnerability spread throughout Argentine society, coupled with the fear that anyone, however innocent, might become a victim of the never-ending witch-hunt. Some people reacted with alarm. Others tended, consciously or unconsciously, to justify the horror. … In the semantic delirium where labels such as: Marxist-Leninist, traitors to the fatherland, materialists and atheists, enemies of Western, Christian values, abounded, anyone was at risk - from those who were proposing a social revolution, to aware adolescents who merely went out to the shantytowns to help the people living there.
>
> All sectors fell into the net: trade union leaders fighting for better wages; youngsters in student unions, journalists who did not support the regime; psychologists and sociologists simply for belonging to suspicious professions; young pacifists, nuns and priests who had taken the teachings of Christ to shanty areas; the friends of these people, too, and the friends of friends, plus others whose names were given out of motives of personal vengeance, or by the kidnapped under torture. The vast majority of them were innocent not only of any acts of terrorism, but even of belonging to the fighting units of the guerrilla organizations... (Sabato 1984).

By the mid-1980s, just a few years into the country's new program of democratic restructuring and decentralization, localized initiatives began to multiply, in the process of transforming the political landscape. Marie-France Prévôt Schapira (1996:81) described this re-emergence of local actors such as churches, NGOs, and resident associations, all who focused their efforts on the most vulnerable populations.

Around the beginning of the 21st century, international organizations and foundations supporting new community "local" non-governmental

organizations/associations had sprung from the ground in *Villa Campo* and started replacing many of the peronist *unidades básicas* and *sociedades de fomento* that characterized the earlier period. More of these associations generated more competition and a new emphasis on self-help--unlike when *punteros* had a monopoly and acted as gatekeepers to state merchandise and information--began to reflect the dramatic rise in stature of that neglected entity in *Villa Campo*, the protagonist, the citizen. *Villa Campo* had become a place showcasing new forms of collective action, where associations scrambled to attract residents confronted with a vast and growing array of initiatives in which to participate.

This chapter provides an overview of political, economic and social changes in *Villa Campo*'s associational sector and the impact of these changes on civil society organizations, participants, and residents. The scope of these changes is large and covers different forms of social, political and economic organization. In contrast to democratic societies where supposedly the masses' voice and participation drive government action, in the seven years prior to 1983, Argentina's polity was an authoritarian or military state in which state ideology and action were dictated by policies of military officials. But in the span of just over two decades, Argentina has shifted from the severely limited civic action space during a period of authoritarianism to a democratic system straining under an explosion of participatory approaches developed in a diverse and expanding range of associational settings. New patterns of participation have emerged that are tied to broader socio-economic changes, and associations have come to develop not only an array of new participatory approaches but new sets of cultural meanings.

Below I outline changes to the structure of both the civic sector and civic patterns in *Villa Campo*, to the early years of the democratic transition, and through to the present day of over twenty years later. The historical context frames the discussion of associational organization in later chapters and underscores the change in *Villa Campo*. At the same time, I consider the links between the growing diverse relations among associations and among the residents. I trace the new political, economic and symbolic interaction that situates the ethnographic account of the subsequent chapters. Perhaps most importantly, this chapter sheds light on the changes—including civic status— experienced by associational participants over the course of the past twenty years.

Standing in the Shadow of Perón: Civic Action Prior to 1983

During the 1950s, the associational sector in Argentina underwent considerable change. Over time, the first Perón government (1946-1955) sought to expand its control over and ownership of the participatory channels of labor and other associations. This program began in the mid 1940s when efforts were made to tie unions into the state system by giving them the right to engage in collective bargaining and receive other awards from the state (Lewis 2002; Rock 1987). Approximately half of the economically active population was unionized by the early 1950s, up from just 20 per cent a decade before (Doyon 1988).

What first began in the labor sector started in non-state associations who were urged to either close or be absorbed into state entities through the course of the 1950s (Lewis 2002:5; Rock 1987:314; Romero). Bringing small residential associations under the umbrella of the state was a slower and far less complete process. These associations

were much smaller and usually did not involve many people. They were dispersed both in rural and urban areas and dealt with small, everyday matters not included in the purview of state centralized planning. A policy for centralizing these associations began in 1949 (called *La Comunidad Organizada*) that sought to organize small associations into a centralized system; many of these associations were later changed into Peronist party-run operatives or incorporated into a network of *unidades basicas* (Rock, 1987:314). The attempt to consolidate civil society was an attempt to isolate many of the other channels of participation, contributing to blocking any forms of resistance (Rock 1987; Lewis 2002:7)[11]; but the success of the conglomeration of civic life was very uneven and although there was corporation in some areas, there was increased autonomy in others (James 1988).

One of the *very few* shared ideological aims of major political campaigns in the Peronist era (1946-1955) and the National Reorganization Process (1976-1983) included efforts to increase bureaucratic state authority, eliminate opposition, and enhance a uniform national identity. During the first Peronist regime, policies promoting state corporatism sought to nationalize civil society participation, which led to local political patronage networks, regulated by the state, and attempting to limit the other forms of civic participation (Rock, 1987:317).[12]

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[11] Eduardo Elena (2005) argues that the political socialization of civil society was far less complete and quite complex, with pre-existing civil society organizations using government programs, such as Peron's 1951 letter writing campaign as an opportunity to have greater political influence. Greater reorganization may have come directly after the military dictatorship of 1976-1982, when most of the social movements were turned into localized residential associations (*unidades basicas*) and political parties and associations were increasingly patronage-based (Auyero 2000:188; Merklen 2005; Prévôt Schapira 1996, 1999).

[12] One of the ironic consequences of attempts to eliminate any trace of opposition was the rise of an 'institutionalized' or 'formalized' opposition that involved the 'formerly supportive' Catholic Church and Army. Rock describes how the attempted influence of these institutions' territories that had originally supported the Peronist regime "initiated a chain of events" in Argentina, which during the early years of the Peronist regime had become "almost a last refuge for Péron's opponents" (Rock, 1987:315-317). Opposition to the Péron government, who were often forced to express their opposition in private, were

The National Reorganization Process involved similar politically-motivated civil society restructuring. Civil society organizations began to either serve the military government or be severely repressed starting in 1976. At the associational level, collective and cooperative groups and organizations that had reestablished themselves during the 1960s and 1970s were banned, in name if not always in practice (Prévôt Schapira 1999). During this period, opposition was once again seen as primarily anti-nationalist, and activists and community leaders were forced to accept whatever the military forced upon the population. Public opposition was virtually eliminated, the "threat" of militant guerrillas was eliminated in the first year of the military dictatorship and few associations survived (Jacobs and Maldonado 2005). These arrangements were so unsustainable that they did not last, and the resulting repulsion over human rights abuses and economic problems laid the ground for a return to democratic arrangements between civil society and the state (Ackerman and Duvall 2000:277; Borón 2000:139).

Participation was highly politicized, especially during the Process of National Reorganization (1976-1983) when space available for participation was further reduced by political campaigns aimed at cleansing society of all the markings of a diverse civic life. Peronism, along with such ideologies as Marxism, public meetings and demonstrations, any organization efforts in poor communities, and even language and disciplines were labeled "subversive" and exterminated from the public sphere (Arditti 1999:11, CONADEP 1984). Political pressures also meant that groups such as family members of the victims relied on the display of cultural representations to signal group

able to find institutional protection to protest the state activities in the face of decreasing power and inefficiencies (Rock, 1987:317-318).

identity, avoiding conventional modes of civic participation (Brysk 1994, Buchanan 1987:371-374, Loveman 1998).

On the introduction of political reforms, Argentina's associational sector was beleaguered by shortages and structural limitations. As Jamie Elizabeth Jacobs and Martin Maldonado (2005) have noted, this state monopoly over both civic participation and education meant shortages of collective venues for Argentine citizens. This may help explain the silence and fear that Ernesto Sabato described in the quotation that begins this chapter.

In the last years of the military dictatorship neighborhood associations (*sociedades de fomento*) re-emerged, in Argentina intending eventually to give low-income communities greater control over their activities (Cavarozzi and Palermo 1995).[13] These occurrences, coupled with political reforms, contended with political party and/or clientelist-operated networks that did not allow for greater community–retained benefits (Cavarozzi and Palermo 1995:40).

A dramatic shift in the associational structure was taking place in Argentina. At the same time, there was growth in the numbers of new associations, as political parties, religious bodies, and private foundations established associations to improve the lives of the growing number of poor people. In the years of the democratic transition, the number of associations grew to be an estimated 80,000 organizations in second half of the 1990s (CIVICUS 1997). According to one source, the average civil society organization had 23 participants (Acotto 2003).

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[13] The idea of neighborhood autonomy was semantic: changes in levels of autonomy were far more modest (Cavarozzi and Palermo 1995). Increased autonomy means greater control over participation practices and selection of activities as well as more retained benefits, and the organization as a whole could be held accountable for successes and failures.

As shown in Figure 2.1, there has been an overall increase in the membership in most associational types. Yet, there has been a remarkable increase in the membership of religious groups in 1995, from 9.3 percent in 1984 to 33.8 percent in 1995. This is similar to the findings in a World Bank study in 2002, which reveals that religious organizations have the vast majority of members in Argentina. On the other hand, labor union membership has decreased by 40 percent (Luengo 2005).

Figure 2.1 Membership in Associations by Type, 1984-1995
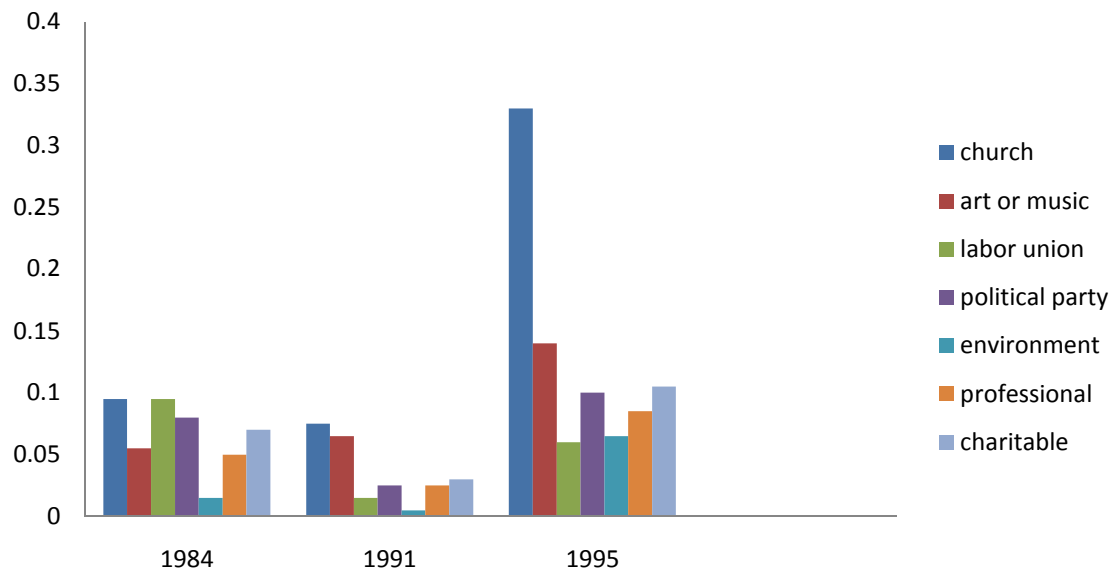
Source: World Values Survey 1995

Participating in a Patronage Democracy

The dynamics of machine politics have been labeled as "patronage democracies" (Chandra 2004), because they tend to produce dependent behaviors, meaningless political participation, and consequent shortages both of civic participation and knowledge. For ordinary *villa* and *barrio*-dwelling Argentines, patronage manifested itself in daily life in

the form of hoarding material resources and information, an important way of surviving, and a general scarcity of genuine democratic representation, phenomena which were exacerbated by the national government's emphasis on the development of local politicization at the expense of civic democratization (Cavarozzi and Palermo 1995). One historical account of participation in working class neighborhoods in Argentina emphasized, "The degree that neighborhoods are used as political spaces to be fought over; where competition can be ferocious and even deadly" (Dubois 1998). Many social programs could only be accessed through political party brokers; including jobs, basic foodstuffs, medicines, and entertainment (Figure 2.2 shows an artist's depiction of a "client").
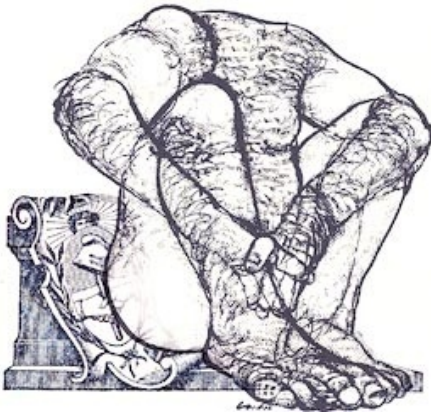
Figure 2.2: Image from Clarín, November 23, 2006 (Artist unknown).

In poor communities, local political party brokers, or *punteros*, mediated access to state goods and services almost exclusively, casting Argentina's shantytown population as, in the words of Javier Auyero (2000), "clients." In his study of Buenos Aires's shantytowns, Auyero (2001) described a condition of "resource control and information

hoarding", where the local resident was forced to rely upon his or her broker not only for employment but also for a range of goods and services—housing materials, basic foodstuffs, even entertainment and opportunities to get out of the shantytown—not always available through other channels. Often the only alternative to long holdups— both political and bureaucratic—was reliance upon elaborate personal connections. The accumulation of such "*survival*" networks was far more useful than going to a government office for gaining access to scarce goods and services by, for example, gaining quick access to state allocated food and housing materials (see e.g. Merklen 2005; for a parallel situation in India, see Chandra 2004).

The Door Opens: Participation in the Era of the Return to Democracy
In this section, I present the past twenty years of life in *Villa Campo* as remembered by the residents and through document research. In the 1980s, *Villa Campo*'s associational sector was basically monopolized by a political party network, and characterized by shortages of basic civic education possibilities, a very limited number of associational spaces, and inconvenient access to the small number of associational spaces available.

In conditions of patronage, political brokers often act as gatekeepers to state goods and services, and they might hoard desirable resources within their own personal networks. In *Villa Campo*'s patronage democracy, brokers were/are notorious for their abuse of residents, punishing residents or excluding them altogether. One man told me, "They (referring to two specific local brokers) are cheap politicians, they only give a little compared to what they expect to get." He said that certain "*punteros politicos*" would respond to residents' needs by seeing how much they could take advantage of (*engañar*)

them. For example, for people to receive 150 pesos from *Plan Trabajar* through a

political broker they would have to pay him 30 pesos, and the *puntero* goes with them to

cash their checks to make sure they *cumplen*. One woman I met remarked on clientelism:

"They (the political brokers) want to manage people! There was one time my husband

was sick, and these *politicos* came by and offered to pay the electricity. I accepted that

one time. Then one day they told me that I had to go to a march. I told them I could not,

for many reasons including being proud and not liking being told what to do, but most

important because if something happened to me at the march—getting killed or injured--

there would be no one to look after (my husband). He is my responsibility. Anyway, I

had to pay back the money they "lent" me. Now I would never get involved with those

people *sinvergüenza*. All they want to do is manage people!"

Perhaps those particular political brokers were "*sinvergüenza,*" because the

interactions with brokers were not, of course, always as terrible as these particular stories.

As with any association, model political brokers were identified and praised. For

example, in the late 1990s, Villa Paraíso's residents described political broker Matilde as

"passionate about the people" (Auyero 2001). Praised for her effectiveness in dealing

with material needs, Matilde was a clientelest "social worker" cast in the language of

Peronism. Traits such as "self-sacrificing," "helpful" and the completion of promised

transactions attributed to Matilde all depicted as inducing dependency. At my field site,

Villa Campo, leaders and residents tell stories of certain remarkable political brokers who

would go out of their way to help people, such as getting books and courses to help with

their education. In addition, there were other stories of *politicos* getting badly needed

help and speeding up bureaucratic processes for community groups and individuals.

Yet bad experiences were common enough that this is very much how people *perceive* participation under a clientelist environment. Given a small number of local political brokers and the lack of competition with any entity outside their network, residents at times had to participate, regardless of how they were treated by *punteros*. One historian noted that clientelism, and other "paternalistic measures" in Argentina's poor communities, effectively broke down group solidarity by "atomizing the electorate and individualizing the voter"" (Rock 1975:79, quoted in Auyero 2000:190).

In 1986, *Villa Campo* was plagued with problems and faced a crisis of identity as well as severe economic problems. The economic problems precipitated the major collective action strategy changes laid out at community meetings held in the local parish meetings which set into motion a gradual but nonetheless dramatic reorientation of *Villa Campo*'s democracy and the transformation of the locality. The resulting shift in emphasis away from a monopoly in clientelism and towards more venues of participation would have a powerful effect upon associating in *Villa Campo*.

Through the last decades, Argentina's associational sector and the diversity of venues of participation in poor communities went from what had been essentially a political party monopoly to a proliferation of participation venues and forms. Informants told me that as the associational sector expanded and activities began to fill *Villa Campo*, political party channels increasingly fell into disuse, and much manipulation and corruption was lifted. Most important for this study, *Villa Campo*'s associational sector developed into an environment made up of ever more diverse participatory venues. The earliest steps to revitalize the associational spheres involved both the internal

reorganization of existing associations and the expansion of the non-governmental

segment of the associational sector.

Reconfiguration of the Associational Sector

Competition for foreign financing is part of the associational context. In *Villa Campo*,

there was a lot of competition between community projects for external capital. *Villa*

Campo's Naranja network is a perfect example of a local project attracting foreign

capital, as the network originally came from being a decentralized community-based

network to a centralized organization headed by an external foundation. The Naranja

network has been successful in receiving funding from both international and national

donors.

Other communities similar to *Villa Campo*, at the time of this study, largely

remained outside of the scope of major Western funding agencies. With their arrival in

the community in the 1980s, these new foreign connections became part of what had

become a complex mosaic of associational settings; a field of players in which localized

organizations, church initiatives, and political party networks were the "face" of civic

activities.[14] To be sure, over the course of 20 years, the organization of civil society in

the community, and with it the urban landscape, has been transformed. A survey of

Greater Buenos Aires shows *Villa Campo* as being one of the areas with the most

community associations.[15] Through the 1980s, the associational arena in *Villa Campo*

was dominated by a community council that worked with the municipal government,

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[14] The World Bank first gave money to the gas project in Villa Campo in 2001. Gas Natural, Telefonica, Ford Foundation, Inter-American Foundation, FunCap, the Municipality, and the national government were other funding agencies that were involved.
[15] Interview with longstanding community activist November 2006.

whose most active members were from the active catholic network. Nevertheless, by 2006, the same area had become home to a large number of associations.

It is important to note, however, that the variety of associations in this area were not just different forms of participation; they also reflected the many individuals in the community. Indeed, the line of work of *Villa Campo*'s associations and the environment where they all worked were closely connected to broader socio-economic changes in Argentine society and especially to the fact that there was further disparity among the population. Therefore, there were some organizations that dealt with the acute poverty of the population; including the incoming migrants from neighboring countries and regions who did not have homes. Other organizations would not focus on material needs, but non-material needs, such as education and counseling. These differences among people, and among associations, have been accompanied by equally dramatic changes to the organization of participation carried out in the poor communities.

New Civic Relations, New Grassroots Relations: The Global World Enters the Local Sphere

Broad changes to the leadership structure of *Villa Campo*'s associational sector and the rise of a diverse associational environment were accompanied by important changes to the internal organization of associations, affecting both participants and residents. For participants, changes transformed civic relations in the community. In particular, conflicts, among leaders and among associations, gave rise to new forms of associational relations that involved increasingly diverse participant arrangements. Given the associational settings that are the subject of this study, I focus upon changes to civic relations in localized parts of large associational networks, specifically national political

parties, religious institutions, and international and national funding agencies. A brief look at how a new associational form emerged reveals how much participation practices in *Villa Campo* today are a result of the way in which political and economic events unfolded.

With clientelism, political networks would supply goods to residents on a give-first, pay-later basis, with accounts cleared eventually and political party networks making sure to get back a part of what they give. This arrangement also allowed political party networks to expand with little investment. By handing out material support to those in need, clientelistic brokers can always return to these beneficiaries in order to demand political support when needed, thereby, in effect, retaining the right to have political support in exchange for inexpensive material items. There is agreement that competition among associations was the key factor behind the criticism of clientelistic arrangements in associations. "The *punteros* come to *our* homes, they want to give us things so that they can manage us," one community participant explained. Interviews also revealed that, in *Villa Campo*, the residents were reluctant users of these clientelistic arrangements, and that they were only turned to during financially difficult times.

Shifting to "social," "nonpolitical" activities did not immediately spell dramatic change for community participants. Unlike the clientelistic networks, these associations did not directly give goods and this shift in the associational paradigm saw changes to the expectations of participation. "Social" projects for community participants, on both individual and group basis, have become widespread. This was accompanied by a general criticism of the "ambition" (*ambición*) that characterized the *politicos*, when community leaders were getting something, regardless of how much actual work they

did. As one *Villa Campo* participant recalled, participants went from looking for the easiest ways of getting resources (which required very little time and energy) to those participatory activities which usually involved the most time and energy.

Through the 1990s, influence not only from development agencies, but also local foundations, would soon bring about changes to civic participation arrangements. As noted above, the late 1990s and early 2000s were boom years for associational life. In *Villa Campo*, many different associational networks (representing state, private, religious and joint ventures) entered the community's associational network since the 1980s. New entrants into the associational sector, especially small-scale private organizations, began disintegrating what was a monopoly on civic participation and associational funding by *punteros*. Perhaps the economic recovery of the past several years plays an important role in the rise of non-governmental organizations as they can act to provide a safety net during periods of crisis when neither markets nor states are providing such safety, and then they have the ability to transform their activities and rise in importance when the crises recede, as appeared to be the case in *Villa Campo*.

It was in this increasingly competitive associational environment that non-governmental organizations began to shift their operations to forms which presumably attract more funding. "Participation"—a requirement for funding of many agencies—required leaders to get more community members to participate besides other tasks of maintaining funding and outreach. Within associations, top leaders (*líderes*) controlled access to popular participation spaces, activities and information; as well, they carefully tracked the participation performance of activities in the association.

The scramble among associations to receive funding is related to the increasingly stratified nature of poor communities' associational sector and the development of civic activities. Large networks like political associations still act as key sites for civic participation, despite growing diversity of the associational environment. There are regional variations, but in *Villa Campo* in particular large social associations stand in contrast to political party network environments, offering different courses of action, more guarantees on project results, and promises of beneficiary-oriented services. These associations offer a degree of trust and respectability—and social status—that is absent from other settings. For larger, collective projects, these associations often provide the only suitable access for poor residents.[16]

For community participants, the rise of the internationally-networked associations has ushered in a new set of civic relations and participation. With funding and wages paid by development agencies or other funding agencies, participants find themselves now answerable to two different hierarchies—leaders and the people who fund them. On the community level, development agents and people who provide funding have become a regular presence—when I was there people from the foundation had almost a daily presence—checking up on results, managing relations, and supervising participant activities.

At the same time, in many associations participants do not seem to be considered full-fledged citizens by many of the "bosses," and many associational activities *appear*

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[16] These funding agencies give funding to local foundations that then connect with community organizations for civic space and staffing. In effect, both the development agency and local association are somewhat insulated from financial risks by these local foundations, who by virtue of their position as intermediaries are forced to seek out both financial backers from whom to obtain financing and existing associational outlets in which to do their activities. Because the financing on associational activities such gas projects can be substantial—funding for associational activities are almost always more than the actual project itself—there is competition to become an intermediary.

unlikely to provide public action skills or other benefits—although I will show in the next chapter that they do. Moreover, although the internationally-networked associations had dramatically altered civic relations in only one of my associational field sites—the *Naranja* network—it represents an influential pattern of civic relations that had the potential to affect participants working in other associational settings. New civic relations have shaped the conditions under which civic work is organized in most associational settings.

Civic Relations, Participation and the Associational Field

While the introduction of economic and political reforms were restructuring the associational sector and recognizing civic relations, the same policies initiated dramatic changes to the sphere of everyday interaction. For community residents, clientelistic participation avenues are increasingly viewed as something of the past.

Still, according to the 2001 census, the monthly median income for *Villa Campo* was around U$S 433 ($ARG 1344,19). Greater wealth on the national level has also meant greater inequality. As I noted in chapter one, the growth of inequality itself is not in dispute. Other research suggests that income disparities in Argentina translate, not surprisingly, into stratified participation patterns, with the rich participating in higher quality, educational, civic-enhancing activities (Bain et.al. 2002).

In fact, for many residents—especially for vulnerable groups in the new social order—participation provides a way to feel included in a modern, urban culture. Moreover, as the following chapters will demonstrate, *barrio* dwellers are divided both by what they can do and by how they participate: low-income residents participate in

largely informal networks with limited resources and include activities that are often

risky. Those who have slightly greater means, by contrast, participate in "risk-free"

associational networks that carefully devise activities and offer formal participation

practices.

In places like *Villa Campo*, popular participation spaces have become a testament to

Argentina's new democratic face—and a visible gap between rich and poor. The humble

appearance and actions of the community participant contrasted with the appearance of

authority of many community leaders, which contrasted with the aura of professionalism

and power that representatives of funding agencies and visiting academics brought with

them.

In many ways, stratification of participation and the growth of *Villa Campo*'s

associational sector have gone hand-in-hand. In addition, as I argued in the previous

chapter, one of the concrete social spaces in which people enact social identity is the

associational setting. Associational venues, as spaces of participation, are important and

particularly public venues for such social performances by both participants and

leaders.[17]

In Argentina today, private and foreign-invested associations that are populated

by economic and social elites with claims of concerned service to those less fortunate,

have joined political party-run associations. Large numbers of small-scale private

organizations have appeared in Argentina's communities. In the end, the differences

made among associations are also difference among people and *those* differences are

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[17] For example, Ikegami, in *Bonds of Civility* (2005), describes the role of publics in shaping Japanese culture.

laden with social meanings (Ikegami 2005). Changes to Argentina's associational sector also hold important implications, shaping the conditions for participation and for social relations.

While this chapter has superficially traced the political and economic context for changes to associations, civic work, and participation in urban Argentina, the rest of this dissertation will explore how *Villa Campo*'s associational sector is as much a symbolic field of meanings as it is a field of social interaction; and this supports the main theme of this dissertation, namely the necessity of certain hierarchy in processes of democratization. As I will show, civic work, and the social-coded meanings it produces, draws upon understandings of both the recent past as well as aspirations for the future. Ultimately, these changes entail the rise of new types of civic work and the creation of new social relations in the civic settings of urban Argentina. For while associations may no longer generally be *viewed* as a "sites of social struggle," there is much contention and negotiation over what constitutes civic work—struggles that involve understandings of social identity, and of what a "modern," democratic *Villa Campo* should be like.

Chapter 3: The Politicos and the Counter-Strategies of Class Organization

Introduction

Almost hidden to the outside observer, throughout the locality's associational activities, were the Politicos.[18] There were a few political party and municipality buildings; plain concrete buildings usually without decoration. Mainly, there were attempts by other community leaders to keep the Politicos outside of initiatives because of the prevailing opinion that they "close" initiatives. These days, the political network does not seem to incite civic participation in *Villa Campo*; residents interested in a specific municipal program and project come, however they generally seemed to be casual participants. This associational sector provided a resource for finding work, emergency money, food, and housing materials. With these particular activities, most of the interactions were asymmetrical.

The space was, primarily, a clientelistic space. In this chapter, I mainly refer to political brokers and not to the medical and school administrators, or even the people involved in political movements necessarily. The leaders in the political network usually tantalized residents with access to government welfare programs and merchandise. Through these *politicos* people could get many things, from schoolbooks, help with electrical bills, and materials for people's homes. There were both good and bad examples of this phenomenon: there were "bad" *punteros* that have the political connections, but use it to their personal gain (for example selling goods that are supposed to be given out to people in the community for free), and good punteros that have the

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[18] Politicos in this dissertation refers to anyone working for a political party, in power or not, of a political party movement.

political connections but are responsible towards the people they serve. For example, as noted in Chapter 2, Flor had some *punteros* visit her when she was in a desperate situation and offer to pay her electricity bills for a while; when she refused to attend a dangerous demonstration, they made her pay back all the "help" that they had given her. On the other hand, there was once a *politico* who upon hearing her decision to go to school came and gave her schoolbooks and supplies, and never asked for anything back, not even political support.

Residents viewed the Politicos in stark opposition to the other associational settings described in the two preceding chapters. In this network, regulated participation took place, leaders generally capitalized on what they had to offer, and they carefully chose which residents to work with according to two residents who I spoke to—i.e., the people who are least likely to complain. Here, residents were regularly expected to not openly bargain, but reciprocate in some way; although whether it was an equal exchange in quality and value was never entirely clear. Usually, the residents that got involved in this network were generally poorer and not viewed as "respectable" by the other residents that I talked to, particularly the independent Flor, because they were viewed as people who "sold themselves" to others—this was as much due to the semi-legal status of many of these activities that made it a particularly anxious associational space. The Politicos harbored the disingenuousness and corruption that many residents of *Villa Campo* associated with the negative aspects of politics. One of the most common terms used to describe participation in the political network by local people was "selling out," a phrase that refers to the manipulation and corruption that is exuded in these networks (*"quieren manejar la gente"*). By extension, the people working in this network—both the

punteros and the people that work for them—were widely perceived by everyone who was not a Politico, as unscrupulous and dishonest people.

The Politicos were obviously not politically marginal, yet they occupied a strongly stigmatized location in the community's associational field. Early on, the *politicos* association with the municipality marked its disreputable space. As Chapters 4 and 5 argue, participation in the political network provided religious and the Naranja leaders with examples against which to present themselves.

However, participants in the political network were not passively defined by their low position in the community's associational hierarchy. Indeed, in this chapter I argue that the political network was a space where the residents who participated in these networks many times actively challenged the prejudices produced in other associational settings that marked them as lowly and dishonest. The political network was an association dealing in blurred boundaries. Whereas *Villa Campo*'s associations had identity-coded exclusiveness (the religious associations) or a vertical aura (Manejo), the practices by the Politicos had been marked as both cheap and shoddy, the people leading it dishonest and devious. However, leaders in this network regularly tried to separate themselves from these images, through claiming themselves to be honest, forthright, representative, and having "*la gente*" foremost in their thoughts.[19] In the process, these leaders challenged a fundamental set of underlying ideas about themselves and their low civic position by their displays of authenticity and conveying levels of respect to which they felt they are entitled. Within a field of democratization, the Politicos served as a space where the expressions of democratization were used, but often to confuse its

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[19]Patricio Korzeniewicz made the point, "Isn't this what participants in any type of social network would claim? Who claims "I'm a liar, devious, do not respond to anyone and do not care about people"?" (April 15 2008)

meaning rather than uphold its principles. Nevertheless, in contrast to both the

Religiosos and Naranjas, I characterize the Politicos as generally a space that is at least

attempting *cross-community organization*.

At the same time, the people that are in the political network were often limited in

their resources—both material and cultural—as they disputed this social image.

Ultimately, I will show that the challenges were largely symbolic. In fact, the very

resources and practices the Politicos used to challenge their bad image were frequently

the very same ones that distinguished them from mainstream society.

Social Organization and the Opening of Symbolic Boundaries

The Politicos was a site of symbolic struggles. Rather than characterize *Villa Campo* as a

space of power battles (which it is most certainly was), instead I view it as a theatre for

the performance of *social struggle*. Much like the city, which de Certeau portrays as

being "left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves

outside the reach of panoptic power" (1984:95), I show that the symbolism that underlies

the organization of participation and civic interactions in *Villa Campo*'s associations

were similarly vulnerable to the political network's practices of redefining them.

While civic practices in other, well-regarded associational settings involved the

marking and maintenance of boundaries, with the Politicos I found instead practices that

blurred boundaries and challenged territories. For example, de Certeau draws a

distinction between "*forms used* in a system" and "the *ways of using* this system"

(1984:98), noting that even the most meticulously planned urban space does not fully

dictate the people's movement. By extension, disadvantaged actors within a field—here

one simultaneously economically and symbolically—may use standard practices and symbolic boundaries in an attempt to turn the system to their own advantage. In *Villa Campo*, the symbolic, political and economic positioning crafted in other associations was subject to tampering.

In fact, often the participants in the Politicos *used* the civic ideas and practices in other associational settings. Instead, they claimed the benefits of the associational setting while rejecting the negative definitions set upon them.

For de Certeau, the strategies of anti-discipline are fragmented and piecemeal and it is this nature that makes them elusive to disciplinary power. By contrast, I want to suggest that the "social organization" performed by the participants of the Politicos was in fact *strategic*, practiced by social actors seeking not to escape but rather redistribute positions in social space. If we return to the concept of field, we might say that the participants in these political networks were still engaged in the game, they were just not playing by all the rules. They engaged in economically induced participation that was simultaneously a "symbolic struggle" (Bourdieu 1984:244). Located toward the bottom of the hierarchy in *Villa Campo*'s associational field, the participants used the Politicos to better position themselves by using the markers that made them different. Theirs was a field strategy; they used the association in order to provide for their temporary needs and to help them rise in position.

Social Identity and the Politicos in the Associational Field

The Politicos occupy a peculiar location within the field of associations in *Villa Campo*. It was a space that was perceived as a backward, low-grade form of politics. It was an

active associational place, generating economic and political profits for the leaders and power for the political parties (as well as linkages to the state and material aid for local participants), but at the same time it was an indisputably low-status social space associated with low-class people and cheap antics. It was a deeply-classed associational space where the predominantly poor participants were viewed as human barometers of the low cultural and moral levels in this political network.

Photo of people waiting outside of a soup kitchen funded by the municipality.

The Downfall of the Lowly Network

Much like the Religiosos, the Politicos were a product of population growth. The political network was an example of the dramatic changes the population increase has brought to *Villa Campo*'s landscape, both physical and social. The political party network was integral in the 1980s when *Villa Campo*'s relations with the municipality, alongside the work of the *Consejo de la Comunidad*, were good. Once the local leaders in *Villa Campo* wanted to "go-it alone" because the *Consejo* became very "political" in 1989 the area was visited by new associational forces and gave way to a new

associational landscape; thus began the development of the NGO network. The breakup of the popular *Consejo* is mostly attributed to the selfish political interests of the Politicos involved in contrast to the other collective interests of the community participants and leaders.

Multiple state and political party organizations and joint ventures between these and other associations exist, and what appears to be many small associations were in fact developed and run in a large part by two political movements: "*Movimiento Evita*" and "*Federación por la Tierra y la Vivienda*." Altogether, they were popularly known as "*politicos*."

Political brokers were commonly identified as the worst *politicos*. The cost of maintaining a group of participants (or "clientele") for political brokers included the expense of finding merchandise to distribute. This varied by the leaders' political connections; the better connections they had, the better merchandise they had access to. The majority of the political brokers had partners, often but not always relatives or family members. Their loyal following helped be their "eyes and ears" in the community. I witnessed this one day when a very well-known *puntero* entered into a meeting on a new water initiative that involved the municipality, incensed that he had not been personally invited. Because of these antics associated with the political party networks, many of *Villa Campo*'s residents regarded the *politicos*, and many of the participants as dubious characters.

According to my interviews, the basic organization of activities in the community had not changed dramatically over the years, though with the political network's loss of status the manner of operating has changed considerably. All four of the municipal

"technicians" I spoke to hastily differentiated between the *politicos* and themselves, not

wanting to be associated with the "political party machines." The loss of status was

linked to the array of corrupt activities of many political brokers; for example, three

community informants who had received funds from *punteros* put the costs of being in a

monthly municipal program through a *puntero* at 20 to 25 pesos out of the 125 pesos

received. It was this kind of illegal, corrupt activity that gave *punteros*, and by extension,

politicos, a bad name. Long-time *punteros* in the community usually had their zones that

were given to them directly by the party in power in the municipality. They had people

working underneath them as well. This allowed them to obtain information on

community residents. The "standard" payback of participating in a municipal program

varied from *puntero* to *puntero*.

Social Identity and Local Stigma

Many of the people in the *Villa Campo*'s political network—ranging from political

brokers to "*responsables*" to community participants—were marked in the popular

mindset as distinct from nonparticipants. Other community leaders and residents viewed

political brokers as unscrupulous and dishonest. The residents who worked for them

were understood by fellow residents to be uncultured and morally deviant. Other people

participating in the network, such as residents working for some municipal program

managed by local brokers, roving *politicos* spouting ideological positions in the

community, and even the many community participants, were likewise viewed by fellow

residents as questionable, untrustworthy, and lazy people in the associational landscape.

Despite the Politicos' political connections, the residents still perceived the political party

network as a marginal space occupied by disreputable people, located low in the symbolic hierarchy of *Villa Campo*'s associations.

In *Villa Campo* the small-scale political brokers were objects of suspicion perhaps because of the explosion of non-governmental associations in the community. Friends and acquaintances in *Villa Campo* would frequently fill me with stories about unscrupulous behavior by political brokers whom they perceived as callous in the pursuit of profits. A middle-aged couple told me such a story one day over mate, describing in detail an outrageous political broker who asked for 100 pesos for the right to participate in a municipal program for impoverished families, where the family would only be given 250 pesos. This was the social reality of poor communities, the couple warned me, and a social reality they attached to the Politicos.[20]

Increasingly, the Politicos were closely associated with the large numbers of the poorest members participating in the network and who now had become emblematic of the network's disreputable reputation. The more established political brokers in the community were mostly older or middle-aged men and women, people who belonged to a political party or movement or former municipal, or state-sector, contract workers.[21] One well-known *puntero* in the *barrio* got his job through his "close relationship" with a former municipal mayor that still holds a degree of power.

Indeed, the majority of residents actually participating in this associational network were often women, mainly single mothers. These women and men either worked, or not, depending on the program, the *puntero* and adherence to the rules, for about 150-250 pesos a month. Residents told me that these programs usually provided a

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[20] As noted in Chapter One, much of the scholars who study poor communities in Argentina would agree with them (i.e. Auyero, Cavarozzi, Merklen).
[21] According to my research based on the four *punteros* that I met.

needed supplemental income to the small regular incomes; they could not live on this little alone. Often there was food provided by the Politicos, at times to try to ensure that the community participants would not need to leave during political activities, not even to eat.

Collectively, these community participants had come to represent the political network and its difference from the more formal, and higher-status, associations such as the NGO network. As discussed in Chapters 1, identity formulations are fundamentally linked to social distinctions, and the participants of the Politicos served as a crucial contrast to which other associational participants were expected to distinguish themselves. I witnessed the people participating in the political party network perform a behavior that linked them with moral deviance and the "impolite" behavior associated with poor people. As a result, the behavior and appearances of these community participants served as a powerful way of identifying their own and the political network's class position.

Photo of a meeting for a community water project in which the municipality was involved. Punteros participated in these meetings and tried to take over the process.

With the Politicos, the focus on participant's bodies reached new extremes, in part because the appearance of participants alone showed their support. The use of people's bodies went from trying to get high turnouts to events in order to "show" support, to one *puntero* in particular giving out food and housing materials in exchange for sexual favors.

These performances were subtly translated into social distinctions. Many of *Villa Campo* residents I spoke with viewed the appearances of the residents who participated with the Politicos as having morally questionable character and low social position. This point was clearly illustrated for me during many conversations with Flor and other women who frequently expressed their disdain for many of the people participating in the political network, leaders and participants. "These people lead a bad lifestyle, all they want to do is fool around – party, dance, drink." Here social distinctions were supported by morally inflected symbolic boundaries (cf. Lamont 1992, 2000).

A participant from another associational network even suggested to me that participating with the Politicos could taint a person permanently. She explained that such a participant would be unwilling to "work for themselves" and would get bad habits, especially in the way of thinking ("*tienen otras formas de pensar*").[22] Indeed, many *Villa Campo* residents associated Politicos' community participants with the unethical or morally suspect behaviors found in the political networks, such as corruption, swindling, taking advantage of people, and irresponsibility. These participants dropped neatly into a popular discourse on *ética* or individual "character" that identified them as *without* good character, an issue I will return to.

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[22] This concern about the lack of moral/ethical behavior and brusqueness of participants with the Politicos parallels wider discourses about people from the provinces traveling to Buenos Aires in search of work. I heard often from residents that they believed people from the rural provinces to value independence, and not easily succumb to the lures of the *punteros*.

The political brokers and their help were widely perceived as deceptive or "false", both within the network and by those outside. Residents claimed that these people had many *caras*, crafty ways of speaking meant to deceive ignorant residents. Many participants did not trust these *politicos* as they commonly tried to skim money off their municipal checks. People in the political network generally appeared to accept that the environment was not a place where one could afford to be trustful, and even fellow participants regarded one another with suspicion.

According to the literature on clientelism in Argentina, *punteros* are portrayed as having a powerful presence in the lives of the residents; however my research in *Villa Campo* indicates that they did not have this powerful sway. This is perhaps due to the fact that there are more associational opportunities than surrounding poor communities, or because, as people like to emphasize, turning to a *puntero* was an act of desperation. Community participants usually did not have a high school education. They frequently came from families with very few economic and social resources, and were unemployed. These people often lacked the education and social resources to find formal employment.

The often unspoken association of the Politicos with urbanization evoked a popular discourse that associates city life with political corruption, moral/ethical weakness, welfare dependency, irresponsibility and laziness. All this is part of a broader public discourse on development and *ética* or individual "character" in *Villa Campo* that differentiates people, classifying people from the provinces (rural) as hardworking, moral and responsible. In *Villa Campo*, the Politicos were associated with questionable urban values.

At times, the political network was even portrayed as representing a backward, primitive form of politics. The small-scale activities and the form of work Politicos engaged in (more on this below) caused people in other associations, who engaged in another form of politics, to characterize the political party network as a "low" "dark" civic form. They distinguished this associational environment from more reputable—and more "advanced"—NGOs, like the Naranjas (which is somewhat managed by a private foundation even though euphemistically said to be run by the people in the community). The Politicos were not part of the vision of democracy for the leaders in both the religious and NGO networks. In this way, social distinctions were also understood through a framework of a transition to a particular, *modern* version of democracy.

Many view the community participants in the political network as being dependent, people who are "managed" with the implication that they cannot manage themselves. The participants with the Politicos were, however active participants in this web of civic life, practicing perhaps class organization that helped drive the civic practices in other associational settings.

Blurred Boundaries and the Counter Strategies of Social Organization
The difficulty of making firm distinctions between associations was, in many ways, part of the accepted fabric of *Villa Campo*. I have outlined above how the political network was a stigmatized space in the associational hierarchy in *Villa Campo* and its people, and their activities were all generally marked as low-class. This lack of symbolic capital also shaped the participation activities and social organization of the associational space, causing political brokers to promote participation strategies that destabilized the

distinctions between the Politicos and other, more elevated associational settings. In a

sense, the Politicos served as a theater for performances of *broad-based class

organization*, a space where political brokers and their helpers fought against the

symbolic distinctions between the Naranjas (Chapter 5) and the Religiosos (Chapter 4)

and those fabricated in the community (Chapter 6). The political network was a "theater"

in the sense that it was where symbolic boundaries were dismantled. The Politicos

performed in a space where the expressions of civic engagement were deployed, but to

confound its principles rather than to uphold them.

Questions of Authenticity

It was part of the nature of the growing civic life in *Villa Campo* to challenge

boundaries.[23] For example, the NGO network focused on public works, which was

normally the job of the municipality.

The Politicos did not necessarily challenge the cultural understandings that were

used to distinguish their network from other associational networks; rather they tried to

reposition the Politicos and its activities with respect to those symbolic boundaries. In

the process, they would challenge the position of other associations in *Villa Campo*'s

field. For example, one of the many distinctions that political brokers and participants

would complicate was that between "political" and "social" activities. The Politicos I

interviewed and observed commanded a large repertoire of pitches that asserted the

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[23] There were, of course, boundaries that community leaders were invested in maintaining. The most obvious was the distinction between inside and outside activists. Only insiders, who would be consistent in their participation and who were friends with the key leaders, would be included in meetings and important discussions. Differences in treatment between insiders and outsiders were substantial and community leaders regularly made judgments about people who came to the community and asked questions. The result was two patterns of interactions, and the boundary between the two types of interactions was carefully policed by fellow community leaders.

"authenticity" of themselves and their activities. This included telling me up front that they were put in prison during the military dictatorship for their political activities as well as describing their personal "politicization" stories.

Participants in the political network would regularly cross boundaries separating these political network and other, better-regarded associational networks, like churches and non-governmental organizations. Because Manejo was the better-known and ironically the most threatening entity in *Villa Campo*'s associational hierarchy, it served as the primary target of criticism over its "non-participatory" actions in the community. For example, in an environmental project that involved the municipality, the community participants, many of whom were involved in the political network, were very critical of Manejo because of its perceived business orientations and shallow forms of participation.

These distinctions—between genuine and false leaders, between quality and "theatric" activities, and especially the activities between those carried out by the "socials" and those carried out by the "*politicos*"—were fundamental to the associational field in *Villa Campo* and the positions allocated within it. The socials described themselves as not having an ideological agenda and just wanting to help people effectively; the "politicals" wanted to transform a class-structured society.

Socials were far more interested in maintaining the boundaries, while the *politicos* emphasized the commonalities. By asserting the value of their activities and, as the next section will show, themselves, the Politicos wanted to rearrange the relational positions of *Villa Campo*'s associational field. They did not suggest that they had as much funds as Manejo, but rather their speech suggested that these other associations, mainly non-

governmental organizations, were really just a façade. Underneath that façade, things were not so different.

Interacting, Power, and Dignity

With the Religiosos, social recognition was a crucial part of undermining actual hierarchical civic interactions. However, many times the leaders and community participants within the Politico (and often in the NGO network) often did not treat one another as equals; there was a lack of mutual respect. Instead, leader-participant interactions within the Politicos at times intimidating power dynamics were present, whether it was insisting on sexual favors for housing materials, or giving out promises that were never kept. At one time, a neighbor, Sofia, wanted to organize cleaning up the garbage from a field; but to do so she needed to obtain a truck from the municipality for such purposes. She could only do this through a *puntero* who repeatedly insisted that he would get one for her. The truck never came. Sofia said this was another example of how the "*politicos*" do not do anything.

This interaction displayed many standard features of participant interactions in the Politicos. Within the political network, the community participants did not consider that they had a negotiating role. Residents just assumed that political brokers and their helpers tried to take as much as possible in order to take advantage of their positions. There was often mutual disrespect expressed between the political brokers in particular, and residents. Many leaders within the political network would exclaim how irresponsible residents were and would frequently complain about how they were

working from their heart and not getting any benefits. One puntero told me, "People here are lazy."

These interactions at times contained mild disagreements and arguments, yet they were always remarkably delicate in nature, and, as far as I observed never dissolved into open conflict. However, participant interactions would at times exceed the limits of normal rituals and routines, revealing an underlying set of tensions that speaks to struggles over social positions and claims to respect. Earlier in this chapter, I described many of the negative opinions about the Politicos—and especially the "*punteros*"—held by *Villa Campo* residents. It was relatively rare for community residents to insult or challenge a political broker outright, in part because they were perceived as powerful and vicious. A resident who 'speaks her mind' might be cut off from social welfare programs and not be able to access them in the future, or worse. The instances when customers openly expressed their disdain to the Politicos directly were only related to me, nothing that I observed directly. *Punteros* who treated making "promises" as nothing more than a game, with no relation to what they actually planned to do, were viewed as both bad and disrespectful. Community residents would accuse them as being insincere, or being a "*punto negro.*" Two *punteros* specifically were labelled "*puntos negros*" both by residents and fellow "*compañeros*" in the political network.

These "*puntos negros*" in the political network themselves often characterized the residents as dangerous, untrustworthy and lacking dignity. Like many leaders in other associational settings in *Villa Campo*, the Politicos often viewed residents as adversaries against whom they must plan. In the project meetings with the municipality, the local political leaders would grumble about the lack of concern and participation of the

residents, the community participants would later tell me that the small turnout was because these political leaders did not bother to invite people. One political broker talked to me as if he was speaking in confidence, that the residents do not have culture, that the mentality of the people has to change because they do not want to work and they have to learn how to "*vivir mas dignamente*" (to live with more dignity).

Conclusion

Within *Villa Campo*'s field of associations, the Politicos occupied a low position. Political brokers and the people associated with them were strongly viewed as dishonest and disreputable people. *Villa Campo* residents viewed their activities as necessary at times, but of low quality in contrast to associations where oversight, leadership, and associational policies ensured at least a demonstration of professionalism. It was the bad image of the political network and its unscrupulous, unrestrained political brokers against which religious associations and non-governmental organizations could define themselves as a sort of haven from an immoral, and, at times, heartless, place.

Nevertheless, for the Politicos, the boundaries between "authentic" participation and theater, even between associations themselves and the political network, were muddled and redrawn on a daily basis. These activities were in part a response to the Politicos' lack of status, so they trespassed across boundaries that divided their network from other larger and better-financed associations in order to assert the value of their activities, and of themselves as honest, hard-working people. These practices were not simply reactive however; in many ways, the activities deployed by the Politicos drove the civic activities found in the other associations. The Politicos were especially effective at

meshing the activities they did and the activities in other networks. They challenged other associations' claims to offer better and more authentic activities. The Politicos, who were often associated with "outsider" activities, were trying to evolve their image into being like "insider" organizations such as the Naranjas (for more discussion on "insiders" and "outsiders" see Korzeniewicz and Smith 2004).

Yet if the Politicos were somewhat successful at blurring the boundaries among the kinds of activities they and others perform, in the end they were much less successful in challenging the definitions that marked them: unscrupulous, selfish, and manipulative. This served to reinforce the symbolic boundaries that made them objectionable.

Whereas the residents participating in the better-regarded associational networks were not necessarily regular participants in the political network, they were from the same poor class 'struggling to make ends meet'; they were people who might also—and at least one time most certainly did—patronize the extensive political network. As the Chapter 6 will show, this very real socio-political competition, particularly between the Naranjas and the Politicos, had begun to drive new discussions in *Villa Campo* for associational participants increasingly realized the potential of the new diverse associational field in which they participated. The leaders of Manejo also recognized that the symbolic capital their association had commanded was threatened by their social nearness to the Politicos. As the next chapter will demonstrate, people in the community began to create civic practices themselves, seeking to distinguish themselves from untrustworthy *politicos* while using the language and tools acquired from participation within these associations.

Chapter 4: Civic Work and Creation of Civic Understanding

Introduction

Appearing all over *Villa Campo*'s streets, churches and parishes constituted an ever-evolving associational sector, and they were where the vast majority of the residents participated. Religious associations were the most popular associational form in this poor community and are commonly known for being hierarchical and generally vertical. There were different choices of participation venues within religious activities and services, and many offered some financial or material aid and a place where residents come to tend to their material needs and problems.

The activities and services that appeared across the religious associational sector were everything from the lures of spiritual salvation and transformation to mental and physical health services to the meeting of basic material needs. Help with addictions and family problems could be found among the evangelical groups, and a vast selection of churches and parishes offered hope and a better afterlife. These religious associations were growing (particularly the evangelical churches) and, out of all the associations, they had most of the residents' interest.

However, it was with the Catholic network--where I spent most of my time--that most of the historical (it was the first association in *Villa Campo*) civic initiatives were rooted; leadership and co-listening programs and other markers of civic work and education—human rights seminars and programs. As for personal attention, they discretely offered customized help for people who were going through tough times. These practical services were clearly targeted at the average *Villa Campo* resident, of

whom in 2001 reportedly had a 40% chance of being in extreme poverty (2001 national census).

The popular nature of these religious associations was shown from the behavior of the participants. Community members in religious associations were much more likely to show ownership of activities done in their associations; whenever they talked about their participation they would refer to "*nosotros*" (us). In addition, the residents' status was respected from the behaviors of the religious leaders. Therefore, even though at the associational level, religious networks were vertical--hierarchical relations were understood by those involved-- in *Villa Campo* personal interactions were often horizontal—leaders were demonstrably respectful and generally used active listening rather than active talking as was common in the other two networks. The act of *acompañamiento* (accompanying), and the attentive, deferential interactions of religious leaders with residents were instigators of new, civic spaces in an urbanized *Villa Campo*.

Of course, participation in religious associations is civic work—these associations affect democratization. Certainly, the Religiosos' accessible, welcoming spaces and spiritual services set them apart from the other participatory environments like *Manejo*. However, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate, the conflicts between the Religiosos affected the relational organization of civic work within the social environment.

Leaders in this associational network generally distinguished themselves and their particular church from all the others—usually in order to attract more participants. In fact, when I started research as a participant-observer in the Evangelical network, a leader told me that I would find *their* parish much better than the Catholic Church, a long-

embedded associational network. He suggested that the "hierarchical" leaders at the Catholic Church did not want to impart knowledge to people, whereas the evangelicals upheld that leaders treat residents with respect. The leader added, "You will have to spend time with us to understand the (cultural) difference."

Those distinctive religious cultures were laden with civic meanings conveyed through the actions of the participants. This chapter explores two different types of civic work in the religious network. In terms of developing an exclusive community, some religious leaders tried to enforce a code (usually dress) through which community participants were expected to distinguish themselves from community participants in other religious settings. In most of the religious associations, a new, fostered conception of identity combined with the imagery of personal transformation to convey powerful meanings. For example, the bodies and dispositions of some of the evangelical and other religious participants were to distinguish them from the Catholic participants.

Yet, there was often recognition of social responsibility. In *Villa Campo*, the religious leaders often performed acts that recognized residents' socially-based claims to dignity and respect. This symbolic recognition of residents' social position and their entitlement to dignity and respect simultaneously produced elements of democratization for both the collective and the individual citizen as I will further explain below.

Combined, these two types of civic work put the Religiosos in a direct dialogue with the locality's other associational settings and their participation practices. Leaders, members, and residents alike distinguished themselves through contrasts with what they clearly were not. For if Manejo was regarded as a symbol of paternalism, with no true participation, the Catholic Church clergy by contrast endeavored to represent a *Villa*

Campo populated by not only "*la gente*" or even "*los pobres*" but by a population with potential for transformation to be protagonists that can be unveiled with "the right push." Religioso leaders were equally anxious to distinguish both their members and their services from the morally suspect Politicos, the subject of Chapter 5. In the Religioso network, discourses of identity, transformation, and constructions of "right conduct" converged on the associational floor to challenge the symbolic boundaries of societal class difference and develop human dignity.

This chapter presents the contradictions of the civic work that religious associations in *Villa Campo* perform. On the one hand, religious leaders often create differences between denominations, and sometimes even between individual churches. These divisions do not indoctrinate the democratic trait of inclusiveness. On the other hand, religious leaders have been essential in providing symbolic capital to a population who is not commonly given recognition.

Diverse Forms of Civic Participation

As earlier chapters have suggested, civic work is invigorated with the rise of a diverse associational space for civic-seeking residents. The second chapter argued that because associational outlets were historically scarce in *Villa Campo*, residents' patronage was a non-issue and leaders instead directed their organizational energies towards the state and its bureaucratic, distributive hierarchy and funding agencies. At predominantly externally-run associations like the Naranja network, some elements of the past have persisted well into the new civic period in the way they try to mobilize participation for their initiatives. Many of the religious associations, by contrast, actively

orient themselves to a changing field in order to respond to the particular needs of the residents. Religious associations attract residents by offering a participatory environment that affirms claims of dignity and respect. The Catholic parish and nuns, generally acknowledged by both the participants and community leaders that I interviewed as *Villa Campo*'s most important, and probably most influential, association, serves as a prime example of how associations stake out their place in the emerging civic landscape of contemporary *Villa Campo*.

Religiosos and the Rise of Villa Campo

The Catholic Church, as a set of nuns and a priest, essentially came during the period of Argentina's "Return to Democracy." The nuns came in 1982 and the priest first came in 1985 and opened the doors of the first parish. As the first Religiosos that lived in the area, from the start these Catholics distinguished themselves from the previous, more formal, Catholic clergy that worked in the area, and the scheming, clientelistic interactions that are still part of *Villa   Campo*'s associational environment. These catholic leaders explicitly sought to work with the poor in a manner that was more about accompanying, rather than organizing, the poor. While a growing number of newer Christian churches and parishes have encroached upon the Catholic Church's offering of a religious experience in *Villa Campo*, the catholic network appeared more devoted to the community (for example, they chose to live in the community), and the people living in the community more than any other associational network.

Usually, the Priest and the *Hermanas* (the nuns) worked independently from one another, and had two different roles in the community, different sets of participants and different types of "training." The priest is in charge of the parish and the *Hermanas* have

small initiatives throughout the locality. At times, there were conflicts between these two sets of Catholic leaders (usually dealing with personality and gender issues), but never enough to cause a full collapse of relations. As reported to me many times by catholic leaders and participants, the majority of the catholic community members' participation was inconsistent, with a small number of active members, producing many changes and uncertainties in the association and it is now unclear whether the Catholic Church is going to maintain its leading associational position in the locality. So far, it has successfully initiated and run a number of small projects within the *Villa Campo* itself and has also linked these initiatives to other communities.

While I was in *Villa Campo*, maintaining an array of small and specific initiatives was a fundamental element of the catholic leaders' method that made it an association that was distinct from the rest. Like many of the associations in the area, the *Hermanas* made careful decisions about which activities they would focus on. What they focused on ranged from internationally-recognized programs to ones developed in *Villa Campo*; some activities widely well-known and others were new. Flexible participation guidelines enabled local catholic participants to come and go; the *Hermanas* conducted regular reflection sessions in which they asked for feedback on their activities to, ensure their activities enjoyed sufficient popularity with the (predominantly catholic) participants.[24] The Catholic leaders' reputation for competence has made their initiatives attractive to funders; they receive small-scale funding to support their projects from both religious and non-religious funding agencies.

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[24] Through these reflection processes, the *Hermanas* established successful activities—for example, a mental health center.

The activities of the *Hermanas* were of a subtle quality; they tried to stick to the background as much as possible. The *Hermanas* had an indirect role in forming associations; they start something and then they leave it alone. The vast majority of the community leadership of the Naranja network originated out of the initiatives of the nuns. One of the *Hermanas* explained that they generally handed over the running of projects to the people themselves, including applying and managing funds. This distinguishes the Catholic leaders from the other leaders, particularly the Politicos. The *Hermanas* noted that the practice of opening the management of projects to the members of the community exposed them to the threat that finances might be used for things other than the project, such as buying groceries. Rather than stake a reputation on coming out with "successful" projects, the *Hermanas* gave active community participants a choice of recognized and identifiable positions and activities often unavailable elsewhere in the locality. Within the initiatives of the nuns, community participants actually played a role in the decision-making process.

Not only did the Catholic leaders offer civic-training activities, they also had distinctively democratic leadership practices. Two of the community leaders that I interviewed claimed that the most significant legacy of the nuns' connection with *Villa Campo* could be found in their personnel practices, which had propagated a new style of leadership in *Villa Campo*'s associational sector—principally the "secular" leadership of the NGO network. As one leader explained, the *Hermana's* participatory practices sharply distinguished them from the others (like Manejo, for example). The *Hermanas* transmitted civic skills and experience, well before this practice became common in *Villa Campo*. Part of this was because of an ideology that places an importance on both

treating people with dignity (with particular attention to the poor) and an emphasis on education, as well as an importance on reflecting on one's actions. All the Catholic leaders took their work very seriously, meeting with members and often discussing work matters as they ate. (At the Naranja network, leaders could frequently be found among themselves, not directly dealing with community members.) Not only did the Catholics cater to the people that live in the community, but also the Catholic leaders were careful to convey that they themselves had a leadership style characterized by ethics and dedication.

Participants obviously arrived at the religious associations for different reasons than at the Naranjas, although this sometimes had little direct connection with the faith. Sometimes it was for basic material needs such as food and shelter, or legal and social support. With the idea of setting up a Basic Christian Community, the *Hermanas* began adopting distinctively emancipatory participation practices. This involved an associational model that shifted much of the responsibility for much of civic participation and education from the leaders to the community members. The idea behind basic Christian communities was to focus on building community. Catholic lay members generally have no formal training in the running of the Church. Despite the Priest being initially against the idea of basic communities, the nuns started holding catechism and Bible classes in people's homes.

There were of course forms of verticalism within, and among, the Religiosos. It was shown that despite the fact that the Religiosos had almost no ability to pay wages; participants were emotionally and morally bound to the religion and the leaders, who in

effect exercised a control over their participation activities. As will be discussed below, there were regulations and parameters for participation. Usually the top religious leaders enforced standards through assistants, middle women and men who roamed the community, helping to resolve difficulties and problems but also checking in with community participants. Leaders were committed to increasing spiritual growth in a particular religion, and helped plan particular goals for individual community participants. In addition, even though many times community participants were not obligated to contribute financially to the religious association, they were still expected to contribute what they could; sometimes, in the case of many evangelical churches, in order to receive a blessing. Community participants were expected to participate in only one religious association, learn and conform to the religion's behavioral expectations and attend religious training classes as well as other meetings and events.

The fact was that community participants served as one of the religious associations' key resources for the growth of their particular religious community—a view, albeit perhaps cynical, that can be transferred to any of the discussed associations. Despite their seemingly open and informal relationship with the residents participating in *Villa Campo*, leaders sometimes regulated the activities in the streets as carefully as they did in the activities in the religious association itself. The rest of this chapter will explore the nature of the religious associations' relationship to the community participants and how civic work in these associations was organized to produce the civic meanings appropriate to a diverse associational setting. Community participants were integral to the creation of those meanings; particularly the type of participant—socially responsible

and sufficiently inspired by the religious teachings and the leaders—was suited to be involved in civically servicing the population of *Villa Campo*.

Selling Personal Attention: The Evangelical Movement

The evangelical movement is growing in *Villa Campo*, along with the rest of Greater Buenos Aires (Semán 2006), over the past decade. One evangelical member described it is as the "non-hierarchical" church. Because of its high participation rates, the evangelical churches' influence is substantial, besides religious affiliation being important to social status. "People are going to the evangelical church because the Catholic leaders just do not seem that involved in people's lives anymore," explained a manager of a community cooperative, who originally had been a member of a Catholic youth group where many community initiatives began. Either given or contributing to the popularity of the evangelical church, as well as other churches and temples, were all over *Villa Campo*. I participated in two different evangelical church services, largely due to the efforts of Flor's sisters.

Photo of an Evangelical mother and daughter about to burn garbage outside of my house.

Luz, one of the sisters, in her late forties has participated in the evangelical movement for several years. Separated with eight children and several grandchildren, she found a lot of solace in her church which was a mega-church with a lot of music and activity. Rosa, her other sister, another single woman in her late fifties, had been a founding member of a small evangelical church (which given the recent evangelical phenomenon, she was almost a veteran evangelical).[25] There was also Alfonso and Sandra (Rosa's daughter) who were in their thirties and had four children who were members of this church. Originally, they had all been members of a Catholic Church, where they met their present pastor (a former member of the Catholic clergy) and decided to follow him when he changed his religious identity. All of them volunteered at their church, and gave as much money to their churches as they could; at times, they received aid from the pastors, usually in terms of spiritual healing. Each evangelical church set up its own unique financial arrangements; usually community participants were expected to finance the church and pay for the pastor and in some cases they were forced to pay a specific tithe according on their salaries to the church, though at other times this was not the case. For such maintenance of the church, and to increase participation, these community participants often volunteered as much as possible for the church, selling food and going door-to-door in order to help convince other to join.

Because participation spaces among the religious associations were delineated according to denomination, they were domains largely controlled by both the

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[25] Religious associations experienced considerable and continuous turnover among community participants. The evangelical leader I interviewed did not specify how many people on average the church had each week, though he did acknowledge that fluctuated a lot. He explained that some left to go to different evangelical churches because of internal conflicts, or they wanted different (more strict) rules, and some left to start other churches.

church/parish and religious leaders, and as a result religious leaders and avid community members could be a continuous presence in community members' lives. Sometimes religious leaders' approval was needed for activities and other routine matters and in the evangelical church, leaders and assistants would regularly inspect community participants for compliance with church policies and standards. Pastors and other top religious leaders would periodically check-in on people directly involved in the church or parish. Avid community members took the responsibility of supplying members and monitoring participation. Non-evangelicals were continually pressured to join, myself included. This worried the Catholic clergy, and there were many cases when over-eager Catholic members would tell on fellow members who were associating with Evangelical leaders.

Typically, dealing with members—introducing activities, managing projects and programs, negotiating participation, and trying to fend off abandonment—took up much of the time of the leaders. This aspect of work at the religious associations will be considered in the context of civic work later in the chapter. However, I found Evangelical members were often preoccupied with other matters that related to promoting their religious community. From the few services that I attended, this was emphasized by the leaders as something that they should do. They would compare their membership numbers with those of other churches and parishes (something that some churches strongly encouraged by talking about the "growth" of membership and the need to attract more people) across *Villa Campo*, and they regularly visited residents not involved in their church to try to pry members from other churches and denominations. This happened one day at home when Flor's niece and her family came to visit her and urged

her to attend their church; I could hear Flor shouting in frustration from another room. "Nobody can ever tell me what I have to do!"

I do not want to portray that it was often easy to find out how evangelical members were involved in their churches; how much they paid, what the pastors personally told them, and so on. Perhaps they were afraid of judgment. It was only after I had established myself as trustworthy in this regard that they began to relax with me.

Denominational Differences and the Jealousy of Leaders

Despite the religious associations being separated along the lines of denomination and often by the actual church, I found that within these associations the range of activities available to participants were more flexible. In contrast to Manejo, I did not find the Religiosos as regimented, and that mistakes and shortcomings were allowed. Participations roles were less limited than in other associations, and there a wider range in the extent of participation involvement. People came to services when they could, they arrived and left during services, tardiness was completely accepted. Following services, which were generally used to proclaim religious doctrine and to exhort members to better their behavior and values, members would tidy up the church or parish and chat with one another. According to my observations, community participants were much more likely to have a sense of ownership in religious associations.

Perhaps because of such identity construction, participants in religious associations were far more cohesive groups than the participants in the Naranja network. Yet all the competition in the community between religious associations surprisingly did not result in a society completely fragmented by religion. Turnover and change in levels

of participation and participants meant, similar to the NGO network, religious networks were not necessarily all-embracing and long-standing. Perhaps the strongest indication of the lack of fragmentation among neighbors in different religious affiliations was the way residents, at the end of it all, accepted others' paths. Once while I was having a stimulating conversation on religion and spirituality with an evangelical couple a neighbor who was an active member of the Catholic Church came and joined us; they discussed trying out different churches, having a diverse religious network of friends and neighbors, being able to discuss and accept differences of opinion, and learning though each other (the catholic woman visited an evangelical leader who helped her with depression). They all agreed that sometimes leaders "*se ponen celosos*", but the people (community residents) do not usually get involved in their pettiness. They all agreed that Christ never looked for a particular religion; he did not care what religion you belonged to. The Catholic neighbor said "*nadie me obliga*", explaining why she goes to different churches. The evangelical woman quoted an African Apostle from memory: "*Los lideres no dejen crecer el pueblo… Los lideres ponen un límite.*" It was generally believed that it was the religious leaders were fragmented and divisive, and it was this which had the potential to create a tense and competitive environment in the religious field.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, conceptions of identity have become integral to the organization of new associational life in contemporary *Villa Campo*. In particular, religious identity has come to powerfully communicate social boundaries in participatory settings through imagery associated with *Villa Campo*'s shift from a limited to a diverse associational society. Religious associations rely upon certain norms to choreograph the behaviors and dispositions of their participation base, in the process distinguishing

themselves from other participatory settings located in the social environment. As David Smilde wrote of the evangelical networks in Venezuela: "Evangelical churches generally have some sort of service every day of the week, and membership is considered an all-encompassing identity that should sharply distinguish the adherent from 'the world'" (2005:760). This is often done in conspicuously divisive ways on the part of leaders. In the associational sector, religion becomes a strategic tool on one side for the creation of social division, yet on the other hand, for cohesion between people in a particular religious setting.

In religious associations, leaders referenced an image of the "other" as they sought to secure a position at the top of the religious associational hierarchy. Both evangelical and catholic leaders engaged in this practice. The main catholic priest was particularly prone to making fun of, or criticizing, evangelicals. Six times, I witnessed when Catholic members, and even the nuns, would criticize the Priest for putting down their neighbors and family members who were evangelical, and argue that he should respect other people's paths.

Good Christians and Creative Subjects

Leaders in the religious network (perhaps unconsciously) deployed two forms of control designed to produce and maintain clear symbolic power between their particular church's network and other community associational networks. One was aimed at standardizing styles of dress (as in the case of some evangelical churches), and the second was exposure to what might be called leadership's practices of "subjectification," which was aimed at making participants manage themselves. Here, my analysis draws particularly from the work of Meyer and Rowan. From the work of Meyer and Rowan (1977), I

utilize their discussion on the effects of institutional norms on organizational structures and social legitimation.

In these religious associations, leaders used images such as heaven and hell, and spirit and form to encourage participants to become individuals who did not just appear to be, but in fact *were* good citizens and good people. It was through this imagery that religious leaders on the one hand allowed for transformational experiences to occur, and on the other hand played the powerful role of shaping beliefs.

Identity or cultural norms were meant to make distinctions among groups of religious members. On the one hand there were the happy, self-focused, skirt-wearing evangelicals, and on the other hand there were the serious, depressing, hierarchical, collectively-minded Catholics. In all these cases, stereotypes were formed to maintain an easily visible distinction the religious association's members and nonmembers in *Villa Campo*. Participants' careful performances served as a clear channel for communicating distinctions among religious associations and, by extension, their membership bases.

Religious discipline, however, was always incomplete. The limited extent of leadership's claims on members meant that member noncompliance was widespread and frequent. As a result, leaders engaged in practices that called up on participants to govern their own behavior not out of fear of leaders' disapproval but rather because such behavior accorded with their own sense of self, in the process also distinguishing themselves from others. For example, catholic homes would be full of images of saints and virgins, whereas evangelical members would never have any of these images because, according to them, that was against God's wishes. In this way, religious leaders

were actually able to enlist participants' active aid and participation in the production of group adhesiveness.

Ultimately, the leaders' emphasized doctrines were to be supported by the membership. Both associational doctrines and the participants' dispositions operated to distinguish the association, through its participants, from other associational settings in the locality. In an effort to secure their position and attract more members, many churches cultivated distinctions and tried to mark differences between their members and others, while assuring their members spiritual success.

Association and the Creation of Civic Meanings

Members of religious associations, by virtue of easily visible differences from other associational settings, created an aura of associational difference that was recognized and discussed by residents. However, as I argued in Chapter 1, civic work operates at two levels: the associational and interactional. At the level of interactions, civic work can produce social differences and commonalities among *individuals* by drawing upon yet also constructing broader social patterns. Indeed, the interactions performed at the religious associations were also a form of civic work, though here the creation of civic channels involved the interaction with residents by community participants as well. In a newly diverse associational sector, civic acts performed by community members, as well as those organized by the associations, became visible ways that recognized residents' capabilities and value.

How could so many of my fellow colleagues have missed the critical element of religious institutions in the history of *Villa Campo*? It is important to remember that this

largely underlying networking within this poor community was tied to associational strategies directly linked to the creation and maintenance of spaces of legitimation and civicness for *Villa Campo*'s population.

Symbolic Capital, Civic Work and the Performance of Transmitting Civicness

It is "symbolic capital" which dominant social groups receive as recognition that their way of life is worthy of esteem (Bourdieu 1990:135). Conversely, acts of respect from privileged individuals towards under-privileged individuals challenge asymmetrical social positions. The way that these religious associations played a critical role in democratization processes was that they transmitted symbolic capital to poor members. The people that I interviewed, both Protestants and Catholics, all mentioned that they started to "feel alive", to "wake up" when they began participating in these religious associations. Many of them started to serve others in the community through, and as a result of, participation in the religious associations. What appears as recognition of the individual is in fact a recognition of civic entitlement.

To understand how civic associations are able to perform these acts of civic recognition and the legitimization of civic entitlement is crucial. Associations have long been associated with cross-class, gender, and ethnic notions of respect and have served as important sites for the creation of civicness in communities ("citizens who identify their social membership with the particularism of one *Gemeinschaft* may not make very effective democrats" (Barber 1998:24)). The argument is that exclusive organizations may restrict democratic social formation by creating "us" and "them" boundaries. While it may be difficult for associations located in small communities to have a diverse

membership, these associations may "bridge" with other associations that represent different categories of the population.

Thereby acts of respect can be used to simply reflect symbolic capital and relative social positions and to reproduce structures of unequal human relations, but they can also be consciously used to contradict these social norms. One of the most important barriers to citizenship is the self-recognition of being a worthy citizen, and not having to defer to authority. It is through interactions, and acts of deference that we get a sense of what, to borrow again the phrase from Stinchcombe (1965:180), "powerful people can get others to do", yet it is also through interactions that people learn to confront social assumptions.

Religious associations not only offered members an environment of compassion and personal attention; the associations also created an atmosphere of attentive deference to people who normally did not receive this kind of attention, and this was their mark of civic work in *Villa Campo*. As one active catholic member, Sofia, told me, "When I met the nuns and taught me another form of living I began to have value in myself; for the first time I was human." Leaders also ensured that the association's religious doctrine produced the proper markers of civicness for the members.

A very different sort of knowledge hierarchy existed, then, than the one constructed and maintained by leaders and participants at the NGO network. In the religious associations, participants were trained in regards to both skills and symbolic capital. This did not occur to the same extent in either the non-governmental or the political networks.

A Civic Space

The key mode for transmitting civic recognition outside of particular associations, however, was the interactions between residents and participants. Religious leaders frequently spoke on such interactions. In some churches, it was an emphasis to not trust the outside. I heard one particular evangelical leader say, "*es muy feo afuera,*" indicating the streets outside and, symbolically, non-members, "*caminan, y no se ven.*" Associational practices in *some* evangelical churches exacerbated the situation by institutionalizing differential treatment meant to reward members who gave more money special treatment that members wore like a badge of honor. In one of the evangelical services I attended, members would go up in front of the congregation to put their money in a shiny gold box and receive a blessing; those who could not give would stay in the pews. On the other hand there were other leaders imploring people to reach out and help their fellow residents, whether they were from the same religious affiliation or not. For example, one evangelical leader urged people to not discriminate against non-evangelicals. All of the five of the initiatives started by community members (excluding local NGO leaders) that I saw were motivated by religious involvement and the call to help their fellow neighbors.

There were many examples of religious participants initiating their own projects when they saw a need. One evangelical couple started their own soup-kitchen from their house when they saw that there were children on their block that were not allowed into the community soup kitchen. They used the skills from prior participation in a bakery started by one of the nuns. Many women that were trained in the co-listening program by the nuns would serve non-participants in their homes.

The Contradictions of Civic Work

All this made the religious associations a mixture of highly emancipatory and, at the same time, highly stratified spaces. And they did not equally "serve" all residents. This was one of the key contradictions of the religious associations; they were semi-public and open to all residents, yet they clearly catered to their own members. This, of course, is where religion clashes with inclusive democratic ideals.

Yet, many of the religious participants did not accept these differentiations (the NGO leaders also strived to communicate that they were open to all religious backgrounds). Within the home is where the "bridging" work (to borrow a term from the social capital literature) took place. Considering that family members, friends and neighbors could have different religious affiliations, collective meetings or meals were started with prayers that reflected the diversity of the participants. There were always open discussions of different religious views. Many participants said that they learn (grow spiritually) by exploring other Christian denominations.

Of course, it was not always the case that community members respected one another's religion. Generally, however, different religious affiliations did not seem to be as much of an issue with people as among the leaders themselves.

Keeping the Spirit Alive

It is important to note that the civic projects of the religious leaders, in the shape of religious doctrine and efforts to get participants to identify personally with the image of themselves as a deserving, valued and important members of society. This may be the reason that many of the community leaders in *Villa Campo*, including the vast majority of the leaders in the Naranja network, began their community activism within the Catholic

Church. In practice, the deeply religious nature of these associations and the subjectivities it called forth could make the line between members' personal inclinations and religious leaders' guiding principles a fuzzy one. This suggests therefore that there may be substantial overlap between the "culture" of community leaders and of the Catholic Church (for example, the nuns had a direct impression on the female leaders through leadership classes).

The flight of catholic members to evangelical pastors was a fact that troubled the catholic leaders and something that they could not quite understand. The priest reacted to the situation by making fun of evangelicals, which many catholic members would criticize as they were often related to or were friends with evangelical members. The *Hermanas* conducted a study to find out what people thought of their activities. (They had outsiders, such as me, conduct the interviews.) Generally catholic members responded by saying that they wanted more religious classes instead of all the social programs that the nuns headed; there was a general sentiment that the nuns were not as religious as they were when they first arrived in *Villa Campo*. One of the Hermanas said to me, "You have probably noticed this already. Poor people are profoundly spiritual people. Often more so than we are!" One of the main factors that drew people to the evangelical churches was the personal visitations from the pastors and other evangelical leaders. Ironically, it was these personal visitations, this accompanying, that initially made the catholic network more cohesive. People said that the priest changed when he went from riding around in a bicycle, to driving around in a van. On reflection, it is ironic that once the catholic leaders acted more like NGO leaders, they were less popular.

In contrast to evangelical leaders who emphasized individual salvation, however, the catholic leaders had a strong emphasis on the collective.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the extensive empowering and subject-shaping activities designed by leadership at religious associations, and in which participants participated, with the ultimate aim of producing social change. Leaders at these religious associations recognized themselves in a competition for residents who sought personal transformation in a collective participatory setting. In *Villa Campo* today, members, and by extension most religious associations, practice the most vigorous civic work as they stake out their positions at a reorganized social landscape.

Civic work, I have shown, occurred at two levels; this demonstrates contradictions. Leaders of religious associations produced associational differentiation between one another by engaging in symbolic dialogue with other associational settings (primarily religious) in the community and identifying their association as more modern and authentic by comparison. Leaders, particularly in the evangelical networks, found members, trained, and monitored their participants' activities in order to ensure that these members successfully distinguished themselves from non-members. To do so, leaders drew upon discourses of identity, as differentiations were mainly along religious identities.

I have also shown that relations between leaders and community members in this religious associational setting contributed to democratization at the level of personal interaction. Personal interactions--combined with acts of deference, reciprocity, and

mutuality--were recognition of citizenship. If we locate these interactions in a context much broader that the leader-participant dyad or even the leader-participant-resident triad, we see they belong to an environment where there is a claim to the poor's esteem and respect.

Ultimately, the religious associations served as spaces where civic entitlements were enacted—by members—and symbolic recognition was envisioned. Indeed, the participants' activities at the religious associations and the social interactions it structured sat nested in a wider context in which poor people are viewed as legitimate and appropriate recipients of esteem and respect. The civic meanings produced by civic work served as a powerful collective undermining of social inequalities: every person should have respect. And they have the right, and the responsibility, to speak and act.

Chapter 5: Manejo: Civic Participation with Vertical Characteristics

Introduction

In the spotlight of the story of *Villa Campo*, the NGO network is a setting that is often associated by community leaders, development practitioners and scholars with confronting clientelism and verticality. The network itself was a result of the Community Council established in 1986, even before *Villa Campo* had a political and social identity. As a civic space, the NGO network characterizes itself as distinctly grassroots. The network is spread out in the locality, but the main center is a few small cement buildings on a field covering an entire acre. On the walls inside the main meeting room is a list of ethical principles of social interaction which is on the walls of most of the community organizations in the area. Each day, the main building hosts meetings where often one hears quite theatric, sentimental declarations, steeped in populist fervor. One of the organizations in this network, henceforth called *Manejo*, stands out. Its aim is "To strengthen the union and organization between neighbors in order to better the neighborhoods and the quality of life of the inhabitants." Although written for the opening of this organization in 2001, the mission is infused with the language of the new "democratic," "grassroots" times and encourages the participation of *Villa Campo*'s residents to building a new future.

This association has garnered a lot of attention from scholars, typically from Argentina. Often the NGO, Manejo, was confused with the name of the community itself, *Villa Campo* by these scholars whose methods usually consisted of going to the buildings owned by the Naranja network in a taxi and speaking to community organizers.

They had a generally positive view of the association. After observing interactions attending meetings, conducting interviews and informally chatting with both leaders and community volunteers as well as living in the community over a period of six months, I was able to see that democratic appearances were not always what they seemed to be.

The somewhat paternalistic sentiment and the organization of activities in this associational network raise a number of questions about civic work, the evolution of democratization and civic human relations. As this chapter will show, the NGO network forces us to ask about the conditions under which participation pushes democratization. In particular, when do leaders of an association like a non-governmental organization structure their participation, decision-making and activities to further the democratization process? Conversely, when do civic organizations become invested in the production and reproduction of a paternalistic culture, or habitus? How are residents' civic perceptions influenced by the actions of leaders and how much do they accept?

In the introduction, I suggested that associational diversity is a key factor in the civic relational process. In this chapter, I examine the activities and interactions in a NGO network, demonstrating that this "participatory" association did *not* further democratization at the level that it intended. This is largely because participation at this largely externally-run network was originally organized under the conditions of a centralized, planned committee; it does not bear the characteristics of a horizontal association and furthermore bears resemblance to the political party network that it was trying to distance itself from. However, the associational network has contributed to democratic processes within the community through augmenting people's civic capacities and contributing to civic discussion (albeit usually criticizing the NGO itself).

As Chapter 2 has detailed, in the mid-eighties associations and participation venues were limited in *Villa Campo* and isolation was a major issue. Associational networks largely directed their organizational energies towards the state and its bureaucratic distributive hierarchy, almost the exclusive source of material resources and other benefits. In this chapter, I demonstrate that this "vertical" mindset continued to guide the operational activities in the NGO network. Consequently, the top leaders in the network (in contrast to leaders of the Religiosos) did not have practices that brought about genuine civic relations within *Villa Campo* itself.

The result, largely, was an association bearing the symbols of a vertical relational process. While leaders focused on building relations with other, local and non-local NGO leaders, academics, provincial and municipal governments and external funding agencies, the local participants' activities were relatively constrained by the leaders' interventions. An acceptance of the leaders' authority and assertions of leaders' expertise and control of the activities characterized the culture of this association as was continually demonstrated in interactions. As a result, most of the interactions were constructed on a basis of community member–leader inequality and required the subtle recognition and legitimization of inequality, or social difference. This chapter explores these three elements: an authoritarian leadership style,[26] a paternalistic civic culture obstructing equality, and non-egalitarian civic interactions. I should emphasize that I am not arguing that activities at the Naranjas is the same as before the changes of civic participation—it is not—but rather that the organization of participation and the quality of interactions in the association was clearly shaped by paternalistic social relations.

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[26] Authoritarian leadership style refers to when the leaders make the decisions of the goals and processes, and other participants follow; whereas democratic leadership styles have more inclusive decision-making styles and allow for diverse views.

Associations and Habitus

Part of the civic work that associations do, I argue, involves leaders making activities and decisions that distinguish their own civic setting from others; in this case of the NGO, distinguishing themselves from less "popular" or "genuine" associations (according to them). These associational-level practices were often not mirrored at an interactional-level, where leaders were expected to recognize residents' claims to be protagonists and entitlement to respect.

I have borrowed the concept of "field" to argue that associational cultures and orientations are very much a product of the environment in which they operate (Fligstein 2001; Schoenberger 1997). At the same time, both leadership and participatory cultures are also structured by the broader political-economic organization of society (e.g. type of economy, or form of political structure), as Tocqueville argued in *Democracy in America* (1939). In this chapter, I attempt to show the crucial connection between associational fields and the broader political economy, and the importance of both factors in shaping life in *Villa Campo*.

In the introduction, I suggested that culture is an integral part of associations. As this chapter will show, culture can structure a durable set of dispositions deeply embedded in the practices of the leaders and participants who make up a civic organization (*cf* Auyero 2000). In contrast to studies of associational networks that focus on explicit attempts to engineer an associational culture (Englund 2006), I point instead to a more subtle but important role of culture structuring activities and rhetoric within associations. Bourdieu noted that the "harmony" between objective structures and

subjective orientations in social settings, what he called a "coincidence of habitus and habit" by which institutions are made real by actors disposed to fill roles in them. An association only comes to life if, "like a garment or a house [it] finds someone who … feels sufficiently at home in it to take it on" (Bourdieu 1981:309). In other words, the notion of "habitus"—made up of largely unspoken values, dispositions, and practices— helps explain why social structures, housed in institutions, are so enduring and are readily reproduced through the daily practices of individual social actors who feel "at home" in these institutions.

The Naranja network, with a history shaped before the economic crisis, also offers us an opportunity to consider questions of cultural durability within an associational setting. In particular, Manejo presents us with a civic association in which the elements of a vertical organization have proved resilient through the course of associational changes— for example, certain managerial attitudes and interactional level had features of what I characterize as verticality (which I outline below in Table 3.1). These culturally guided attitudes, values and practices all made up the "tool kit" (Swidler 1986) that Naranja leaders and participants relied upon to structure their participation activities in the association. For leaders at the association, their mindset operated largely through accepted power relations and unstated assumptions—assumptions often only made explicit when together, either forgetting about my presence or thinking that I did not understand. In this sense, leadership orientations were evidence of a paternalistic habitus that resided in a realm of habit and disposition (Bourdieu 1977).

TABLE 3.1: Associational Structures and Practices

	Horizontal (commonly viewed as democratic)	Vertical (commonly viewed as non-democratic)
Associational structures and practices	Decentralized; responsibility is dispersed; accountability and transparency	Centralized; rules of participation are defined according to roles; servicing; paternalism
Decision-making processes	Deliberative; inclusive; transparent	Authoritative decision-making; exclusive
Leadership	Democratically elected by the general membership	Appointed
Information	Information is widely dispersed	Only information approved by authorities dispersed
External Relations	Wide network with similar associations	Links with more powerful bodies: the state, national and international religious authorities, international organizations

Like leaders, participants in the network also expressed dispositions strongly associated with authoritarianism and clientelism. To some degree, the repeated and explicit assertion by some leaders of their grassroots civic culture hinted at less coherence between circumstance and culture than the concept of habitus suggests. There are two reasons why this might be so. Following Auyero (2000), I suggest that the explicitness of this civic culture was in part a product of the organization of civic life under conditions of clientelism. Also, as Ann Swidler has argued, during unsettled times, strategies of action become more explicit, and "culture's role in sustaining existing strategies of action and its role in constructing new ones" becomes more apparent. This chapter is primarily concerned how both circumstance and culture have operated to sustain existing strategies

of action at Manejo, as associational leaders maintained many traditional vertical

orientations and participants continued to participate in a largely vertical civic culture.

(Chapter 6 will explore the construction of new strategies of civic action by participants

in *Villa Campo*.) Ultimately, the consequences of civic work for associations, leaders

and participants become especially clear when we examine a participatory setting *not*

directly shaped by their civic participatory claims.

A Vertical, but Civic, Association

Despite numerous differences and changes, Manejo of 2006 retained many

orientations of verticality. In particular, leaders mainly directed their attention and

energies not towards the community and the residents but rather towards funding

agencies that are above them in the vertical network of "local" development. Having

enjoyed a privileged position among the local organizations, Manejo's links to, and

dependencies upon, the local and international funding agencies grew. Ultimately, this

fostered a "vertical" mindset, one *not* geared to produce democracy in the participatory

setting.[27]

Villa Campo enjoyed a distinct, civically-advantaged position within the

municipality of Garcia and in Buenos Aires province more generally. Prior to 1986, there

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[27] The argument presented here contrasts with Pablo Forni and M. E. Longro's (2004) findings for Villa Campo's associational sector. Forni and Longro (31) found that these well-situated non-governmental organizations—for example, autonomous from the municipal jurisdiction—were *more* likely to embody the elements of democratic reforms. Forni showed that in the 1990s, these well-situated non-governmental organizations were likely to cope with lack of infrastructure by organizing the community's participation. There is no evidence to contradict arguments, however, that the community's participation was a result of simply wanting the infrastructure. I do not mean to suggest that the Manejo's relationship with the funding sources and the local government is representative of Greater Buenos Aires' associations and non-governmental organizations in other localities, though the pattern *was* representative within Villa Campo. The locality's largest associations were not under pressure to change. My point here, rather, is to explain the enduring paternalistic nature of leadership and participation in this particular network.

were no formal associations in the locality besides churches and brokers for the

municipality (*la municipalidad*) nor any local organizations or networks ("*no tuvimos un*

idea quien somos") that were more typical in other areas. This meant that there were not

so many political party brokers (*punteros*) in *Villa Campo*, and therefore there was

limited access to provincial and municipal-level state distribution systems with state

programs and goods meant for poor communities. In the aftermath of the return to

democracy, *Villa Campo* was one of the first localities in the province that established a

Community Council to make decisions directly within the community (Prévôt Schapira

1996). During this time, a good relationship to the municipality and the province was

one of the more valuable resources at the disposal of the Council's leadership. The

Council's special relationship with municipal leaders remained strong enough through the

course of political reforms in the municipality, and in the late 1980s they created a

municipal delegation, built a chapel, established a police station, inaugurated two

schools, paved the majority of the roads, and obtained an ambulance. Through time, the

success of the Council attracted less 'community-oriented' players and people from

established political networks entered into this local democratic process. Because of

political conflicts, *Villa Campo*'s first formal organization finished in 1989. The

Council's leaders claim (in 'esoteric' fashion) that the Community Council had become

"a seed … sown in the community which continues to grow and yield fruit."[28]

Economic conditions, of course, had dramatically altered the way the way this

network engaged in the work of community development. By the late 1980s, for

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[28] These leadership claims are laden with the tones of spiritual symbolism, primarily Catholicism. Marie
Prévôt Schapira, in her study of municipal politics and administration in Greater Buenos Aires, notes the
heritage of *basismo*, "a specific confluence between a Catholic current influenced by Liberation Theology
and a secular movement, namely Peronism", that motivated the development of certain government policies
in the local government in the 1980s (Prévôt Schapira 1999).

example, the Naranjas were no longer looking for funds through political and state networks, opting instead for the direct links the community had with other funding sources that had developed through the Community Council. In the early 1990s, this network shifted from depending on the state and instead looked at private funding sources.[29] This shift happened through different associational incarnations; from a decentralized community council, to a transport collective, and then into the Naranja network with Manejo at the head.[30] People who worked in the network shifted from being "*militantes*" to being "community development professionals", with more secure salaries. When I was in the community, this NGO network that originally was populated by young Catholic youth had evolved into a more bureaucratic, "professional" form.

In 2001, state welfare programs collapsed, along with the state and the economy. Inhabitants were, before this collapse, enrolled in state welfare programs sponsored by the government and which they relied upon for their monthly contributions. The state no longer could shoulder the full social welfare burden for all its inhabitants.[31]

These associational changes, all responses to new social, economic and political conditions, and to declining employment, were largely initiated by what was going on at the national level. Indeed, these changes had not contributed to a change in leadership within the NGO itself; in fact, the network was headed by the same community leaders throughout this period of change.

In other ways, the Naranjas remained as financially tied to external financial agencies as other local associations in previous times. 2003-2004, when Manejo

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[29] Given that Argentina first began introducing decentralization of social programs in the early 1980s, Villa Campo seems to have become accustomed to this system relatively early.

[30] It should be pointed out that this is a quick run through the community's rich associational history.

[31] This system was still functioning of course when I lived in Villa Campo with the poorest relying on government handouts through *punteros* in order to get by.

completed the massive new water project built on funds through the Foundation, was also a turning point in *Villa Campo*'s associational sector. As the previous chapter described, local development, which began to increase in the late 80s and the early 90s, had attracted large numbers of new social initiatives, while political party networks saw their support slide. During the national economic crisis in 2001, the community's financial fate was largely left in the hands of external non-governmental financial institutions.

The officials at the Foundation controlled the association through a general manager, who was not selected by the community, but externally appointed by the Foundation and seemed to be expected to approve every decision of any importance of the Foundation's director. As a result, the participants expressed little sense of control over and as a result often little interest in, the major affairs of the association. "They used a *gestión comunitaria para vender algo*," said a disgruntled former community participant, "They were using people. ... (I)t does not appear logical to use people, to lie to people, and make them believe they are participating in something progressive when in reality they are selling a multinational (*sic*)." "We are just a community organization;" said one of the community leaders explaining why they rely heavily on the Foundation as the entity in charge of promoting the organization, providing administrative support, and looking for funds for the activities of Manejo. As one of the staff pointed out, the *pueblo* is the face of Manejo, but behind this facade, the entity that administrates projects and makes decisions is the Foundation.[32]

This sense of lack of authority or control also characterized leaders' relations with participants. In particular, leaders frequently reminded me of their inability to get people to participate. The association did have an institutional process for people to participate,

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[32] From interview on November 11, 2006.

involving a large meeting of participants (*una asamblea*) and also passed out approved

targeted surveys. However, finding committed participants was viewed as difficult,

unless the individuals were already involved in the network's circle.[33]

All this suggests that the Naranjas inhabited an associational environment similar

to the vertical elements (outlined in Table 3.1) found in clientelist networks (clientelism

is explained in Chapter One). The vertical political environment, then, with its array of

interlocking government and political party organizations and local units, was similar to

the field in which community leaders operated.[34] This understanding dictated the issues

and relationships many of the NGO professionals focused upon, particularly the ones in

Manejo, turning their attention away from the participants and residents in favor of donor

officials. In the minds of most community leaders, Manejo's position in the cosmos of

Villa Campo's associational life was dictated not by the community's demands,

ultimately, but by the Foundation. Even community leaders' reaction to my desire to

volunteer and conduct research in the association served as a case in point, for they took a

foreigner's interest in them to be yet further evidence of Manejo's elevated position in

local development in the Province of Buenos Aires and within Argentina as a whole.

Verticality and Civic Culture

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[33] Englund (2006: 170-171) found similar expressions of leaders' concern for participation, which he attributed to Western human rights ideology and its sense of individual responsibility.

[34] The association's relations with municipal government made up a distinct field in which community leaders operated. However, the community organization-funding agency relations, which I will address here, were strongly shaped by perceptions about the association's break with the municipal government. The community leaders believed their historical position as one of the community's champion associations—a position designated by financial backing—meant that external agencies would want to go through the Naranjas' network. External agencies through their role recognized the network's historically central position in the locality's associational sector and judged its financial viability based on its close ties with other external funding sources.

Fixed upon benefiting from the Naranja network's relations with the Foundation, the NGO professionals, especially the ones in Manejo, did not focus on creating a space for development and education of civic life. Instead, it appeared that the community itself received little attention from these particular professionals on a day-to-day basis, and therefore it was primarily left to the domain of community participants (volunteers) and residents. In this relatively autonomous space, volunteers cultivated a civic culture infused with the stated, if not often realized, civic values of democracy. So, even though participation was *not* structured democratically, this vertical, authoritarian association, in fact, helped foster a civic ethic along with critiques of inequality.

Civic culture in a participatory setting can provide participants with resources to stake claims and challenge authoritarian control in the community. In a study of church groups in the United States, Paul Lichterman (2005:56) defines civic culture as "the cultural patterns that shape the means or ends of civic engagement." Civic culture incorporates collectively held values as well as the practices through which these beliefs are enacted. The streets of the community became a space where participants asserted themselves, collectively, through self-organization of activities, a sense of entitlement and public speaking skills, and strategies to handle both leaders and fellow residents.

Even though I found through my observations, meetings, interactions between leaders and community members and decision-making processes bore the clear marks of experiences with clientelism and paternalism, most strikingly, participants maintained a culture that frequently invoked democratic values and included an explicit critique of inequality in these associations and of the leaders' authority over community volunteers (participants).

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Photo of men at a food kitchen.

Ethnographic studies of social life in clientelist networks in the *villas* and *barrios* in Greater Buenos Aires identified a consciousness grounded in both ideology and material relations of the paternalistic system. For example, Scheper-Hughes (1992) argued that the political power in clientelist networks required an explicit ideology that attempts to "mystify reality, obscure relations of power and domination, and prevent people from grasping their situation in the world" (Scheper-Hughes 1992:171 quoted in Auyero 2000:150). Under situations of clientelism and authoritarianism in general, participation and its results are commonly appropriated by the authority, whether it is the state or another entity.

In Malaysia, anthropologist James C. Scott found civic consciousness, what he terms as "weapons of the weak" in the peasant class. For this group, Scott argues that, "in small but significant ways, the mutuality of the poor represents a form of daily resistance that prevents, or at least delays, the worst consequences of the full "rationalization" of production relations in the countryside" (1985:265). In Scott's study, this politics was most clearly expressed in informal interactions, where peasants resisted

attempts to impose new, ideological and material rules by ridicule, noncompliance and foot dragging. He contends, the peasants "act to defend their interests" by "boycotts, quiet strikes, thefts and malicious gossip" (1985:304). Scott holds that these actions were contingent, tied to the era of the green revolution and the organization of production, rather than the result of a general social organization of power and disadvantage, as Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey (2003) argue.

At *Villa Campo* it was clear that there was an oppositional consciousness, which was not embedded in a particular ideology or event, as seasoned active community members often presented an almost structural understanding and critique of their relationship to Manejo leadership, and other "*politicos*" more generally. Community participants demonstrated an acute understanding of the inequalities created by *Villa Campo*'s brand of clientelism, "local development," verticalism (or the vertical elements involved in civic life as outlined in Table 3.1) and opinions of the new relations in the community. Much like the Malaysian peasant workers described by Scott (1985), community participants in Manejo drew upon cultural resources cultivated by experience and knowledge to critique Manejo's building (or even un-building) of a failed or compromised democracy. However, unlike Malay impoverished peasants, the democratic and egalitarian strands to the civic culture at *Villa Campo* were neither nostalgic nor repressed, grounded as they were in daily activities and discussions among participants despite the verticalism that prevailed in associational life. The result was a set of deeply held dispositions—a democratic habitus—from which participants actively endeavored to make the community a place in which they felt at home—bending it, with their practices, into something that matched their civic culture and its values.

Politics in the Barrio

The community participants in the Naranja network served as an example of how "civic consciousness" was forged daily through concrete organization of activities. When there were no leaders around, it enabled community participants to engage in critiques that both challenged leaders' power and asserted community participants' competence and wisdom in matters of the community. This was certainly true in the corner of "the red zone" of *Villa Campo* where I was living.

This part of the barrio was the oldest and poorest neighborhood of *Villa Campo*, stretching along the border of the neighboring municipality. *Manzaneras*, Manejo block representatives, usually women, were in charge of being the links between the association and the residents, passing out information on the activities of the association. I found myself in the house of one of these *manzaneras*. They mainly worked in their blocks, occasionally going to an *asamblea* or *jornada* when they could go. All told, the participants who I accompanied and spoke with were typical of the association's community volunteer-force: they were women, grandmothers, in their forties and fifties. In addition, they had lived in *Villa Campo* for a long period and were well socially connected and respected.

Starting from the 1990s, associational changes had gradually altered the community activism in *Villa Campo*; from working for free to infrequent, unstable honorariums to opportunities for stable wages. This has been the pattern in many social movements in the past. Many trade unions, for example, also began with volunteer work that eventually turned into paid activities, and there were intense debates as to the consequences of this shift on the issues of activism and representation. Community

volunteers, if they showed sufficient commitment during the week, had an opportunity to make some money on the weekends. These salaries and bonuses were issued by the Foundation. Given the poverty in *Villa Campo*, participants actively pursued these small contracts, and in the interactions I had with them, I never heard these particular, ambitious participants ever critiquing or holding back on their praise of the association.

An associational manager and four other representatives were in charge of daily operations in Manejo, and people from the Foundation would conduct periodic inspections. People who worked in the Naranja network were subject to admonishments—for not being in frequent contact with the Foundation, for not being organized and on schedule—but in practice they were rarely let go. However, these leaders were rarely doing their work in the streets of the community, and when a Manejo representative did come by he or she was likely to focus upon incidental issues that benefit the Foundation such as passing out surveys and handing out pamphlets. Community volunteers' autonomy in the *barrio* gave them the freedom to organize their participation activities as they saw fit.

In a sense, the patterns of participation of the leaders in Manejo were similar to those Max Weber (1978) observed in a bureaucracy. Weber identified low levels of personal self-direction and autonomy as a key element of this "bureaucratic organization," revealed by the static positions in the organization, even as people flow in and out of the organizational space.[35] While *Villa Campo*'s participants were certainly not free from the professionals' evaluation and control, participants' self-direction also

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[35] Participants, by contrast, deal mainly with the *demands* of the locality—of its residents—which is generally a source of uncertainty in an unstable sphere.

enhanced their sense of expertise and competence, heightening their disdain for a seemingly arrogant leadership.

Participant autonomy in the community made community volunteers especially skeptical of leadership power, so it is perhaps unsurprising that open critiques of authority were most frequently provoked by the appearance of professionals in the community itself. When the top leaders *did* appear—usually in some formal "work" sense—or when their names were mentioned, participants were likely to comment to me on the power relation between participants and these community leaders, in the process revealing the politicized nature of civic participation in the community.

Such a critique came out quite unexpectedly one day when I was questioning *La Gorda* about her participation in the association. A group of people who worked at the association had just passed out a newsletter. "Have your activities changed from when you first started participating?" I asked *La Gorda,* who was in her fifties and had lived in *Villa Campo* most of her life. "This…" *La Gorda's* voice trailed off. Then she launched the conversation in another direction. "You know, there are hundreds of us who work on the water project, but only a few are actually getting paid for it, and they get paid quite well. We are not paid and we do most of the work. They are just using us (*nos están utilizando*)." *La Gorda*'s comments pointed to the unfairness of salaried workers of the association asserting authority and profiting over those who are doing a lot of the work. This critique was quickly directed against the realities of life where there is inequality. "Those people are just where they are because they had an opportunity to have an education, whereas, we did not. It is the way things are," *La Gorda* continued. She threw her hands up in exasperation, with a serious, agitated face looking at me straight in

the eye. *La Gorda* criticized both the "authoritarian" nature of the community leaders (according to her, they did not do more work to justify their salaries) and the social realities of the development process.[36]

I received many comments on another occasion at a community party when some of the Manejo leaders appeared. I was chatting with Sofia and Ladi, participants at neighboring blocks. When a few women from Manejo stood near us, Sofia and Ladi straightened up, making it clear that these women were distinct, of another social category. Sofia looked at me and pointed to the group, "*esta gente, son de afuera*"; I told her that a couple of them are from the community and still live in the community. She looked at me with a little smile and said, "*Si, son gente con educación, son de afuera.*" It was interesting that the Irish nuns who were present were not referred to as outsiders; perhaps they transcended the outsider/insider divide as their particular work was at a much more personal level. Another occasion when representatives from Manejo passed by the house, they incited fiery discussion. Ladi commented, her voice rising in volume, "Everyone thinks they are the boss of us (*todos piensan que son los dueños de nosotros*)," she said, and started making a list: the municipality, the *politicos*, the police, the religious leaders, and the people that worked in the Naranja network. "It seems like everyone but the garbage collectors … when they bother to come!" she scoffed. At this point Sofia joked that Ladi was "talking about the difficult life of the poor (*la vida de las pobres*)." This was a jab at Ladi, who did not like to think of herself as poor.

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[36] There are two issues that arise here. The first is the fact that volunteer civic work was frequently considered "work from the heart" by Peronists and people in the Catholic Third World Movement (according to many of the interviews); the same people who are now the professionals. The second issue is that the one way these community leaders demonstrated their own leadership position was through the assertion of their unique expertise and abilities.

Populist rhetoric--along with concepts of *neoliberalismo* and *autoritanismo*--continued to find critical, if at times ironic, usage in the community hints at the close connection between participants' critiques of authority and the discourse of Latin American-style populism.[37] Critiques of democracy made from *within* democracies are often based on the notion of justice and equality that is promised, but not delivered, by the democratic state itself. Ironically, democratic ideology provides the bar against which to measure reality—and criticize that reality for coming up short.

The long ritualized meetings planned by the community leaders and people from the Foundation sharpened participants' skepticism. The emptiness of these meetings was apparent at the first meeting I attended. That day the Foundation had a 2-3 hour-long meeting to discuss, or rather inform of, a future project. I arrived to find that in order to enter into the room where the meeting was held, your name had to be on a list. As mine was not on the list, they were planning not to let me in, until the woman at the Foundation who invited me let me pass. The gatherings felt more like rituals than meetings that were serious in terms of deeply involving community members in the project process or even getting their opinions, however. A couple of people did challenge the project until the woman from the Foundation handed the mike over to a male community participant who aggressively answered back to questioning community members. Despite this, people in the room would always pay attention to whomever was speaking, usually one of the leaders reading a carefully prepared Power Point presentation. As a result, the "participatory" or "democratic" content of the meeting was hard to find. From the beginning, the women from the Foundation announced that this was a project information

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[37] Even residents might use the language—and the implicit critical perspective—of the politicized populist language in their interactions. For example, when there were people coming from the United States, the man scowled, "*Ay, los yanquis!*"

session. The presentation was read aloud and had been prepared by the Foundation and focused on a number of things: such as 99% of the families surveyed who did not have running water wanted running water (not a big surprise); there was money for the project; and that this work is usually advanced by businesses and municipal governments, "but this time it is different because it is from *Ustedes*--the same *vecinos* that benefit are the ones that do the *obra*". There were some questions concerning who would be handling the funds (the Foundation), what would the costs be, and whether it would be better for a private company to come in and do the work so that the "vecinos" did not have to. The Naranjas identified the municipality and private enterprise as threats to the community.

On one level, participants and leaders alike recognized that these events paid lip service to ideals and principles that the community non-governmental organization had had originally, and now in practice seemed to have largely abandoned. Yet seeing the leaders orchestrating these events made them seem like part of a charade. These events fit perfectly with the participants' negative perceptions of their "higher-ups" (*los politicos*); feeding a critique of leaders' authority that drew in part upon experiences of the inequalities of community or local development.

The ethic was especially evident in criticisms of leaders' favoritism and the use of personal connections, or *amistades*, to secure good positions and salaries within the Naranja network. These *amistades* can be viewed as an oppositional force, acting counter to the inclusive ideals of democracy, and their existence makes the organization vulnerable to criticisms based on notions of impartial fairness. In fact, participants perceived the use of instrumental ties in community associations, rather than skill or merit, to be *part* of the notion of local development and not in opposition to it. The use

of social connections served as yet another basis upon which to analyze associational leaders.[38]

In the Naranja network, favoritism was also linked to how well the project was financed. Pay was not uniform and variable, earning potential was powerfully influenced by the program or project that the leader was in, as well as their "professional", or rather, educational level. Favoritism was expressed through the hierarchy of financed projects and corresponding to the leaders' positions.

For this reason, community workers' earnings were not perceived to be a good measure of ability or effort, but rather a sign of educational level and "middle class culture" and, by extension, the strength of one's connections with the Foundation's leadership. For example, one day after a meeting (itself more form than content), Maria-- one of the few professionals in the Naranja network that was committed to civic work and from the community and is the hardest working and paid the least--started working on a presentation. As Maria sat working on the presentation, other community leaders passed-by and joked how Maria knew and was involved in everything. She was widely admired. "She never stops and she knows everything about *Villa Campo*," said one woman, and when Lola talked about her she said, "Such a great leader, she really is worth studying (*vale la pena de estudiarla*)!" Maria was the lowest paid community leader even though she was unanimously recognized as the hardest working and the most committed. I assumed that it was because she lacked educational credentials that others had, she was from the community and she was a woman.

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[38] Community members who discussed this issue with me were against the use of *amistades* in associations. However, their attitudes towards the use of social connections outside this arena were less uniformly negative.

Participant Authority on the Streets

Challenges to leaders' authority in the Naranja network had a meaning, namely a powerful assertion of *community participants'* authority, expertise, and ability of the leaders to represent them. Being in a leadership position in the Naranja network fostered a sense of competence among leaders that was reflected in their interactions with both outsiders and residents. The length of time these paid professionals were in the network, and to a lesser degree their younger age (relative to the Religiosos for example), also enhanced the network's authority and provided a space in which the Naranja's associational culture could flourish.

I rarely witnessed real open challenges to Manejo leaders in associational activities, and certainly, there existed recognition of the formal hierarchy that allowed leaders to direct participants and allocate them to certain activities. All the same, without leaders' presence, participants would regularly be critical and do the activities their own way.[39] Therefore, there was space outside of the formal network for participants to develop civic capacities on their own, with the tools that they gained from participating in this network.

However, autonomy in the Naranja network extended far beyond freedom to circumvent the formal associational rules and even beyond the flexibility in dealing with fellow residents—the kind of autonomy we might expect with informal participation (Stark 1989:644). Participants gained knowledge over aspects of participation frequently not given to participants in other settings in *Villa Campo*; from tasks such as the

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[39] There are parallels between these forms of participants' resistance to leaders' authority and Scott's descriptions of everyday resistance in his influential work, *Weapons of the Weak* (1985). However, I wish to emphasize that Naranja participants were more assertive, and carried a greater sense of entitlement, than the impoverished Malaysians in Scott's accounts carry. As the conclusion to this dissertation will indicate, formal hierarchy and the distribution of power it upholds ultimately changes at the community level.

organization and management of materials to arrangement of the meetings with their neighbors and soliciting their opinion.

Information in particular—as Englund (2006) has noted in his ethnography of poor communities—is a key element in civic work. In many ways, accessing information *is* civic work for community participants, and familiarity with the range and availability of civic choices, and the ability to access civic education, is often crucial for community members to make claims, and to become citizens. At the Naranja network, the organization of civic activities and information served as an important way for participants to adapt their civic work to their individual styles and preferences. Community members expected not only associational leaders, but also Foundation managers and external funding agents, to teach them. As such, it is a perfect example of how participants conceived of themselves as capable students with civic responsibility to change the conditions of the community.

Participants were keenly aware that well-organized activities could greatly enhance one's ability to be a 'citizen.' This was especially true of the work done in the community, in small "by invitation only" meetings, as well as taking classes and seminars. In regards to classes and seminars, for example, the information imparted usually dealt with issues with which the community members were familiar. One good example of this in the Naranja network was the gardening school. Ambitious students could go on to become teachers in the *barrio*. Each trained community teacher tailored their teaching arrangements to their own needs, habits and preferences.

Information issues also highlight another set of relationships with the associational network, namely that between the Foundation representatives (*los jefes*)[40] and community participants. In a technical sense the participants had two levels above them in the Naranja network—the community leaders, who organized and monitored their activities, and representatives from the Foundation who actually paid contracts and salaries, funded campaigns, shouldered the costs for renting and outfitting the office space, and importantly, handled and supplied the information and propaganda. These representatives from the Foundation would naturally seek to communicate the most popular and positive information and propaganda to venues where they believed it would attract more financing, and as a result, they did not treat all projects, and did not fund all projects, equally. Professionals in the Naranja network recognized that in this respect they were highly dependent upon the representatives in the Foundation in terms of the activities that they did.

In contrast with the participants in the Religioso network, community members asserted themselves with Manejo representatives in ways that reflected their legitimate authority and expertise in the community. The issues of financing and service for the water project were ones which *Villa Campo* community members were constantly exerting pressure on leaders. It was, for instance, a regular practice for members of the water project to try to make claims to the association they hoped the association would help them with—though, according to the residents I spoke to, that rarely ended up happening. If dissatisfied, community members might speak up to the Manejo representative when they came by with newsletter or surveys. On one occasion, Flor and

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[40] The people in the Foundation could be also view as "middle men" in terms of funding, as in this case it was their job to look for funding for the community's activities.

a few women gathered at the house were particularly stern with one or the representatives, a young moody female professional who was joined by her husband, both of whom worked in *Villa Campo* but lived in the neighboring municipality. Flor informed them that she did not intend to participate in their new initiative, setting up a cooperative for public services, because they made such a mess of the previous project, the water project. She said that when they hooked up the water to her house they did not do it properly and messed up her yard and they never came back to fix it. She said that they should finish what they started before beginning another project. The NGO's representative seemed a bit surprised and a bit embarrassed that I was there to witness it all, but noted down the information and told Flor what she had to do was indicated in the contract (a highly technical, long document) that she signed. Flor did not conceal her annoyance on this issue.

Right after, all the other women chimed in. Doña, Ladi, and Sofia enthusiastically informed them that they ended up having to use their own time to do work on the water service that they had paid for. The NGO representative, *Gordita*, kept taking notes and looking very uncomfortable. Ladi articulated a number of problems that resulted from this project, including that in her case because the water pipes were put in improperly, her house was ruined; she grilled *Gordita* about this. Gordita defended herself by explaining that it was not directly the work of the Manejo and therefore they were not directly at fault. Ladi responded that if she hired someone to do work, then she was responsible for seeing that they do it properly; the same should hold true for the association. She stated that she was not being aggressive; she was only stating the truth.

My fellow residents understood very well that having the right civic skills was crucial to contributing to their own and the community's development, and increasing this development was the basis for a healthy future. When the various community volunteers would stop by, Carmen, Sandra, and Flor would discuss what was happening, soliciting information on activities and projects in the hope that more benefits would come the community's way. It was from these conversations that I incidentally learned the amount of civic education and information the neighbors passed on to each other. This was a key resource in their search for more and better civic opportunities and resources. "Whatever I find out I'll tell you," was a common assurance.

Community leaders recognized that they served as a vital source of current associational information--often the only source of information--about what was going on in the community to the outside world. Passing information to enquiring academics, seemed to be sometimes self-interested—assertion of expertise, professionalism, and authority. Many professionals in Manejo were so confident of their expertise that they would routinely offer up their rigid opinions of the locality's problems to others, that always seemed in turn to be about them. At one meeting for example, Constantina began lecturing everyone in the meeting on starting a research center in *Villa Campo*, complaining that academics do not give back the information that they take from the community. "I've never heard or been given these papers and reports, and I am the one giving them information!" she exclaimed. It turns out that she was not angry that community members do not see these papers and reports; it was that *she* did not see them.

Community members asserted a sense of authority in other ways, such as resisting attempts to impose new ideas or participatory practices upon them; consider, for instance,

the very short and targeted surveys from Manejo. The association had devised this

system as a means for tracking the sentiments and the opinions of the community.

Because this was a new procedure, or a procedure they did not like, community members

frequently did not fill out these surveys; nor were they always collected, as I found out.[41]

When I asked why people were not filling out the surveys, the answers were, "This

information is for them and they expect us work for free; they are going to have to pay

us" or "I am just too busy."[42]

A Vertical Participatory Interaction

Civic culture in the Naranja network, then, was composed of not only managerial

power at the level of the Foundation but also a sense of authority, expertise, and

professionalism among the community leaders. The entitlement this generated carried

over into interactions between these community leaders and their members, producing a

leader-participant dynamic different from the interactions found at the Religiosos.

Instead, an aura of entitlement, representativeness, and expectations of deferential

treatment dominated civic interactions at Manejo and not a democratic ethos, which

would require listening, deferential service and lack of entitlement. Shaped by new times

and a new civic culture, both leaders and participants in Manejo participated in

encounters marked by professionalism and hierarchy.

Encounters among Un-Equals

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[41] It is possible that some of the community members' resistance to this system was related to the fact that it would partially reduce their ability to express their real opinion and ideas.

[42] This is not to deny that community leaders did successfully impose all sorts of participation activities on community members. In fact, every block operated only slightly differently as a mixture of the NGO's and the community members' own rules of conduct and practices.

As noted above, leaders did not always cultivate either the associational space or activities that were democratic. Instead, the NGO was a closed, impermeable, and even often an authoritarian space, in the sense that the world "outside" was frequently shut off and was subject to much filtering: community members visited the association for business transactions, to make complaints, to socialize, but there was little engagement with social activism. Plenty of students and academics would parade through the association carrying their notebooks and cameras, and look around in case someone might mug or pickpocket them, while exclaiming "*Qué sentido diferente tiene Villa Campo! Es muy participativa!*" Community members and participants would drop by and their appearance enhanced the association's populist and community feel. Many people carried on other, non-associational activities within the conglomerate as well— sold candied apples, jams and crafts.

Community participants themselves were not so distinct from "the masses." Their appearance, class, and religion allowed the streets of *Villa Campo* to be reproduced within the associational network, at the level of community volunteers. The association's participant base fell into the very poor and poor-income ranges among the population, meaning that community members and leaders that were from the community came from similar socio-economic strata and earned a range of incomes that reflected this low strata—between 162 and 3612 pesos a month, on average—and lived in the same manner.[43]

In fact, community leaders would often make explicit the *lack* of social distance between them and the participants. For example, when trying to sell a new initiative to a

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[43] Since the beginning, the association had no "target" population and aimed to serve the entire population of Villa Campo. It should be noted, however, that some of the leaders had access to leadership positions closed to the general population.

middle-aged woman, Constantina urged her to attend the meeting, explaining that it was

"*de nosotros, para nosotros*" ("from us, for us"). The woman smiled and told her that

she did not think she had the time "*no sé si puedo ir, es depende en otras cosas*." In other

instances, participants complained to me about how their own economic situation was not

good. One of the leaders diagnosed this as a problem stemming from *neoliberalismo*, the

current macro-economic context that affected everyone. The community residents did

not see it the same way: "They are doing well," one community participant told me,

indicating the community leaders, "They earn very good salaries." At times, community

leaders would point out their own life conditions or experiences to participants as a way

of establishing a sense of empathy or rapport. Yet, I never spoke to any resident, be they

supportive or unsupportive, who believed that the leaders of Manejo were truly members

of the community.

At the same time, community leaders tried to establish themselves as both

experienced and experts regarding the activities, projects and programs they tried to

sell.[44] The two sides, leaders and participants, of course, did not enter into these

interactions as complete equals, especially as the community leaders' salaries were

closely bound to the community members' participation. However, leaders did not show

any deference or accountability to community members' wishes (though members did not

anticipate the levels of surliness that was at times demonstrated when community

members expressed an opinion). Instead, community leaders constructed a knowledge

hierarchy that elevated them above community members, and from that elevated position

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[44] Robert Michels explains that community leaders use this aura of professionalism to exert control over their interactions with community participants (in Perrow 1991:198). At Manejo, leaders managed to establish their expertise and authority independent from the Foundation.

leaders could and often did issue judgments and declarations on residents' tastes, choices, and civic knowledge.

For example, *Gordita* made fun of one of the residents who was taking a long time trying to think of response for a survey question on what organizations she participates. "I told her that you participate in *Manejo*! *Ma-ne-jo*!!!" Community leaders could be quite aggressive about redirecting community participants' choices (often to fall in line with what they had already planned), and the community members were often intimidated into accepting these authoritative decisions. For example, Constantina exclaimed to a community member who wanted to get a private enterprise or the municipality to be in charge of public services that this would be giving power away to outsiders for them to make the decisions, and they would not do it as the community wished. In many cases, community leaders would guide choices, instructing them as to what was appropriate or inappropriate for them. There were many other examples—not just in the Naranja network--of this lack of respect, or paternalism.

Community members rarely dared to openly challenge leaders' interpretations of the direction of the community. A telling exchange occurred in a "by invitation only" meeting when the leaders were discussing popular education and how "fantastic and marvelous" it was compared to the education in university; one of the three community members who was there (who ended up not really knowing what the meeting was about) shyly admitted that she was going to university, but quickly added she did not like it in order to fit in with the prevailing opinion of the leaders, who smiled and nodded in agreement. In line with the "popular" character of the association, leaders often engaged a veiled enforcement of "universal" standards by which community members' behaviors

and opinions were judged. Failure to conform was a mark of stupidity or perhaps "old ideas," but not of relative social location *per se*. The irony, of course, was that these "universal" standards had actually become class-specific—that is, specific to the middle-income leaders who were employed at the association, not the low-income residents who volunteered in the association.

(Dis)Association in the Community

If community participants' expressions of deference are a key means of signaling social difference and recognizing leaders' claims to leadership (see Chapter 4), then civic interactions at Manejo were especially notable for the social distance expressed by both sides. In fact, the uneven playing ground upon which leaders and participants engaged one another was exemplified by the degree of disassociation between actors and the distance between them. On the part of the leaders, disrespect at times took the form of gruff dismissal of quarrelsome residents or people they felt who were beneath them. One time some residents responded with suspicion about the quality of work of the association. Constantina argued, "Go look around at other places! They do not have a say as to who comes in and does the work and how it is done. They have no control. The community needs to be in control of its own development!" For example, one resident responded to a sales pitch for a water project by exclaiming, "But why do we have to do this work? Why don't we hire a private company to do it instead?" A male representative from the NGO responded aggressively, "We have to be in control of our community, do you want to hand over control to outsiders?"

At the same time, community members also expected a degree of respect from community leaders (and likewise might attribute bad service to the poor "quality" of the

leaders). Community members, of course, responded to such disrespect. The most common way of doing this was to be cynical of the community leaders' sales pitch, but community members might do other things, like say they support something and then change their mind and go somewhere else. As one of the nuns said, "People vote with their feet." At least five people who participated in Manejo in the beginning voluntarily stated they would not be prepared to work for them again.

Ironically, it was clear to me that the people that claimed they were representing the community in Manejo did not treat community members with respect. There was a gap between the leaders' rhetoric and what I witnessed actually occurring. One of the community leaders said to me with gravity: "With people's participation in taking control of the path of their own community, this will lead to a *transferencia*." She continued: "People just have to realize this; they have to get it through their heads."

My claim is that community leaders in Manejo did engage in class judgments. Community leaders' treatment of people was colored by discrimination. There were people in the community that did not have access to the water project, did not receive the association's surveys and did not get any of the "community" organization's information or invitations. These excluded, marginalized community residents were rarely directly confronted with the judgments and opinions of these community leaders, nor did they apparently challenge the fact that they were not served.

In fact, when community residents did suggest that they should receive better service, their "ideologies" or "loyalties" were used to discredit these demands. For example, on one occasion I spoke with two female residents who were carefully explaining to me how things worked. One of the women praised my "humble attitude

(*humildad*), noting that as a foreigner I was very patient. She said that that "they" (the leaders) "do not have patience with *la gente*; they discriminate and are very authoritarian."

"Don't you consider the people from Manejo as one of you?" I asked, surprised. Sofia said no, noting that it was their education and the way they treated people that gave them away. This explanation left me surprised that such levels of distance—as Chapter 6 will suggest—were common among *Villa Campo*'s residents towards community leaders. Rather, it was clear that labeling these community leaders as "*personas de afuera*" (which they may or may not have been), Sofia and all the other people I talked to discounted the association's claims of being a "grassroots" "participatory" organization.

Indeed, as the explanations of community members show, the vertical nature of community leader-member interactions in the non-governmental organization was to some degree class-bounded. The NGO itself made few efforts to recognize these unequal relations between its leaders and community volunteers. As a result, community leaders did not seek the opinion or deep participation of community members because doing this would than recognize differences in opinion and that in most cases leaders and residents occupied dissimilar socio-economic positions in *Villa Campo*'s society. However, when leaders were confronted with residents with whom there *was* a social gap—ordinary folk from the community—the illusion of similarity was disrupted. As educated professionals, community leaders felt distinct from and distinctly elevated above the community residents and the former's treatment of disrespect was converted into the latter's disdain.

Conclusion

Manejo was, in many ways, a vertical associational network. Community leaders

operated the association by drawing on strategies that focused primarily upon the

financing agencies, not the local community. In their associational work, leaders

sustained an active civic culture characterized not only by a grassroots politics that

critiqued the power of outsiders, the government and the universities but also by active

assertions of their own authority, professionalism, and skill. The associational space also

showed the relative polarity between community members and leaders, and vertical civic

interactions predominated. In a sense, both leaders' and members' habitus served as

durable institutions for values and practices linked with a paternalistic social

organization. These features of civic life at Manejo also served to identify the

association, in the minds of *Villa Campo* residents, with an association of *politicos*, and

an association that does what the municipal government does not.

Manejo demonstrates how an associational culture that maintains a perceived

discontinuity with the authoritarian past, a past where associational life was in a large

part controlled by political brokers, is still thought of as belonging to that past. *Villa

Campo*'s residents frequently described the people in Manejo as "political" and "out to

sell something," characteristics that also marked them as belonging to the paternalistic,

clientelist era. In an increasingly civically diverse society being "out to sell something"

also differentiated these particular community leaders from not only more local

grassroots groups, but from what they were before.

Community leaders like those at Manejo provided a contrast for community

members with whom spiritual associations, like the Religiosos, were defined as more

connected with people and more grassroots. As the following chapter will show, leaders at the Religiosos mobilized a subtle, internalized notion of citizenship that both required civic work from their community members and which distinguished the Religiosos from large associational settings like Manejo and its leaders and managers.

Chapter 6: Civic Work among Diverse Associational Settings

<u>Introduction</u>

The last week of my fieldwork, I went to a particularly difficult meeting with a group of NGO professionals which taught me a lot about ruling relations in the associational field in Villa Campo. A small number of people who worked at Manejo accompanied by a young sociologist at a local university who did survey work for them, and three of us who were doing research in the community were meeting in regards to establishing a research center for the "community." I had been asked to be a part of this initiative for the past few months.

From the beginning there were accusations to me and fellow invited university researchers about the validity of our projects that we were doing. The NGO professionals and "popular" sociologist, Margo, claimed that what we were doing was individualistic and what they were doing was "popular" and for "social transformation." They complained about us coming into the community and using it as a lab, and regarding people as objects for our own purposes.

"You are only here so you can take information and the leave and be a professor in Canada," one of the NGO workers said. He glared at me aggressively until I started looking back.

"I can do a better study than you can," one of the man married to an NGO worker challenged a female researcher, without knowing what she was doing.

'Certainly not,' I thought. 'What was happening?' This was all rather unexpected. Of course I had reflected many times on issues of power and representation

before and during my fieldwork. I had no idea that these NGO professionals were so angry. Were they upset that I found out that residents had problems with the NGO?

The young female leader of the NGO, Constantina, then insisted that she wanted things to change in regards to academics coming into the community—that is, they would have to go through this future center in order to get "information." I told her that if there were going to be a center that controlled academic research in the community, it would have to go through a committee that really represented the community, as they did not. I had openly expressed my unease with the way some NGO leaders -- the ones that were present at this meeting -- felt that they were representatives for Villa Campo. There were only four residents of Villa Campo present, including her, and all of them worked in the NGO sector. The other three residents were silent throughout the meeting and admitted at the end of the meeting that they did not know why they were invited. After this there was a lecture on the importance of participation from the sociologist that took place for over an hour; the only other person that spoke up was Constantina. I was reminded of a university classroom. She said, "University people come here and use our time and the time from people in the community for projects that do not serve us, but serve themselves." At the time, I was outraged at their suggestion that I was here for my own purposes only and insulted at the implication that I was using people (albeit true and something I had personally reflected on quite a bit), particularly because I had only interviewed one of the people was at the meeting.
 I was struck with a dreadful thought, 'Could I be like Constantina and this sociologist, Margo?' I was schooled.

This encounter brought up issues I was constantly wrestling with, and I knew my other two colleagues were as well. What do they expect from me? Why was I here? And why were they "attacking" me anyway considering I had not used very much of their time, and I did not know many of them? How did Margo know so much about me even though I had never met her before? "Well, you just have to make clear to people that they should give send back whatever they write to the people whose time they used," I responded lamely, and to my relief a young male Argentine professor spoke up. He talked about that knowledge came in many different forms and that it is hard to determine which type of knowledge is better than the other, be it collective or individualistic, or scientific or non-scientific. Then a young male a teacher in the gardening school, who was one of the residents and someone I knew well, spoke up and said, "I think we need to trust people."

At this, we broke off and ate an *asado* (barbecue).

I quickly learned not to take this encounter personally, for this kind of distrustful interaction occurred all the time with the leaders and others, including members of the community. Reciprocity was an expected norm, and no one wanted to be "used". In addition, the rise of such distrust in this diverse associational setting was also important for understanding the emergence of new forms of civic work as residents and leaders reacted to and reconfigured the associational field in Villa Campo.

This chapter will consider the appearance of civic practices at *Villa Campo*. In Chapter 5, I argued that, because of the poor communities' vertical associational legacy and continued instances of political party clientelism, at times leaders did *not* organize

activities that would produce social democratization directly. In this chapter, however, I will demonstrate that *Villa Campo* was not locked in stasis but in fact was changing in the face of an altered environment with new diverse conditions. For while leaders continued to take their cue from the local NGO foundation, the municipality, and Church hierarchy, the residents at *Villa Campo* had began to innovate civic practices between neighbors.

The impetus for participants to innovate civic practices was found in an environment of general distrust that *Villa Campo* was experiencing as a setting of poverty. Confronted with competitive pressures from the municipality, NGO leaders developed a repertoire of trust-producing practices meant to set Manejo, both its workers and its products, apart from the shady reputation of the municipality. Nevertheless, in stark contrast to the nuns, where civic work was carefully implemented and openly discussed by the nuns for all participants, at Manejo the civic work was more towards the creation and empowerment of the leaders themselves.

Participants in all of the associations did draw upon ideological and cultural resources acquired under a predominantly vertical system. By calling forth both the locality's waning symbolic capital as an entity ignored by the government and their own cultural resources as part of a poor community, participants at *Villa Campo* produced a particular configuration of civic practices that traced the trajectory from one with limited possibilities to a new diverse associational setting. In what amounted to a bottom-up strategy of cultural representation, leaders and participants attempted to deploy the reconstructed symbolic capital of a poor community that has battled for its autonomy and its reinterpretation of traditional relations between poor communities and outside

institutions. In the process, they staked out a democratically-evolving location in the province's associational field.

Cultural Innovation and Post-Vertical Trajectories

The creation and continuance of civic practices by the leaders of Manejo raises questions about social change and cultural continuity. Chapter 5 considered the role of associational culture in "sustaining existing strategies of action" (Swidler 1986:278). This chapter takes a different track, examining instead how people draw upon culture to create new practices and plans. To do so, I turn to Bourdieu's concept of "trajectory."

Swidler (1986) suggests that during "unsettled times," cultural values become more explicit. Pierre Bourdieu similarly argues that social change can create dissonance between unconscious values and social circumstances; for sociologists, such tensions can demystify the more common and "seemingly miraculous adjustment" of individual dispositions to the social positions (1984:110). Doing so requires us to recognize that social categories and fractions are made up of individuals and groups who do not only exist in the present but also experience change as they move through social and historical time.

In other words, the social conditions under which an individual's or group's habitus develops may not be the same as those in which it is presently exercised—a situation that can result from individual or collective social mobility (upwards or downwards), something Bourdieu dubs "the trajectory effect" (1984:111). This trajectory effect may also be the result of the collective upward movement of a group or a fraction with the broader social structure, resulting in discord between the practices and

expectations of a given group, on the one hand, and the objective possibilities open to them under changed social circumstances, on the other. For an individual or a group, the relationship between habitus and social position is not frozen in time but reflects an historical trajectory, either an individual one through the layers of social space or a collective one through transformations of social structure. The methods people use to adapt to social change are shaped by historically-constituted dispositions.

Within *Villa Campo*'s associational field, social trajectories take on the specific forms of strategy and method. Given that a field is the product of historical struggles and changes (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:90), the concept of "field" provides a framework for speaking concretely about social trajectories and individual and group strategies (Bourdieu 1996). By locating the leaders, participants, and residents at *Villa Campo* within the community's civic field, we can see how social actors attempt to adapt their resources to changing circumstances. On the community level in *Villa Campo*, there is an overlap between two distinct trajectories: the upward trajectory of the social development sector within the associational field, paralleled by the broader growing inequality in Argentina.

This chapter explores civic innovation and trajectory by focusing upon residents' reactions to new civic behaviors and orientations. Unlike many of *Villa Campo*'s community leaders, who were aware of the problems in *Villa Campo* but were not themselves impoverished, community participants faced the daily consequences of the community's low position in comparison to neighboring communities. It was in the community where changing civic practices interacted with participants' civic culture and their broader collective habitus. As participants regularly encountered blurred boundaries

between democratization and its antithesis, authoritarianism, they were compelled to clarify the obvious difference between civic participation and the untrustworthy sphere of clientelism. As with the Religiosos, the Naranjas, and the Politicos, this civic work was relational, and it engaged *Villa Campo* participants symbolically with other settings in the area's associational field.

These participants' trajectory through historical and social circumstance becomes clear, however, from the particular cultural resources community participants drew on to support civic engagement. Specifically, participants defended against the locality's low position in the new democratic context by attempting to translate the locality's, and their own, *democratic*-era symbolic and cultural capital into forms fellow residents could recognize. As a means to establish fellow residents' interest and trust, participants evoked *Villa Campo*'s status as a flourishing participatory place. Through their interactions with residents, participants also produced a setting characterized by many of the hallmarks of the traditional culture of the poor. Frank, sociable civic interactions conveyed the underlying message that *Villa Campo* was the appropriate place for poor residents seeking to create social changes in the new democracy. These democratic practices were the fruits of participants' habitus encountering changed social circumstances. In a reconstituted associational field, participants in *Villa Campo* staked out their position by practicing a form of civic work with their own distinct characteristics.

The Skeptical Inhabitant in an Environment of Distrust

Residents of *Villa Campo* were very careful in their interactions. The first day I arrived in *Villa Campo* I was told by Flor and others in the community who I could and could not trust. Residents' distrust—and an accompanying, deep-seated fear of being tricked or taken advantage of (*nos van a engañar*)—manifested itself in a variety of forms. These skeptical residents would interrogate associational participants about money, the quality of the activities, and the association's policies. They feared that if there was money involved, they were being ripped off; yet they also feared that if there was no money the project would not function properly. These skeptical residents seemed to feel that the slightest detectable flaw was evidence that an activity would fall apart soon after it started. They would examine new and present initiatives with great apprehension.

Skeptical participating was, however, a social practice, and at *Villa Campo* these sleptics were far too prevalent to be attributed to personality quirks. Rather such patterns of participant behavior were a clear reaction to the perceived risks of being involved in associational activities, especially because of their vulnerable status. Many of *Villa Campo*'s residents honed these practices in the oft-corrupt political network like the Politicos, where they also participated and to which their limited resources, to varying degrees, restricted them. Often, resident fears and skepticism grew out of bad experiences, as was the case with one woman who told me about being involved in a municipal microenterprise program. "Phew! There were so many forms and papers that we were required to fill out, we hardly had time to do the cooking we were supposed to be doing. *Tanto trabajo, y no paga nada!* … After that experience, I am not interested in being involved in anymore of these programs!"

At this point, the reader may be skeptical at how 'participatory' residents were in *Villa Campo*. Yet the care and attention many residents devoted to their participation activities represented a more complex phenomenon than hesitation over spending a fair sum of time. For while many residents who had the means or could rely on external support (usually from a religious association) could avoid *Villa Campo*'s corrupt, manipulating associational networks by participating in other "better" associational settings, residents with more modest means had to strategize between these associational networks regularly. In *Villa Campo*, this meant that the sharp lines that supposedly defined an association's reputation as a reliable institution and that set it apart from the corrupt *clientelistic* associational networks were really not so sharp for the residents themselves. Often from the point of view of the residents, they saw that leaders were trying to sell them activities to benefit not the community as much as themselves.

As previously mentioned, there was a lot of competition between the political party network and the NGO network. According to one community leader that I interviewed, it was partly because the director of the Foundation and are former mayor with continuing political influence clash. There was a meeting within the Naranja network once in which an outside NGO was conducting a seminar on how to strengthen community networks (ironically). The meeting was attended exclusively by all the organizations in the Naranja network. At the meeting one of the prominent community leaders criticized a municipal project, saying that they wanted to take away power from the community. Whether it was the community *Villa Campo* or the community of the Naranjas that she was referring to was unclear as often the two were conflated.

Protecting territory was a key element of competition among associational leaders, and so many groups were careful to conceal actual funds from others in the community in an effort to protect their interests. For example, a cultural group that was part of the Naranja network was well-known, not because its "popular" classes attracted a lot of community youth, but because it was able to attract funds. Many similar organizations, particularly ones that were part of the political network, were disgruntled over this fact and wanted to know how this cultural group was able to attract so much funding, but the group was not forthcoming with the information. There was a conflict, particularly between the leaders of these two groups where the residents were put in the middle: the political group arguing the NGO group was only in the *barrio* to get funds, the NGO group arguing that activities that promoted "culture" for "culture's sake" (*i.e.*, not for politics) were justified. For this reason, funding sources and financial information were jealously guarded.

This competition however, created boundaries in the structure of *Villa Campo*'s associational field and complicated the democratization process to which residents and the community leaders sought to contribute. High levels of social cleavages prevent democratic communities from forming. The conceptualization of trust contains a scope which can range from trust towards a small group to trust towards humanity in general (Paxton 1999; Putnam 1993). In- group trust can exacerbate social cleavages and is common in organizations such as the mafia, ethnic separatist groups and cults. In-group trust conceivably isolates a group from broader society and promotes feelings of distrust towards nonmembers. Generalized trust, however, is not only contained in one group, but is diffused throughout the society. In sum, when trust is limited to a small group –

although it may produce stronger feelings of bonding towards members of that group– it does not necessarily benefit the community/society as a whole. Associations that have strong constructed identities contribute to in-group networks, but do not contribute to the between-group networks that are critical to democratization. Recently, a World Bank study (2002) found social capital to be low in Argentina.[45] Some of the main conclusions of the report were that social capital is low; associations are religious based; the poor participate to survive while the rich participate to advance; and the poor do not have a chance to lead, control or make decisions. These findings are consistent with the World Values Survey that found participation and trust rates in Argentina are significantly lower than other developing and developed countries (World Bank 2002:14). It is interesting to note that despite these findings, there has been an increase in the number of civil society organizations. This increase in organizations does not necessarily translate into increased general 'trust' or an increased intensity of 'participation.' The important factor is not merely whether people are involved in an organization, but the effect of that participation; such as, whether or not people know that they share common elements and feel a general sense of community with a large number of people who are connected to them through this network.

Risk in the Environment

Skeptical residents appearing on *Villa Campo*'s streets were very much a product of Buenos Aires' broader civic environment. However, as I suggested above, both perceptions of and exposure to participants' risks were not distributed equally, and for the

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[45] In the report, social capital was defined as "the networks, associations, norms and values which enable people to act collectively in order to produce a positive externality for them or their community" (2002: 5).

ordinary person in Greater Buenos Aires the civic environment was a realm full of risks. In Chapter 5, I discussed negative popular perceptions of the Politicos and other political networks, where *Villa Campo* residents regarded participants with distrust and moral distaste and viewed the activities as cheap and suspicious. In contrast to the area's more limited participatory days, when (one informant described) "yeah they were corrupt, but that was all you had," many of Greater Buenos Aires' residents today face a more diverse associational environment where the authenticity of activities are all subject to question and generate debate for residents.

To some degree, these residents' attitudes reflect historical experiences with a manipulative politics such as clientelism, and parallels exist between the participatory environment in Greater Buenos Aires and other transitioning contexts. A generation gap exists between young and old Argentines, and in *Villa Campo*, older people were most likely to convey unease with the new ambiguities of forms of participation and the risks of non-genuine participation according to my interviews, whereas the few younger participants that I spoke with did not express this skepticism. However, in the associational sector increasingly dominated by non-governmental associations and younger leaders, the older residents are still more likely to participate in these settings. During interviews I conducted among former participants in the political network, they expressed their discomfort with the strong encouragement to participate (that is, work for free) in order to reap the benefits in the new associational settings. "This place has changed so fast," said one long-time participant. Whether the change was positive or negative was always up for debate; but, generally out of all the conversations I had with people there was a sense of hope.

Source: http://www.escanda.org/proyectos/renovables.php, November 21, 2007

The risk of taking the time and energy of participating in activities that were fake, inauthentic, and not successful, created more worry than whether there was debating and/or having a role in decision-making. Like many poor communities, Greater Buenos Aires' associational environments are full of inauthentic activities, fake promises and schemes to cheat or deceive locals. Many people have personal experiences of being "cheated" (*engañado*) in some way, though it was usually on the scale of wasting their time for something to happen or being "sold" on a flawed project. The sense of distrust and risk associated with participating is heightened by regular media reports on associational deceptions and frauds. For example, while I was there, local and national media reported on incidents relating to nuns "kidnapping" poor children and running illegal adoption services which grabbed the attention of Flor and my neighbors.

There were a lot of stories floating around of both outsiders and insiders with means trying to take advantage of community residents; and some of those stories were about me! Friends and acquaintances in *Villa Campo* regularly informed me of examples of bad associations or leaders, some personally experienced and others garnered from acquaintances or media. Residents I encountered at *Villa Campo* were also informed on

these issues. One of the most astonishing story—and quite possibly legendary—was of a *puntero* in the community selling housing materials given to the municipality meant to be handed out for free to the very poorest! The man who related this story to me explained that this was one of the reasons that he tried to avoid places where *punteros* are participating.

Indeed, most associations would try to distance themselves from these untrustworthy associational networks by offering residents explicit guarantees for funding to see projects through. As one Buenos Aires expert in civil society explained to me, "When these people participate in something, use their time, they are unsure of what is going to come out of it." He added that he and his colleagues were careful not to make any promises or require participation. Of course, with the religious associations, the existence of some form of ethics was generally taken for granted by locals, who tended to focus on asking about specific terms of policies and results in the other associational networks. Still, the fact that most local participants level of participation was unstable— intense at times, non-existent at other times--was commonplace.

Photo of a mobilization organized by the Catholic priest.

However, for many residents, they could not avoid taking risks in their participation. Given the access to goods that political brokers offered, including the range of welfare programs with often few time commitments, increased their ability to survive through bad times. Therefore, three *Villa Campo* residents explained to me that they were willing or felt compelled to give up the often more time-consuming participation of respectable associations for the less time-consuming but corrupt Politico venues. And, as I explore below, participating in the political network called forth a whole set of defensive practices—ranging from questioning over what was expected of them to inspecting projects and programs—that had become a deeply ingrained orientation towards participating in general. So even though very poor residents still participate in non-governmental associations for large projects, like the water project, participating in a non-governmental organizational setting was not seen as a necessity. Even a non-governmental association like the Naranjas, which targeted poor people, often had substantial time commitments and had well-financed, big activities, and so it required more in terms of time and energy than the political brokers. As one man remarked to a woman participating in Manejo, "I don't have time to be in that group and their projects. I have to work!" Time constraints on the part of the poor local residents were one of the key reasons they participated in the more "risky" associational networks that provided immediate material gratification.

The Crisis of Trust and Representation in Villa Campo

At the end of my time participating in *Villa Campo*, many community leaders asked me to present my thoughts on their activities. Wanting to avoid personally criticizing any of them, I settled upon abstract ideas, namely, problems of representation and distrust. I

began a piece written for community leaders and participants, in which I identified what were *Villa Campo*'s major strengths and why it attracted so many local academics: the leadership qualities and the reputation they have, *Villa Campo*'s history of and dedication to civic participation—especially the fact that they accomplished what they set out to do (*se cumplen*).

These points could have easily been anticipated. I then explained that I believed an environment that was not stable produced uncertainty and contributed to the distrust that was present in Villa Campo. I argued that despite the fact that there were so many avenues of participation, and success, residents' fears had nevertheless made their way into this area. This indicated the possible decline of *Villa Campo*'s associations' trustworthiness in the eyes of the residents.

On the one hand, residents did not clearly distinguish between many political network settings and a non-governmental organization run by a centralized management, with a uniform action and participation policies. Indeed, some "non-governmental" associations in the community had shifted entirely to allowing *politicos* to run things, and some associations that often looked "social" were very much politicized. In such cases, the associational type, for the individual participant, might not guarantee a certain form of participation and service. Just by looking, there was no way for a resident to know that *Villa Campo* had remained largely impermeable to these "political" influences.

At the same time, residents imported their participation anxieties into non-governmental organizations. Because the participants who were involved in the Naranja network also tended to have participated in associations like the Politicos, they had grown accustomed to confronting the dangers of participation. In many ways, the streets of

Villa Campo had been invaded by the political brokers' practices. The result, for participants, was regular encounters with distrustful residents and the repeated need to establish trust in order to gather enough participants to create a worthwhile project. The associations needed to help community participants in this endeavor by making the benefits of participation clear to residents at a more formal level.

By the end of my fieldwork, it became clear that some community leaders recognized a change in residents' participation levels but were unwilling to acknowledge a problem with trust in their association. Instead, one of the top leaders declared that just by signing up to receive water in their homes, residents were expressing their trust in Manejo. One of her co-workers who retold the community's strengths in instructive fashion took up this problematic logic: its history, the value of community participation, large-scale collective action, and, not surprisingly, its well-known solidarity. The issue, of course, was that this "solidarity" had to be produced, regularly, in the course of personal interactions and by means of the residents' own methods of civic activity.

A Question of Democratizations

Once living in *Villa Campo*, I quickly encountered the fuzziness surrounding civic participation. One of my first surprises at *Villa Campo* was the amount with which residents hoped for, but did not ultimately expect to have a role in decision-making. "*Pero no me hacen caso*" or "*pero no me escuchan*" resident after resident would say.

Participation in *Villa Campo*, for the most part, did *not* have broad-based community decision-making, and the associations had to, in effect, "sell" activities as they were already created. However, given the space to voice in some associational settings—mainly religious associations—residents were reluctant to relinquish their

rights to opine. They often refused to believe in leaders' insistence on the viability of

written projects. One example of this was when *La Gorda* (a grandmother who was very

involved in the water project), while among other residents, questioned whether Manejo

would be able to start the new public works initiative because of all the volunteer labor

they required from community members the previous time: "They are really going to

have to sell it (the project) to us in order for us to work this time." This is just another

example of the skepticism on the part of the residents of being "used" for an activity in

the name of "grassroots participation."

Over time, I came to realize that the problem was one of distinguishing among

associational settings. Given the changes to associational organization in *Villa Campo*, it

is understandable that residents would be unclear about where the rules for participating

had changed and where they had stayed the same. As described in Chapters 4 and 5,

associations offered some opportunities for debating, especially for the most outgoing

and opinionated residents. (Indeed, at times opining and debating seemed less about

having an input and more about presentation and a sense of entitlement and capacities,

including the recognition of citizenship.) Other new associational venues were

increasingly the front of Politicos, but they often looked the same as a non-governmental

organization, complete with community participants. Even in the Naranja network, the

occasional space might be taken over by a *politico*. In the one instance at a Naranja

event, I witnessed a person *not* in the Naranja network, speak with residents about

political activities, completely separate from the Naranja activities that were occurring at

the time. Therefore, when residents began to participate in the Naranja network, they

often did not know, or were confused on just what kind of associational system they were dealing with.

At *Villa Campo*, there was a problem of divisions. One of the primary divisions was between the "*sociales*" and the "*politicos*" despite their similar activities. The *sociales* were more likely to distinguish themselves from the *politicos* saying that their activities did not stem from any ideological basis, and they were not seeking power, whereas they just wanted to help people. As one very active NGO leader explained to me on a bus ride, the difference between *sociales* and *politicos* were that the later wants to implement an agenda the former just wants to help people. This rhetoric (or sales pitch) tapped into a broader discourse that portrayed associations as "risk-free" participatory environments where residents were protected by semi-formal policies and activities that went further to guarantee the outcomes. Despite this, I witnessed them negotiating and working tightly with political movements for some programs, especially relating to education and health.

Such confusion meant that, in the eyes of some residents, the Naranja network was not significantly different from a political network, and drastically eroded much of the symbolic capital the Naranja network might have claimed in the early days and through the years of democratic reforms in the 1980s. Despite the fact that community leaders insisted that simply by entering the association, "residents express their trust in us," in fact the residents that I talked to on this issue (approximately 25 people, with the exception of 3 or 4 highly active members) had little confidence that the Naranja network or its leaders operated according to anything but short-term, money-driven motives that for them defined most of *Villa Campo*'s associational settings.

This was made clear to me when I first arrived in *Villa Campo*. I was talking to a neighbor, telling him that I was going over to the Naranjas. He looked at me seriously and said, "You know that there are a lot of *politicos* there, don't you? They are politicos as well."

Strategies of the Skeptical Inhabitant

The *Villa Campo* associations' promises of genuine grassroots participation were not well-believed. The community's residents were skeptical participants, and their participation strategies clearly revealed this. Residents often blurred distinctions between associational settings like the Naranjas and other settings, such as the Politicos.

Two of the most common practices were the close inspection of activities and a practice of choosing, or selecting, the best from a number of associational activities. Both inspecting and choosing were practices I would later see regularly exercised in most associations, unsurprising given that these strategies reduced risk in a setting without guarantees. Equally important, however, were the expressions of distrust and perceptions of suspicion, amplified by the amount of volunteer participation that most associational activities required. For while verticality may have become a common practice in most associational settings, *Villa Campo*'s poor residents had introduced their own participation strategies to these associations. In doing so, residents acted on the social problem of distrust that *Villa Campo*, a poor community, was undergoing.

These strategies indicated what life was like in the Villa Campo's associational field. Careful inspection of activities was the first line of defense against being tricked into participating in the corrupt and badly organized schemes that filled the associational field. Residents in Villa Campo would regularly examine and closely scrutinize every

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aspect of a project. Residents would carefully pick over initiatives, examining for any

flaws, as one man put it, "to see if something happens (*para ver si pasa algo*)."

Unaccounted money, a common occurrence, given the poor context, could bring cries of

'I-told-you-sos' or abandonment from participants. When the nuns handed over the

financial responsibilities for a community daycare to a community participant, Flor

protested by leaving the project, saying that she did not want to watch all of the hard

work she and others did "go out the window". At the time I was leaving, the daycare was

going to be shut down because of financial problems. Flor told me that she always knew

that it was going to happen.

The result to close inspection of activities was the practice of choosing. The basic

principle behind choosing is that you never participate in anything without choosing the

best from the other options. In Villa Campo, inspections of activities and choosing were

not only frequent; they were also just the most prominent of a whole collection of

practices calculated to compensate for the lack of trust in associational settings.

Residents would engage in casual participating (i.e. seeing what is going on but not

committing to anything). Some would question very carefully what was in effect being

sold to them: How much money is there? What activities are they expected to do? Other

residents would simply rely upon instinct and social relations for some form of

guarantees saying things like, "I know her. She is very careful with her promises."

Creating Trust and Counter-Strategies of Democratization

Given that residents did not take for granted Villa Campo's associations' forthrightness

and abilities, the associations' community participants faced the task of producing trust at

the level of individuals, through interactions. Community participants encountered

regular reminders of the residents' distrust, and their interactions with residents (coupled

with their own status as poor residents) made participants acutely aware of their

repositioning within the community's associational field.[46] At the same time, the

community participants were able to assuage fears in order to get people to participate.

Given the levels of participant autonomy in the community (discussed in Chapter 5), the

community participants developed their own set of methods for dealing with residents'

suspicion and distrust.

Thus, we find the rise of civic work in *Villa Campo*, for interactions centered

upon the creation of horizontal relations and the drawing of symbolic resources.

Recognizing themselves as occupying a middle position among *Villa Campo*'s

associations, participants sought to establish in the minds of residents that these

associational settings can be both trustworthy and practical, as well as spaces that are for

poor modest residents like themselves.

The resources participants relied upon to draw these symbolic resources were

laden with social meanings and reflected their collective trajectory through Argentina's

era of democratic and economic reforms and social change. While participant's methods

were conscious in the sense they involved the explicit goal of informing fellow residents

of activities, these methods also drew upon participant dispositions and cultural

orientations—the realm of habitus—that were steeped in a kind of implicit cultural

knowledge. Participants' methods found traction with residents precisely because many

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[46] Community participants themselves frequented many other types of associational settings—including ones such as the Politicos—in order to be cautious. They associated me with the Naranjas or the Religiosos, however, explaining that since I was a foreigner it was more likely that I would be at a large formal organization.

residents in *Villa Campo* shared these cultural orientations. Changes to *Villa Campo*'s associational field had brought forth a set of social practices that traced a trajectory. By relying on an increasingly devalued cultural knowledge, participants' methods acknowledged their own (and their fellow residents') social position.

Here, I identify two specific methods participants used with their friends and families. The first was an explicit evocation of *Villa Campo*'s status as place of collective action that represented the long-standing division between the municipality and local associations in order to revive the positive status of *Villa Campo*'s civic sector had. At the same time, participants recognized that *Villa Campo*'s grassroots (collective action) status, once the area's great symbolic and material resource, could also lack accountability with people in the new "democratized" associational environment and, as I will show, they drew from the rhetoric on civic participation in a flexible manner.

The second trust-producing strategy involved the far more subtle creation of a distinctive participatory culture and set of personal interactions at *Villa Campo*. This participatory culture revolved around the notion of *solidaridad* (which could mean the display of warm feelings or acts of serving others) and relied upon elements of culture that resonated with both the civic culture at *Villa Campo* and the habitus of many of the community's residents. Indeed, as I will argue below, expressions of *solidaridad* by participants took on an almost nostalgic aura in a context of limited mobility for large portions of the community's struggling, poor population. Both these methods—explicit claims and implied cultural understandings—went towards producing trust and democratization (in this case, expanding horizontal relations, relations of equality) by

means of cultural expressions that were highly intelligible to the more traditional

segments of *Villa Campo*'s poor.

Locally-Owned Symbolic Capital

If leaders in *Villa Campo* felt confident on the community's reputation as a place with

grassroots collective action, participants in the community had cause, as I have shown, to

be less cheerful. Participants lacked one of the easiest methods used in other

associational settings to diminish residents' reluctance to participate—giving material

items and money. As a result, participants instead sought to gain residents' trust in order

to cultivate civic participation. Though aware of the declining status of many

associations (especially leaders) in the community, *Villa Campo* participants nevertheless

sought to mobilize what remained of the associations' diminishing symbolic capital by

emphasizing the positive connections with its 'community-owned' status—in particular, a

reputation for openness and collectiveness in a underhanded and capitalistic environment.

Participants reminded residents of the community associations' history of

dedication by highlighting the difference between *Villa Campo*'s capable community-

owned sector and the greedy powerful state political entities. An interaction between a

community leader, Zapo, a participant from Manejo and a female resident was

exemplary. A woman asked with suspicion how it was decided who the first houses to

receive water would be. Zapo replied, "We treat all members equally, we don't charge

you one thing, and charge another price to your neighbor. We are not like corporations

(*multinacionales*)." The woman, Flor, was persistent. "But why did some people receive

water before others?" Zapo explained, "We are a community organization!"

Here, Zapo suggested that Manejo operated on principles of fairness, treating all residents equally. Separately, Flor suggested to me some people were more likely to receive water first, as well as other privileges, because they were friends with people in Manejo and not all residents were treated the same, and as all of the participants in Manejo (but not the leaders) told me, many people felt taken advantage of.[47] In *Villa Campo*'s associations, participants attempted to demonstrate that residents would *not* be cheated.

Participants frequently sought to tap into *Villa Campo*'s grassroots symbolic capital to reinforce the associations' integrity with residents, believing that the mark "community-owned" still denoted straightforwardness, reliability and fairness. The connection between the two was not so obvious to most residents as "community–run" Manejo was often more perceived as a business than a community association.[48] Naranja participants reminded residents that only at the NGO network could they find a reflection of all the community that was from the community, and for the community.

These methods reflected participants' attempts to mobilize *Villa Campo*'s symbolic capital in order to garner residents' trust. But this capital (the community's civic history) was in decline as most of the residents were new to the area and did not live through its rich civic history. Also initiatives commonly were corrupted by individual interests that caused projects to collapse. As noted in Chapter 5, the Naranjas emphasized their modernity compared with the political and religious associations.

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[47] It could be argued, then, that leaders in the Naranjas were indeed asserting a kind of equality of "the masses" that was an ideal, if often unrealized, of Villa Campo's civic life.
[48] I do not want to oversimplify: At times, distrust involved trying to conceal differences between organizations. This was often the case with residents' expectations for material aid.

Within the confines of *Villa Campo* itself, however, participants frequently portrayed the Naranjas as influenced by non-local political and economic forces.

When participants drew attention to the community's grassroots status, they attempted to bring diminishing symbolic capital to bear in a new associational context. In this way, participants and leaders deployed a set of increasingly historically-bound resources as methods of promoting both trust and participation.

"Solidaridad" and the Poor's Sentimentality and Nostalgia in the Community

In seeking to distinguish the associational settings in *Villa Campo*—at the one end, spaces like the suspicious, insecure, Politicos; at the other, the more formal, regulated settings like the *Naranjas*—participants in these associations also created a space that *felt* distinct to residents. Participants modeled their interactions with residents on notions of straightforwardness and warmth—*solidaridad*—that both participants and residents identified as characteristic of traditional provincial culture and, even expressive of a kind of genuine feeling that had been greatly dampened by political and economic crises, economic relations, and the increased inequality in the Province of Buenos Aires. *Solidaridad* expressed a sense of mutuality between participants and residents that was, in many ways, the flipside of mutual disrespect described in Chapter 3. In this case, the resulting personal interactions were marked by warmth and caring for the other.

In civic settings, the term *solidaridad* has been broadly adopted by promoters of new, modern standards of civic life,[49] and talk within the Religiosos and elsewhere exhorted participants to engage in warm and loving relations with others (*traten otros con cariño y amor*). One community leader I frequently talked to described meeting people

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[49] Session on *The Civic Sphere* by Jeffery Alexander, ASA 2007.

with a hug as a kind of *solidaridad*; "Greeting people with kiss and a hug gives them a good feeling."

At *Villa Campo*, however, the notion of *solidaridad* took on a distinct significance, caught up as it was in a politics of nostalgia. At a time when many in *Villa Campo* faced economic hardships, participants' performances and acts of *solidaridad* created a social space that evoked the positive qualities associated with the urban poor, simultaneously asserting both *Villa Campo*'s difference and the value of the poor's social relations.

According to *The Oxford Dictionary* (1978), the term *solidaridad* or solidarity means "community of responsibilities or interests" and refers to genuine expressions of "cooperation" or "community." In everyday life, the word is used to describe people of honest friendliness and warm hospitality, and the people from Argentina's provinces understand themselves to be especially endowed with these qualities of warmth and generosity. For the poor, expressions of *solidaridad* are also linked to perceptions of themselves as unselfish and dedicated to others (*de no ser egoísta*). But whereas traits associated with poor people like *hablar claro* (to speak clearly) can carry negative connotations, especially in Argentina's middle- and upper- class, of "naiveté," *solidaridad* commands a uniformly positive meaning in politically progressive circles.

Such character traits and cultural ideals are closely associated with the culture of Argentina's provinces. Similarly, traditional poor neighborhoods were social institutions characterized not only by the instrumental and authoritarian factors such as clientelism identified by Javier Auyero (2000), but also by a community of highly personalized relations resulting in strong, long-term relationships and a sense of collective interests.

Solidaridad interactions in Villa Campo similarly performed a kind of traditional nostalgia by evoking a space and a set of social relations that harkened to a time when poor people, like them, enjoyed simpler times and collective security. Indeed, *solidaridad* operated as part of a method of representation that involved not necessarily an authentic past but an imagined one in order to stake a claim on the present (Anderson 1991). To be sure, some people's actual memories of interactions in the provinces are not ones of *solidaridad*.

In the hands of poor participants dealing with their poor neighbors, *solidaridad* conveyed levels of care and concern for the resident that community members felt set *Villa Campo* apart from the newer, more profit-driven associational settings. In this sense, expressions of *solidaridad* were as much a poor person's strategy of cultural representations as they were methods to counter distrust in the environment. They were methods that appealed to a cultural identity shared by participants and everyday residents; it was in their sense that civic strategies were also cultural representations.

The following scenes were exemplary of the sentiment called *solidaridad*:

An elderly couple arrived on the corner where I lived. The woman was guiding the man who was walking, gesturing but not being able to speak. When Sofia greeted them, it became clear that it was not the first visit. Sofia listened to the woman's troubles patiently. After they left, Flor and Marie explained to me that the couple frequently goes to the neighbors to seek pity and ask for help. Once I was walking with two women in a neighboring indigenous community, poorer than the one I was living in. We saw a woman giving food to an elderly man from *Villa Campo*. One of the women murmured; "It is true sometimes, isn't it, the poorer a person is, the easier they can give to others." I

regularly saw the small business owners in the community helping people out by not charging them anything when they were going through tough times.

Certainly, this kind of *solidaridad* was bit of an informal community policy—and as well as these incidents illustrate, socializing could be interpreted as an expression of *solidaridad*. Of course, not all community members used *solidaridad* as a strategy to create rapport with neighbors, believing it a waste of time and energy. Nevertheless, in my part of the barrio as well as surrounding areas, I repeatedly saw instances where participants went to considerable lengths to create a feeling of concern and intimacy between themselves and their neighbors. These *solidaridad* practices were in part rooted in a participatory culture that fostered intimacy, sociability, and, ultimately, trust, among participants and could be extended to include everyday residents. These practices also stood in stark contrast to *two* associational settings, the formal part of the Naranja network as well as the Politicos, where leaders and residents tended not to identify with one another. With many of the Religiosos, by contrast, *solidaridad* built upon a sense of shared place in the world and a mutual understanding of needs and desires. Moreover, as the examples above suggests, *solidaridad* distinguished *Villa Campo* as an interdependent—and caring—space for the community's poor residents.

In practical terms, *solidaridad* meant involvement with neighbors and close but unaffected personal attention to their needs—as one might expect from a friend or, in some cases, a family member. Flor was forthright about performing and fomenting these personal interactions. When I joked with Flor about the little profit she received from the kiosk, she responded that she had the kiosk because she enjoyed the interactions with the people. "I get to see more people and it gets me out of the house," she said. On one

occasion Sofia declared that serving others in the community poorer than she was a kind of "spiritual enjoyment." At other times, both Sofia and Flor devoted a considerable amount of time to helping others in the formal settings of the associations, as well as the informal settings of their own homes.

Indeed, performances of *solidaridad* often resulted in a sense of mutuality between community members, and between community leaders and participants. Given that *solidaridad* was most definitely part of a participatory strategy, there were times when community leaders' performances of *solidaridad* were portrayed as a personal connection with residents that created almost an obligation to participate.

For while some community members engaged in *solidaridad* with fellow residents—which at times included buying and selling items--they produced an atmosphere of comradely sociability in which all community members would participate. *Solidaridad* interactions sat on a continuum of mutuality, the opposite of which was the mutual disrespect detailed in Chapter 5. Indeed, unlike the many of the *asembleas*, services and events that I attended, community leaders did not choreograph the behavior of community residents, so acts of *solidaridad* with neighbors happened when people felt so disposed (and rude when they did not). This mutuality could be seen in the ways that all sorts of personal information would be solicited or shared between people; there appeared to be an entitlement to question fellow neighbors about their occupations, their relationships, their religious and political beliefs, their family, and their financial situation. Women frequently made recommendations regarding raising children.

On other occasions, such as the opening vignette with the NGO leaders, reciprocity would be held as an ideal (and a demand) alongside *solidaridad*. In many of

these cases, leaders held an exclusionary idea of *solidaridad* which upheld a distinction between "us" and "them." At the same time, they tried to establish a sense of empathy and common interest with the fellow residents.

The term 'solidarity' has an implied, often unmentioned, scope. The scope can range from solidarity towards a small group to solidarity towards humanity in general. These different scopes can be termed respectively as 'closed solidarity' and 'open solidarity'. Closed solidarity may isolate the group from broader society and in turn promote feelings of distrust to non-members; on the other hand, it also can create denser social ties and *bonding* relationships. Alternatively, open solidarity can create feelings of trust towards the general society and promote bridging between groups as well as promoting weak social ties instead of bonding ones. *Bonding* signifies relationships with people that are close to your situation (i.e. family members, work colleagues, close friends, neighbors); whereas *bridging* is relating with people that are outside of the 'bonding' network, but are more or less in equal standing (Putnam1993).

The friendly, open interactions at *Villa Campo* were partly what identified the community as special (*especial*), as one leader had pointed out to me. Like the examples of disrespect I described in Chapter 5, the sociability that *solidaridad* represented was meant to be reciprocal between neighbors. Failure by a neighbor to respond to *solidaridad* was viewed by fellow neighbors as a breach of etiquette.

Conclusion

In a context where participants in *Villa Campo*'s associational environment have become diversified by exposure and perceptions of economic and political risks, *Villa*

Campo has gone through two eras of associational life. Changes in the customs of participation and activities in *Villa Campo* resulted in the expansion of choice for residents—in terms of both the kinds of activities and the spaces that are available—that was accompanied by uncertainties about corruption and the authenticity of the activities. In *Villa Campo*, the consequences were problems with trust, as residents carried their anxieties and deep distrust of the associational sphere into each initiative. An institution that had once commanded resident's patronage by virtue of scarcity and enjoyed their status as one of the only associational outlets in the community, the Politicos, could no longer elicit loyal participation by virtue of its place in the associational universe. In *Villa Campo*'s associational trajectory, the dynamics of participation had begun to dramatically change for participants. The methods participants developed in order to cope with the problems of trust can be seen, I have suggested above, as a form of civic work. Conscious of the environment they now inhabited and sensitive to the increasingly murky boundaries between reputable and disreputable associational spaces, community participants in this poor community sought to re-establish the civic virtues that once set *Villa Campo* apart, and above, in the community grassroots sector.

Nevertheless, the strategies participants relied upon to counter suspicion and distrust simultaneously traced the trajectory of Argentina's poor. Indeed, their methods only made sense within this context. In the course of distinguishing themselves, participants and leaders also engaged in a nostalgic method of representation that portrayed *Villa Campo* as endowed with the symbolic capital of grassroots activism. Community members endeavored to create a space in the community characterized by a set of sociable interactions that recollected an imagined, pre-capitalistic golden era of

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genuine warmth and feeling among strangers—among the poor and the working class. Here we find that moral ideals be laden with socially coded meanings and cultural practices. We also find, however, that moral ideals are shaped by the social trajectories of the groups they define. In *Villa Campo*, the production of trust and democratization mapped a social trajectory in which the past became a resource to the present. In reaction to socio-economic instability, the community members staked a claim about value and moral worth in the here and now by reaching back into a reconstructed past of the poor.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

As I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters, participation can be organized around the construction and communication of symbolic capital, in particular those demarcating civic capacities. I call this *civic work*. Civic work was clear with the nuns, where the nuns were deeply committed to the creation of an empowered community force that could not only communicate religious teachings within their field but also ably recognize residents' rights to more dignified lives and social esteem through the course of their interactions. The ethic of treating people with dignity and respect was most easily conveyed when the nuns were compared to other key associational settings in the community, such as the NGO and political networks, both known to most local residents, with the former as both a "community" and "vertical" space, and the latter as an untrustworthy and disreputable one. As I noted in Chapter 4, recognizing the type of social space of the Religiosos, and by extension other associations, requires identifying what they *were not*. In this way, civic work—and the construction of civic conceptualizations—is relational in nature.

However, some community leaders, such as some of the NGO leaders and political brokers, challenged "outsiders" that invaded their space, their infrastructure, and even "their people." I have suggested that by making distinctions between political people and social people, was in a sense anti-democratic. Their work nevertheless pulled them into a larger symbolic meaning in which they remained unable to erect the boundaries to mark them from each other.

The NGO network revealed conditions under which democratization does—and does not—appear. The NGO's leaders focused more upon relations between themselves

and with financers, academics and community leaders than with its members (the residents). Instead, the NGO network was a place where participant culture with vertical characteristics could flourish. Confronted daily with the pressures of competition and the encroachment of clientelistic practices and mindsets, Manejo workers attempted to distinguish the association by reminding residents of the association's illustrious, populist pedigree. Civic work in this setting sometimes translated clientelism into a form recognized as new and modern. Nevertheless, as Chapter 6 demonstrated, the associational space at *Villa Campo* was also a place where participants could create a relational civic process and create their own form of civic work.

In all three cases, the organization of civic life suggests that the creation of social relations can be a key aspect to how democratization is created. The creation of civic meanings sets different civic settings in conversation with one another. As I have argued in the preceding chapters, we can only recognize the role of civic work in one civic setting if we take into account how its relations with how other spaces in the field shape it. This approach to democratization, and to the symbolic construction of social boundaries that it entails, provides insight into the practical and relational aspects of democratization.

The symbolic boundaries that stake out the cultural borders of social groups are critical aspects of both everyday social interactions and the construction of hierarchies. These boundaries are also contested and changing. Leaders in *Villa Campo* often sought to rely on a kind of grassroots symbolic capital that was in decline. Indeed, the trajectory of *Villa Campo* and its community participants says much about the social implication of civic work and the implication of new forms of participation in poor communities.

What did people who lived in the community think about the new activities Manejo was proposing? It turned out that the upcoming incorporation of the cooperative was the culmination of a series of events that made my fellow neighbors frustrated and suspicious. Ali explained that over the past years the community leaders had gotten more distant from the community. "They have a circle where they do not let anyone else enter. It is always the same people." Another man told me that they were never going to be successful because people do not trust them because their previous work was a "disaster." Ali was utterly unconvinced of what alleged motives were behind the new initiative. "It is not about the community, it's about making profits for themselves."

Social Identity and the Face of New Era

Civil society organizations like the associations that I studied are invested in a structure that sets them—and their participants—apart from others. When I was in *Villa Campo*, community participants commonly distinguished themselves from the *politicos malos* and the community. However, as the local government's interest in the area became increasingly clear, community leaders adopted a confrontational stance to support their own associational welfare. Ironically, it seemed that some associations in *Villa Campo* were now distinguishing themselves from their original purposes of community development.

Many of the Naranja leaders were distancing the associational network from its grassroots legacy. The requirement that participants have to sign in when they attended an *asamblea* seemed like a copy of the participatory model offered by the traditional political associations. In the hopes of attracting more funding from development

agencies who desired quantifiable measures of participation, decision-makers in the Naranja network (mainly people in the Foundation and a few community leaders) sought to cast off the association's connections with political parties by acquiring a new, modern face with the veneer of democratic participation.

That face was not just rhetorical but also quantifiable, and the well-known community-wide network would count the members that sign contracts, attend meetings and so on. In an expanding civic sector where community participants served as representatives of a new democratic society, the politics and economics of "democratic transformation" has combined with social inequalities to weigh on poor people. Associations, of course, can disappear, their structures usually occupied by another new association.

The fact remains that when I carried out this study, community leaders in religious associations, like the nuns, conducted their work with levels of dignity and respect for residents that find no equivalents in more "modern" models of civic work in poor communities. It appeared that political and religious associations in *Villa Campo* have lost symbolic capital among middle-class outsiders in the course of the democratic era because they are traditional, and seemingly unchangeable. Yet, as one of my community informants said of associations like Manejo (believing that community opinion matters), "They have to change … or they are not going to last."

Nevertheless, *Villa Campo* residents were often simply connected with tradition by virtue of their social category as 'poor.' The dominant culture also identified them as undisciplined, irresponsible and unintelligent and not willing to conform to the parameters of order in a democratic environment —not as creative citizens. Poor

community participants are usually destined to live in anonymity. They are mainly middle-aged female participants who are involved in largely invisible, background participatory activities such as food preparation and domestic work and are volunteers with sometimes small, or no, benefits.

What does it mean when there is no ladder of advancement in the associational field? Where do participants go when they attain skills from the association? These are empirical questions, and while the fate of civic participants is an issue beyond the scope of my study, these questions point to important directions for future research.

Another question raised by this research is one of participant resistance. If associational life becomes more vertical, and if community leaders shed responsibilities for participants (but not control over them) in increasingly fragmented civic settings like *Villa Campo*, what are the possibilities for participants' resistance? Moreover, for community participants like those in *Villa Campo*, where I have argued a grassroots civic culture flourished, what is the likelihood that their critical consciousness might be redeployed against the erosion of civic privileges?

Participation Changes

Yet, *Villa Campo*'s civic culture could be threatened by changing participation practices, such as the individualization of participatory practices that could prohibit collective resistance. The option for getting some money for some work over the weekend in an association could easily produce competition between co-participants. As Denis Merklen's (2005) study of Greater Buenos Aires testifies the intense competition for scarce rewards and resources that occur under this system create divided loyalties. In fact, many participants believed these associational changes to be very *un*fair, but they

also saw little opening for protest. In the end, community members would have to choose, on an individual basis, their own relationship with these associations.

At the Naranjas and the Politicos, participation was more fragmented and individualized. Indeed, the civic arrangements at the Naranjas and the Politicos were at times antithetical to collective action, and the environmental dynamics created fractured, competitive, and even distrustful relations among participants. In contrast to participants in wealthier places, the participants that participated in associations in *Villa Campo* had few resources: In these settings, community participants would largely resist "with their feet," leaving to participate elsewhere. At the very least, it is unclear if changes to the organization of civic work like those found in non-governmental organizations have been, in many ways, a recipe for community members' disempowerment.

Changes in the Field

The day after my going-away lunch, and my last day in *Villa Campo*, I saw the Naranjas, who were having a meeting at their center. A representative of an outside NGO said that he was very impressed with the capacity in *Villa Campo*–he was referring to the Naranjas. One of the community participants introduced herself as someone who was coordinated by one of the leaders, Constantina; then she went on to say that they (the group of community participants) were learning a lot from Manejo, she called them "the pioneers." I talked to another community participant from Manejo, and she said that plans to form a public works cooperative was already going ahead. When I asked if they had received any feedback from the community on this initiative she told me that there was a survey that was handed out and the response of the residents was stupendous–82% of the population wanted a cooperative. I asked her why they did not come to pick up the

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survey in the house I was staying at, and she explained that they only had time and money to go to two barrios. I question the accuracy of these surveys.

The parallels with the vertical, controlled participation of the past were there. The signing in of the participants at the informational meeting, the lack of any true public discourse, the rhetoric, was all very similar to the political network. This network catered to non-political participants, but the activities were the same as those found with the Politicos (and may well have been swiped from the large, decentralized political network). The two types of networks—one well-financed and externally legitimized, the other broke and not well-regarded—seemed truly locked in a symbolic, relationship as was pointed out in Chapters 3 and 5.

But when I gazed across the busy meeting, I could not help but be overwhelmed by the extent to which international donors have had a role in the rise of non-governmental organizations and the power they have in these communities. This is a reconfiguration of associational life in a poor community: but it also suggests change from the past as well.

The Structure of Legitimation

Of course, I am not suggesting that *Villa Campo* prior to these associational changes was a civic paradise. I *do* want to suggest, however, that civic disempowerment is closely tied to a broad acceptance in *Villa Campo* of new levels and forms of inequality that are often seen as unavoidable accompaniments to social changes. To be sure, the model of civic work pursued by *Villa Campo*'s most elite association—and now mimicked, to some degree, by declining political ones—invests a new structure of legitimation that not only dictates who is deserving of a powerful position in the

community but also who is entitled to make decisions and represent people from there. Acts of disrespect or respect in the community, I have tried to show, recognize social differences and commonalities. Civic interactions that involve such expressions of respect must, I contend, be located in a context much broader than the leader-participant dyad or even the funder-leader-participant triad. These social interactions are situated in a wider social context in which well-educated elites are viewed as rightfully entitled to esteem, respect, and deference. Rituals of social recognition embedded in civic interactions are indicative as well as constitutive of these new social hierarchies that help create a culture of differentiated privileges and legitimation in *Villa Campo*.

A belief in the power of diverse forms of participation to regulate civic interactions—that residents will simply take their time elsewhere if they are not adequately fulfilled—suggests that a community member's time becomes valued.

No doubt, the categories that mark symbolic boundaries and construct a field of differences among associational settings, among community members, and between leaders and participants are a central pillar of this structure of legitimation. Symbolic boundaries are important in large part because they translate into social boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002:168-9).

As the previous chapters have detailed, new social inequalities in *Villa Campo* are sometimes legitimated through discourses of social and of democratic transition. Indeed, when poor communities are associated with verticality, corruption, and clientelism, their civic capacities in this recent democratic era seems like they would self-evidently be undeveloped. Perhaps we can conclude that these poor "communities" are laden by the same tensions as the associational networks: that democracy, solidarity and trust

advances hand in hand with exclusion, inequality and distrust. In the associational

hierarchy, the organization of participation can produce social meanings that serve as a

powerful public support to these broader social inequalities.

Appendix A: Methodology

Introduction

       This appendix attempts to address a number of methodological issues. One objective is to clarify the data gathering process. Second, I outline some of the theoretical and methodological considerations that lay behind my approach to data gathering. Finally, I address some of the challenges that arose in the course of carrying out this research project.

General Approach

       The method I used first required locating myself within the field site. I then observed and identified the actual social linkages, connections, and relations of power that impact the everyday organization of social life, and follow these connections to wherever they led me.

       This project began as a comparison between three associations—one political and connected with the state, one religious and connected with larger religious institutions and one run by a foundation connected by international funding agencies. The rationale behind a three-pronged comparison was simply to explore how associational work and participation were changing in the course of Argentina's democratic reforms; a contrast between an entrenched political network, the social work that was being done by religious institutions, and a newer association using more "modern" leadership practices seemed appropriate. It quickly became apparent, however, that I would have to expand my comparison to include a fourth setting—that of the community—because the three associational settings were in no way discrete and separate cases. It was clear that the

people in each associational setting were acutely aware of one another (and of other associations in the area) as well as of the activities going on about *Villa Campo*.

Understanding why this was so not only led me to a fourth site—the streets of *Villa Campo*—but it also guided my search for interview informants and shaped the discussions with them. As my study progressed, the connections and relations among my field sites began to direct my research and drove the questions I asked. In this way, tracing social linkages "on the ground" led me from three sites to four and drew me out of the associations and into the homes of the community members as well.

Participant-Observation

The bulk of the data I draw upon in this project is derived from over six months of participant-observation conducted in these settings.

Site selection and entry

To some degree, site selection was determined by which associations were willing to give me access to their activities. I was almost shunned by one of the associations I tried to gain access to—a non-governmental organization run by a foundation outside the community—presumably because leaders at the association had fears about my discovering their "secrets." This was despite what I thought to be a very good introduction to the association through friends connected with the community leaders.

Many community leaders and the people in the Catholic Church rarely appeared to think in terms of "secrecy" and my "*sacando información*," (taking information) so when I approached the community leader (who I was acquainted with already from contacts and meeting two years prior) in the Naranja network, I was received without

hesitation. I explained that I was a Canadian graduate student studying changes in civil society and participation in *Villa Campo*, and that I hoped to spend some time in the associations—as a participant, if possible—to gain some first-hand knowledge. This leader introduced me to other community leaders and the nuns, who readily agreed to allow me to participate in the association. I initially visited the association during a preliminary research trip, a couple of years before I formally arrived in *Villa Campo* to pursue my research.

I never was successfully able to formalize any volunteer arrangements. This was due in part with my initial struggles with the language, and not having practical skills (or knowledge) on what to do. In addition, it was not until the end that the associations knew what to do with me, as they were not bureaucratized so far as to be able to handle the capacity for volunteers, particularly ones as 'foreign' as I was. As an expression of thanks, I agreed to share the "information that I took" at the end of my stay.

At the same time, community leaders were excited about the prospect of having an international "visitor" in their association, and they clearly felt that I had selected their association because it was so well known. I was the first non-religious foreigner that had lived in the community, and therefore, quite an oddity.

Needless to say, there was a lot of suspicion as to what I was doing. People quite rightly asked me what I was doing and for whom, and for what purposes the information would be used. There were rumors that I was a spy for Bush, and that secretly I was a real estate tycoon that was going to buy up the land. There was also a rumor that someone was going around telling people not to speak to me. Community residents who I talked to directly asked me to clarify what I was doing, which I really appreciated. The

people who were angry about my presence in the community were the leaders; particularly, curiously enough, the ones from outside the community. Why was this? I do not know. The elements that we shared were that we were both profiting from our activities in the community: them financially, me for my educational career.

At first, all this attention was unsettling, but people quickly grew accustomed to my presence in the NGO compound. Initially I thought the associations might restrict me to simply observing the activities of participants in the association, but I was wrong. Some of my of the NGO leader (who were not in *Manejo*) enthusiastically coached me in almost all aspects of the association—such as organizing activities and introducing them to residents. Overall, I was extremely lucky with the level of access that I was able to get within the associations and the community.

Ultimately, all the attention I received at the non-governmental organization made it possible for me to gain access to the Catholic network, which I had no preliminary contact with. In the course of my time at the Naranja network, I made the acquaintance of other community leaders that also worked on various initiatives in the community. Through the community leader at the Naranjas, Angela, I was introduced to the nuns. These nuns, having seen what a good impression the community leader had of me, helped me find volunteer opportunities within the community, whether it was gardening or working in a food kitchen. So when I asked them if I could arrange to live in a private home in the community, they readily agreed. It was largely through the nuns and Angela's efforts, and their negotiations on my behalf, that I was able to enter the 'community', *Villa Campo*. It was through hearing the struggles of other students doing

ethnographic work (such as community leaders avoiding them for months) that I realized how much they did for me.

At Manejo, where leaders were far more anxious about making mistakes and there was a workplace discipline, it took me a much longer time to become acquainted with them. There were activities that I never felt comfortable observing. As I noted in Chapter 5, some community leaders worried that I would take information out of the community; to my surprise this occurred in the non-governmental network a lot, where, with the exception of one phenomenal leader and a volunteer, there seemed to be a loathing to speak to me. The first few times in Manejo were uncomfortable, though I eventually came to understand that this was in fact a feature of the environment, and not simply of my reception by these certain community leaders. Unprompted, a number of community participants individually expressed to me that they had similar experiences when they first arrived at Manejo.

Gaining access to the Politicos was less straightforward, in the sense that acquaintances had to introduce me to people, or I happened to be in the right place at the right time. In these settings, I was an observer rather than a participant, and got most of my information through interviews in a large part because the Politicos work consisted mainly of personal interactions and negotiations. In addition, community leaders in the Politicos often consider their work delicate and best kept secretive, and did not want my investigation to affect these relations negatively.

If getting an interview with the Politicos proved difficult, participating in their activities or events would be even more difficult. I had received no invitation to spend time with them and the Politicos in the *Villa Campo* did not seem to care much about my

presence. The Politicos were regulated by the political representatives in the Municipality of Garcia, whose programs were theoretically carried out by a group of brokers who many times in practice tended to bully residents in *Villa Campo* in order to get a cut on any welfare programs. On one occasion, one of these men appeared at my house and suggested that I might have to "go out with him" in order to have an interview. I just acted as if I did not understand what the man was saying. Later I found out that he had propositioned the vast majority of women in the neighborhood, offering housing materials, food and access to municipal programs in return for sexual favors. I also worried about what kind of negative impact my presence might have on the woman that was hosting me, Flor. However, Flor was on very good terms with everyone, leaders and residents, and in the end, nothing came of all my worries.

Additional observations and interviews were conducted in a number of other settings in *Villa Campo*. I spent time in evangelical churches attending services. I spent quite a bit of time in a project where I was introduced to a couple of political brokers; it was run by an external non-governmental organization and specialized on environmental issues. I spent time in health centers, also the domain of people that work in the municipality. I regularly visited the community's soup-kitchens and daycare centers, and accompanied a woman that worked in a women's center on her daily rounds, including a meeting with political party activists. At the very end of my stay in *Villa Campo*, I spent time observing the management transition of one of the community centers from the nuns to community members.

Data collection

In all four field settings, my presence was obvious to all and my general purpose known to people in these sites. As a result, I could openly write shorthand field notes, and people grew accustomed to me writing things down. I kept a pad and paper and through the course of a meeting, an activity or an event, I would jot down observations. At the end of the day, I sat down at my computer to reconstruct the day's events based on these abbreviated notes. For this reason, the direct quotations and conversations that I report from participant observation are usually reconstructed. I have only placed people's words in quotation marks when I had confidence in my ability to reproduce closely their meaning, if not their exact words. In some cases, however, my hand-written notes did include direct quotations in Spanish. In general, I was able to reconstruct the important events of each day in detail.

Interviews

In order to understand the organization of participation of the Naranjas, the Religiosos, and the Politicos—and the external agencies that supported these associational networks—I conducted interviews with leaders of these associations as well as other associations in the community (both private and with state ties). Other interviewees included people in external support agencies (including foundations, political movements and the municipal government), professors in local universities (who have done studies on *Villa Campo*), as well as socio-political experts in Buenos Aires who have done research on broad, national-level trends. In *Villa Campo*, I also interviewed people who had participated or were still participating in these local associations. This last set of interviews helped me evaluate how if I might generalize

experiences of certain styles of participation to other associations and other types of activities.

Some of these interviews were taped; if not, I relied upon hand-written notes that were typed up into interview reports as soon as possible after the interview. My fear in some cases was that the presence of a tape recorder would inhibit interviewees. In a couple of cases, I was able to conduct follow-up interviews, and so I was able to clarify any gaps.

One of the biggest "challenges" I encountered in the course of conducting interviews was that some interviewees felt the need to talk about what they wished to talk about, dealing with opinion rather than being factual. I quickly learned that I had to triangulate carefully my sources, asking the same questions of many people in order to arrive at an answer about which I could feel confident. In the case of the social, political and economic changes and the unfolding of events in the 1980s and 1990s, I found that people's memories were frequently inconsistent or unclear; memories usually are.

Challenges in the Field

One of the biggest challenges in the course of my research was managing *my* impact on the events and conversations I studied. I was never an invisible, and rarely an inconspicuous, observer as much as I tried. For my first few weeks in *Villa Campo*, I was frequently in the position of being observed. The level of scrutiny meant that my attempts to maintain anonymity of my research sites and subjects had been somewhat compromised. At the same time, I felt confident that nothing I have written in this dissertation could negatively affect any of my informants.

My foreignness also meant that simply by being present I created an effect on the spaces I was studying. As time passed, I realized that this could be as much an asset as a liability. My presence caused people to raise and discuss issues that might not have gotten an airing otherwise. I learned much about how *Villa Campo* residents think about *la gente de afuera* in comparison to richer Argentines, in part because my foreignness was a catalyst for commentary on such matters. At *Villa Campo*, the people living and participating in these spaces expressed a strong desire to teach me—almost tutor me, at times—about how these associations were organized and how things "really" worked. By the end of my stay, I became accepted and almost an ordinary presence. I found that people used interviews for their own purposes: for example sharing information with others in the room.

Finally, even though writing this dissertation gave me the power to reconstruct and frame the words and actions of other people. Within the community itself the power dynamics were quite different. Not only was I highly dependent upon my informants for almost every piece of information in this dissertation, and many people went out of their way to help me do my research. Yes, I also became an object of gossip and speculation, and people continually asked me questions on what I was doing as if it were highly suspicious. However, perhaps this is just as it should be--curiosity on both sides. The ethnographic researcher can expect to share herself with her informants, just as they share with her. Reciprocity is to be expected.

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