
CHAPTER 10. LINARES: WOMEN IN A MALE COMPANY TOWN

Linares is both different from and similar to Elda. To make the comparison clear but yet vary the tale, I have chosen to make the Linares story more personal, concentrating on two exceptional women. To be sure, I met exceptional women in all the places I visited, and I have presented some of their stories as examples in other chapters. But in this chapter I will make myself visible and give the reader a view of Linares through the story of my meeting Francisca and Loli.¹

But first the background, gleaned mainly from newspapers and magazines I found in the Linares municipal library.

A bit of history and geography

Linares is an Andalusian town, but it is very far from the stereotypical image of Andalusia as the land of flamenco, bull fighting and other colorful phenomena. True, the inhabitants speak an Andalusian dialect, they feel Andalusian and their traditional music is a variant of flamenco. True, there is a big bull-fighting arena where the great Manolete met his death in 1947. True, some señoritos (rich landowners with an aristocratic lifestyle, usually living in Madrid) own land around Linares. But Linares is situated on a high plain that reminds one more of the surroundings of Madrid than of Seville or Malaga. It is cold in winter, scorching hot in summer, and always windy. There is no Moorish charm to be seen, hardly even any sidewalk cafés, and the town promenade is more imposing than inviting. Linares flamenco songs tell bitter tales in heavy rhythms.

Linares is above all a working class town. It has a long history of urban wage work. It was built up around mining and industry. Few of the inhabitants have ever worked the soil. When the town grew explosively, about one hundred years ago, its daily life was probably more like a North American gold rush or Wild West town than it was like aristocratic Seville or like the rural life in surrounding villages.

The people in this area were miners and travelers already in Roman times. Not far from the town is an archaeological site called Cástulo. It was a Roman town, which grew up at this site in part because two imperial roads, one from the center of the peninsula to the southern parts, and one from the eastern to the western part of the south, crossed here. In a way they still do. Until very recently, all trains from Madrid to Andalusia passed through Linares.² And for the traveler by car or bus between the two major Andalusian cities, Granada and Seville, or between either one of them and the major city of the southeast, Valencia, the road goes by way of Linares.

In all probability, the Romans built a town here also because of the mines. Historical documents speak of the extraction of gold, lead and other rare minerals – the same ones that were rediscovered in the 19th century (Soler Belda 2000). Or, to express it more correctly, their exploitation was once again discovered to be economically profitable, thanks to new technology. The many small companies were bought up by big, mostly foreign, ones (Soler Belda 2000). A group of Englishmen became a noticeable and influential feature of local social life. The small village, which had slept in obscurity for almost two thousand years, crouching beneath the walls of a castle and a church and little else, grew from 5.000 inhabitants to ten times as many between 1860 and 1890. Linares became a curious phenomenon in the Spain of those times. There was as yet little industry anywhere, and the working class had not found its urban identity. But Linares required working

¹ The reasons for this are developed in the appendix on method.
² Most of them still do. The exception is only the AVE, the high velocity luxury train between Madrid and Seville. It required new rails, and they were built in a straighter line between the two cities. The AVE was inaugurated in 1992 and was one of the investments of that special year of fifth centennial, world fair in Seville and Olympic games in Barcelona.
hands, so people moved there from all parts of Spain. The railway was built. An opera house was built. A streetcar line was inaugurated to transport workers from working class areas to the mines. Boarding houses, brothels, bars and other boomtown businesses flourished along with construction and all kinds of commodity commerce.

During the 20th century the mines were all closed down, one after another, the last one in 1991. But as the mines closed, enough industries opened to keep the population stable. As elsewhere in Andalusia, the birth figures were high, so Linarenses, too, had to emigrate to other parts of Spain to find work. Not in the same proportions by far as other Andalusians, however, so they felt they were relatively lucky.

Or so I deduce from what I was told. I could learn little about the history of the town without taking on a complete project of my own. Linares is almost virgin territory for contemporary historians and completely virgin for sociologists and anthropologists. My interpretation of Linares history is based mainly on what Linarenses told me. And what they stressed was mining, boomtown anecdotes, the relative prosperity and the historical uniqueness of their urban working class identity.

The province of Jaén, where Linares is situated, lies north of Granada, on the border between the Castilian flat highlands and the more typically Andalusian landscapes of high mountains and fertile valleys. Parts of the province are covered with forest. Most of it consists of rolling hills where the red earth is monotonously dotted with rows upon rows of grey-green olive trees. Jaén is olive country. Many Jienenses (inhabitants of Jaén) suffer from allergies; olive tree blossoms are highly allergenic, I was told, when I myself developed symptoms during my stay. During certain periods of the year, a large part of the province reeks of olive oil processing.

Most of the province is rural. And "backwards", retrasado, according to informants, according to journalists, according to the authors of the few historical and economical texts I could find on the province. It has been the poorest or the second poorest province in Spain through most of the 20th century. Unsurprisingly, the levels of schooling are also among the lowest in the country.

Economists complain of the dominance of the main crop, olives, the fortunes of which go up and down and carry with it the life of the whole province. Feminists complain of the low levels of female participation in economic life outside the home, and they hardly even find it meaningful to mention participation of women in politics. An article on reproductive health pointed out that so far (1994), only two legal abortions had ever been performed in the province, in spite of the law that had permitted them for a decade. And so on. In other words, as one informant said in a tone of desperation, "Poor Jaén! Poor Andalusia! We have always been the bottom of the world (el culo del mundo) and we continue to be."

In the 1950s, the technocrats of the Franco regime embarked on grand plans for renovation of the Spanish economy. Two provinces, Badajoz and Jaén, were singled out for special attention. Special plans were drawn up for redistribution of land, colonization and cultivation of unused land with new techniques, and also some industrialization. The Plan Badajoz is well known in Spain, the Plan Jaén less so, but they were similar. Linares, as a place where workers were already at hand, was chosen as the site for several new industries. They gave work to some of the workers laid off from the mines. But most of them had to close after a few years. A cannery survived into the

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3 One anthropologist, Rafael Cuesta from Seville, had just begun his fieldwork in the Santana factory in 1994. As far as he knew and as far as I could find out, he was the first ever anthropologist or sociologist to do research in Linares. In the public library of Linares I found only five books on present day Linares, two of which were about the Santana conflict, one was a description of streets and the other two were historical but stopped in the 1930s. They confirmed the oral narratives I heard about long-standing socialist convictions and experience of strikes in the early 20th century. Soler Belda (2000) reports that the mayor during the Republic was always socialist, and that during the Civil War large landholdings were collectivized. Cuesta’s PhD dissertation was presented in Madrid in 1997. Title: “Japón en Jaén: Intersección de identidades en un centro de producción fabrili.” Universidad Complutense de Madrid.


5 The Spanish law permits doctors with a problem of conscience to refuse to perform abortions. According to Isabel Martinez (1994) all gynecologists of the province of Jaén were conscientious objectors.

6 This is not the place to explain why. Suffice it to say that most analysts have concluded that the development plans of the Franco regime were ill conceived. See e.g. Tamames 1980a and 1980b.
1980s, a wheat processing plant was still operating in 1994. For the rest, the story of Linares industry during the last thirty years has been about hopeful but ill-planned beginnings and then a continuous but undramatic downhill slide.

The population in 1994 was close to what it was at the beginning of the 20th century, some 62,000.

There was one exception, however, among the stories of business failure. The name was Santana Motor. In 1994 it was difficult to discuss the usual type of neighborhood movement issues in Linares, because everything depended on what was going to happen to Santana, and Linarenses were totally involved with what could be called a class war.

The Santana story

Santana Motor was founded in 1956 to manufacture tractors and other agricultural machinery. The 1960s was the decade of mechanization for Spanish agriculture. So the timing was right and the Santana tractors sold well. The management was also far-sighted enough to realize that the tractor boom would taper off once most Spanish farms had one, so they bought manufacturing rights for a four-wheel-drive vehicle from the British company Rover. To begin with, the Santana Land Rover was a success. So when the tractor sales diminished, the Land Rover took over and the company could continue a cautious expansion. At its height in the mid-1970s it had over 4,000 employees. That means some 7% of the town population. Add family members and you get around one fourth. Then you have to add several subcontractors wholly dependent on sales to Santana. Linares had become a company town.7

Trouble started when the British Land Rover developed technologically and the Santana one did not. Relations between the companies deteriorated. Santana terminated the contract in 1982 and found a new partner, the Japanese automobile manufacturer Suzuki. By the early 1990s, Suzuki had become the largest owner. Other owners moved out, however, and the Andalusian autonomous government had to take over, in a series of crises, so that when Suzuki had come to own about half of the company, the Andalusian government owned most of the other half. The Suzuki models sold well for a while, but Suzuki felt that the Santana factory was not profitable enough. Starting around 1988, it laid off workers continuously. It tried to implement "the Japanese model", which seems to have clashed badly with the Andalusian workers.8 By February 1994, the factory was down to 2,400 employees.9

Suddenly Suzuki announced that it had stopped payments and would close down the Linares factory altogether.

The town reacted with an explosive mixture of panic and solidarity. The story of Linares from February to June 1994 was the story of the workers' desperate fight to keep their town alive. There were immediate spontaneous demonstrations under the main slogan "If Santana goes, Linares goes." This made huge headlines in all Spanish media.

Suzuki offered a compromise: it would contemplate staying in Linares if it were allowed to lay off close to two thirds of the workers. The union local responded with a campaign under a new slogan: "2,400, not one less."

A green bow became the symbol of solidarity. It appeared on t-shirts, in shop windows, as pins on jackets and work uniforms... Linares was filled with green bows. The demonstrations grew larger and larger. Not only the workers and their families, not only union and party people in general, but also shop owners, the middle class and many who would normally vote conservative tickets took part. When the Santana workers did not receive their wages for February, town businesses lost some 70% of their turnover.

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7 I base this story mostly on oral information I collected while in Linares plus newspaper reports during the winter of 1994. I have also used two published personal accounts, Belinchón Sarmiento 1995 and Martínez Liébana and Rubio Fernández 1995.

8 I had no time to investigate the details of this, but it is precisely the theme of Rafael Cuesta's work in Linares.

9 All of them male except the cleaning women and a few secretaries. According to Rafael Cuesta (personal communication) the number of female employees was 13 or 14.
Soon, the main impetus of the protest was directed against the Andalusian government. It said it did not have the money to buy Suzuki's shares, nor did it have the power to force Suzuki to stay. The protests then veered towards the central government in Madrid. The demonstrations escalated. People sat on the freeway, stopping traffic on the main road from central to southern Spain. People sat on the rails, stopping the major part of the train traffic between Andalusia and the rest of Spain. The authorities responded with violent police attacks, but the demonstrating Linarenses were not about to be intimidated. As they told me, a few months later, over and over again, "We were past fear." They fought back. No one died, but many were injured.

Workers, unions, leftist political parties, Andalusian towns with leftist mayors, the neighborhood movement and many others showed solidarity, sending busloads of people to the Linares demonstrations, donating money, etc. Linares workers organized two long marches, to the Andalusian capital, Seville, a distance of 240 kilometers, and to Madrid, 335 kilometers away. The latter took two weeks, 125 men walked the whole way, many more parts of the way, and even more, including family members, i.e. women, went by bus to Madrid to meet them there and make a huge demonstration through the streets of the capital.

Both the Andalusian and the central governments were in PSOE hands. Linares had traditionally voted socialist, but socialism and PSOE now became ugly words in the town. Socialist meetings were interrupted by people throwing eggs and tomatoes and hurling invectives. At times hand fighting would break out. Socialists I talked to said democracy and free speech were threatened. The handful of Japanese employees in Linares did not dare go outdoors.

No solution was forthcoming from the governments. The workers were getting tired. Suzuki made a new offer. It would settle for permission to lay off one thousand workers and try to keep 1,400 busy. It made no long-term promises. The Andalusian government stepped in and said it would pay part of the cost for early retirements, so that only a few workers would have to become dependent on unemployment benefits.

The workers settled for this. Many of those with whom I spoke, quoted the old saying, "Esto es como las lentejas, o las comes o las dejas" (literally: this is like lentil soup, either you eat it or you don't), meaning that when one is poor, there are few alternatives, so one takes what one is offered; whatever there is, is preferable to nothing. A mood of resignation settled over Linares. Back wages were paid. Some were laid off. Some negotiated private agreements to quit voluntarily in exchange for some money, with which they hoped to start small businesses. Close to one thousand men were retired as of June 1st.

They were all between 50 and 60 years old. Those below 50 had generally kept their jobs, and if not they had been laid off, not retired, and were now preparing to move some place else. Those over 60 had been retired already in earlier crises.

They were all men.

So the streets of Linares were filled with people of this narrowly defined category: male ex-workers between 50 and 60. Most of them about the same height (not very tall, as a result of the hunger years of their childhood), all of them similarly clothed, most of them with similar paunches (the result of the relative prosperity of recent years), most of them completely unused to not having a job to go to. The streets of Linares were a strange sight in June 1994, full of men in their best years hesitatingly walking about, stopping in groups to talk to each other.10

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10 I relate the story of Santana as background. It is important information on what sort of town Linares is and what the political conjunction was like during my fieldwork. It is also part of the background for what the neighborhood movement was and did at this time. However, let there be no misunderstanding: I do not tell this story as part of my overall story of the neighborhood movement. Many individual activists of the movement were involved in the Santana actions, of course, since they were employees of Santana or neighbors or kin of Santana employees. But the movement as such did not organize any of the actions and took part in only a few. It was mainly the union locals that organized the actions, plus some ad hoc groups. And when the Santana actions took on anti-PSOE characteristics, this caused serious tension between them and the dominant factions within the neighborhood movement. The movement did support the protests, however, and many shows of solidarity were forthcoming from the neighborhood movement in other parts of Spain.
A bit of sociology and urban characteristics

On the surface of it, Linares did not look poor. There were plenty of stores of all kinds. People in the streets looked well fed and well clothed. The working class barrios looked neat.

But what statistics there were told a story of poverty. The province as a whole had been losing population for the last several decades and it was usually ranked last or next to last in income per capita among all Spanish provinces. And the differences were substantial. In 1977 the income per capita of Jaén was 41.6% of that of Madrid, 56.8% of the Spanish average. Analysts found vicious circles of poverty, dissatisfaction, low schooling and low productivity (Cuadrado Roura 1981).

The living standard of Linares was higher than the provincial average, but I could find no exact figures on that. Good indicators, however, were the figures on literacy and unemployment. Illiteracy in Linares was higher for women than for men, as has always been the case in Spain, but the figures for Linares were much higher than the national average. Almost 8% of all women in Linares were censed as illiterate in 1991. The percentage was just around 1% for those 25 or younger, but at 30 it jumped to almost 12%. Out of 26,000 women older than ten years, over two thousand could not read or write at all, just over five thousand could read a little but had never gone to school and between eight and nine thousand had only elementary schooling. 370 had a university degree and two had a PhD (Datos del censo de población y vivienda de 1991, unpublished).

As to the labor market, only 45% of the population of working age was active in 1991. It was the lowest percentage of all medium sized towns of Andalusia, but it had increased compared to ten years earlier. Only 15% of women were active, 75% of men. Most of those working were in the sectors of agriculture, mining, food industry, metal industry; almost 16% worked with manufacture of transport vehicles (read Santana and its subcontractors), and over 10% worked in small commerce. The unpublished report from which these figures come found a tendency towards increasing percentages of service sector jobs and commented that this might mean more jobs for women in the future. In February 1994 (i.e. before the Santana lay-offs) there were close to five thousand unemployed persons (Mercado Laboral en Linares, unpublished).

But these figures did not reflect reality. Labor statistics were unreliable all over Spain, because of the large informal labor market, but this was more so in Andalusia. Jaén was considered to have the proportionally largest informal job sector of Andalusia (Al Sur 14, 1994). Many women worked for a month or two each year harvesting olives. Most of the unemployment was found among the young. As women start thinking they too want to work and have a right to work, they will enter the statistics of the unemployed in ever greater numbers. In 1992, for the first time, there were more women than men looking for work (Eseca 1993, unpublished).

Apart from my visit to the hospital (cf. below) and my attack of olive blossom allergy, I did not find out much about public health in Linares. There was a problem of water, and I was told it had been much worse until recently. In a book describing the situation in the mid 1970s, the water problem was one of the major topics: constant water shortages, public fountains with water not fit to drink and so "hard" (calcareous) that it was difficult to use for washing. The main problem of health in Linares through most of the 20th century had been the high content of lead and other toxic metals in the water (Moreno Nofuentes 1987). There seemed to be no shortage of water while I was in Linares, but it had a bitter taste.

My broken toe

I came to Linares in late May 1994. I had just broken a toe, so I arrived limping and with a bandaged foot. In my memory Linares seems bigger and hillier than it is, because all through my three weeks there I walked with effort and pain, and in the end I had to cut this piece of fieldwork somewhat short in order to get some rest and give the toe a chance to heal.

Thanks to this toe I got a glimpse of the town health care system. I visited the public hospital a couple of times, for x-rays and check-ups. I had to stand in line in front of grey windows, in grey halls, for hours, together with young mothers with sick children, old bent women and men
dressed in black, young men with traffic injuries... The babies cried, the old men complained, everyone quarreled about their turns, there were angry complaints about unnecessary bureaucracy, over and over one heard the same phrases, "this ought to be arranged in some more rational manner" and "this is just because we are poor; state health care functions much better in Madrid and Barcelona." And when I had finally obtained the slip of paper with the permit to see a specialist, even though I was not a resident of Linares, and another slip of paper with the time for the appointment, and a third one with the number of my turn within the set time interval, I had to negotiate anonymous hallways with wrong signs on the doors. I noticed that I was just about the only person trying to read my way. The other patients asked their way, so I did, too. Then one had to try to find a place to sit on the uncomfortable wooden benches outside some grey door where the specialist would supposedly receive patients when he arrived, usually about one hour after the set time. Since the specialist I wanted to see was an orthopedist, almost everyone outside his door had casts and bandages on different limbs, so my bandage was no ticket to a seat.

Finally a doctor took a rapid look at the x-ray plate I had brought from Madrid and said it was no use for me to take my shoe off, he wanted another x-ray done. "Go down and get it and come back here with it, you don't have to go to the office for a new appointment." Grateful for that, I limped down new stairs and halls, found the x-ray department, stood in line again, but unfortunately it was too long, and when the department closed for the day, the rest of the people in line had to leave. Come back tomorrow! So I did, and I did get the toe x-rayed, but that day my doctor had no time, so I had to wait until the next week.

Summing up, I had to walk a lot on a sore toe just to get help with that toe. I am not complaining. The pain was not severe. But the experience gave me a feeling for what it is like to live in Linares and not be able to afford private health care. I have had similar experiences in other parts of Spain, but that was many years ago; in general state health care has grown much better. In Linares the improvements were running behind schedule. What this experience meant for my fieldwork was to give it a wistful note that seemed to put me in the right mood for relating to Linares.

Meeting Francisca

The protagonist of my period in Linares was Francisca. She was a protagonist of the Linares neighborhood movement, too.

The local movement federation received me well, thanks to the letter of introduction I brought from CAVE in Madrid, whose secretary had also called the Linares president and forewarned about my visit. These letters and calls were my instruments of access in three of the places I visited, but they worked especially well in Linares, because the board there sympathized politically with the CAVE board.

I met with the president and the vice president of the Linares federation, and listened to their opinions about the political moment in Linares. They explained how a socialist leadership is the only thing that can make the movement work, because the communists are caught in old-fashioned ideologies of confrontation, and the independents are inefficient. But they made sure I understood that they kept party work and movement work in two different compartments, the movement must not be confused with a political party. They were upset because the Santana events had made the Linares population anti-PSOE, to the point of their feeling at times personally threatened.

A young woman named Maite was the person responsible for women's issues in the federation. She arranged a meeting for me with a number of women from different associations, who then invited me to their associations and let themselves be interviewed. In my first conversation with Maite, she talked nervously about the plans she had, how she would arrange courses, what she was doing to "activate" barrio women and "make them understand" and so on. Her vocabulary sounded not quite right, so I asked if she was a newcomer to the movement, and she admitted that she had never been active in any local association, nor did she have any background in the women's movement. She was active in a local PSOE party group, which had suggested she take on the job of organizing women in the neighborhood movement; they thought that was the right thing for her to do since she was studying social work at the university in Jaén.
This is a clear example of what movement independents and old-timers found so arrogant\textsuperscript{11} about party tactics.

Besides the meeting with the women, Maite suggested I begin by talking to Francisca. Mentioning that name, Maite's tense face relaxed in a big smile. Francisca is an incredible woman, she said, originally a nun, one of those street nuns, you know... She has lived for a long time in her barrio, Fuente del Pisar, she was one of the people who started the association there, and she is still active, all over town, she has enormous energy, she is a true warrior...

Maite, too, had just complained about the "war-like" confrontational tactics of the "old-fashioned" movement groups, but suddenly the reference to war switched meaning, now it was a compliment to Francisca for courage, energy and commitment.

When I dialed the number Maite had given me, Francisca already knew about me, Maite had called to forewarn. Oh yes, I was welcome to come to the meeting of the association of Fuente del Pisar, named La Esperanza (Hope), the next evening.

So the next day I limped through central Linares, past a park that used to be the entrance to a mine, past the fountain that had given its name to the barrio, all the way out to a barrio of the kind that had originally been built by the inhabitants themselves. The neighborhood association had a two-floor house that looked like all the other houses around it. On the wall by the entrance was a sign announcing that the people of the barrio had built the house with their own hands in collective effort.

Most of the ground floor was one large room. In one corner there was a staircase, the toilet and a small glass encased office. The walls were covered with notices and posters. The floor was tiled, but even so the room was very hot. The only cooling device was a traditionally shaped clay jug (\textit{botijo}) with water in a corner. The women in the room came over to it in a steady stream, lifting it and drinking skilfully without touching their lips to it.

The room was full of women, sitting around two long tables, sewing. The tables were covered with material and little baskets for sewing gear. Thread, scissors and measuring tapes were lent and borrowed back and forth. One woman walked around with a measuring tape draped around her neck; I realized that she was the teacher. By one wall stood three sewing machines and some wooden frames where finished or half finished pieces of clothing hung. In one corner was an ironing board, and a woman actually stood there ironing, glistening with sweat.

The president of the association came out from his office, greeted me and said that Francisca would be right there. He did not quite know what to do with me and seemed relieved when he had to attend to a couple of women who came in to ask if it was too late to sign up their children on the waiting list for summer camp. I placed myself in the door of the office, to enjoy the intermittent narrow stream of air stirred up by a small electric fan on the desk inside. I thought of approaching the teacher. But just then Francisca arrived. A sturdy woman around fifty, with short curly hair. Her clothes – a white blouse and a straight knee-length dark skirt – looked chaste, but her image was of a barrio woman much more than that of a nun. Her greeting words and her body language were frank and no-nonsense.

We went up to the second floor. Here, too, was one large room and one smaller one. The big one had a central table with chairs around it, and glass cupboards with sports trophies. A young music teacher got up to leave, and his three students packed their instruments. I caught a wonderful glimmer in the eyes of a girl of around twelve as she literally caressed her guitar. The teacher saw what I saw and laughed happily: "This means so much to some of them."

The walls were full of posters here, too, not just from the neighborhood movement but speaking of solidarity work in other parts of Andalusia and in Latin America. I stopped to look at one with a comic strip about Nicaragua on it. Francisca explained with pride that she had brought it. Actually she had brought almost all of the posters from Nicaragua where she had done volunteer work a couple of years earlier. She told me that her order had at first refused to pay for the trip, but she had threatened to resign, so in the end it did. Why should it pay? I wondered. She was patient with my ignorance: "As nuns, we don't have any money of our own. We do everything for our order, so then the order has to give us the money we need. When it is for something sensible."

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Prepotente} was the Spanish word almost always used.
Actually, however, she did earn some money of her own. She worked for the municipal domestic service, visiting old people who had no family to take care of them, shopping, cooking, cleaning for them, and bathing them. The people who received this kind of municipal help were at the very bottom of the social scale; they were completely alone and very poor. Francisca told of dirt and smell, of sorrow that turned into mental illness, of bodies eaten by worms while still alive... For this work full time she earned about 70,000 pesetas (about 475 US dollars) a month.

But she thought she lived very well. Her order would take care of her old age and any possible illness. She bought used clothes very cheaply. And she shared daily expenses with three other nuns. Together they rented a small house in the barrio.

While we talked, a number of women arrived. I asked if I had misunderstood, I thought it was the board of the association that had a meeting, but it seemed it was the women's committee. This caused hilarity and Francisca explained: "In this barrio, the board used to be only men. In Linares it is still like that, you'll see. But I had been in on this from the start, and I had started a women's committee, too, and I thought it was wrong if they did not let the women have any say about the general association business. So one year I saw to it that a lot of women came to the annual assembly, that was two or three years ago. So then we voted for the women, so the elected board turned out to be almost half women. And guess what happened then!? The men were so resentful they stopped coming to the meetings! They went to the bar to play domino instead, muttering about how the women had taken over, so they could no longer work in the association. But we wanted to work with them! They were the ones who did not want us! But of course, as long as they did not come, we had to do everything ourselves. And we did very well, the association has many more courses now than we used to have, we have repaired and painted the building, we bought two electric fans... and so on, we are very active, and the men at first got even angrier because things went so well for us. But now they have started to come back, the president right now is a man, yes, you met him..."

He sat in on the meeting to begin with, but after a short while he said that we did very well without him, and since he had work to do in the office... and disappeared downstairs. Perhaps he was the president just for appearances, I thought. The token male on the board. But it could also be that he wanted to be discrete, seeing that there was a woman visitor who was going to talk about women's issues.

The vice president was a woman, likewise the secretary and the treasurer. Francisca said she had had all sorts of positions through the years, but now she had decided to stay in the background. "The others must learn, too, and they won't if they don't have responsibilities, you can't let everything depend on one person..." But as far as I could tell she was still the moral authority and ran the meeting for all practical purposes.

As I told them about my project, I could feel the atmosphere around the table changing. They had been friendly, but now they became cordial. They eagerly told me about their experiences. They did not mind the tape recorder in the least. There was too little time to tell everything they wanted to tell, they had to go home and cook dinner, so they asked me to come back the next week so they could tell me more.

When everyone except Francisca had left, she also told me more. And more and more. Then she offered to drive me to the hotel (she had bought a used car in order to be more efficient in both her job and in association work), so that I would not have to walk on my sore toe. On the way we passed an outdoor café, so she asked if I wanted a beer. It was close to ten o'clock, and we sat there in the delicious sundown cool, talking more, over a second beer and some food, about her life as a young upper class woman in Seville who gave piano lessons but decided to become a nun already at the age of twenty; she stayed in a convent for ten years and continued teaching music, but little by little she found out about "the suffering of the world", so she left her order and entered another one, to become a street nun; she had arrived in Linares twenty years ago to live among the poor and be of help to them — without having any idea about poor people's daily problems and how they coped with them. She laughed at her own naïveté. She told me about a priest who founded the neighborhood association, how much she had learnt from him, and how she also learnt from how he was outmaneuvered by a conservative church hierarchy and was moved to another town. She told me more and more about how the neighborhood association had fought for dignified housing,
Suddenly she giggled and leaned forward across the table: "Do you know why I was so brusque towards you at first?" I said I had not felt she was brusque but friendly. But perhaps friendly in a rather superficial way, at first. "Exactly!" said Francisca. "I am never impolite, naturally. I receive everyone who comes along, I want to tell people about our association, and let them then interpret as best they can and want to. And they do. Oh, if I were to tell you about the times I have been misquoted in the press, harassed in live radio broadcasts... And now, all these PSOE people who are taking over the whole movement! Maite is a good girl, she is just so inexperienced, she makes all sorts of mistakes, and she is so naïve she does not even realize her party is using her. I like her, she'll learn. But since she was the one who sent you, I took for granted that you were just another one of those PSOE people they keep sending. To spy on me, or put pressure on me, or whatever it is they think they are doing." I giggled: "Me? A PSOE person?" We laughed together. "So I thought, sure, I'll receive her, as nicely as I can, because I receive everyone. But now it turns out that I can talk to you!"

**Women in the Linares movement**

Francisca became my key informant in Linares and also a friend or a mother figure. She took care of me. She drove me around, to spare my poor toe, and to introduce me into various neighborhood associations that perhaps the federation was not that keen to show me. "Treat her nicely," said Francisca to the local boards as she dropped me off, and those words of hers opened doors and hearts. She took me on a trip to the neighboring town of Baeza one day when I had little work to do and she thought I ought to have some fun and not just work all the time. She invited me for Sunday dinner to her home, where we sat with the three other nuns in a vine-covered cool patio, discussing methods of resistance. Francisca told me more things about her life and I told her things about mine.

The nuns had quite a stock of videotapes on various actions in Linares and other Andalusian towns and villages. There was one about the association in Fuente del Pisar organizing its annual fiesta with decorated streets, there was one on how the women's committee went on a solidarity visit to the striking village of Marinaleda, and how women from Marinaleda then came on a return visit to Linares when Linares was striking against Santana, and there were several tapes on the women's choir of La Esperanza singing at street parties or on local TV shows.

The tape I found most illustrative for my project was one on the play the women's committee had written and performed in various contexts. It was about how women rebel against male dominance, and it explained the need for this in such a way that it became understandable and legitimate in the eyes of the women – and some men – who saw the play.

I was first of all struck by the quality of the play. It was abbreviated in its arguments, but the situations and the language were totally recognizable. How could these unschooled women have captured these everyday scenes so exactly and written them down and combined them into a narrative with a clear point? Francisca giggled, "One must be pedagogical! The problem with these women is always that they have no self-confidence. We don't know anything, we can't do that... even when they try to talk about themselves. Like when we are somewhere with the choir, journalists ask them about who they are and so on, and they clam up, they find no words. But in our meetings, when there are no outsiders, they can talk for hours! For a long time I kept writing down things they said, without their knowing it, and then when I suggested we write a play together about this theme they talk so much about, about how their husbands don't like their being active, they said, inevitably, 'We can't! Impossible!' Yes, you can, you have already done it, I said, and started reading from my notes. So, then we just used these notes as a starting point, and discussed which things were most important to include... and again I wrote down everything they said... and little by little, a play grew out of it."

In other words, Francisca had written the play, but in dialogue with the other women, and using their own words and expressions and troubles.

Here is an outline of the play:
Scene one: Paquita, in an apron, sits sewing. Her husband Manolo, with a mustache and a big workman's cap, sits reading the newspaper. (The cap was necessary, since he was played by a woman with long hair.) Paquita fiddles with pieces of thread and manages to say that she is bored at home, the children are big now, they are in school all day, and she would like to meet other women... Manolo just snorts with contempt.

Scene two: Paquita runs into her neighbor Lola in the street and talks to her about her problem. Lola says, "Come to the neighborhood association! We have a women's committee there now, we have a lot of fun!" Paquita stammers that she cannot imagine joining an association, she knows nothing about anything... Oh yes, says Lola, everyone can contribute something.

Scene three: Similar to scene one. Paquita tries to persuade Manolo to let her go out in the evening, but he does not want to hear a single word about any association.

Scene four: Manolo and Paquita in the doctor's office. Manolo explains in an important manner that there must be something wrong with Paquita, because she cries all day long, so please, doctor, give her some vitamins or something. The doctor talks first to Paquita alone, then to Manolo alone. She says that Paquita is sick from loneliness. Manolo must give her permission to join that association, so that she can talk to other women. If not, she will never be cured. Manolo agrees, reluctantly.

Scene five: Paquita returns home from a meeting. Manolo complains that it is late, but feels happy when Paquita laughs and gives him a hug and fixes dinner in no time and tells about all the fun she has in the association. And next week there is an excursion, she says, with husbands and children and all, and I signed us up, both of us. Manolo is angered again. He does not want to go with his wife to some women's thing! But other men are coming, too, insists Paquita.

The last scene: Manolo is so happy to have discovered the neighborhood association. He, too, has found friends there. And he is so happy that Paquita is now happy and energetic, their life together has improved immensely. "Next time there is an excursion, don't forget to sign me up, too!"

This was the key story for Linares women in the mid 1990s. They wanted to struggle for schools and health care and all the other usual movement issues, but the struggle that came first of all, and must be won before the other ones could even begin, was the one against the gender order that rested on the norm that women should stay inside their own homes as much as possible.

Meeting Loli

At the second meeting I attended in La Esperanza, the women sang a song to me. It was a marvelous song, full of the pleasure of struggling for a better world and of gratitude to the association for what it had meant to them. Evidently Francisca had written this text, too, I thought.

No, said Francisca. She was not good at writing rhymed texts. Nor was it necessary, for the barrio had its own poet. Her name was Loli Lechuga, and she wrote almost all the songs the choir performed. Francisca showed me some sheets with texts. I was impressed.

So I asked to meet Loli. No problem, Francisca took me to Loli's home, and Loli received me with coffee and smiles. We sat for a couple of hours in her cool patio and she told me about her life. I was even more impressed with her poetic talent, when I learned that she had been illiterate until adult.

Loli was born in a village so small it was not even a village, she said, just a few shacks along the road. Her family lived in terrible poverty and she did not know about any other kind of life, yet she was never content, always dreaming about something else. She did manage to get out of the local drudgery when she got married and moved to Linares, and she and her husband had managed to raise several healthy children and now lived in a comfortable house of their own, but material worries had always accompanied her and still did. What really changed her life was a literacy course she took as adult. Now she had become "a person", she thought. And the association was her forum. That was where she had found friends, that was where she was inspired to write her texts, and that was where the choir was, which performed her creations.
She herself expresses what her life has been all about in many of her poems. Here are three of them that describe her youth, her dreams of improvement and her political views.12

MI JUVENTUD

En Jaén donde es mi tierra
siendo mi pila en Arquillos
mi cuna al pie de la sierra
mamando aceite de olivos.

Las encinas de la dehesa
me enseñaron su cultivo
los pájaros la cultura
de sus cantos y de sus nidos.

Los bueyes araban la tierra
yendo al arado uncidos
vi cómo crecen las siembras
cómo cosechan los trigos.

De mi juventud el rincón
matinal de primavera
donde yo esperaba el sol
del puntal a la pradera
con las cabras, los marranos
y la burranga Lucera.

Por las tardes en el huerto,
cerca de la carretera,
me sentía entre vergeles,
así fue mi vida en el puerto
al pie de aquella cantera
La Piedra de los Donceles.

MI TIEMPO PERDIDO

No siento el haber nacido
de padres sin capital
ni tampoco haber crecido
en medio de un olivar.
Lo que siento haber venido
a tan falsa sociedad
que hasta el saber me han prohibido
y sin poderme realizar
en mayor me he convertido.
Cuantas veces soñé yo
cuando en la infancia vivía
que al llegar a ser mayor
algo importante sería.

12 The translation is as close as possible to literal. Since for the purposes of this chapter, the contents of the poems are more important than their literary value, I have not tried to maintain rhymes and I have not been able to keep much of the rhythm.
Nunca me vi retratada como una mujer casada preparándole a mis hijos desayuno con tostadas.
Siempre a mi madre observaba y al verla tan cargada yo con mis sueños vagaba. Con tantas torres soñé sin cimientos ni hormigón que cuando me desperté todo se me derrumbó. Lo que me hace respetar delante de un infantil ver que puede aprovechar el tiempo que yo perdí.

Y aunque no me sé expresar, cual poeta verdadera, tengo la oportunidad de decir lo que quisiéрапor la Fuente del Pisar.  

Yo quisiera ver en los barrios al alcalde dialogar preguntándoles a los viejos por la Fuente del Pisar.  

Preguntar por los parados, sentarse con los papás a prevenir resultados antes de ampliar el penal.  

Quisiera ver la ciudad con parques y aparcamientos y, después podrán multar si hay falta de cumplimiento.  

Quisiera que la mentira y la verdad como un semáforo fuera que luzca con la verdad y al mentir se oscureciera.  

Yo quisiera que las leyes I never saw myself as a married woman preparing for my children a breakfast with toast.
I always observed my mother and seeing her so overloaded I dreamed of so many towers that had neither foundations nor concrete so when I woke up it all came tumbling down.
Which makes me respect in each child the thought that he will be able to make good use of the time that I lost.

Yo quisiera ver en los barrios al alcalde dialogar preguntándoles a los viejos por la Fuente del Pisar.  

Asking about the unemployed, sitting down with the parents to prevent the results rather than enlarging the prison.  

I would like to see the mayor come to converse in the barrios asking the old men and women about Fuente del Pisar.

I would like to see the town full of parks and parking lots, after that they can fine people if they do not comply.

I would like for lies and truth to be like a traffic light to shine with truth and go dark when someone lies.

I would like for the laws
Quisiera pedir a mi Dios
ahora que voy a la escuela
que retrasé su reloj
y que el tiempo no corriera.

Quisiera ser como tú
para aprender a perder,
a perder mi juventud
aceptando la vejez.

Quisiera vivir en la era,
donde firmar con mi nombre
y colocar mi bandera
sin ser esclava del hombre.
Yo quisiera....

Loli Lechuga, March 1989, translation BMT.

Linares, the women and me

Linares was a lot more than what I have been able to report here. As in all the other places visited, there were many interesting discussions, on gender, on democracy, on what the PSOE is really up to, and so on. I could describe a number of barrio associations and their local histories. I could tell about other interesting women I met and interviewed. There is so much to tell. Anthropological fieldwork is terribly tiring, because it is so rich and it engages so deeply, and then, when "writing it up" you feel as if you write it "down", that is, you abbreviate, generalize and abstract, until all the emotional excitement disappears. In this chapter I have endeavored to be more personal, to retain some blood and sweat.

I will also risk a generalizing reflection, however.

Maite, Francisca, Loli and I moved in a kind of circle around the object we tried to appropriate and interpret: the movement, its history and activities and its relationship to gender. We had different experiences of it, and different opinions about what was the purpose and what was likely to happen next and what we would like to see happen in the future. Maite, Loli and Francisca had different backgrounds, socially and geographically. They entered events in Linares and specifically in Fuente del Pisar through different doors as it were. They knew about each other's opinions and felt different degrees of admiration or tolerance for them. They each worked on influencing the ongoing discourses about women, gender, class, democracy, political change, economic justice, and so on. Then I entered their circle for a short period, trying to interpret all of them. And thus they were forced to try to interpret me, at the same time as my interpretations became new material for them, new arguments to use in their various daily struggles. Our circle turned into an entangled ball of woolly threads.

But in spite of the short time and the many-sidedness that turned our interaction into knots of cross-purposes, something beautiful was created. How can this be reported without too much distortion? Or is distortion the very life of it all?

There can be no doubt about the presence of a gender hierarchy on the overall social level of the town, whatever its degrees and forms of expression in different individual lives and different situations. There can be no doubt about the presence of a class hierarchy. These two orders were analytically separate. They interacted with each other, producing variations and contradictions, and sometimes they reinforced each other. Nobody in Linares in 1994 could be blind to these structures...
or the material conditions upholding them, from whatever perspective one might look at them. My story of Linares could easily be fitted into a postmodernist discourse. It would be just as easy to tell it as a local example of the meta-narrative of globalization without concern for human welfare. It could even be seen as a recent variant of battle in age-old class war. The women were in two struggles, they were active agents, and clearly oppressed by both gender and class structures.

The moment in time was very special. Linares had gone through a period of dramatic upheaval, and was just beginning to settle down to resignation. And perhaps slow stagnation and death. Those who could were already moving out of town.

The neighborhood movement was also in a special moment. It was recent and it was heavily PSOE dominated. Put that in the context of an angry anti-PSOE town, and it becomes clear why the movement could not really show its best sides. My presence was uncomfortable. Even so, a lot of people did their best to receive me well. The leading men in the federation did not just talk to me, some of them spoke quite honestly and a few of them took me to local associations, introduced me to politicians, helped me search for information about the town, and so on.

I will not forget sitting on a bench in Town Hall, together with one of the leaders, waiting for a politician he wanted me to meet. The politician was late – or kept us waiting on purpose – and it was hot and we were thirsty, but time went fast, as this man told me about how he had been recently laid off from Santana, and how he hoped to give more time to the movement now, at least for a while, but he also hoped to find a way to do some studying. He had always been interested in history. He had visited the archaeological site of Cástulo, outside the town, and he insisted I must go there, too. He wanted to know about "his past", he said, meaning the past of Linares. His father had been a miner; he himself had worked for Santana all his life, until he had been laid off now, at the age of just over fifty. I asked if he planned to look for work somewhere else. No, he did not want to leave Linares. He hoped the pension would be enough to live on for him and his wife. They had three children, the youngest was still studying, and the other two were looking for work, all of them were still living with the parents, but he thought at least the oldest one would soon be able to contribute something to the family income. He gave me a book of poems produced by a cultural group in Linares, but no, he was not a member of it himself, he did not know how to write "in the deep sense of the word", but he admired people who did.

I felt the reflective sadness of this man. I enjoyed sitting with him in the town hall patio, greeting the people that came up to us to greet him. He treated me with friendly respect. He even tried to understand my feminist arguments. He said his daughter had begun to say similar things. I noticed, but I do not think he did, that there were only men in the town hall. Even the people who came in just to check the voting registration lists that hung like washing on clotheslines all around the patio, were mostly men. The politician we finally met was paternal, treating me like a little girl to be humored when she thinks she is doing something important. I do not think my companion noticed that either.

The gender order in Linares was a variant of the traditional Andalusian one, which is a variant of the traditional Mediterranean one. It was built on ideas of segregation and hierarchy. Most men continued to be quite convinced that this was the only natural and necessary way. So did the women, most of the time, even as they also suffered from it. They lacked social contacts, they lacked self-esteem and they felt that there was something wrong. They needed to find words for what they "knew" in order to turn it into something knowable and thus criticizeable. Recent public discourses helped them. The political transition in Spain meant that everything old and traditional could and should be criticized, and in many parts of the country, feminists used that cultural conjunction to great advantage. Discourses on emancipation had reached Linares women by way of TV and radio, by way of young teachers in the schools their children went to, and through some special persons such as Francisca and Maite. Linares women who could not find paid work were beginning to register as unemployed instead of retreating into housewife status. That made a difference for statistics and for their self-image, if not for their daily life.

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13 To use Bourdieu's terms, they were just becoming aware of a piece of doxa (that which is so much taken for granted that it is not verbalizable), struggling to de-doxify it, introduce it into the universe of discourse.
Anything that could be interpreted as repression could and should be criticized, was a common feeling, and it had become legitimate to make efforts to change any circumstances that could be seen as unjust. The events of the winter 1994 in Linares made this extra clear. One has to protest to survive! And women protest, too! the Linarenses said. Some people were beginning to connect general radicalism with feminist rebelliousness.

The women in the Linares movement were basically optimistic. That was not the case everywhere in the movement, far from it. Among sophisticated informants, e.g. feminists in big cities or disenchanted old-timers of the movement, the debates could be sharp, and often angrily pessimist. In Linares, where women's lives were "objectively" more limited than in any other place I visited, the women paid more attention to the general trend than to static facts. They were moving forwards, that was their experience, and that was much more important to them than any exact measure of freedom obtained.

Their joy in the struggle was contagious. I thought Linares was a terrible place in many ways, but I had a very good time there. I enjoy thinking back, remembering sitting in the association building in Fuente del Pisar, surrounded by thirty women singing their songs of struggle exclusively for me, to "thank" me for my work. That was an experience of art, wisdom and beauty for which I want to thank them. There is so little I can do. At least, with this story, I introduce Francisca, Loli and Maite to an international readership. Not much of a favor for them, but it is all that is in my power to do. In this way, their views and efforts are communicated beyond Linares.

Their names are not pseudonyms. They would not want that. Nor is it possible to hide their identities; they were well known persons in Linares.

Linares was not very far from Elda, as the crow flies, and it was of the same approximate size. Like Elda it had a clearly urban and industrial history and there was a working class with consciousness and pride in the struggles. Both towns were "one-crop" and both had begun to flourish over a hundred years ago but were now in economic crisis. The jobs in both towns were clearly gender marked. The important difference was that in Elda there were jobs for both genders, in Linares almost exclusively for men. Another salient contrast was that Elda had many small companies, Linares one main one. This made the crisis more sudden and visible in Linares. But both towns had lost their economic self-determination long ago without really noticing it. Both their crises were connected to the global economic restructuring, and local politicians could do little about it.

If we talk about class, then, the similarities between the two towns were more evident than the differences. If we talk about gender, the differences stand out. Elda women thought they had "always" worked and "always" had freedom of movement. Their husbands wanted them to "help" earning money for the family. Linares women were struggling to obtain the freedom to leave their homes to do things not directly linked to their duties as wives and mothers, and their husbands felt deep misgivings about that. They did not have a useful vocabulary for those misgivings, for the traditional one of untrustworthy women, fear of ridicule and other aspects of the honor and shame syndrome was now considered old-fashioned. Manolo, in the play of the women of La Esperanza, found his alternative vocabulary in another culturally very firmly rooted idea, that of sociability and friendship. He did not want his wife to be in an association, and he himself refused to take part in "women's things", but when the whole thing could be redefined as sociability, it became acceptable.

In both towns there was opposition to the present gender order among some women and a few men, and there was room for them to argue for their views inside the neighborhood movement. In other words, the movement was a forum for cultural negotiations around gender.

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14 In this generalization I refer not just to the women in La Esperanza, but also to the women I met in all the associations I visited. Naturally I cannot generalize to all women in the town, or even to all women active in such movement activities as courses, but I think the generalization is valid for most women who were active in running the associations. True, they were not many.

15 In earlier publications I have called it philia. I see it as a deeply ingrained disposition. It is related to but not the same as friendship. It is something like a taken-for-granted feeling that "it is always nice to have a crowd around you, whether you can trust the people or not". It is a general Spanish, and perhaps general Mediterranean, preference for situations with lots of people in them. And it is one of the cultural contradictions that make housewives' lives so difficult. See e.g. Thurén 1988. As to "Manolo's" solution, cf. also what the women in Malvarrosa said about their husbands (chapter 7).
In Linares, the gender conflict in 1994 centered on women's freedom of movement; the arguments used to legitimize change were related to positive change in general, especially human rights and democracy, and the loss of privilege for men was played down in favor of an emphasis on new gains for all; arguments against change in the gender order were more difficult to legitimize. Nevertheless, some men resisted defiantly, for example boycotting active women. But my impression was that most men were more bewildered than angry. At least the leaders of the federation seemed to feel more or less like the man with whom I sat in the Town Hall patio: women nowadays say strange things, do strange things; not my wife, of course, she is trustworthy and she loves me; but a lot of other women... even my daughter... where does it all come from? where will it lead?

Epilogue

The future of Linares did not turn out as bleak as it seemed in 1994. In 2002, the population had not diminished. The men who had been laid off in 1994 were still jobless, and Santana Motor was down to 600 employees and still laying off workers as they turned fifty, but the younger generation was finding work in new service sector activities. Among other things there were plans for a campus of the University of Jaén to be instituted in Linares. There was a lot of building going on. The political plan was to turn the town into a commercial center.

The PSOE still dominated the neighborhood movement but not as much as it used to. Or not as openly. The topic was still sensitive. There were eighteen associations, all federated. The Church had recently invited the federation board for a talk. The board had not yet decided if it should accept. This was the only time I heard of any formal contacts between the movement and the Church hierarchy.

The gender order of Linares seemed not to have changed very much. When I presented what I was going to write to an audience of fourteen men and eight women activists, the men were upset about what they saw as unjust accusations on my part (even though I expressed myself with great care to be polite). They said there had always been women active in the associations. They also said that the problem was not that the men stopped the women but that the women themselves refused to accept responsibilities. The women present rebutted with retained anger, giving examples of how they had personally been insulted and hindered. They also pointed out that it is difficult for women to accept association responsibilities as long as they have the full responsibility for children and housework. The men insisted, also angrily, that "the feminists" were wrong. But there were exceptions, among them one man (the one who had tried to understand my feminist arguments eight years earlier) who uttered the radical phrase, "the political transition is not finished as long as there is domestic violence." And the president of La Esperanza recognized that the women had been very important for the success of that association. "It has been like a school for adults. The pity is just that we are all getting old and no new people are joining." So the discussion turned to the general lack of solidarity on which all could agree.

Francisca and I later laughed together about a detail we had both noticed in the meeting: all the men had sat in one half of the room, all the women in the other half. Not one person had sat among people of the opposite gender. And we both felt sure everyone would have denied this if asked. They would have said that such old rules no longer exist, they are backwards. Of course it was not a matter of norms or even conscious choice, it was just deep habit, an automatic searching out of what felt comfortable.

Francisca had retired and moved to another barrio. She now felt some impatience with the women of La Esperanza; she thought she had done as much as she could in that association and had moved on to other political activities. Loli was now the informal leader, and the association and its women's committee continued much as before, organizing courses and festivities. But they tried to avoid applying for grants. "If you get money, and then more money, after a while you forget why you are doing things, it feels as if you do it just to get money." A young woman had volunteered to teach them and help them prepare the plays they still specialized in. They had done one on drugs, one on a bad marriage with mutual violence, one on illegal immigration and one on "modern families," which was about complications around whom to invite for a family celebration, "because
everyone has divorced and remarried several times and how can I not invite my ex-mother-in-law, even though she is not the grandmother of my child, when she has then married the brother of the man who is now my husband..." They had an exchange program for children from West Sahara. They had made soap together, to save money and because homemade soap is good for the skin. They participated in the annual Linares carnival, with fancy dresses they made and critical political verses they wrote. "The husbands", as they always expressed it, participated in the carnival, but not in the theater. "They have no patience for rehearsals." The women had especially enjoyed a course on Linares history.

I reminded them of the play about Paquita and Manolo and asked if it was still the case that husbands disliked wives to join the association. This question caused some discomfort. At first, the comments were about how much time had passed and how everything had gotten much better. But then some said that "some husbands" are "still" "a lot like that" and they ended up saying that many women were in a worse situation now that so many husbands were out of work. "Before I could do what I felt like when he was not at home, but now he is at home all day!" And the main conclusion was that things had changed a lot for younger people but not much for women of middle age or older. They told about husbands who kept their wives' identity cards and social security cards hidden to be sure they did not do anything important without the husbands' knowledge, and they told anecdotes about husbands who threw their wives out into the street when they felt they did not obey them. But they also insisted, "We no longer keep quiet!" "There is still a lot of machismo, but women are no longer stupid!"

Most of the active women were the same ones, one or two had moved, hardly any had dropped out, a few new ones had joined. The building was much the same with one great improvement: heating/ air-conditioning!

In the federation, there was now a secretariat for women but no women's committee or separate association. Two or three women volunteers did most of the work; the woman in charge spent three to four full workdays there per week. Luckily her husband had a good salary, she said, so she did not have to work for money, but sometimes she felt bad because she neglected her own domestic duties. They organized courses, including collaboration with a European project to prepare women for the labor market. There were health projects. There was a "dynamization project" to teach barrio women to find out what the needs of their own barrio were. The secretariat participated in the municipal council for women and youth. They were preparing a campaign for immigrant women.

In a group interview with three women leaders (two from the federation, one from a barrio association), they stressed the following points:

– It is no longer unusual for women to go to cafeterias in groups. But lots of women still have problems with authoritarian husbands. In this respect, Andalusia is still more backward than the rest of Spain and Linares is among the most backward towns of Andalusia.
– Attitudes around gender vary a lot according to class, education and so forth and above all according to age.
– It is too bad that some women stop evolving. As has happened in La Esperanza, perhaps. Younger women do not feel attracted to join such associations, because the activities mean nothing to them. But one must understand the older women. They have taken a big step. One cannot judge them. But things are not like that any more.
– In working with women, you have to start from where they are. Give them courses they like, educate them little by little.
– Some neighborhood associations are especially difficult for women, because the presidents are old and stuck in backward ideas. Some generational turnover would make a big difference.

As an example, one of them told about a conflict she had had with her father-in-law. "He thinks that women are for cleaning only. They should not go out even to have coffee. And this conflict we had was because I wanted to go to (another Andalusian town). Because my daughter lived there, and she had a problem and wanted me to come. My husband was going too! And I said, it is my daughter, my husband and I are going together to help our daughter. My father-in-law said that was no reason, your husband and I can go, you should not leave your home, you must think of your
other children, and so on. I love my father-in-law a lot, you see, but he has to respect me. My husband helps me, he defends me against his own father." She implied that men of her own generation had a new outlook. But she added that her husband's brothers were old-fashioned and their wives did not speak up against them.

The three women were between forty and fifty and considered themselves unusual for their generation. They came from open-minded families and they had insisted to their husbands that they were going to do what they wanted to do whatever he said. "I told my husband that as long as I set food on the table and keep the house clean, you cannot complain." One said she had almost died from cancer, and that had changed her profoundly, it had liberated her, "but my family says it made me go crazy! They criticize me because I am different. I don't live in the same world as they do." They all stressed that it had been decisive for them to get out, get to know people, to realize that not everyone lives according to the same norms.

One said, "Some women are much more advanced, I know that. But I worry about those who are less advanced than I am. It's a reality I feel, it hurts me."

The important issue they were working with in 2002 was gender violence. It was a big issue all over Spain. Not just the feminist movement, or other social movements, but government, NGOs and the mass media had taken it up as one of the most pressing social problems of the country. The fact that between fifty and one hundred women are murdered by their present or former husbands or "sentimental companions" (as the common Spanish euphemism has it) every year was quoted in TV debates, news programs and association debates, and measures were taken, such as the institutionalization through the neighborhood movement of "social mediators" – ordinary barrio women to whom women can turn for help and who can then help them find the more specialized help they may need. In Linares and several other places, courses had been organized for these mediators. But in Linares there had been problems because some associations did not want to admit the mediators, saying that there was no gender violence in their barrio. One association president had said he wanted nobody from outside the barrio to come in and set the women of his barrio up against their husbands! Several people reported this incident to me; apparently it had caused quite a conflict.

As a whole, women in Linares had obtained more freedom as compared to eight years earlier, or so it seemed and so they said. The "evolution" continued in the expected direction.

When I asked if they thought my description of the situation in 1994 was exaggerated, the answer was, "No, you can hardly exaggerate the machismo of Linares!" One of the women leaders told a long tale of how she had been accused of "disrupting marriages" and "taking the revolution into the homes" just for trying to organize some activities for women. But they did protest about some examples in my notes, things I was sure had really happened. It seemed as if they had forgotten some of the harsher aspects of what life had been like only eight years earlier. They told similar details themselves, to be sure, but then in order to describe the life of "elderly women" or of "Linares a generation ago." I believe the change had been faster than they recognized. I agree that it had been positive. I also agree that the situation was still very far from anything a feminist would accept. The struggle for Linares women who want to influence social processes was still in a phase where the most urgent measures to take had to do with women's freedom of movement.

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16 But in view of their protests I have not included them in this text. They were only examples, and there were others I could use instead.