
CHAPTER 12. CORDOVA: A DUAL MOVEMENT

Some history and geography

Cordova is an old city, loaded down with memories of splendor. And since its rank in the world has been rather low ever since the Middle Ages, the splendor of olden times has not been erased by later events, just a bit worn.

Cordova was a strategic site already two thousand years ago. It lies in the center of the fertile valley of the Guadalquivir river, with good communications in all directions, and where different ecological zones meet, making it a good place for commerce. In Roman times, the river became sailable at this point. It is also a place where the distance between river (= communications) and mountains (= defense) is small. The place had been inhabited long before it became a Roman town – archaeological evidence shows that the area had contacts with Greece at least as far back as five centuries BC. (Cuenca Toribio 1993). Cordova was the capital of Roman Andalusia until the IVth century. It had all the architectural treasures of a Roman city, including a temple, the ruins of which have been excavated and stand now next to the central square of modern Cordova.

The philosopher Seneca was the most illustrious Cordovan of that time and has perhaps remained so. When Cordovans today describe themselves, they talk of "senequismo" to convey the idea of a dry, stern, non-talkative temper, very different from their neighbors, the gregarious Sevillians.

During the reign of the Visigoths (456–711), Cordova's fate was that of a loser, but then it was made the capital of Muslim Spain. After two centuries, the Muslim rulers of the Iberian peninsula declared their independence from Damascus and established the Cordovan Caliphate. Cordova became a major world city, where sciences and arts flourished. The population outgrew the area of the old Roman city, and new city walls were built, marking an urbanized area of approximately the same size it has today. The street plan also became more or less what it still is1 (Cuenca Toribio 1993).

Under pressure from constant wars, the Caliphate soon disintegrated into many small kingdoms. The city of Cordova fell to the Christians in 1236. It was a prize conquest, so a palace for the Christian king was built, but when Seville also fell soon afterwards (1248), that city became the center of Christian Andalusia and Cordova lost its preeminence. Many Muslims had to go into exile and soldiers from the north repopulated the countryside.

There is much controversy about how complete the exchange of population was. But whatever happened to the genes, much of the social and cultural inheritance survived. Not language and religion, but the city itself stayed much the same, so did its economy and probably much of its social organization and everyday life.

Major changes came in the 19th century, when parts of the walls were torn down to make room for traffic. The population now grew quickly, but the economy did not, and there were few of the urban reforms that were popular in other places (widened streets, parks, new residential areas with straight tree lined streets for the bourgeoisie, etc.). But the coming of the railway and the destruction of historical monuments followed the pattern of other cities (López Ontiveros, 1981:143–147).

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1 UNESCO has declared large parts of central Cordova a patrimony of humanity.
In the 20th century, the population grew intensely. Most of the in-migrants were people from the immediate surrounding countryside, where agriculture was being mechanized. There was more push than pull, in other words, even though the city was obtaining some industries in this period. Few people came from other parts of Spain (Plan estratégico, 1994:26) and while some were coming into the city, others were emigrating, mainly to Catalonia and abroad. Attempts at industrialization had weak effects, and in 1994 what there was seemed about to be lost. Unemployment was endemic. As a whole the city made a worn, decaying impression.

The river for example. The city is situated at a pronounced curve of the great Andalusian river, the Guadalquivir. Across from the central part of the city lie rolling soft hills covered with fertile cultivated fields. Two bridges cross the river, one of which is from Roman times. In the river are ruins of Roman and Arab mills, and here and there are clumps of trees. Along the city side of the river runs a wide avenue, lined with pieces of the old city wall, Roman and Arab architectural treasures and the walled gardens of a medieval royal palace. The Mosque / Cathedral is only one block away. What could be a better place for some imaginative planning of urban beauty? A park, a promenade, a setting worthy of the old stones, some made use of the beauty of running water in a hot climate... But instead the river has been so drained of water that it is more of a gutter than a river. The Roman bridge, thankfully, does not seem to be about to wear out, but motor traffic across it is heavy. The old mills are falling apart. The wide avenue is a noisy, polluted and dangerous place, carrying most of the east–west through traffic.

In many ways I found Cordova a depressing city. Silent, closed in on itself, backwards-looking. There was beauty but also much ugliness. Large areas of the central part were run down. The areas called dangerous probably were, because some people were growing desperate. The center of social life was a square in the middle of an area where old buildings and old streets had been erased a few decades ago to leave room for straight wide streets with high-rise office buildings around them. There was lots of movement around the Cathedral, but that was tourist life.

For a woman outsider, Cordova seemed slightly repressive, too. There were women in the street, but they did not move with the same ease as women in Madrid or Vigo or Elda.

In other ways, however, Cordova was a very exciting city. History was truly present. So was Andalusian artistry: flamenco music, ceramics and silverware, decorative leather work, exquisite garden-like patios... Cordovan reality approached the tourist brochure stereotype of Andalusia: low white buildings with small balconies decorated with red flowers, black railings and green shutters, a candle lit in front of a saint's image in a niche at the corner, someone playing the guitar behind an open window... And this was so not just in a small picturesque area, as in Seville or Granada, but throughout most of the old part, which was most of Cordova.

Moreover, to complain of the lack of public meeting places is ethnocentric. The private house is the center of Cordovan life, and the center of the private house is the patio. It is a garden, hidden inside the house, in order to be enjoyed by its owners and their visitors. Even the bars (except the ones for tourists) are hidden behind plain doors and arranged around patios. Cordova is silent, secretive, inwards-turning. That has been its personality that travelers and poets have remarked on through the centuries, and that continued to be so in 1994. But for all its secretiveness, it is proud of its artistry and shows off the patios through wrought-iron gates. It is a charming city according to its own values.

Sociology and space

If Vigo was a largely rural city, spread out and full of villages with trees and grass, chickens and pigs, Cordova was quintessentially urban, concentrated, sophisticated. The greenery in Cordova came mostly in the shape of geraniums in clay pots hanging on tile or brick walls. The old center had the layout of a Muslim town: narrow winding streets, irregular big blocks with interior private

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2 In 1930 it had just over 100,000 inhabitants; which meant that it was finally approaching the size it had had a thousand years earlier. In 1950 it had 165,000, in 1960 almost 200,000, in 1970 235,000 (López Ontiveros, 1981:149) and in 1992 306,000 (Plan estratégico, 1994:25).

3 This is ethnographic present tense. A third bridge was under construction in 1994.
streets and patios, and some spaces that were hard to classify as either private or public, backyards or squares.

The new barrios were different. They were planned to offer light and space and room for traffic. They were not organized around parish churches, as in Vigo, but around shopping centers.

In half an hour one could walk through central Cordova diagonally. It was divided into three main barrios. One was the traditional Judería, the Jewish quarter, around the Mosque and the Royal Castle with its gardens. It was full of tourist shops and restaurants but also autochthonous population of all social classes. The second central barrio was the Axarquía. It seemed always to have been of lower standing than the Judería. There were fewer upper class buildings and many more casas de vecindad – the Andalusian type of working class dwelling consisting of many rooms, one to a family, arranged around a courtyard where water and cleaning facilities are located. Some of them were still inhabited in the traditional fashion; most had been reformed into unpretentious apartments or one-family dwellings.

The third central area was the modern business district constructed during the first half of the 20th century. There were a couple of wide avenues, several rather straight streets lined with office buildings and department stores, banks, a theater and the central meeting place, the Tendillas square.

Where Vigo was a 20th century city with a small medieval area, then, Cordova was an essentially medieval city onto which a small 20th century-style area had been grafted.

Outside the central town, a couple of residential areas offered one-family housing for the upper middle class, mostly to the north, in search of the coolness of the mountains. There were some working class barrios of a kind similar to those in Madrid or Valencia. At the edges of some of them were small nuclei of people considered dangerous by the rest of the population. There was also one area, to the west, where a middle class barrio was built in the early part of this century.

Excepting these peripheral areas, Cordova is cramped. There are almost no parks in the whole central area; there are traffic problems due to the river and the lack of bridges. Due to the wish not to alter the old street plan, there can be no through traffic almost anywhere in the whole central area. In addition, an iron band of railway tracks separated, until recently, the central area from the northern suburbs.

Cordova was not only more crowded than Vigo. It was also visibly poorer. But its peripheral barrios seemed better organized and had more public spaces. Associational life was lively, and the barrios had been given much autonomy and a say in the government of the city. District civic centers were being built, with facilities like social workers, libraries, sports, etc.

The Strategic Plan of Cordova, published by the City Hall, describes the social structure as follows: "The Cordovese social structure is very uneven, with a small economic elite, a not very numerous middle class and a great mass of working population with low incomes, constituting the majority of the population (280.000)." (1994:69, my translation) The elite consisted of landowners, still the upper crust even though in economic as well as social and political decline, according to the same text, which also affirms that it is a non-enterprising and non-innovative class, and that the large-scale businessman is a rare type in Cordova.

Cordova was mostly a commercial city serving an agricultural province. What was called the industrial sector of the labor market was in fact only partially industrial. About one third were construction workers. One of the most common occupations, and the principal one in manufacture, was the traditional one of jeweler. There were many small, often family-run, artisan shops in the old parts of the city, making silver, leather and ceramic objects to sell to the tourists. In 1992 the unemployment stood at over 23% of the active population (Plan Estratégico 1994:27–29).

As to level of education attained, it followed the level of income closely. In the areas to the north and west of the city center, 15% of the inhabitants had university education (Sevilla Guzmán et al 1987:17, unpublished). The city average was 5%. In the Axarquía, the problem was illiteracy. 120.000 Cordovans had not completed even primary studies. Among young people, almost all had gone to school and there were now enough schools for all children, but the rate of failure was high.

Politically, Cordova was most interesting. In spite of a tradition of being a city of señoritos (landowners), in combination with a rather Castilian-like tradition of religious sternness, it was the only provincial capital in Spain that had a communist municipal government. Cordovans voted
communist already in the first democratic municipal elections in 1979 and had done so ever since. This had had visible effects. In spite of the economic depression, the working class suburbs of Cordova were in relatively good shape. The city boasted good social services. And it had a set of regulations for local administration that took into account not just "representative" but also "participatory" democracy. In this rather unique experiment, the neighborhood movement had played a crucial part.

Voting behavior, too, followed class and type of barrio faithfully. The communist vote was consistently much bigger than in the rest of Spain, while the conservatives got almost all the votes in the upper and upper middle class barrios. The city was clearly polarized, and the polarization was spatially expressed.4

The Cordovan neighborhood movement

According to the local activists, there was a neighborhood movement in Cordova already in the 1960s. But it was organized under the different heading of associations of heads of families, then.5 It was in the early 1970s that it really began growing. Two barrios with subsidized workers' housing had problems with the bad quality of the buildings, and when the inhabitants could not obtain repairs through legal channels, they began organizing to protest, more or less spontaneously.

The first "real" neighborhood association was legalized in 1974, in a barrio south of the river. There was already an Association of Heads of Families there. A group of progressive-minded persons, forming around a recently arrived young leftist priest, decided to try to take it over. They applied for membership but were not admitted, "because they knew who we were. In a barrio, people know each other!" So they decided to found a new association, a Neighborhood Association. In a short while Cordova had seven or eight more.

According to this priest, who is still a foreground figure in the movement in Cordova, the Church as such had nothing to do with the movement. His association was started by people who were active in Caritas (the Christian charity organization) in the barrio but dissatisfied with how it functioned. In other barrios, progressive Christians joined the neighborhood associations in large numbers, too, but they were careful to disassociate the movement from the Church. Many of the progressive Christians were communists, usually sympathizers of the big party, the PCE. There were people from smaller communist parties, too, like PT, OIC or MC.

The neighborhood movement in Cordova did not suffer very much from the general crisis of the movement around 1980. On the contrary, this was a period of great growth of the movement. Like in other places many leaders left the movement, but in Cordova many of them entered municipal government, and from there they worked for the institutionalization of the movement (or at least they did not work to undermine it). Or so I was told.

The major issues in the local history of the movement were the river and the train station. There had been recurrent movement campaigns to get the river cleaned up. In 1994, a city plan for the river had finally been drawn up, including the construction of a riverside promenade, but there was no money budgeted for it.

The train station and the train tracks had been built north of the central area of the city, but like in so many other cities, they soon turned into an obstacle for urban growth, and later an eyesore that strangled traffic. The neighborhood movement struggled hard to get it moved underground, but to no avail. Until, that is, the new high-speed train track between Seville and Madrid was to be

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4 As an illustration, here are some figures from the 1986 elections to the Andalusian parliament. A so-called residential area, El Brillante, gave only 8% of its votes to the communists and 9% to the socialists, but 65% to the conservatives. Four other barrios, all with middle and high income inhabitants, had similar patterns. At the other extreme were the "marginal" barrios of Las Moreras and Las Palmeras, which voted over 50% communist (in 1983 it had been over 70%) and practically all the rest socialist, with the conservatives getting around 3%. A barrio like Electromecánicas, which (as its name indicates) was built by an industry for its workers, had an even larger communist vote, 60%. The majority of the peripheral barrios voted 45–50% communist. The city average was 40.5% communist, 23.4% socialist and 24.3% conservative, (plus 11.7% others) (Sevilla Guzmán et al 1987:26, unpublished).

5 Cf. chapter 2, on the general history of movement.
built; it was decided it would pass through Cordova, too, so then state money was forthcoming, a new station was built and the tracks were moved underground.

In 1994 these constructions had been concluded, but it was still not clear what would happen to the area where the tracks had been. The neighborhood movement wanted it to be used for collective and social purposes, such as a cultural center, a school and apartments of average to low prices. But the market value of the plot was high. There was a great risk that it would be sold to the highest bidder, which would in all probability mean commercial buildings and luxury apartments. An earlier plan to replace the tracks with a freeway had been definitely shelved, however. "At least we accomplished that!"

Drug prevention was also an important general issue for the Cordova federation in 1994. Another item on the agenda was to study and criticize a proposal for higher property taxes.

A struggle for decentralization of city administration had been largely peaceful and successful. Four civic centers had been built and more were planned. They were administered by mixed committees in which 60% of the seats corresponded to the neighborhood movement. These centers housed libraries, auditoriums, cafeterias, rooms for associations, music groups, etc. plus all sorts of municipal services.

The Cordovan model of participatory democracy

Cordova was the first city in Spain to include the neighborhood movement in its political structure in a formal manner, and it was probably still the city with the closest relationship between city government and neighborhood movement, at least among the major cities.

As early as around 1980, a city regulation for citizens' participation was written. It established municipal district boards in all areas of the city. In each district, all associations active in the district were to be represented: parties, unions, cultural associations, neighborhood associations; "anything that moved" said one informant and continued, "and even things that hardly moved at all." According to him, these district boards never really functioned, perhaps because the regulation did not give sufficient weight to the neighborhood movement.

The federation then prepared a better model, presented it to the city assembly and got it accepted, except for one detail – the movement had asked for the right to attend the city plenary sessions with the right to speak and vote. They got the voice but not the vote.

The district boards were reshaped into district councils on a territorial basis, one for each of eleven districts with approximately 25,000 inhabitants each. Open assemblies of inhabitants of the district elected their representatives, and one of these was elected president of the council. All active associations in the district were represented: neighborhood associations, parent-teacher associations, youth and women's associations, senior citizens, environmentalists, pacifists... And also the more traditional kinds, like the peñas (cf. below). The district council was a consultative body; it must be informed, by law, of any issue that concerned the district. The council chose which issues to debate and made proposals, but it was not mandatory for the municipal government to act on the proposals. The district councils were conceptualized as a neutral intermediate forum for mutual consultation, a space where neither citizens nor administrators could impose anything.

The councils sent one representative each to the monthly meetings of the Citizens' Movement Council, which consisted of these district representatives plus the whole board of the neighborhood movement federation. This gave extra weight to the neighborhood movement. The reason, said the leaders of the movement, was that "we invented it. We created it in the 1980s when no one believed in it."

The basic idea behind this organization was that a neighborhood association worked on the level of a barrio, the district council on the level of a district, coordinating a number of barrios, and the Citizens' Movement Council on the level of the whole city. It was not meant to be a parallel municipal government, but a constant conversation partner of the municipal government.

All the political parties of any size in Cordova accepted the model. But a few years later, PP and PSOE combined their votes in order to modify the regulation so that the district councils would include one representative from each political group. The neighborhood movement was against this modification, because it did not want the political debates from the city assembly to be repeated in
the district councils. But the movement found a solution to the problem – the district councils never summoned these party representatives. The district councils were legally not a part of the city administration, they were citizens' fora and as such the administration could not oblige them to invite anyone they did not want to invite, according to my informant.

What we have here are two conceptualizations of democracy and the tension between them played out in actual practice. On the one hand is the usual Western one according to which political parties offer citizens a number of options and obtain power in proportion to the acceptance each option gets among the citizens. Once the citizens have voted, the parties place their activists in the corresponding number of posts where they work to realize their party program in any way they see fit, as they interpret that program in each instance. On the other hand the model of participatory democracy, which includes the first model, but according to which citizens should do more than vote. A party program can never be detailed enough, in this view; a party leadership cannot foresee all issues that come up. Therefore, to ensure that the will of the people is taken into account, there must be specific organs where concerned citizens inform themselves, debate, make alternative proposals and negotiate with party politicians.

The district councils were meant to be such organs, and they should not therefore be dominated by party people. But according to the first conceptualization, a political organ is not democratic if it is not shaped and weighted according to the latest electoral results.

The Cordova regulation actually had no legal force. My principal informant explained that it served mostly as a sword of Damocles for the city government, and as such it was effective. "For example, we had this one barrio which had a problem with a city councilor who never answered their phone calls or letters. The neighborhood association of that barrio notified the city plenary that they wanted to address the plenary on this issue. The neighborhood associations have the right to speak, but they have to give advance notice. So the mayor finds out and he goes to talk to the councilor and since the councilor does not want this incident in the plenary, the problem is solved, he went to speak to the neighborhood association on his own initiative."6

**The movement and Cordovan society**

As in most towns and cities, the neighborhood movement in Cordova covered a wide ground between politics in a narrow sense and sociable and religious associationism. And as in many other places, in Cordova, too, there was tension between traditional associations and the neighborhood movement. In Cordova, like in most of Spain and especially Andalusia, there is a strong tradition of religious associationism – cofradías, or hermandades, i.e. "brotherhoods" that organize around some religious image and/ or religious festivity.

In Cordova there was also a strong tradition of peñas. They were basically groups of friends who decide to formalize their friendship. The tradition was old but it was institutionalized in the 1950s and a federation was created in the 1960s, in other words during the dictatorship. This was clearly reflected in the discourses of the peñas, according to my informants, and so it certainly seemed in a 1977 publication about the history of the peñas (Montiel Salinas 1977). This author says that the reason to be peñista is to "feel Cordovan throughout your body and to love Cordova with all the strength of your heart." According to article 1 of the Federation Statutes, the principal purpose of the peñas is to "foment the associationist spirit of Cordovans around arts, culture and sports." Most peñas had premises of their own in the form of a small bar, and the members usually lived in the same neighborhood.7

According to one informant, peñas, cofradías and neighborhood associations all had their roots in medieval city guilds, which were also territorially organized.

In one sense, the peñas were a kind of neighborhood association. They were territorial, interaction was friendly and informal, and their purpose was to foment collective life in their area. But peñas were the very opposite of neighborhood associations in that they rejected politics, they

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6 The translation is literal. My informant switched between past and present tense for dramatic effect. This is very common in Spanish conversation.

7 One could see them as just a short step from the informal but durable male friendship groups that tend to spring up in commercial bars. Cf. Driessen 1991 and Thurén 1998.
used hierarchical symbols, their discourse was anti-modern, romantic and stylistically baroque. And they wished to retain and defend, rather than criticize, traditional social structures. The clearest example of this was gender.

Peñas and cofradías were represented in the district councils. In this way, there was interaction and coordination between them and the neighborhood movement. But the relationship was very cool.8

In 1994 there were between 50 and 60 neighborhood associations in Cordova, according to most of my informants, but they all hedged a bit around this number and talked about different levels of activity. I visited four associations and met representatives from seven more. (Plus the women's associations, which were a kind of parallel neighborhood associations, cf. below.) In the Federation, the people I met always seemed to come from these associations, and the examples referred to always had to do with the same ones. This is difficult to interpret – were there really around sixty associations or much fewer? If there were 40–50 more, why did they cede the power and the limelight to just a few?

The leaders were obviously trying to give me the impression of a larger and more active movement than there was. This happened in all federations I visited, to be sure, but the discrepancy between what I was told and what I could actually see was usually not so large. Piecing together information from various sources, inside and outside Cordova, inside and outside the movement, I arrived at the conclusion that the movement in Cordova had shrunk quite a bit in recent years, but its role in the city institutions had had the effect that fragile associations did not die out completely. The ones I visited seemed active and robust, but the time was too short to investigate the circumstances of the less visible ones.

The fact that the neighborhood associations had a clear political role to play in the government of the city probably also promoted interest in them. Possibly some associations had become political machines, instruments for small-time barrio patrons. I heard some complaints about clientelismo. This is the Spanish word for patron-client relationships, usually used as an accusation. It was not a nice word for anyone. But for some it was "natural" or at least "inevitable", while for most of the neighborhood movement it was "undemocratic," "corrupt," something to be combated and something that would be possible to eradicate, in the short or long run.

The movement leaders were worried about a "process of involution", not in the movement itself but in the relationship between the movement and the city administration. They were clearly used to an intimate and friendly relationship that had not been common elsewhere in Spain. As one leader expressed it, "The city government in Cordova has not exactly given participation to us as a gift, but they have made it possible. Which is not common in other places. We can discuss all city documents we feel like, because they give them to us." This was not coming to an end, but the city government was less attentive to the voices of the citizens than it had been. Or at least to the voice of the neighborhood movement. The recent Strategic Plan of Cordova had been negotiated with such civil society entities as the Church, the University, labor unions and businessmen's associations. The neighborhood movement had also participated, but not in its accustomed leadership role.

A few years earlier the movement leaders had actually tried to create a new start with the help of Tomás R. Villasante, a sociologist and movement activist who has written extensively on the movement. He made a rapid study of the situation and concluded that the main problem was a growing distance between the leaders and the movement base. To remedy this, he designed a project that was accepted by the federation. It would set up mixed groups of researchers and movement activists to study barrio problems together. The proposal was presented to seven districts

8 This type of relationship seems logical – but there are exceptions – between local organizations that are similar in social purpose and territorial base but very different in discourse, symbols and political purpose. For instance, in Valencia, the traditional "falla world", which organizes the great Valencian festivities of Fallas in March every year, was very much like the Cordovan peñas in that it consisted of small chapters with a territorial base, in which sociability was a central purpose, they called themselves apolitical but were in fact quite conservative, and the division of labor in the organization was based on traditional ideas of gender, age and family. The tension between the falla world and the neighborhood movement in Valencia was even stronger than the one between the movement and the peñas in Cordova.
and accepted by three. The districts with active women's associations (cf. below) were especially enthusiastic, while the older neighborhood associations and the district councils were skeptic.  

Another problem in Cordova was that the associational world as a whole was very diverse. There were specific associations for women, youth, senior citizens, ecologists, and so on. That was of course good and healthy in itself, but it left less space for a generalist movement like the neighborhood one.

In Cordova as elsewhere, there was a generational problem, too. Young people were scarce in the movement. Again, this may be due to the very successes and institutionalization of the movement in this city.

The leadership of the Cordova movement was almost wholly male. The women in Cordova were very active and very radical, but they had chosen to work mostly in separate associations. This fact, too, may have had a suffocating effect on the leadership.

There was little about the movement in the local press during the time I spent in Cordova. One informant, who had had strong sympathies for the movement in its earlier days, sentenced, "The movement has no impact on the life of Cordova today. It is a group of leaders, most of them more or less communist even though they may not be party members, and there is no strong base." What about its institutionalized participation in city government, then? She thought that "it is just very comfortable for Town Hall to have them, that they have their meetings, that they criticize even, but that Town Hall can then act according to its own criteria but with the pretty alibi of 'participation'." Since this woman was professionally involved in party politics, she may have been skeptical of the neighborhood movement in general for that reason. But then again, her party, IU, was very close to the neighborhood movement in Cordova, as she also recognized. Her comment was an instance of a leftist Cordovan discourse on the movement outside the movement: unconvinced, disappointed.

So, in spite of the legal, political and historical strength of the neighborhood movement in Cordova, it was not a self-evident success story.

The federation board members emphasized that the federation wanted to respect the autonomy of the individual associations. It set up a few general campaigns every year, but each association decided which ones to work with. That was of course the usual practice and ideology in the whole movement. Still, in Cordova the federation considered it a problem that the associations were "individualizing", i.e. looking more and more inwards to their own barrios and worrying ever less about the common problems of the city. Naturally, the federation recognized that each barrio had plenty of local problems that no one would worry about if the local association did not. That was the basic reason for the existence of the neighborhood associations after all. Traffic problems, social problems, sports facilities were high on the lists. The associations of the central area were especially interested in cultural issues, such as promoting the typical Cordovan patios, but there were also such issues as noise and parking problems.

**Women's participation in the movement**

*Peñas*

The *peñas* were the traditional form of barrio organization, as we saw. They must be especially taken into consideration when it comes to gender. They were of concern to women in various ways. First, because most of them excluded women as normal members. Second, because the wives of the *peñistas* were indirectly involved in ways that often affected their lives profoundly. Third, because for Cordovan feminists, the *peñas* symbolized central aspects of the local patriarchy they combated. The *peñas* were very gender conservative, so for women who wanted to break radically with traditional gender ideas, the *peñas* constituted an obstacle. It was a formidable obstacle because of the confluence between three things: the gender ideas of the *peñas*, the traditional working class gender order and the gender ideology of the Franco regime.

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9 Villasante, personal communication in February 1995. At that time Villasante did not know what had happened to his project after he left. A federation board member in Cordova gave me a mimeographed short text that outlined the plan, but otherwise I could see no signs of it; it may have been unofficially shelved.
So let us take a quick look at what the word "woman" meant in the peña world.

Montiel (1977) dedicates his book to the wives of the peñistas. Obviously, then, peñistas are men, not women, and this was also what everyone I talked to in Cordova said.

Montiel writes: "To the unselfish wives of the peñistas, women who have suffered, are suffering and will suffer the absence of their husbands who are totally dedicated to the good works of the Cordovan Peñas with the healthy enthusiasm for promoting what is typical and traditional in the land where they were born." (1977:7, my translation) In other words, women are wives, and womanhood is equal to suffering and self-sacrifice and far removed from promoting anything outside of the home.

The peñistas themselves said they respected and valued women very highly. One year, one peña proposed a homage to the women of Cordova as a peña activity at the Feria of the city. Every year, there was a Day of the Peñista Woman. But, of course, this implies a view of women not as active persons but as symbols to be adored.

In spite of everything, change was coming even to the peñas at the time Montiel wrote. Or so it seemed to him. The last chapter of the book describes the presence of women in peñas and tries to defend it. Between the polite lines one can infer that there was strong resistance. The author says that "we men" have to accept the presence of women and children in peña activities. They are good for all of us, because with women present we will not get so drunk, and the women have, after all, always cooked for us and cleaned our premises, so why should they not also eat, drink and enjoy themselves? "So let us all march united in the world of peñas. Let us accept the presence of Woman as an irreplaceable element in our activities. But, distinguished ladies, you must suffer the absences of your husbands and accept humbly whatever excuses are given for late homecomings, caused by his having been working in his peña for his city, even though it might have been downing a glass or two with his friends, because there are all kinds in the vineyard of the Lord." (1977: 274, my translation)

A timid and rather anti-feminist defense of women's participation, to be sure, but still a sign of change. What had happened in the twenty years since then? According to the Cordovans I met, nothing at all. "The peñas never change." "Women cook and clean for them." "Well, today the wives participate more than they used to, but it is still a men's movement." I heard rumors of a group of women who had formed a peña of their own, for women only, but I got no confirmation.

Women from the neighborhood movement and from feminist groups said that the women who join peñas do not sit on the boards in them because they do not want to. The boards are male spaces, but the women can have a lot of indirect power. In other words, the same kind of power Spanish (and in general Mediterranean) women have always had inside the family, in the "private" sector of life. A type of power that is as real as it is limited. And evidently, to have any power at all of this kind, a woman must be married. Her influence goes by way of her husband, and an unmarried woman is an anomaly in these contexts.

This is the background against which women's participation in the neighborhood movement in Cordova must be interpreted.

**Feminism, new groups and a councilor**

Cordova was very special when it came to women's participation. The story of women's participation in the neighborhood movement cannot be told without including the whole women's movement of the city. In a way such a presentation is not fair; I have not done the same for the other places described in this study, so it makes the Cordovan women look comparatively much more radical.

But in a way they were more radical. Proportionately more women from the neighborhood movement had joined the feminist movement in Cordova than in other towns and cities. More women's groups in neighborhood associations had more of a feminist discourse. The boundary between women's groups in the neighborhood movement and outright feminist groups was porous.

This is why one can say that the women of the Cordovan neighborhood movement, on the average, were more radical than in other places, and why their story cannot be told separately from that of the feminist movement. But this means that the degree of feminism in the Cordovan
neighborhood movement should not be compared to that of the other places I studied. There were feminists of all colors and degrees in all of them, too. But they moved in a separate world, with little contact with the neighborhood movement. There were often mutual feelings of mistrust and even scorn between the two worlds (cf. chapter 5).

As elsewhere, there were individual feminists in Cordova already in the late 1960s, but only some years later were they ready to get organized. In the general climate of "leftist culture, with Christian socialists and PC people" (according to one of those first feminists), a first organization, the Assembly of Women of Cordova (Asamblea de Mujeres de Córdoba) was formed in 1978. Like most other feminist groups of that time in Spain, it concentrated on reading, learning about feminist debates in other countries, discussing to what extent they were relevant to their own situation. They combined theory with activism, however. They took part in the statewide struggles for a divorce law and for the right to abortion, and they mounted some local campaigns of their own, such as breaking the silence around a wave of rapes in Cordova, and obtaining the dismissal of a reactionary judge. Like most feminist groups, everywhere, it was loosely organized. There was a core of a few very active women, who mostly set the agenda; around them were twenty or thirty women who participated regularly in the weekly or monthly debates and lectures, and there was an informal list of some one hundred names, people who could be counted on to turn up on short notice for some urgent action.

Like in other places, the political parties formed their own women's groups, and there were tensions between the "party women" and the "independents." But according to several people I talked to, these tensions were never as strong in Cordova as in other places. The Assembly of Women of Cordova never excluded party women from its ranks, i.e. it never demanded "simple militancy" of its members. During the 1980s women's groups were formed in some barrios, too.

Around 1988 Town Hall felt the mayor should have a feminist advisor. The Assembly of Women was approached but declined. They did not want the Assembly to be conditioned by institutional ties. But they were not against the idea as such, so they passed the offer on to other women. After some discussion among several groups, it was agreed that instead of an individual woman with a salary, it would be better to use the money for a collective project. Town Hall agreed and four women's groups set to work to design the project.

In the next local elections, however, IU got more votes than expected and the municipal government was enlarged with one extra IU councilor. The feminist groups suggested this person be named Women's Councilor. 10 This was accepted, after some disagreements on the allocation of money, and the feminist project was also launched. There were debates and lectures; there were courses on sexuality, health, self-defense, self-confidence, etc. Films by women and about women were shown. These activities were taken out to the barrios, not just to barrios where there were already women's groups, but also to other places, reaching non-feminist women through courses in literacy, exercises and handicraft. The Councilor's office financed and gave advice, but most of the work was voluntary and carried out by the women from the groups themselves. When the six months of project time were up, the initial four groups had become eighteen.

I cannot resist mentioning some of their names: Al Alba (At Dawn), Amanecer (Daybreak), Despertar (Awakening), Nueva Luz (New Light), Manantial (Spring or Fountain)... The names may reflect a general Cordovan penchant for poetry, but they also express a feeling that something new and beautiful was happening.

But far from all of the groups were feminist. Some of them were more or less part of the neighborhood movement, others were connected to political parties, and many were cultural: a music group, a flamenco dance group, etc. What they had in common was that they defined themselves as women's groups, only women participated, and they organized their activities in the general framework of the Town Hall project.

The next step was for the groups to get to know each other. The Women's Councilor organized and financed a two-day meeting at a nearby beach hotel. The idea was to discuss some very basic things, especially the term "feminism". The common popular idea of "feminismo" in Spain is

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10 In 1994, there were ten town councilors in all, three of whom were women. One was the Councilor of Women, one was in charge of ecological issues and the third one of health.
that it is the female counterpart of "machismo" i.e. gender chauvinism. This misconception is of course common in other parts of the world, too, but the Spanish language aids the parallelism. In Cordova it was suggested that the counterpart of "machismo" is not "feminismo" but "hembrismo" (the basic meaning of macho is male animal just as hembra means female animal). Feminismo is the transcendence, the overcoming of both, the feminists taught. This was accepted and became a widely known idea. Cordova was a most rare place in that by 1994, the word feminism was used without apparent problems in all sorts of political discourse, from the mayor to barrio associations.

Other questions on the agenda concerned women and the public sphere: what is that which we call public, what can women do there, is that where power is or not?

The beach meeting was also a lot of fun! Evidently the coming together of university women and barrio women, and of long time feminist activists and newcomers, did not happen without strain. One leading feminist told me about conflicts around language. "For instance we suggest they change the text of a song. They are offended sometimes. But actually we are more often offended than they are. For example this group of women that prepared figures for carnival, they made one out of a sausage and two balls, thinking it great fun to joke with the male organs... You know, one notices these differences of level." (She referred to intellectual or educational level and also degree of attainment of feminist consciousness.) "But we all respect the autonomy of each group and we can still do some things together. And the important thing is that, whatever level they have, it is better to be close to the roots where women move than to float way above ordinary life, without any social connection. In the Assembly, we had been working for many years to bring feminism to the barrios, and it never worked (... and now that the women of the barrios start moving, I think we have to encourage that which moves. That does not mean that we are not going to continue our studies and debates in the Assembly! Of course! But in the collective work, one has to accept people's own rhythms."

Next, all the groups organized festivities for the 8th of March together. They also prepared a new project. At a general meeting in 1993, the groups agreed on two things. To avoid "maternalism", the Councilor with her office and resources was to be considered one group among the rest. And there was to be a permanent commission, where each group had one vote. The first project had been called "A project to be shared" (Un proyecto por compartir), the second one "A future to be earned" (Un futuro por ganar).

In 1994, the women's movement in Cordova consisted of some twenty groups. There was the Assembly, three or four women's groups with ties to IU, about the same number with ties to PSOE, some groups formed by a Savings Bank, and a few that had grown out of courses of different kinds. And then there were various kinds of barrio groups, inside and outside the neighborhood movement.

The second project was to be financed with 8 million pesetas. That was one reason there was a need for a permanent commission; that amount of money had to be controlled through a formal contract. The advisor in the Councilor's office underlined that there was now a plan for women that had been formally decided on. It still needed to be accepted among the women's groups, but Town Hall could no longer backtrack. She stressed that the feminist activities were causing a lot of "rebellion" in many quarters, and she laughed, "Town Hall is to be applauded, really, for enduring all of this!"

Women in the barrios

There was one neighborhood association in Cordova where more women than men were active, and there were two where a majority of the activists were men but where there were also quite a few women. In the rest men dominated absolutely.

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11 This was a rather unusual attitude among "high level" feminists in Spain. The Cordovan discourse made close contacts between "feminists" and "barrio women" sound like a generally accepted goal. In other parts of Spain, there was usually a barrier between feminist groups and women in barrio groups. Cf. chapter 5. All of the difficulties described there seemed somehow irrelevant in Cordova. I am sure they must have been present, but they were not evident, and they did not impede the collaboration described.
The women of the barrios were not inactive, however. They had formed women's associations. A few of these were born before the Town Hall projects got off the ground, most of them more recently. But they were now many and robust and very active. They considered themselves feminist, but above all they were barrio groups, working for the good of their barrios. When I heard their descriptions of issues and activities, I had to ask, "What makes this work different from the work in a neighborhood association?" The answer was, "It is not different! Why should it be? Women are interested in the same things as men! We want to work for our barrio – but we can do it much better in separate associations."

According to the advisor of the office of women's affairs, the women's groups inside the neighborhood movement were developing towards independence, but as long as they formed part of neighborhood associations, they could not be as autonomous as women's groups were. The key was to prepare women for participating as women, able to create their own discourse, she said.

"A number of women have been active in the neighborhood movement for a number of years, now. They have experience by now. Some of them have left, however, because they have difficulties making themselves heard, especially when it comes to important decisions. Only a minority have feminist consciousness, but even 'normal' women are beginning to want to have a say, for instance sit on the boards. This is recent. It has been happening for perhaps three or four years."

The advisor, from her special vantage point, felt that there had been resistance in the neighborhood movement against feminist ideas. But she also felt that the movement was now coming around to accepting what it called "sectorial groups": "Two years ago it was youth, now it is women, the next thing will be Third Age." (Spanish expression for senior citizens.)

Movement leaders, all male, gave another version. One of them expressed it approximately as follows:12

"It is normal for women to participate in the neighborhood movement. But the associations don't usually have women's groups. The women themselves don't want that. They say they are persons, like the men, so they don't want special issues. In most of the associations, there are women on the board. Perhaps 30% have men-only boards, that is the tradition, inertia. It used to be that there were only men. Because there were only men in the political parties. I don't think there were any important women in prison during Franco times."

In other words, he postulated continuity from resistance against the Franco regime, via prison for all important leaders, and then via political parties to various positions in democratic institutions. It is true that many have followed such a path, but there have been many other possible paths, for men as well as for women. It is absolutely not true that there were no women in the resistance or in the prisons of the Franco regime.13

This man used the key symbol of "person" to delegitimize women's groups. He insisted: "There are some women's groups, in the movement, but they also consider themselves women's associations. In any case, they all say, 'we are persons, we do this as persons, not as women.'"

I asked him what image he thought people had of women active in the movement. He did not like the question. Apparently, he felt under suspicion for chauvinism, so he wanted to underline that it was normal for women to be active. He said women were everywhere, doing all sorts of things, occupying all sorts of posts. "It is seen as just as natural. "If 'Pepe' has to go somewhere, and he can't go, people say, who can go? 'Pili'? So she goes. Nothing special about that, no one thinks twice about it." Then he conceded: "But it is a qualitative difference that there are feminist women – and some are feminist without knowing it; there are some very important issues. They want equality. They do change the future, because they change family life. Although actually those who just do yoga or handicraft or go to the neighborhood association, they change family life, too,

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12 Not exact quote since the interview was not taped.
13 As many well-known books, both fiction and non-fiction, have testified. See e.g. diFebo 1979 and Silva and Macías 2003. Famous women who have written about their experiences in prison are Lidia Falcón, Eva Forest and Carlota O'Neill. Reports and testimonies have become more frequent lately, but it is hard to believe that this man had not ever heard anything about such women in 1994.
14 As I said in chapter 5, this formulation is more exact than he probably intended. The first choice is still a man.
because they change the daily rhythm. Who is to cook dinner... The men have to, and they do, you know, they have to!"

Another male leader, one of the most influential in the Cordova movement, expressed the same basic ideas in more sophisticated but still not quite feminist terms. According to him, women's issues should get a lot of attention. That was a step in the right direction. But women should join the movement without having to work only with specifically women's issues. "A woman is something more than a woman, she is a citizen. She lives in a social, economic, political context. So then she cannot just dedicate herself to – housewife calisthenics! She can't just demand equality with men. She has to do that, too, sure. Look, I am not saying that she should not do that. She has to do that, because she has been left a few miles behind, she has to catch up. In the competition of life. (…) But if she is to dedicate herself only to specifically women's issues, well, personally, I... I can accept that as something transitory. Transitory. But you must not lose the perspective that that is not the final objective. Because otherwise we will create a ghetto. Otherwise, tomorrow there will be men's associations!" Unlike most women in the neighborhood movement in Cordova, he obviously did not see the present all-male or almost-all-male associations as men's associations.

He agreed that it was a problem that few women were active, and he agreed that special women's groups, or apparently harmless activities like handicraft courses, could help women overcome the obstacles on their way from "home" to "street". But he did not accept that such activities could have any intrinsic value. When I asked about that, he got a bit emotional, insisting that he was not a machista (I took great care no to accuse him of anything, but evidently Cordovan women used the same argument as accusation), but that women must integrate fully in the associations, and that the issues were the same for women and men. To work "just for women coming out of the home, well fine, but let us not stop there, that is ridiculous. They should get out in order to do something for the whole community, not just for themselves."

He also declared, a bit ambiguously, that "there was another objective for women" because they "do things. They are the ones who paste posters on the walls, because they seem to have a bit more of good taste. They are the ones who sweep and wash dishes, they take care of the association... And they are the ones who prepare food when we have a picnic, all of us. If on top of that they want calisthenics..." It was not clear whether he felt they should be liberated from the supportive tasks or if he meant it as a compliment that they were good at such tasks. In any case, the picture was strikingly similar to Montiel's portrait of the ideal wife of a peñista. But I am sure he would have rejected the similarity vehemently, had I pointed it out to him.

Some who tried

For many years now, international feminism has debated the pros and cons of integration (to avoid isolation and to obtain influence) versus separate organization (to develop personal and organizational strength and independent analyses). There is some consensus that both methods must be used and combined strategically according to context. In that light, one must ask why Cordovan women had chosen to such a large extent to work separately from men, to the point of creating independent women's associations in many barrios, instead of working inside the ordinary neighborhood associations? Why did some of them call the neighborhood associations "men's associations"? And if this separate organization was necessary, why was it that the leading men of the movement, who honestly thought they approved of feminism, could not see any need for it?

Two women from one barrio told me about their experience. They said that only very few women become active in the neighborhood association. But in the women's association they work with all the classical issues of the neighborhood movement, "like urban planning. In our barrio we work together with all the other groups, through the district coordinator. Everything is of importance for women, right?" In other words, in a way they were saying the same thing as the quoted male leader, but they drew opposite conclusions as to methods: only through separate organization were they able to do the same thing.

For a while there had been several women on the board of the neighborhood association in their barrio, they said. "But we got fed up. Because... They don't admit it, but they don't want us
there." The problem was that the men were afraid of the women. "I don't know what they think it is we are going to change in there. As women. The thing is that a man will not admit a woman." The other woman filled in: "Exactly, they will pretend not to hear what you are saying, they won't pay any attention at all to you. So you get bored in the meetings. Because they will not throw you out, but they won't notice you."

As an example, they told the story of when the men of their association decided to have a beauty contest at the annual barrio fiesta. The three women on the board protested. "And they asked us why. No, we said, because we don't want to be objects. Listen, why don't we have a mister instead of a miss, the prettiest man of the barrio? And they went no-no-no! So there!" The men understood in the end, the women said, but it took a lot of persuasion.

The worst problem, what really had made them quit, was gossip. "Comments began to be heard in the barrio, because, sure, often the meetings finish at midnight or later, right? There were three or four men and three of us, so, let's have a beer, let's go... Sure, that's natural and normal, but as the barrio saw it..." In other words, according to the gossip they were immoral women. They were caught between one norm which held it to be "natural and normal" for people to show sociability by having a beer after a meeting, and another norm that held that women cannot go to bars with men that they are not married or related to without their husbands, especially not late at night. According to a traditional view, a drink in a bar means strengthening of ties, solidarity, human relationship, if the participants are of the same gender, but it is a step in a set series of moves towards erotic engagement if the participants are of opposite genders.

"Sure, it was horrible, we had conflicts even with our women neighbors... They even said things directly to our face. And among the men, too, there were comments... they said we had gone to have a drink with so and so... and sure, once you are in a bar, having a drink, people think you are not just having a drink, you must be going to bed..."

As a consequence, there had been marital problems.

"Actually, my husband especially, because as luck would have it, he was working in a village at that time and came home only on weekends. So one man, a friend of ours, heard something, and it was nothing important, but he mentioned it to my husband, to ask him what was happening... And you can imagine, from that moment on, things got really ugly. And the other man's wife, too, she was saying things about us... She was always asking, listen, at what time did the meeting finish last night? And I'd say, look, we went to this bar... (She'd say:) Well, now, my husband did not get home until five in the morning! So I'd say (to her), well, that's your problem!"

It was dangerous, to the point that there were separations. "I did not actually separate from my husband, but well... There was a little... The other one, Conchi, she separated from her husband, because there were comments that he was going with another woman."

These women had little analytical distance to the events. But they did say that "traditional ideas" were dangerous for women who "go out of the home" and also for the neighborhood movement as a whole, since "seeing what happened, anyone who has a happy marriage will think twice before joining."

### A dual movement

Cordova was a beautiful and interesting city but difficult to live in. It was one of the places in Spain where the neighborhood movement had attained most recognition and become most firmly integrated into formal city politics. But it had remained mostly a male movement. Which was logical in view of the strength of "traditional" ideas on gender that emphasized hierarchy, separation and complementarity. Many women complained about discrimination in politics and in the labor market, and about loneliness and disappointment in private life, and to sum it up and explain it they used the phrase "men in Cordova are still very Moorish." There was no discussion about one thing that was considered self-evident: that women and men live in different worlds.

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15 Their description sounded so much like Berit Ås' "techniques of domination" (Ås 1982) that I asked them if they had heard of them. They had not, they were just telling me what they had observed, they said. (They could have, however, since I had lectured on these techniques in the Tenerife meeting and had later found that some of the contents of that lecture had been widely discussed in women's contexts in the movement.)
In all of these ways, Cordova was similar to Linares. When it came to actual practice, however, there were great differences.

The women I met did not hesitate to portray themselves as victims, but that does not mean they were not active. The women in the neighborhood movement worked together with feminist women, there were lots of experiments going on, and their discourse was the most radical of all the places I visited. For example, there were plans for a series of workshops on "sexuality from the perspective of women's pleasure and desires." The leading feminists who told me about it underlined that this brave formulation was not theirs but had come 'from the women themselves,' i.e. from non-feminist barrio women, whom the feminists would not ordinarily expect to dare to pronounce such words, much less actually wish for and strive for an understanding of their own bodies.

It was impossible to demarcate feminist from non-feminist women's groups. Many were barrio groups. They had a territory which coincided with that of the 'men's association,' and their purpose was to "work for the good of the barrio", but they had found it necessary to organize separately from the men. In many barrios there were actually two neighborhood associations, one could say, one for men and one for women, working on similar issues. In some cases they shared the same premises, meeting at different times. These women's groups did not want to be redefined as women's committees of the neighborhood associations. They feared that would limit their freedom of action and subordinate them to the men. But neither did they define themselves as associations of neighborhood women. That idea was strongly opposed in Cordova, since it was taken to come from PSOE-dominated CAVE, and the neighborhood movement in Cordova was IU-dominated. They were independent barrio groups working with barrio issues "as women", without stopping to ask what the phrase "as women" meant, but without rejecting cooperation with feminists.

Only very "advanced" feminists discussed to what extent gender differences might be naturally given or inevitable. But most of the active women in Cordova, of whatever ideological color, felt that decreased gender segregation was desirable. They had been trying to work with the men for some time, especially in the neighborhood movement, and some women continued to do so and assured me that it was perfectly possible. But others told stories of very negative experiences. There was resistance from many quarters, centered on the mixing of unrelated women and men, so they had found an alternative in separate organizations. For the time being. Much of their struggle was precisely aimed at abolishing rigid definitions of what is fitting for each gender, but it seemed that segregation was the best strategy under the circumstances. Equality in the sense of similarity had to give way to equality in the sense of justice. Given the strength of a gender order stressing complementarity, the two were difficult to combine, even though, for the very same reason, the most progressive stance was to strive for integration.

We could say that the women in the Cordovan neighborhood movement reproduced the dualism of the gender order, in the short run, in order to undermine it in the long run.

Epilogue

My return visit to Cordova, in November 2002, was not as fruitful as the rest. There was now a federation of associations of neighborhood women, but my attempts to contact them before my trip were frustrating and in the end frustrated. The general federation thought that it was not their business to arrange a meeting for me if the women's federation would not. Some of my best contacts from the first visit had vanished from public view. I went to Cordova anyway, of course, and spoke to a number of key persons. I will summarize my impressions, but with reservations about limited data.

The problems I had could be pure coincidence. But when I commented them with people I knew (inside and outside the movement), no one seemed surprised. There were head shakes about the "low level" of the women's federation and their activities. A couple of persons said the president probably did not even try to organize the meeting for me. "They don't do that kind of thing, she probably did not understand what you were talking about." Again, there were also comments about
the "closed" character of Cordovans and the "cozy and perverted" relationship between the neighborhood movement and Town Hall.

The movement had kept growing. There were now 94 barrio associations (according to the federation secretary) and everyone agreed that they were mostly "authentic" and alive. But they had little to do with the federation. "They are not interested in federation work, and perhaps they do not agree with the politics of the federation, but they are in it in order to have access to the subsidies."

The split between barrio associations and federations was present throughout the movement but appeared especially wide in Cordova. That was so in 1994 and still in 2002.

This was strange, one might think, since the movement in Cordova had been so successful in turning itself into a recognized interlocutor with Town Hall. The neighborhood movement now had representatives on the boards of most municipal enterprises, such as those of housing, transportation, water, urban hygiene, the municipal theater. The movement had obtained the right to be present and to speak (but not to vote) in the committees of municipal government besides participating in the debates in the municipal assembly.

The federation had new premises in a municipal building, surrounded by a beautiful garden, called the Citizens' House. Several other civic entities had offices there. There were classrooms, meeting rooms, space for art shows, etc. The federation had a couple of large office rooms with desks, telephones, computers, an employed secretary, and even two big flags (the Andalusian and the Spanish ones) standing behind the president's desk.

The inevitable question becomes: What price success?

The most positive news were the participatory budgets. In Spain, this idea was first implemented in Cordova; in 2002, a few other places were about to or had just started using them (Villasante and Garrido 2002). In this system, municipal budgets are divided according to districts, then associations and individuals in each district discuss that which directly affects their area, and they also decide. In Cordova it was done through the district councils. Practically everyone I talked to mentioned this innovation in very positive terms. My argument, that it might – just might – undermine the critical force of the neighborhood movement, was pooh-poohed. The one danger some saw was that the experiment might be discontinued because few people participated. The remedy envisioned was education: it is not easy to understand municipal budgets; people must get a chance to learn.

As to women's participation, there were contradictory messages. There were still few women's committees in the barrio associations, and most activists in the barrios as well as on the federation level were still men. Only two women sat on the federation board. But overall there were more women than there used to be. The estimates centered around perhaps one fifth of all activists, whereas eight years earlier the proportion was less than half of that. There were several women presidents in barrio associations. The women activists I spoke to all seemed to think that it was difficult but not impossible for a woman to be effective in a barrio association, and that separate women's associations were therefore no longer necessary.

Some municipal districts had women presidents, and the mayor of Cordova was a woman.

My informants did not agree with my observation that there had been a gendered dualism of the neighborhood movement eight years earlier. However, they concurred with me on all empirical details and also on the difficulties that had led women to organize separately. In other words, they agreed with my data and analysis but not with my conclusion. I suspect that what bothered them was the expression I used, "gendered dualism in the movement", and that the reason for that was that there was now another kind of gendered division, which they were all against.

In 1994 I thought that the idea of associations of neighborhood women would never prosper in Cordova, not just because it came from CAVE, but also because there was already something similar under another name. In 2002 the president of the neighborhood federation said that there had been a decision taken against it, but somehow it had come about anyway, around 1997, "and we are not about to close it down, that would not be right." But the federation as well as the feminists had opposed it and so had most women activists in the barrio associations. The neighbor-
hood movement as such, they all said (women as well as men), was for integration and against separate organization. The negative feelings were evident, the topic was sensitive.\footnote{I deeply regret that the representatives of the associations of neighborhood women did not want to give me their side of the story, but I can hardly abstain from reporting what the rest of the movement said about them, since it is relevant for the overall description. I did what I could to contrast opinions.}

What had happened then to the former coordination of women's organizations in the city, that seemed to be off to such a promising start eight years earlier? The information on this was also contradictory. A federation of women's organizations in the city had been organized (starting with the meeting at which I had been present in 1994) and it had been active for a few years. The Town Hall still had a councilor for women's affairs, but the women's federation had been converted to a local council. It was now a decision-making body, which meant it had more power but less independence.

Some of the women's associations I had visited in 1994 had been discontinued. According to one woman, whom we can call Rocío and who had been a key actor for many years in both the women's movement and the neighborhood movement, the leading women in those associations had been disgusted by the manipulations and corruption they had seen in the neighborhood movement, so they had left it. Rocío herself, however, thought that political parties "do not want to have more democracy because then they themselves will lose power," so she thought the neighborhood movement was the only workable alternative.

Rocío did not agree with my hypothesis that perhaps the neighborhood movement had had its moment and was now dying. "If you had said that four years ago, I would have agreed. There was an impasse for a while. But now new things are happening. People do get together to work in their barrios, for their barrios. That is clean, there is a new atmosphere of solidarity. Unfortunately, it goes against the interests of the political parties and also of the entrenched leaders of the neighborhood movement, who have become used to negotiate comfortably with the town councilors."

Rocío was against the associations of neighborhood women, because of their separatism, but she was not against the handicraft courses. She had been to Vigo and studied what happened there, and like most of the activists in Vigo she thought that it was absolutely necessary to get women "out of their homes" as a first step, and handicraft courses did that, and no better method had been invented.

In a collective interview, three key women of the Cordovan neighborhood movement explained that many of the "most valuable" active women of Cordova had left the movement for other organizations. For those who wanted to work with feminist issues the main place was now a platform against domestic violence. There were also other platforms, and lots of activity, but they all focused on special issues; nobody was working with general organization and democratization, and that had them worried.

I asked about the practical difficulties for activist women. The three women said that that had not changed much. Most activists were still men and they were still very chauvinist. "You wouldn't believe what they say sometimes, I can hardly believe it myself when I hear it." But even so, they thought integration was the only way. "I have been utilized and manipulated, I have felt very bad, but I won't give up, because I think that what I am doing is worth it."

I asked if they agreed with my analysis, that the gossip about women activists was especially virulent in Cordova. In all the towns, there were comments to the effect that a woman should take care of her home and family, and so on, but in Cordova I had also heard stories of dangerous sexual gossip and broken marriages. The women agreed. One of the three said that she had been the victim of that type of gossip herself. Another said that because she worked with an association activity that put her in daily contact with some male workers, people in her barrio were convinced that one of those men must be her lover. All three felt hurt by constant denigration of women but insisted that one must not let it affect one's activities. They were able to be active because they were lucky to have husbands who were not jealous. They thought that the barrios where several women were active were barrios where the male leaders were not very chauvinist.

In sum, Cordova was contradictory. Women seemed to be making headway in the neighborhood movement and in public life in general, but the journey was slow and painful. There was no overall consensus on methods or goals; instead there was a strong opposition between the activists I
met, who were all adamantly in favor of "integration", and the separatist associations of neighborhood women; this opposition seemed to express the old feminist problem of equality versus difference. There was little debate on how to transcend this polarization and little debate of the kind I found in Valencia and Vigo on how to take "the second step" once women leave their homes physically. Or perhaps there were such debates in some quarters, but they did not surface in my interviews with key women activists, and in view of the clearly negative evaluations these women made of the opposite position, a fruitful debate between them did not seem probable.

Apparently, the strategy of gender segregation in the short run as a means for integration in the long run was not working out in Cordova.