CHAPTER 13. MOVEMENT CHARACTERISTICS AND THE GENDER ORDER

What sort of movement is this?

In this chapter, the neighborhood movement will be described with the aid of some theories that will clarify its features in a comparative manner. I will first analyze the general characteristics of the movement, as a movement, and then their relationship to gender. My arguments for the relevance of the neighborhood movement for gender change are grounded in practice theory, as stated earlier; here I summarize my theoretical narrative with the aid of the concept of access to cultural negotiations. In the middle of this rather arid theoretical chapter, I have inserted a short interview with a Valencian activist, in order to refresh the reader's empirical memory and show how the traits discussed are expressed inside the neighborhood movement. The chapter ends with a discussion of the main changes in the movement between 1995 and 2002.

But let us first of all sum up the impressions from the four towns.

Town portraits, a summary

Taken together the four town portraits plus the examples from Madrid and Valencia give a picture of the range of variations in what women do, can do, are allowed to do and want to do in the movement.

I do not want to speculate about any causal relationships between different kinds of places (regional culture, economic structure, size of town, etc.) and women's political participation. Such relationships probably exist, but the important thing here is to show, first, that there are variations, and, second, that in spite of these variations, there are certain themes that recur throughout the movement.

The gender order looks different in different parts of Spain. Since women need and want different things, the neighborhood movement comes into their lives in different ways. What the examples taken together show is that the movement can play an emancipating role in different gender situations and that women in various circumstances find it useful.

Simplifying for the sake of argument, we could say that whatever else they were doing in the movement, the women in all six towns and cities also made efforts to redefine gender. Minimally, they had to refuse to stay "in the home" if they wanted to be in the movement at all. Implicitly, they wanted more equality in the sense of similarity, since they wanted women and men to work in the same spaces. But usually they bracketed the question of what degree of similarity might be possible, while working for equality in the sense of justice. They were practical people, they did not approach such abstract issues as biology versus culture. If they thought about them at all, they would find it self-evident that women and men are different from each other, but they would also quote the dominant discourse to the effect that this is due to "education", not nature, and they would not be interested in exploring possible contradictions in this. But through their practice, they undermined the cultural and social constructions that kept the differences in place, first and foremost among them the home-street dichotomy.

The women of the four towns differed from each other in what they thought was most urgent, or most easily attainable, and what tactics to use.

In Elda, the women felt that they had already become similar to men in the most decisive domain, the labor market. Their implicit theory was quite Marxian: if there is equality in economic activity, other inequalities will disappear. They were therefore confident that, with or without special efforts on their part, more and more women would enter the movement, the men would welcome them there, more and more husbands would begin helping at home, and so on.
Time is a factor in itself and societies evolve and improve, they felt. Unless unemployment upsets the whole process.

The women of Linares wanted to enter spaces that had hitherto been reserved for men and were still mostly so. To enter the labor market was a lost cause, since there were no jobs for women and even the ones for men were dwindling. A more realistic goal was to enter public life in the same way as men. If asked, most of them would say that they thought women and men were very different kinds of beings deep down, and they wanted to remain "real women". But this was not an issue under debate. Their "feminine identity" was not under attack at all; on the contrary, it was being used as a weapon against them. So they wanted to diminish difference because that seemed to be the only way of moving towards justice.

In Cordova, too, the women felt that decreased gender differences were desirable. But they would not come about automatically. The women were working on it, trying hard. But they had had many negative experiences of working with men, so for a while they had experimented with separate organization. A dual neighborhood movement seemed a logical thing to many. But when the associations of neighborhood women came onto the scene, a line of conflict (which I was unable to obtain a good picture of but which undoubtedly existed) was drawn up in such a way that for most women who wanted to work with barrio issues, integration once again looked like the best solution. Dualism looked like a step backwards. The descriptions I got of the associations of neighborhood women all referred to "old-fashioned" women, doing "home"-things.

So, to use the key metaphor of home-street: While the women in Elda felt they were in the street as a matter of course, and the men ought to start knocking on the kitchen door any time now, wanting in, and the women in Linares knocked their knuckles bloody on the inside of their front doors, wanting out, the activist women in Cordova had opened the front doors and gone out, but it was not an evident liberation, they did not feel well received, so many built new walls in the street in order to be able to use at least parts of it for their own purposes.

Vigo can be described as a case of women already outside the home calling for other women to come out, and doing it in such a way as to make the walls themselves blur. But this was controversial, because some Vigueses were convinced that there were no walls to start with, so to act on them would actually mean creating them, while others thought they ought to be kept in place and strengthened to keep matriarchy from overflowing.

It is especially interesting to compare the evolution in Vigo and Cordova. Both were medium-sized cities where the so-called traditional gender orders were seen to be based on separation and complementarity and – although this was more controversial – hierarchy. Both had small but lively feminist groups. Both had large neighborhood movements. In both cities, energetic initiatives had been taken by Town Hall (fueled by political parties in both cases, different ones but in neither case the PSOE) to improve women's situation; in both cases these efforts had centered on working class women and barrio activities, and in both cases leading men in the neighborhood movement were skeptical and somewhat uncomfortable but careful not to oppose the initiatives, at least not openly. In Vigo the initiative was more clearly top-down, but the neighborhood movement was also actively involved. In Cordova an effort was made to create a women's movement "from below", through the building of a new federation, a women's movement that would include both feminist groups, neighborhood movement women and more traditional women's groups. But curiously, the neighborhood movement was much less involved in this effort than in Vigo. The Cordova initiative was less cautious than the one in Vigo, it was more open about the goal to change the gender order. In Vigo the women's council moved in more indirect ways, one could even say that its hidden agenda was manipulative. Both initiatives reached many women and created many and varied activities. What was happening in Cordova seemed more radical and better organized and therefore more promising from a feminist point of view.

Eight years later, the Vigo experiment seemed to have been more successful. It continued in more or less the same manner and some of its key activities had become stable traditions. There were certainly debates and doubts about the amount of real and durable change in the gender order, but at least the situation offered material and fora for such debates. In Cordova, there seemed to be little debate and little lasting change. The women's federation had not
survived. The neighborhood movement federation was still dominated by men. The associations of neighborhood women seemed to have distanced themselves from the movement, and activists, women as well as men, feminist, regarded them with suspicion or not. Feminist women were finding new spaces, no longer connected to the neighborhood movement. But at least the number of activist barrio women seemed to be increasing.

The difference could be summed up as follows: In Vigo there was a program of gender separation, based on a diplomatically hazy ideology, that was working its way, very slowly, but not very uncertainly, towards integration. In Cordova there had been a program of gender separation under clear feminist banners that had misfired and turned into a situation of tense divisions, on the one hand between women and men inside the neighborhood movement and on the other between the neighborhood movement and the feminist movement.

But in both cities, there were other processes of gender change, connected to larger structural processes.

The gender order of Spain as a whole had been moving towards similarity and decreased hierarchy for three decades, and in the hegemonic discourses (of mass media, politicians, educators and intellectuals in general) this process was legitimated by references to other European countries as images of the desired direction and by references to legislation and ideology of the Franco regime as images of what must be rejected (Thurén 1988 and forthcoming). This general tendency was supported by such structures as education and legislation, so it reached into all parts of the country and into the thoughts of almost every individual. But it interacted with local structures, of course, and with individual and collective habituses formed by previous circumstances, thus resulting in variations, as we have seen examples of in this study.

What do these comparisons mean? First of all there is one thing they do not mean: The similarities among the six places studied should not be read as some sort of generalization on "Mediterranean culture" or even "Spanish culture". There are levels at which such generalizations can legitimately be made, but this study focuses only on the relationship between processes of gender change inside one country and the characteristics of one social movement.

At an even higher level of abstraction, some theorists postulate a "universal patriarchy". I do not think there is such a thing, or at least I cannot imagine how it could be described without committing vast ethnocentric errors. The ethnography of this study shows both connections and disconnections with general Western European trends of gender change, and some readers may want to use my data for their own elaborations of this theme, and that may well be fruitful, but my study does not enter that terrain.

As to strategies, I do not wish to be read as proposing a "go-slow" method as a general recommendation, nor am I defending or criticizing any specific party line.

My main point in comparing the six places is that a theoretically and strategically useful analysis of grassroots politics in general and feminist politics in particular needs to enter into close contact with reality as locally shaped and as culturally constructed, since we cannot understand it otherwise, and since the cultural constructions make up a very large part of the reality that sets the conditions for what we can do or even want to do.

Nevertheless, it is also necessary to generalize.1 One possible way to sum up the gender situation of the six places studied here is to picture it as a continuum from women very much relegated to their homes and family life to women very much habituated to public life. Everywhere some women were just beginning to peek out their windows, while others felt that there was absolutely nothing unusual about women following their own wishes. The debates about this, the everyday descriptions, the positions taken and the individual consequences in practice, and the arguments used about it all were more similar than different in the six places. And the general direction of gender change was nowhere doubted (even though opposed by some). What differed most were the proportions of women in the "street" and the strength and legitimacy of the sanctions applied against women seen to be too far out of line. And, although less clearly, the legitimacy of expressing ideas about women's innate inferiority and men's right

1 My position is thus that the debates around postmodernism versus materialism must be transcended. This position has been defended by many, for instance Calhoun 1995, di Leonardo 1991, Fraser and Nicholson 1988, Göransson 1998. See also Thurén 2003 and especially the famous debate in Benhabib et al 1995.
(or even duty) to control them also varied. One man in Linares said, "Women are like mules, if you don't reign them in, you lose them." That would be an unthinkable thing to say in most public contexts in Spain. But old sayings to the same effect continued to circulate widely as "jokes".

Since the continuum was wide, what was taken for granted in some contexts bordered on the incredible in others. At the same time, people were aware of the variations. This caused insecurity in the personal attitudes taken and was often expressed in contradictory statements about, on the one hand, "what everyone knows" and "human nature", and on the other "what is obviously changing" and "what has not been like that for a long time." (Whatever position I took in the conversations, I was met with all of these attitudes.) This weakening of doxa was an important fact in itself, since it injected dynamism (and tension) in the ongoing cultural negotiations. We will look more closely at the workings of this in the final chapter. But first we must summarize the descriptions of the neighborhood movement as such.

Traits of social movements

Social movements can be classified in various ways. Let us look at some suggestions (mainly from Sztompka 1993) and what their application can tell us about the neighborhood movement.

Sztomppka distinguishes between reformist, radical and revolutionary movements when it comes to the scope of intended change. The neighborhood movement can be classified as either one of these, depending on which historical moment or which federation or which levels of activity and which kinds of participants we talk about. For those – intellectual members at all levels, long time activists, high level leaders, members with strongly leftist convictions – who stress the political participation theme, the "deepening of democracy", the movement is at least radical and perhaps revolutionary; many of them would like to see a restructuring of parliamentary democracy that would lead to a different distribution of resources of all kinds in society as a whole. But for the majority of members and local level activists, the movement is reformist in that it is seen to be about making local democracy work, gaining advantages for working class barrios (or, for some, just one's own barrio) and creating a sociable atmosphere (convivencia) by organizing all sorts of activities.

Social movements also differ in the quality of the intended change. Some look to the future, others to the past. In this sense, the neighborhood movement is clearly progressive. It has been imaginative and experimental from the start, and in its vocabulary "tradition" is usually a negative word, often equivalent to "obstacle", whereas "progress", "innovation" and "development" are among the most highly valued ones. And this is not just a question of self-image. The movement is innovative and does participate in the creation of new political and social forms of organization.

As to the targets of intended change, social movements can address individuals or social collectivities or structures. Here, the neighborhood movement is ambivalent again. Many local level activists stress above all how much the movement has meant to them personally (learning new things, getting out of the house, getting to know your neighbors, finding out what is going on, having fun...) and how their personality has changed, and how they think the movement does a lot of good precisely by changing people's outlook. And we have seen that especially women emphasize this aspect. But the main thrust of the movement is clearly towards changing social circumstances. The main activities have to do with distribution of collective resources, the main interlocutor is the local municipal government, and the dominant discourse of leaders is a political one about tactics and strategies, about taking a position on issues, about the resistance encountered from conservative forces, and so on, and this discourse insists on the focus on democratic processes. To be sure, both women and men activists like to talk about their personal feelings about and their personal experiences of whatever issues are on the agenda, but they do so in order to clarify social issues, not to place psychological or emotional issues on the agenda. Religious or spiritual issues are practically never on the agenda.

The neighborhood movement wants a new and different kind of society (at whatever level), it proposes new ideas, it works for improved guarantees for democracy. It resists whatever phenomena come up that go in the opposite direction, such as rightist politics or traditionalist discourses.
Since a major aspect of Spanish traditional discourse is a view of gender as morally central, complementary, and naturally or religiously given, therefore unchangeable, the progressive tint of the neighborhood movement implies that it stands in opposition to the gender order as it has been. This is quite taken for granted by all, as we have seen. But for many, it is difficult to translate this principled standpoint into concrete opinions or actions. And this creates contradictions, not just on an analytical level, but in members' thinking and acting, and it does so in a culturally visible manner. People talk about "my/our contradictions," often in self-disparaging and humorous terms. In spite of all of this, an explicit stance in favor of critical analysis of the existing gender order in feminist or feminist-like terms is rare. For most activists, the word feminist sounds "extreme" or unacceptable. This constitutes a real collective contradiction.

Social movements can struggle for power or they can emphasize values or life styles (Sztompka 1993, Melucci 1989). This analytical distinction corresponds to a major tension inside the neighborhood movement. For the leaders, the intellectuals and some careerists, and for the political parties that off and on try to dominate the movement, it is an instrumental movement. For them it is one actor among many on the general political field. For some of them the neighborhood movement could even become a new kind of political force itself, an alternative or complement to parties and unions. For others, who see parties as the only decisive actors, the neighborhood movement is a resource to enlist among other resources on which one's own party can count. For others again, the neighborhood movement's special role is to balance other forces. All of these attitudes are instrumental and rationalist.

A majority of activists and members, however, do not see the neighborhood movement in this way, and they feel strongly that those who do are "political", and in their discourse that is a negative word, meaning hierarchy, discipline, manipulation, loss of autonomy, loss of dignity, personal careerism and cynical opportunism. When such persons say that the neighborhood movement is not political, they do not imply that it cannot be instrumental in some limited ways, especially in procuring advantages for one's barrio, but they stress that the main purpose should be expressive: making barrio, doing things for people, having fun, getting to know one's neighbors. Convivencia, in short.

There is also a possible third position, people for whom the instrumental and expressive purposes act together. A favorite expression in such a discourse would be that the neighborhood associations work as schools of democracy; people learn to act together, learn to interpret political events, learn not to accept injustices, learn to invent methods of political struggle, and so on. The result is expressive, because people learn and grow, and instrumental, because as a result of their learning, people change society. The two purposes are inseparable, according to this view.

The neighborhood movement also experiences inner tensions around the issue of class. It was class based to start with, but it soon spread to all kinds of urban areas, and people of different classes often participated together. This happened because during the dictatorship many of the issues affected people from different classes, perhaps not with the same intensity but in similar ways (Castells 1977b, 1986). Still, the movement was defined as a leftist movement. And even today the working class dominates it, at least as to numbers. Recently, conservative parties have been trying to move in, and it is difficult for the movement to delegitimize such efforts, since they do what the neighborhood associations are all doing, organize people who live in one area around issues that are important to the people of that area. But in some areas that implies defending class privileges. Representatives of conservative local associations encounter resistance in the federations and other meeting places within the movement, especially when they act in ways that to others look like subverting the basic values of the movement, working for, rather than against, social hierarchies and for privatized rather than collective consumption.

At the same time, the neighborhood movement displays traits that are typical of a non-class-based type of social movement, according to Sztompka's outline, in that it is very much decentralized and in that it is not focused on economic issues. Its main purpose is to improve the quality of everyday life, defined in a very broad way. It takes on all sorts of "new" issues as they come up, often organizing under its wide umbrella local expressions of feminism, environmentalism, youth culture, anti-war activism, etc.
The neighborhood movement is not one of those movements that are paired in conflict. It is leftist, and as such opposes conservative political parties, but it is not a leftist political party. It takes stands on many issues but in an ad hoc way, supporting other groups that focus on those issues.

What emerges from this analysis is that the neighborhood movement is exceedingly difficult to classify. It is amorphous. But it knows where it stands on the all-important issue of "democracy". Which is of course very logical in view of its emergence in the struggle against a dictatorship. The neighborhood movement wants an active civil society, one in which people do things, move around, experiment, let opinions and issues and positions clash to see what comes out of it all. The main enemies are resignation, ignorance, indifference, and impotence. These words, used by Sztompka to describe the "passive society", are precisely the words most often used in the neighborhood movement discourse to describe not only what one does not want in the future but also what one has come from, and therefore knows, and therefore knows one does not want to return to.\(^2\)

The defining feature of the neighborhood movement, then, is not any of the criteria Sztompka or other textbooks suggest. Instead it is its political and organizational base: the territory. This is unusual. Even nationalist movements are based not so much on territory as on a mixture of ideas about "state" (i.e. a form of organization) and "people" (i.e. a classification of individuals according to language or descent). The neighborhood movement is against such criteria. It takes a stand on the issue of xenophobia, defending foreign immigrants to Spain (a recent phenomenon, very much on the agenda in the 1990s and later). And I have never come across a case of a local association that placed any importance on the "nationality" (the common Spanish word for regional origin) of its members, even though most of the associations in the big cities, where the movement originated, in fact grew up in ethnically mixed neighborhoods, among people recently arrived from different rural areas.\(^3\)

Instead, the movement is based on territory in the concrete sense of neighborhood, people living near each other. It is comparable to citizens' movements or civil rights movements in other countries, and also to locally based interest associations that can be found in many countries, but its originality lies in the combination of the two. This can work only if, and as long as, living near each other means that something is shared and that this something has to do with what sort of society one wants. In a way, the neighborhood movement is a new version of the workers' movement. Most of its members share basic living conditions and this gives them a similar outlook on what is important to struggle for. And they know they do not belong to the privileged classes. But they are not only manual workers. They are workers in the wider sense of being salaried,\(^4\) and usually their salaries are not very high. As neighbors, people suffer the same problems, such as rationing of water, pollution of water, danger and noise from traffic, lack of schools, and so on. And as neighbors they want to improve everyday life, not just for themselves, not just for their "kind", but for all human beings, in principle, but being practical, they define the locus of action as the area where they live. The movement concentrates on everyday life, which means that all sorts of issues overlap and interconnect. Since a major purpose is to "make barrio", we could say that the main enemy is social atomism, underdeveloped local networks.

\(^2\) This sharp image may blur with time, as the dictatorship becomes more remote in personal memories. Already, some young activists have no memories of their own of Franco times. But the image can refer to other social circumstances, too, such as repressive religious education or village social control.

\(^3\) And one must remember that Spanish regions can be as different among themselves, culturally, as different European countries. Gender orders, daily rhythms, means of survival, living standards, languages, and many other aspects of life vary greatly, so there is plenty of material from which to construct "nationalist" discourses, and "nationalist" parties in for instance Catalonia do this. The neighborhood movement has had its share of conflicts around issues of nationalism, but to my knowledge it has never classified members according to ethnic origin. On the contrary, the emphasis on barrio convivencia foregrounds problems shared by all.

\(^4\) Most of them, that is. There is also a sprinkling of small businessmen/ -women. Their life styles and economic possibilities are not very different from those of their salaried neighbors, however.
Generalizable model or historical specificity?

To make barrio means among other things to create the kind of social capital or civic-mindedness that Putnam's research in Italy has identified as crucial for successful democratic government (Putnam 1993). This might indicate some generalizability. Can the Spanish neighborhood movement be a model for democratic reformers in other countries to imitate? Perhaps, in some indirect way, but one must always be cautious when transferring experiences from one context to another. There are two major reasons why a movement exactly like the neighborhood movement could probably not exist in any other country: the historical experience of Spain and a cluster of cultural habits and values.

The historical experience is the division of the country in two, through a civil war, which caused wounds that took a long time to heal, or are still not healed, in part because the dictatorship kept them open for forty years and in part because the transition to democracy was accomplished through a pact of silence which swept differences under the rug (Aguila 1984, di Febo 1979, Foweraker 1990, Gilmour 1985, Heywood 1995, Pérez Díaz 1987, Tusell et al 1990). The discourse of the dictatorship was sharply dualist, so people had to define themselves for or against it, and all manner of issues sorted themselves along the same division. This in combination with forty years of ignorance about democratic discourses and lack of local fora for debate, lack even of basic knowledge of associational techniques, has made for shaky democratic institutions and has created a conflict-laden political sphere, where experimental activities are necessary but difficult to implement in a stable way. Perhaps it is the very amorphousness of the neighborhood movement that has helped it to survive, while many other experiments have failed. In other historical circumstances, such amorphousness might be more of a drawback.

The cultural habits and values have to do with the emphasis on local territory, whether village (pueblo) or barrio, as an important dimension of life, as a factor in personal identity and a principle for organizing many or most aspects of everyday life. It connects to such values or dispositions as the importance of knowing someone personally, the importance of sociability and the importance of personal characteristics, all emphasized by anthropologists working in Spain (Brandes 1975, Cucó and Pujadas 1990, Driessen 1991, Sundman 1999, Thurén 1988, Uhl 1991). This means that a good life can only be lived among one's own people, but these are widely defined as all whom one knows more or less well. Even an "enemy" like a rich landowner can be judged by personal characteristics, whereas there is mostly indifference towards the fate of people one does not know personally. Such dispositions must change, and do change, in urban life, among people with leftist perspectives, and also with modernization in general. But this change leaves a cultural void. The neighborhood movement builds a new kind of local grouping, where people get to know each other and identify with a local area, a barrio – but also with all barrios. The neighborhood movement can be seen as a cultural mediator between village particularism on one hand and modernization processes, universalism and bureaucratic and urban organization on the other.

These two sets of circumstances have colored the movement and have shaped the field of opportunities in which it moves. Anyone who wishes to learn from the experiences of the Spanish neighborhood movement must take into account the specificity of this historical conjuncture and this cultural space.

The neighborhood movement, like all social movements, was shaped by the context of its origins also in a more obvious historical sense. Franco regime laws made it paradoxically possible. At hand were also special resources that helped it to evade repression, for instance the so-called red priests and the exception the Church had from censorship. And there was the limited reach but important experience and energy of the underground parties; they had failed to topple the regime and therefore turned to new methods in the 1960s.

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5 In recent years, a movement "for recovery of historical memory" has grown up in Spain. Its aim is for people to learn about what really happened during and after the civil war, so that the crimes of the Franco regime will not be forgotten, and to find and bury the remains of some of the "disappeared". According to its enemies, this movement unnecessarily and vengefully opens old wounds that had healed; according to its representatives, the wounds are still festering, so for them it is necessary to set the record straight. See Silva and Macías 2003 or the web page of the association: www.memoriahistorica.org.
This coincided with the massive migrations from the villages to the cities, and the conditions people encountered in the cities, the material and social circumstances with which they found they had to live. Especially dwellings were bad, "infra-human" according to the common movement vocabulary. They were small (usually much smaller than what the migrants came from), without running water or electricity, far out from city centers, with non-existent transportation to work places. And insecure. The owners of the land and/or the police could move in at any time with bulldozers, destroying the belongings and the results of painstaking labor. Many migrants came to the cities not because they were actually starving in the villages, but because they had hopes for such amenities as health care, schools for their children, "modernization" of their lives (Molina 1984), and these hopes were thwarted for those who had to live in the shantytowns.

This situation, combined with the experience of having become an agent for change in one's own life by the act of moving, and the consequent feeling that one might be able to do more things, was explosive. Most obviously, it made for underground political parties and clandestine union organizations. But life was not only political struggle and the labor market. It was also the home, the children, the everyday issues of obtaining water, helping sick neighbors, drawing up provisional "streets" between the shacks, and so on. The place where one lived was a large part of life. So the neighborhood became a logical place to start for those who tried to improve their lives. Once the people of the shantytowns started developing this idea, it became easily transferable to more established barrios because of the two sets of shared circumstances (historical conjuncture and cultural construction of "barrio").

The neighborhood movement does not have a common worldview. There are discrepancies inside the movement on many issues. Some leaders complain of the lack of "ideological coherence" or "a shared project." But it does have a generally "progressive" outlook. And it has elaborated a series of experiences that now serve as references and legitimate certain types of action. Members have "learned", they say, that political parties are not to be trusted, that "if you don't cry you don't eat" (i.e. you have to protest), and that protest actions can be successful even under adverse circumstances. In other words, there is an ongoing elaboration of a discourse, building on actual experiences as well as on convergent analyses and interpretations of issues. In this more approximate sense, there is a shared project.

Internal norms of behavior and a repertoire of methods have been created in the same way and throughout the history of the movement. Everyone agrees that using the movement as a springboard for a personal career is negative; activists should not mix the cause with personal goals, because then the cause might lose out. Everyone agrees that using the movement in the service of other causes is even worse, morally and politically. Especially political parties have been the great sinners on this count. The internal norms that have evolved the most are the ones that have to do with how to behave in meetings: asking for the floor, chairing a meeting, respecting turn-taking, and so on. There was little knowledge of parliamentary procedure when the movement began, so meetings were chaotic; now norms exist. But they have little to do with what is written down as official statutes. What counts is what experience has shown to be workable.

New relationships among members have evolved, first as the associations brought together neighbors, then as representatives were elected to attend meetings with people from other associations, when the associations began federating. The bonds and ties between members are in constant flux. Alliances, treason, friendships, enmities, and ambiguities are the order of the day.

Social movements often create new opportunity structures. The neighborhood movement has as yet hardly offered its members any salaried posts, and the road from the neighborhood movement to political power of other kinds has been neither straight nor common. But some leaders have traveled it. Especially during the years of Transition, when the neighborhood movement was at its height of influence and when there was a lack of leaders in most other

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6 Let me mention just a few persons with prominent political careers who started out in barrio work: Matilde Fernández, who later became minister of social affairs; Isabel Vilallonga who reached the top level of municipal politics in Madrid; Joan Lerma who was the president of the Valencian Community for many years; and Julio Anguita who became mayor of Cordova and later the leader of Izquierda Unida for all of Spain.
organizations, the leaders of the neighborhood movement were often tempted to move on to political parties or unions or local bureaucracies. Later the road grew longer and more crooked.

When the PSOE party moved in, a new pattern emerged: people came from the party and worked in the neighborhood movement for a few years to earn merits in order to return to a career at higher levels inside the party. Since the PSOE had municipal power in many places, such a career was also often a career in local bureaucracies or government structures.

For most movement members, however, there are no material benefits at all. It is experienced as an insult and an irony, often commented on, that many people outside the movement interpret activists' dedication as self-interest. "If they do all of that, they must be getting something out of it," is the cynical and skeptical interpretation non-members often make of members' commitment, and the people inside the movement know it and feel hurt but self-righteous: "If they only knew how much I work, and for nothing! It even costs me money!" They do get something in return, they usually say, but that something is immaterial and therefore not considered immoral: satisfaction, knowledge, and a wide personal network. They do not obtain what some of their neighbors suspect: money, positions, kick-offs, first choices for summer camps for their children or advance information on job openings. There is certainly a grey area between such "immoral" benefits and the "moral" ones of knowledge and networks, but this is not discussed, either inside or outside the movement; it is culturally invisible.

Sztompka distinguishes between movements initiated from below and from above. The neighborhood movement is clearly initiated from below. This was so from the start in spite of the influence and support from underground political parties and some religious organizations. And it continues to be so, in spite of everything. It is truly a grassroots movement in its origins, in its organization, in its general atmosphere, in its local activities and in most of its goals. It looks less grassroots-like if you talk to high-level leaders or read the CAVE publications. It is probably conceived in instrumental ways in the strategic planning inside the political parties. Nobody knows what will happen in the future. But during my fieldwork it was still what it had been from the beginning, something close to home, something anyone could join without feeling out of place, something for and of the barrio.

That view was summed up in the interview that follows.

Pilar's words

To quote the words of Pilar Navarro is for me to give momentary voice to a great fighter who is no longer among us, and through her to give tribute to the many formidable women in the movement who must remain anonymous. Among the infinitely varied personalities in the neighborhood movement, Pilar was representative of the staunch and steadfast kind. Her words reflect a common interpretation of work in the neighborhood movement. They are another way of saying what I described in the previous section.

Pilar began by telling the story of her childhood in a small Castilian village and her early rebellion against the stifling atmosphere of the village, then she went on to describe how she studied to be a school teacher and got a job in Barcelona, how she learnt new things about politics there, how she met her husband and moved to Valencia, then to a village in Andalusia, where she used her position as village teacher to confront the mayor about some basic demands of the villagers, and finally back to Valencia, where she had two daughters, and how she at each and every stage of her life had questioned things and managed to find ways of translating her personal ideas to political struggles. Towards the end of the interview, we had the following exchange:

BMT: You are evidently a fighter. You don't keep quiet. Wherever you have been, you have been involved in things. All sorts of things. But the place where you have been most active is the neighborhood movement. Why?

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7 Pilar Navarro Bertolín died of cancer in 1998, at the age of 47. She had recently been president of the neighborhood association of Benimaclet, Valencia. Her husband gave me permission to publish this interview (from 1995) with her real name. It was taped and transcribed. The part quoted here is translated by me but not otherwise edited.
PN: Because of its proximity and because the neighborhood movement works with everyday nearby problems. The truth is that I have very limited time, I could not dedicate myself to party politics. Sometimes when I think about it (short comment on her health), and the truth is that the meetings are very inefficient. Which means a lot of time sitting on a chair, and no, I don't want that. I don't want that. So then, just to be one of a number, because you are convinced by the ideas and so on, well, that's not it. That's why I don't take that step. The truth is I don't want to commit myself to more things.

BMT: So it is not that you want to stay independent on purpose, because... How do you look at work in the neighborhood movement? Like a great experiment...? Like politics at the grass roots...? Another way of doing politics...?

PN: It is another way of doing politics. The thing is that it is not... There are not a lot of people in it, because lately a lot has been done against the neighborhood associations and very little in favor of them. So they have lost prestige. I think there has been a PSOE campaign to discredit them. They (PSOE) say now that they are in the neighborhood associations, but the truth is that they have not done a lot for them. The great struggles of the neighborhood associations have been carried out in the barrios; they have been their own struggles. And yet, it has not given them the recognition they wanted. Today everyone ought to be present in the neighborhood associations. If not physically, because people have a lot to do, work and so on, but at least offering trust, offering support. That is not the case, however. (Something inaudible about how things used to be better.) And I think that this is a consequence of the negative policy, of campaigns to discredit the movement, and so on. But we were saying, why don't I go into larger contexts? Probably because I think I am limited. I am limited by work, and because I don't want to give up my personal things, reading and so forth. So then, this is a platform near my home; it makes it possible for me to combine it with everything else. I know I cannot reach larger contexts in this way. Nor do I want to. Nor do I want to. I don't know how to express this... (BMT makes a short comment of support) I want to obtain some social recognition, and to do something for my people, and I can see that this is one vehicle, one way, one possibility.

BMT: Yes, right. What do you see, what do you want to accomplish, what does the neighborhood movement or this neighborhood association have... what can one do... what is in it for you?

PN: What is in it for me? (Ironic laughter.) I don't know what there is for me! (She continues with lots of laughter in her voice) I think sometimes it means work, effort and so on... Sometimes you feel that...

BMT: But to what ends?

PN: ... that organizing a carnival sometimes does not make much sense, because people participate, they get out into the street and dress up as whatever, and then they go back home, and if they had an idea of the association, then they continue having that same idea. But: I think social change comes little by little. And so, well, little by little... well... people will understand this democratic style, and they will understand that things are changed from below, and if we don't want (reference to a local problem), then all of us must set to work, all of us must collaborate, all of us must learn, all of us must demonstrate... And things must change from the bottom up, not from the top down. And nothing has ever been given us for nothing. Never. And if the barrios are now better than they used to be (she changes her mind in mid-sentence)... they are not really much better, probably because we did not mobilize sufficiently. There are certain issues we have not worked much with. Because we need more time, there are too few of us... But Benimaclet (her barrio) needs a lot more things, for example sports areas, for example a civic center, for example a library, for example... (inaudible)... and that is why, since I have to contribute in some way, and I know that this is close to me and concerns me and I know how to work with it, that is where I am. I told you the other day that I work mostly with educational issues.
BMT: Which is your thing, sure.

PN: And that is how I managed to (short reference to a recent accomplishment). But we don't do a lot there either, you know, because everybody has too much to do, with work and so on.

BMT: That is one disadvantage with the neighborhood movement, that it is difficult to be efficient, because there are no employees, not many people with sufficient preparation... But there is another side to it, which is that it is authentically a grassroots movement, it has a base the political parties do not have.

PN: And from the bottom up!

BMT: And from the bottom up. And for me, that is what makes me continue believing in the movement, in spite of everything I see.

PN (with serious emphasis): When I go to the Benicalap park – you know I contributed my grain of sand to that, like a lot of other neighbors, right – I feel satisfied, because we accomplished that, it was accomplished in that manner. Because there were a lot of people working for it and wanting it that way. If it had been just given to us... well, later of course there was the usual opportunism, in the elections, they took advantage of the moment to make it seem... But anyway, that is also part of the game.

BMT: And you, what do you plan to do? I imagine you plan to continue, or...

PN: Oh yes!

BMT: Or do you plan to take a break in a few years?

PN: Well, in a few years – that I cannot know! Because one of my great dreams is to travel! (So we talked about her dreams and her lack of money and ended the interview laughing about lotteries.)

Pilar's statement exemplifies some major themes in the discourse on the movement one hears from people of her kind: women with long experience of political struggles, women with clear ideas of what the neighborhood movement is and could be, but who still see themselves above all as barrio women, not prepared to take the step into "larger" political contexts. Men in similar situations say similar things.

Pilar gave the most common argument women in the neighborhood movement give for participating in it: it is something close to home; it is something that does not take too much time, so you can do it without sacrificing other interests (Pilar mentioned reading, most women mention their children); and it is about everyday problems that you understand, and which you feel no one else cares about. Therefore, you want to contribute to the work of the neighborhood association, which does care. The word *contribute* is a key symbol, as we have seen. You want to offer your grain of sand, as Pilar said.

And a grain of sand is what it is, they insist. Both women and men in the movement emphasize that the collective effort is what gets results; what one person does is not unimportant but just a small part, you must never forget all the others. Both women and men speak like this; it is a central part of movement ideology and discourse. But women underline more emphatically

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8 Benicalap is a large peripheral barrio of Valencia. According to various Valencian informants, the barrio park was created on the initiative of the neighborhood association of that barrio. It managed to convince the Town Council to set aside a large plot of land and to hire a team of technical experts to translate the wishes of the inhabitants into feasible plans. The neighborhood association carried out surveys in the barrio to gather information on what the people wanted in the park and how they wanted to use it. Once the plans were reasonably advanced there was a public exposition of the suggestions, and the inhabitants of the barrio could once again voice their opinions. The park was inaugurated in 1982. It has a pool, sports areas, play grounds for children, trees to give shade, winding footpaths and plenty of benches.
that one reason they do not want to take the step to "real politics" (party politics) is that they are not interested in a political career. Even women who, like Pilar, would be capable of it and do not reject it out of hand, say so. If you are not interested in a career, but only in improving society, then "real" politics is not the most efficacious way, they say.

In just about every interview I made, there was some reference to the tense relationship between the movement and political parties. Women, more than men, found party politics more inefficient than the neighborhood movement style. This probably has to do with different views of political work that clash and compete, but also with different levels of concreteness. In general, Spanish women have been socialized to see small problems and solve them before they grow big. They like to manage everyday problems, they do not feel they need any political ideology to do that, and they like practical work for the well being of others better than abstract analysis and long-term strategies. This is especially true of the most active, the most “revolutionary“ people in the movement. They disdain “sitting on a chair“, as Pilar expressed it. Meetings in the neighborhood movement are long and inefficient, too, but the connection to practical, concrete problems and events is always more direct than in a political party.

The interview also illustrates a view of the world of politics. It is usually seen as working from the top down, i.e. as a hierarchical and authoritarian world. The neighborhood movement is different: it is unique in its emphasis on the base and its contact with "ordinary" people. Which of course entails disadvantages, like the lack of people with time to spare, and the lack of people with sufficient schooling and experience to carry out certain tasks that are necessary in political work.

Both Pilar and I expressed another common feeling: that this movement has lost energy and prestige. But it is still there, and we want to defend it, in spite of all the drawbacks and weaknesses. It seems indispensable, because what it does is important and no one else will do it.

**Movement traits as they affect gender**

We have seen a number of testimonies and arguments proffered by individuals with different perspectives on the workings of gender in the neighborhood movement. To obtain a more systematic picture, let us look at Joan Acker's suggestions, developed for the purpose of studying gender in organizations: 1. The routine practices that constitute the activities of an association or federation. 2. The images, rationales and ideologies that explain and legitimize the structure and the activities. 3. The ongoing interactions of participants. 4. The processes through which individuals cope with organizational life and understand themselves in relation to their work (Acker 1999).

1. **Routine practices.**

Everyday activities in the neighborhood movement consist above all of meetings in the local associations and federations. Meetings with professional politicians, administrators and journalists are also fairly common and necessary, as are protest actions. We have seen how experienced activists are often very accomplished at such practical chores as collecting signatures, putting up posters, organizing a demonstration or a protest meeting. The day-to-day survival of an association also presents activists with such tasks as writing minutes and keeping track of money. The festive aspect, too, requires certain routines, and there are more and more things to do in connection with social work, volunteer service, study activities.

All of these tasks used to be somewhat gendered. In the early 1970s this was invisible, since most activists were male, and the few women activists were exceptional persons, so whatever they did was not seen as feminine but as related to their special personalities. Later, as more women became activists, there was probably a tendency towards a gendered division of tasks along the lines that the general gender order made look "natural" and both women's and men's habitus made feel most comfortable and efficient. To simplify: men were presidents and treasurers and in charge of urban planning, women were secretaries and in charge of education and culture. But the movement was sufficiently counter-cultural to reflect on this tendency and oppose it as reactionary. To the limited extent that it was still there during my fieldwork period, it was usually denied. It was not considered legitimate. And it was disappearing.
2. Representations and legitimations.

The images, rationales and ideologies that explained and legitimized the neighborhood movement were not about gender. A key symbol was "person", which implied that human beings should not be categorized according to gender. One could say that the movement was feminist in the sense that it opposed inequality on the grounds of gender. This was not its main objective, to be sure, but many activists argued that a leftist movement by definition opposes all kinds of inequality. The movement as a whole was not very gender aware, however; most activities had little or nothing to do with gender, and the term feminism was avoided.

We have seen that the movement is about urban space as lived-in-space. It takes the point of view of inhabitants of barrios. To the extent that urban space is conceptualized as "the street", and to the extent that the opposition home-street is still gendered, one would think that the movement would be gendered as male by its very nature. It was, in the early years, and it is still gendered male in the minds of many in those places where the gender order as a whole is still largely complementary. In this study, Cordova, Linares and in some sense Vigo.

However, it is a movement that sets up goals of social change, and it is not limited to any one definition of what sort of social change is desirable. The directions and ideologies of the movement are worked out in practice, as things come up. Anything that is good for barrio people, as interpreted by movement activists, becomes a goal for the movement; anything that is harmful for barrio life is set up as a reivindicación or carencia, i.e. something to be worked with, something for which solutions should be proposed. Abstract analysis is not sought; what is important is to see to it that reality really changes. This pragmatic attitude comes close to women's traditional habitus in this type of society.

The genderization of the neighborhood movement has gone through different phases: almost all male, increasingly female, almost perfect balance and perhaps by 2003 approaching gender neutrality. It has also been shaped by other processes parallel in time: urbanization, migrations, democratization, increasing living standards, etc. The result is a space where gender counts for little, in contrast to surrounding society but in consonance with general trends in surrounding society. To be sure, women and men did not have equal possibilities to participate, and those that did participate did not have identical perspectives. But gender was conceived as an old-fashioned principle of social organization that should not count.

At least this was so in big cities and in towns where the movement had had time to mature or where other local circumstances had mitigated gender tensions. Where overall genderization had been strong and pervasive, however (for instance in both Cordova and Vigo, in spite of the many contrasts between their gender orders in other ways), it had clashed sharply with the progressive ideologies of recent decades, and this had been particularly noticeable in the neighborhood movement. It constitutes an ambiguous space, neither public nor private, and this clashes with ingrained dispositions that require a clear dichotomy public/private and a clear parallel between that and the gender dichotomy male/female. In such places, gender did count in the movement, and this caused conflict, it could not be taken in stride, it could not be handled in traditional ways nor could it be handled easily along the otherwise dominant ideological and practical lines of the movement. Linares was one clear example.

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9 To clarify: There were now close to equal proportions of women and men in the movement (seen as a whole for all of Spain), and it was not gendered male as strongly as most other political contexts, but gender was not a completely irrelevant factor. In my usage, gender-neutral and gender-mixed are not synonymous concepts; a distinction should be made between degree of genderization and degree of segregation. The former has to do with cultural construction, the latter with empirical description. A gender neutral context is one in which a person's gender is considered irrelevant information. A gender mixed context is one in which persons of two or more gender categories are present, whether by chance or design. A non-gendered context might be mixed, or it might not (that is a matter of chance). If a mixed context is not gendered, there is no logical problem; that is what could be expected. If it is gendered, that is if it is gender marked even though persons of other genders are present, this might be because some persons oppose the genderization and invade the context, or it might be that there are differently gendered sub-contexts within a context that is not gendered as a whole. An example of the first case is a man in a kitchen in Spain. An example of the second case is a cafeteria, which both women and men feel equally free to enter, but where the area close to the bar is gendered masculine, while the women sit at the tables, which are usually not gendered at all, or sometimes gendered feminine. The neighborhood movement is hazily gendered because it is changing from being strongly gendered and barely mixed to being weakly gendered and completely mixed.
3. Interactions of participants.

Women and men inevitably brought their habituses with them into the activities of the movement. We have seen that men took up more space, behaved in ways that made it difficult for women to make themselves heard and get support for their suggestions, etc. Women's dispositions were more supportive and relational. In other words, and as one would expect, the general gender order influenced what happened in the movement.

But the process was two-way. The fact that women and men met in approximately equal numbers in many contexts within the neighborhood movement meant that two gendered habituses, that used to meet only in kin contexts or in hierarchical situations in the labor market, now had to find ways of cooperating and understanding each other in the movement. This must in the long run affect the gender order as a whole.

It must also affect the political order. The fact that there now existed a political context where women's voices were heard and women's dispositions influenced outcomes, and that this context was not a women's context but a mixed one, was a new factor that could not help but having consequences for the political order as a whole.

During the time that elapsed between 1994 and 2003 (beginning and end of this study) things certainly did change. Naturally, there were several other processes at work that favored the degendering of the political order, such as women's increasing participation in the labor market and growing presence in higher education. But if the neighborhood movement had not existed, this might have been mostly an elite phenomenon, as has happened in other historical conjunctures (Borreguero et al 1986, Capel Martínez 1986, Folguera 1988, Garrido et al 1997, Scanlon 1976). Now, degenderization was at least understood and largely approved throughout society.

We have also seen that the generally informal, friendly, down-to-earth and pragmatic style of interaction in the movement facilitated the incorporation of women.

4. Processes through which individuals cope with organizational life and understand themselves in relation to their work.

There were certainly problems for individual women and men in this complex weave of conflicts, cooperation and ideological creativity. Both individual and collective stories in this book illustrate that people did cope, in practice, but paid a price of confusion and conflict in both private and public life. My observations coincide with those of Acker: "In my experience, most people cope and say little, but sometimes, under some conditions, coping turns into organization." (1999)

One way of turning coping with gender into organization, within the movement, was to organize women's groups, under whatever name. Another way might be to introduce quotas, as some political parties had done. That had not been tried in the neighborhood movement, to my knowledge, and it would clash with its anti-bureaucratic ways. A third method, the most common one, and perhaps the most effective one in the long run, was to negotiate gender tenaciously in everyday situations: refusing the genderization of tasks, teasing people who held "traditional" gender opinions, neutralizing gendered spaces, and so on. This is not organization in the usual sense, but in due time it will probably turn into a set of norms and expectations. That is, it will turn into a gender regime, i.e. a way of managing and understanding gender that is the established way in a given social institution (Connell 1987).

If one gender regime does not concur with other gender regimes in a given society, contradictions and tensions will be produced, Connell predicts. And that is what we have seen in this study. Since contradictions and tensions are bothersome to live with, it can be expected that they will be resolved, somehow, sooner or later. Thus they produce dynamic effects. Therefore I am convinced that the gender regime of the neighborhood movement in its interaction with other social structures will contribute to a gradual and probably not complete but nevertheless real degendering of urban Spanish life.

Such interaction between abstract entities comes about through the actions of human beings, of course. Processes of cultural change are fueled especially by cultural negotiation. The neighborhood movement is one of many fora for cultural negotiation in urban Spain and one of the few where working class women can reach outside kin contexts.
Power, gender and cultural negotiations

One of the most pressing issues for feminist theory, especially for its anthropological version, is: How can we recognize and describe that which is related to power?

Within this big issue, there are sub-questions, such as: What constitutes inequality and what is just difference? Which resources are especially crucial for the capacity of the various categories recognized in a certain time and place to act in their own interest or even to formulate an interest of their own? What other resources influence the access to the decisive resources, and how are different kinds of resources interconnected? How do the affected individuals and groups themselves interpret the patterns of power? How much and in what ways do these interpretations vary between different categories among the affected? Can an outsider perhaps distinguish aspects of power that are culturally invisible (doxic) for all directly affected?

All of this varies with time and place. The variations constitute a crucial study object for feminist history and anthropology, and these disciplines have a special responsibility to point out that variations exist, since some theories generalize on the basis of data from only some times and places (usually close to the theorists' own). But in all probability resources also exist that play a prominent role always and everywhere. If we want to describe some power resource in a universally valid way it must be defined on a high level of abstraction. "Money" is inadequate, but perhaps "material resources" will do. "Many friends" is not abstract enough, nor is "good contacts", but "social capital" may be.

One kind of power resource that is probably universal is that which we can call "access to cultural negotiations" (Hannerz 1992, Thurén 1998 and 2002). By the term cultural negotiations I refer to processes that lead to cultural and social reproduction; the term emphasizes that reproduction is not automatic but always depends on the actions of many actors, and it also points to the fact that reproduction is never perfect, among other things because there are always different ideas that work themselves out in interaction. In other words, cultural complexity entails cultural dynamism (Bourdieu 1977, Connell 1987, Giddens 1979). Cultural negotiations are all those actions that mean something in the context in question, and that have consequences, and that other actors therefore take into consideration for their own actions, at whatever level of awareness. They consist of words and rhythms, dress and movement, laughter and silence, attention and inattention, emotional reactions, and anything else that influences people's dispositions. In each time and place there are varying forms, norms and arenas for cultural negotiations. Some are legitimate, such as political debates or works of art; others are illegitimate, such as gossip or demonstrative norm breaking.

Cultural negotiations are always going on, in all societies, at all times, in associations and everyday conversations, in education and the judicial system, in political decision-making and in all sorts of debates. They are ever present in everyday actions of all kinds. In periods of fast or deep change, the negotiations become visible as such. This has been the case in Spain during recent decades.

As Spanish society becomes ever more urbanized and socially complex, the arenas for cultural negotiation become more numerous, and arenas are even created for fora for debate. Women and men meet and talk at their work places and at social gatherings, as always, but such fora become more and more gender-mixed, which means that what is said there has new consequences. Women and men also meet more often than they used to in trade unions and

My use of the concept cultural negotiation does not refer to explicit deliberations between different standpoints in order to reach consensus or solve conflicts in a democratic way, such as Habermas recommends (1996), and such as political science usually studies. Cultural negotiation is a much more general process, constantly going on in all sorts of situations, and by means of all sorts of symbols, not only words. But since I argue that access to fora for cultural negotiation is a power resource, I am also arguing that some kinds of negotiations, in certain kinds of contexts, have more impact than others, and this means in turn that the issue of how such contexts are defined (norms of behavior, limits in time, space and types of persons present, purposes) is a democratic issue, to be resolved preferably in a democratic manner. Thus, although indirectly, Young's arguments for a communicative democracy and the concomitant acceptance of social differences, including differences of styles of communication, are relevant for my argument (Young 1997).
political parties, the number of associations of all types is increasing, and the associations are becoming increasingly gender neutral or at least mixed.

Participation in the neighborhood movement is one way of taking part in cultural negotiation, and it is much more accessible for barrio people than such more recognized fora as media debates or political parties. And it is almost as accessible for women as for men. The neighborhood movement is a lot more than just a forum for cultural negotiation, but among other things it functions as one, and an accessible one, and activists can use it to go on to others.

Within the neighborhood movement the positive meaning of "change" is not doubted. But the meaning and significance of many other matters must be debated. And the associations function as fora for a more general cultural task, that of developing ideas about the substance of change. For each issue, the questions asked are: What is happening exactly, what do we think of it, what is good and bad, what is sustained and what is temporary, etc. It is vital for women to participate in such weighty cultural negotiations; all categories should contribute their various perspectives. In society as a whole, there are specific women's fora, and there are also gender-marked men's fora. But the neighborhood associations are fora where women and men meet and influence each other's outlooks.

There are gendered restrictions in the movement, to be sure. As we have seen, men talk more, listen to each other more than to women, have preferential power to define issues, etc. Women make efforts not to "gossip," since that is seen as something "traditional" women do, so the women activists want to be more "advanced," and this hampers their influence to some extent, even as they gain legitimacy in other ways. The meeting hours are often inconvenient for women, and there are other practical limitations. But, as we saw in chapter 5, there are also many aspects of interaction in the movement that make it almost as easy for women as for men to speak and act once there.

At least during the meetings. But a lot happens at the bar after the meetings, too; not just implicit cultural negotiation in general, but also often explicit negotiations directly related to association work.

Spanish women are beginning to discover that it is risky not to come along to the bar after the meeting in the association or the party. Men go as a matter of course, it is their right and habit. It is in the bar that alliances are formed and reformed, that is where people chat, that is where arguments are tried out informally so that the risk you take when you launch them during a meeting is minimized. The women want to go, they try to go, they may know they should go – but usually they do not, because they have to go home and get dinner on the table, put the kids to bed and make sure the husband does not get nervous about their being out late.

An added difficulty is that women are not as comfortable in the bar context as men are, even when they do go. Downtown cafeterias are gender-neutral nowadays, but the bars in the barrios continue to be strongly marked as male spaces.

All of this places women at a disadvantage in moments of tension or crucial decisions in the association.

If women and men have different kinds and different amounts of access to fora for cultural negotiations, they will evidently have different possibilities to influence such negotiations. In consequence, the differences between women's and men's experiences will be reproduced through the difference in their participation in cultural negotiations. And this in turn has consequences for patterns of power in all areas of social life.11

On the level of cultural and social processes, some categories are more active than others in negotiations of all sorts, and some participate in more influential negotiations than others. Those habituses that characterize the most influential groups will have the most far-reaching impact on the processes of change.

Any individual carries a load of experiences that she interprets through a filter that has grown out of her experiences in interaction with the sets of discourses that surround her. All complexes of ideas with which she enters into contact become experiences for her, and all her experiences, in a wide sense of the word, interact with each other and influence her interpretations of what happens. This is what Bourdieu calls habitus.

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11 For this reason I consider it theoretically and politically urgent to study ambiguous semi-public spaces, such as Spanish bars, from the point of view of cultural negotiations. Cf. Thurén 1998 and 2002.
Thus, if an individual habitus is built on experiences, and if an essential part of a person's experiences consists of which messages she receives and which ones she herself formulates and expresses, then the set of discourse contexts in which she participates is decisive for who she is and how she will want to act.

If there are differences between women and men as to which discourse contexts they have access to, participate in or enter into passive contact with, that will have consequences for the power structure in the gender order. Evidently, the same thing goes for class and other hierarchical categorizations that are relevant in the society in question.

From this theoretical perspective, then, we can see that the neighborhood movement is a factor in the processes of social and cultural reproduction. It plays a humble role on the recognized political arena, and for Spanish political science it has been close to invisible. But it plays an important role as an arena for cultural negotiations where the voices of categories that usually have little say are somewhat amplified and where especially women's lives, experiences, habituses and self-images change. And this has political consequences.

If it is true, as many theorists of democracy argue in various ways (e.g. Benhabib, Habermas, Mouffe, Landes and other articles in Benhabib 1996), that a public sphere of debate is an essential minimum requirement for democracy in modern plural societies, then no category of persons should be excluded. Not everyone can participate in each and every debate and each and every political context, but there should be a variety of contexts, with different methods and norms, so that everyone can participate comfortably and effectively in at least some of them. For some category, e.g. women, to be confined (as a cultural ideal, if never totally in practice) to very small contexts, such as family life, is for them to be deprived of the basic democratic right to influence society, and for society as a whole to be deprived of their perspectives. It is also desirable that the public sphere of deliberations should include not just more or less specialized contexts, but also general ones, where all sorts of issues can be treated, without these contexts having to conform to the norms of political parties or be of restricted practical access (like for instance the mass media). Generalized political movements, such as the neighborhood movement, to which persons who feel uncomfortable in more specialized or professional contexts feel that they have easy access are therefore crucial. The neighborhood movement is but one experiment along these lines. But as an experiment, it constitutes important proof of how such a context might work.

Changes between 1994 and 2002

Let me now briefly sum up the main changes in movement characteristics between the two periods of fieldwork (1994–95 and 2002–3).

According to many activists, at all levels, the movement was now stronger than ever. Membership kept growing, the organizational pyramid was settling into adequate forms, and the many difficulties that had been overcome had meant an accumulation of experience that translated into strength, determination and know-how. The pessimism that dominated in 1995 was still discernible in 2002 but much weaker. However, there was still a problem with renovation of activists. In all six towns and cities, I met mostly the same people as the first time around.

The political parties were less interested in the movement than they used to be, probably because they now had more members of their own and so less need to exploit other organizations. Even so, few if any parties came anywhere near the membership numbers of the neighborhood movement, nor did they have such functioning channels to the grassroots.12

During the years the Partido Popular governed Spain (1996–2004), the PSOE adopted a more critical stance to party power, and this made it act in less arrogant ways inside the neighborhood movement (or so said some of my informants).

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12 In 1984, the six largest political parties had a total of 416,388 members (of which 21% were women). In 2002 the six parties that were then the largest ones had a total of 1,265,627 (of which 31.59% were women) (Las mujeres en cifras 2003). That is, the number of persons affiliated to political parties had tripled. But the total party membership in the country was still smaller than the membership of the neighborhood movement.
The proportion of women had increased at all levels. Since some feminist studies have found that women are sometimes allowed to move in when power moves elsewhere, one might wonder if this was a sign of the diminishing influence of the movement. The neighborhood movement was, in fact, probably less important, politically, than it used to be. The optimist activists were right to see improvement if they thought of internal organization and total membership figures, but the media and the public in general seemed to pay ever less attention to the movement. This could be one reason that there was more room for women. But it was still significant enough for a lot of men to be interested (the proportions were still around half and half), so the women had moved in not so much because of a void left by men as because of changes in the gender order as a whole. But there was evidently a risk that women may, once again, come to spend a lot of energy in an unfruitful domain.

In 2002 there were still more women at the bottom rungs and fewer higher up in the organizational pyramid, but the barrier for women had moved upwards. In 1995, the typical difficulty was for a woman to be elected as a representative from her barrio to the federation of her town or city; that barrier was now weak, and instead the step yet to be taken was for a reasonable number of women to represent their federation in a regional confederation or at the statewide level.

Gender issues were important and talked about. The most debated one in 2002–2003 was gender violence. It had become easier to present feminist arguments, because the movement discourse that held that gender equity is an important part of the move towards a modern and progressive society was now even more hegemonic than eight years earlier, inside the movement and outside. But many men were still uncomfortable with such viewpoints and tried hard to find faults. ("Where did you get those statistics? That can't be so! I don't know any men who batter their wives! I don't believe it has ever happened in this barrio. But don't get me wrong, of course I am against violence!" or "Of course I don't think husbands should dominate their wives. Nor the other way around, eh! Actually, I think it is much more common for wives to dominate their husbands.")

However, in comparison to a few years earlier, and in comparison to other issues, gender issues were less fashionable. Issues of peace and globalization drew more attention when it came to ideological debates. And when it came to "sectorial" divisions within the movement, age was seen as much more of a problem. Women may be somewhat underrepresented, but the category that is almost wholly absent is youth, the activists said.

Movement discourses continued to distance themselves from the revolutionary style. For over a decade now the expressed aims had been decreasingly about reivindicaciones and increasingly about offering service. On higher levels (federations and confederations), the tendency had been to create large projects and even businesses, e.g. housing cooperatives. The business discourse had even penetrated the barrio level in some cases. The arguments for creating projects and businesses were not anti-reivindicación. The idea was, rather, that the movement cannot survive on the tiny membership dues, so when conservative local governments refuse subsidies, most associations cannot even afford to rent premises. Consequently it is necessary to find other ways of earning money. And that is actually all for the better, many said. "You cannot be truly critical if you depend on subsidies."

But there was a lot of controversy around the issue of "management". Apart from the big projects, always controversial, some barrio associations or federations took on the management of such services as sports facilities or care for elderly people. Some activists thought that such responsibilities were burdensome but necessary, since otherwise the services would not exist. Others felt they offered opportunities to demonstrate the capacities of the movement. "Of course

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13 But a scandal affecting the statewide confederation, CAVE, in 2003, may have reversed this tendency, at least for the time being. I do not have sufficient information on the events to describe them, nor are they important for my argument. There seems to have been sloppy management of big projects that led to huge debts and to having to lay off a number of project employees. CAVE was on the brink of bankruptcy. When I finished the second round of fieldwork, in February 2003, it was not clear how the problem would be solved. In 2007 a new organization with similar name and functions was launched, see Congreso CEAV 2007. It had at that moment 156 member federations and confederations.
we can do that! We have the knowledge and the experience!" Others again felt that the movement was losing its reivindicativo heart. "The more you manage, the less you criticize."

Some educational services that barrio associations had been offering were now also offered by the so-called popular universities, a form of state adult education. For some activists this spelled competition and loss of a valuable activity that attracted people to the associations and generated some income. For others it meant emancipation from an onerous duty that the movement had had to take on because no one else did, so now the movement would be free to dedicate its energies to its core activities.

As an institution, the movement seemed to stabilize. To use Victor Turner's words, it was losing its communitas and moving into a phase of structure (Turner 1974/1969). For adult Spaniards under 30–40 years of age, the neighborhood movement was not an accomplishment but something that had always been there. It may be turning into something like old established movements in other countries, such as trade unions or temperance movements in northern Europe, entities that most people think of as semi-official, there to give service, something you find it normal to pay dues to, but not something you yourself have to participate in for it to exist.

To sum up the situation in 2003:

The neighborhood movement had become a fact of social and political life. This may make it less radical and less inventive and more distant from the grass roots. But it also means that it is not very likely to disappear.

It had provided itself with some instruments for self-reflection. There were14 some intellectual offshoots of the movement, such as the magazine Salida, the research units Red CIMS (Red de Colectivos y Movimientos Sociales) and CIDUR (Centro de Investigación y Documentación Urbana y Rural), the Hugo Zárate Foundation, and others. Movement conferences were sometimes organized for reflection, not just for practical politics. There was serious discussion on what the movement could become, and if and in what way it should participate in state level politics. There was an awareness of the need to continue experimenting to avoid loss of momentum.

Such reflection took place far away from everyday barrio concerns most of the time. But the movement continued to have true grass roots. Membership was shrinking in some places, but growing in others. The movement continued to be close to its constituency in a way political parties were not. The neighborhood movement was far from an elite phenomenon. It was, on the contrary, one of its weaknesses that it did not have a strong leadership. It was hampered by the fact that almost all work was unpaid, most activists had little schooling (but this was one factor that was changing fast, especially at higher levels of the organizational pyramid), and it was difficult to legitimate long-term strategies within the movement, since most activists were mainly interested in immediate problems. The structure was from the bottom up; no association was obliged to follow recommendations from higher levels. From the point of view of professional politicians, such factors made the movement look ineffective, amateurish, undefined, and obtuse. But from another point of view, these weaknesses were strengths: the movement was truly democratic. It was not inoculated against corruption and abuses of power, to be sure, and there were cases of entrenched groups of leaders who treated the movement as if it were their private turf. But it suffered much less from such evils than most other Spanish organizations. And even if it was institutionalizing, it had not completely lost its capacity to surprise and innovate.

For all of these reasons, the movement may survive. It may even grow stronger. And women will then, in all probability, continue to use it as an instrument for invasion of the sphere of politics. I can see no danger at all that the proportion of women activists will diminish. On the contrary, the fact that there are now many women activists will make it easier for even more to join. What they will do, with what motivations and with what effects, only time will tell. That their presence will have some effect on the gender order seems evident, and as long as the key analogy woman:home::man:street continues to have any meaning at all, barrio activities will be one suitable place to work on the subversion of it.

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14 Or had been – some of them were short-lived.