

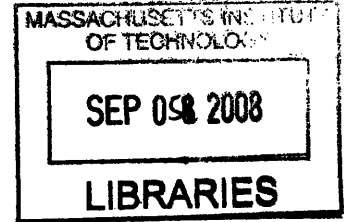
What's happening to my neighborhood?

Lessons learned about civic engagement from case studies of community development initiatives

By

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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at the

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on August 18, 2008
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Thesis Advisor: Xavier de Souza Briggs, Professor of Sociology and Urban Planning
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ABSTRACT

What does it take to create an active and engaged population that can be successfully integrated into decision-making that affect its communities? Planners and public officials must answer this question when developing public policies or planning community development interventions. This thesis analyzes two cases in which community development activities were each undertaken under a specific set of social, cultural, political and economic conditions that shaped the context of civic engagement. The case studies are set in Lawrence, (a medium-sized city in Northern Massachusetts that is home to many immigrants) and Mexico City's Centro Historico (a neighborhood in the heart of one of the largest cities in the world). I use a mixed-method approach that includes in-depth interviews with key informants, direct observation on the ground in each community, review of media and other documentary sources and a review of distinct approaches to analyzing public participation and civic engagement in different contexts.

This thesis discusses rapid changes that each community has undergone at a local level in the last 20-30 years, as well as the effects of regional, national and global trends. Next, the thesis describes public participation strategies implemented as part of key interventions in each community. In Lawrence, the analysis is focused on particularly inclusive and empowering public participation strategies employed by non-profit organizations. In Mexico City, community development activities have been primarily implemented by the municipal government and the private sector and the public participation strategies were more limited and dis-empowering. I show how such strategies interacted with the broader context of civic engagement, using a three-part framework: the organizational level, project level and individual level. My analysis suggests that in addition to efficiency and effectiveness, organizational and project objectives should also be measured by the degree to which they ensure long-term sustainability by promoting broader civic engagement. This might mean the increased capacity of grassroots organizations to integrate themselves into the community development process, a breaking-down of the vertical power relations that existed in within a community and a leadership development strategy that is successful at developing a consciousness of civic engagement among community members.

Beyond corroborating planning's well-established notion that public participation may contribute to the short-term success of a project in a community, I show how it may also shape public participation efforts in the future by improving the broader context of civic engagement.

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- Rafael Polanco, who went out of his way to give me contacts in the Dominican Republic, information, home cooked meals and a Dominican flag.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Throughout my two years of graduate school I have been interested in the issue of public participation in community development activities. In my own professional life I have seen how broad and effective public participation strategies can lead to more sustainable tangible outcomes for community development interventions. In addition, I am also firmly committed to the concept that I call “community development justice”, which can be summed up in the following way: Often times, the people who live in neighborhoods where community development interventions are implemented tend to already have had a long history of marginalization and discrimination. As a result, I believe that it’s only fair that this population be given an opportunity to be at the decision-making table for as many aspects as possible of the planning and implementation of community development interventions. I have also learned of examples during my professional as well as academic life where this a concerted effort to reach out to the most disenfranchised group of people standing to be impacted by a community development intervention, only to result in negative consequences for this group.

The challenge, of course, is how to implement a truly effective public participation strategy, especially when the people that are the highest priority to target according to my sense of community development justice (for example, immigrants, minorities, public housing residents, young people, or homeless) are the least like to become involved in public participation. Many of us already know the most common understood reasons why this so. In the first place, people are often too busy trying to make ends meet to devote time to “extra-curricular” activities such as attending community meetings, no matter how important they might

be. In addition, particularly in a community whose members who are primarily immigrants, people are afraid to draw attention themselves—especially if they're legal documentation status is in question. Also, many residents of low-income and predominately minority neighborhoods do not consider participation in community development activities to be a priority. This may be because they are focused on day-to-day living—and in the case of immigrants, on taking care of their families back in their countries of origin, as well as participating in the politics there—and because they do not see a direct impact that this type of participation might have on them.

The problem of low participation rates of community members in development interventions and other types of civic affairs might be solved by focusing on the logistical barriers (providing compensation, childcare, linguistically and culturally appropriate avenues for participation). Additionally, greater public education efforts would contribute to more community participation, by helping more people to understand the direct and indirect impacts that such participation might be able to make on their own lives and those of their family members (wherever they may be). But would this be sufficient to promote broad sustained civic engagement, particularly among people that continue to encounter active disenfranchisement and resistance to grassroots-driven visions of development? In the face of such resistance, what does it take to allow a consciousness of civic engagement to develop among community members? Secondly, what does it take to keep a civically engaged community member going, overcoming fatigue, anger, cynicism or despair? And lastly and most importantly for the purposes of this thesis, what types of public participation strategies can community development practitioners implement that support the creation of an active and engaged population, so that over time it will

become easier to recruit people to be active participants in their own community's development activities?

This thesis seeks to contribute an answer to this question through the qualitative analysis of public participation strategies for community development interventions in two different communities. In particular, this analysis seeks to place the decision-making about these public participation strategies in the context of a broader set of norms and practices around civic engagement in each of these communities. By choosing this type of focus for my analysis, I hope to provide another lens through which to view the important work of seeking public participation around community development interventions or public policy decisions: not only might this work prove to be helpful in achieving the short-term success of a project in a community, but it might also be impacting future public participation efforts by improving the broader context of civic engagement in that community.

1.1 Methodology

The analysis included in this thesis is based, in large part, on in person research conducted in the following three different locations: in Lawrence, Massachusetts in June and July 2007, in the Dominican Republic in August 2007, and in Mexico City in January of 2008. In some cases, research conducted for my thesis took place within a larger context of a client-based project, with different but complimentary sets of objectives. In other words, in the case of Lawrence and Mexico City, much of the information cited in this thesis was not originally collected with the intention of being included in the thesis, but instead it was collected during the

course of realizing other projects. Meanwhile, the Dominican Republic phase was strictly thesis-related research.

In general, research for this thesis was primarily qualitative, conducted via long, open-ended interviews. In total, over 50 interviews were conducted in Lawrence, the Dominican Republic and Mexico City, and they were either conducted by me alone, or as part of a larger group of researchers in a practicum class environment. The large majority of interviewees were community members, meaning they did not hold a paid position in either a public or nonprofit community development organization. Governmental officials and nonprofit organization staff members, however, were also interviewed at length. In order to protect the privacy of the interviewees, none of them is mentioned by his or her actual name in this thesis. In most cases, information gathered from interviews is simply presented in the text without a citation following it. In two particular cases, however, where individual community members in Lawrence are profiled, their names have been changed in order to protect their privacy.

This is also an appropriate time to mention that it is not intended that the people interviewed in this research be representative in any way of the type of civic engagement most prevalent in each of the research locations. Instead, the purpose of the interviews was to shed light on the series of case studies that will be included in this thesis, falling into the three different levels of analysis of civic engagement outcomes mentioned above in the introduction: Organizational, project level, and individual.

I employed the *snowball sampling* method to help me identify interviewees. Robert Weiss, in his book about the methodology of qualitative research, *Learning from Strangers*, cites the example of one researcher, Diane Ehrensaft, who employed this method.

“Through word of mouth and my own personal contacts, I began to generate a pool of people who fit the bill of two people, a man and a woman, sharing the position of primary parent in their family. I had no trouble finding potential couples to talk to. People told me eagerly about friends or friends of friends, and I soon found myself generating, both geographically and socially, an arena well beyond my own circles” (Weiss, 1994, pg. 25).

My own experience with employing the snowball method was quite similar to that described by Ehrensaft.

In addition, I did not employ a scripted list of interview questions, choosing instead to develop interview guides, which detailed the list of topics I intended to cover in each interview. According to Weiss, utilizing the “interview guide” method as opposed to the interview questions method in qualitative research allows one to relinquish some control to the interviewee as to the pace, direction and content of an interview, thereby reducing the possibility that interview bias distort the outcome. (Weiss, 1994) For the sake of continuity, in each location I employed roughly the same interview guide, although after each interview there was usually some degree of revision made to the interview guide, based on the lessons learned during that interview. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the majority of the interviews in Lawrence, Dominican Republic and Mexico City were conducted in Spanish, with occasional transitions into English, although this did not present a methodological challenge, since I am a native Spanish-speaker.

The two case studies included in this thesis described below are not intended to be comparative. Instead, they were selected because they were two communities that I got to know well as a result of practice-based coursework during my graduate program. In each case, I carried with me my over-arching interest in the opportunities and challenges of public participation in community development. Thus, the research and analysis presented in this thesis is quite frankly the result of the continuous cycle of practice and reflection on the same theme in each of these two unique and fascinating communities.

1.1.1 Lawrence, Massachusetts (Summer 2007)

My involvement with the world of community development in Lawrence began in the first semester of my Masters' program, through my participation in the Lawrence Practicum course. Though the topics of this practicum were not directly related to what would ultimately be addressed in my thesis—we worked with the Lawrence Planning Department and the City Council to help the city improve its process for disposing of city-owned land—the Lawrence Practicum allowed me to get familiarized with the political, social and economic context of this amazing city.

Particularly inspiring was my introduction to Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW), a membership-base local community development corporation that has leveraged a broad base of support, particularly among Latino low-income people living in North Lawrence, in order to become a major political and economic force in the city. Then in the summer after my first year of graduate school, I secured a part-time internship with LCW, allowing me to continue learning

about the organization's community development strategy, which seemed to include an innovative combination of community organizing, social service provision, political advocacy, and long-term community planning. My job during the summer was to help Lawrence CommunityWorks develop a way to track and measure the patterns by which their base of membership grows, information which would support both outreach-related and programmatic decisions in the organization. The interviews with staff members and key community leaders within the LCW membership base which I conducted as part of my internship also turned out to be important early information-gathering opportunities for my thesis research. In addition, the results of my quantitative analysis of LCW's membership database and its various programmatic tracking spreadsheets, one of the key final deliverables of this internship, are reproduced, in part in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

There were some interviews conducted during that summer in Lawrence, however, particularly with local community leaders less directly affiliated with LCW, that were solely for the purpose of my thesis. What the majority of these interviewees had in common was that they were active in the large Dominican American community in Lawrence, and some of them were also still active politically in the Dominican Republic. Three of the interviews in Lawrence in the summer of 2007 were conducted in conjunction with Joyce Mandell, a Social Work PhD candidate at Boston University, whose dissertation research interests overlapped with mine to some degree. In these three interviews, I served in a dual role, as an interpreter (Ms. Mandell does not speak Spanish) and interviewer. The majority of the interviews conducted during this period, both in the capacity of my internship and as part of my own thesis research, were

recorded with an audiocassette tape, with the permission of the interviewees. I also took some notes on a laptop during or immediately after each interview. At the end of the summer, I produced a document summarizing the results of all the interviews in Lawrence.

The same summer I worked and conducted research in Lawrence, I also traveled to the Dominican Republic for two weeks. The research conducted during this trip was solely intended for use in my thesis. My reason for choosing to conduct research in this country was to provide a point of comparison to the results of my research earlier in the summer in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where a substantial portion of the population is of Dominican descent. Having gained some insight regarding the patterns of civic engagement (of different types) of the Dominicans living in Lawrence, as well as regarding the important role that identity and culture play in the political world there, I was eager to learn about the local socio-political context for civic engagement in the DR. I was also very interested in learning more about the expectations regarding participation on the part of Dominicans living in the United States in the political, economic and social world of the DR.

The majority of my contacts in the Dominican Republic prior to arriving were from interviewees in Lawrence. Although my employment of the *snowball method* ensured that not everyone interviewed in the DR had a direct connection to someone in Lawrence, it is true that my methodology resulted in a sample of interviewees with a disproportionately greater degree of linkages to Dominicans living abroad than what one might find in a random sample. This does not represent a shortcoming of my methodology, since the main purpose of my research in the

Dominican Republic was to gain insight onto the social, cultural and political context of Lawrence.

Most interviews were conducted in Santo Domingo, the capital of the country, although there were a few that took place in Santiago, the second largest city in the DR and in Tenares, a small town in the center of the country with a strong connection to Lawrence. Although sources vary considerably, it seems that between 20-50% of all Dominicans living in Lawrence claim some connection to this town of 30,000 people. As was the case in Lawrence, the majority of the interviews conducted in the DR were recorded with an audiocassette tape, with the permission of the interviewees. In addition, I usually took hand-written notes during each interview to help me to recall them later. Lastly, at the end of these two weeks of research, I produced a similar document to that which I had written in Lawrence, summarizing the results of all the interviews in the DR.

1.1.3 Mexico City (Fall/Winter 2007-08)

The research I conducted in Mexico City took place in October 2007 and January 2008, as part of another practicum course I took there. The team of five student researchers that I was a part of conducted the majority of its interviews in the downtown part of Mexico City known as the *Centro Historico* (Historic Center in Spanish). In addition, the subjects interviewed during the course of this research were identified using a mixed methodology. While half of them were identified using the snowball method, starting with contacts that the professors and TA's of the course had provided us, the other half were either identified at random during the numerous *in*

situ observations of the research team, or were based on a list of active community members provided to us by city government officials. In total, more than 50 interviews were conducted by a 5-person team and dozens of hours of observation logged. While some of the material was originally included (in Spanish) in the final report for this practicum course, the scope for this report was very different from this thesis and to a large extent, it only utilizes the raw data gathered during the course of the practicum project.

1.2 Organization of the thesis

In the second chapter of this thesis, directly following the introduction, I will present the following: a definition of some important terms I will be using in my thesis (including, “civic engagement”, “participation”, “public policy” and “community development”); and a brief analysis and summary of the literature that has been written on the subject of civic engagement in community development projects.

In the third chapter, I will provide background information about each of the two locations I have chosen from which to pull case studies for this thesis. It will describe the geographic, social, economic and political dimensions of these locations briefly introduce the community development activities and principal governmental and non-governmental actors that will be the focus of analysis of chapter 4. In addition, I will present the historic context for these community development activities and outline some of the regional, national and global dynamics of which these activities form a part.

The fourth chapter will contain the bulk of presentation and analysis of the findings of this thesis. This chapter will utilize the following three-part structure to analyze efforts at promoting broader, more sustainable civic engagement of people in community development activities that might directly impact their lives.

- 1) ***Organizational level:*** What are the characteristics of an organization or network of organizations performing community development functions that are more successful at promoting long-term and broad participation?
- 2) ***Project level:*** What are the characteristics of a community development intervention that results in stronger and more sustainable participation of the population being impacted by this intervention?
- 3) ***Individual level:*** What factors contribute to individual decision-making about whether or not to participate in activities that positively impact their communities?

In the last chapter of this thesis, I will summarize the main conclusions from the analysis in Chapter 4. I will also extrapolate from these conclusions a set of recommendations for community development practitioners of ways to think differently about the important task of promoting greater community participation in development projects. The research conducted for this thesis was not sufficient to prove that these recommendations will be successful, nor was it sufficient to describe specifically what conditions must be in place in order for increased community engagement to occur. Instead, the final product of this thesis might most accurately be described as a set of suggestions of ideas to keep in mind while conducting the planning and implementation of community development projects. These suggestions are organized into the following three broad categories: Focus on leadership development; re-examine the organizer-community member relationship; and identify new opportunities for transnational community

development. Lastly, I will outline additional lines of research that would continue answering some of the ideas that this thesis touched upon. Specifically, these lines research have to do with the individual level (one might even say, the psychological level) of impact that public participation strategies can have on an individual's personal sense of motivation for becoming civically engaged.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the early stages of the field of urban planning, which John Friedman has termed the social reform era (Friedmann, 1987), the idea of “development” in a low-income and marginalized community implied the existence of a patriarchal figure that plans and implements an intervention in a top-down manner, in order to “bring them up” into a way of life that he assumes is universally accepted as “better”. In the modern era of community development, however, there is now consensus among most practitioners that it is necessary to view members of the target population of an intervention as equal partners in its planning and implementation.

In his book, *Public Participation in Public Decisions*, John Clayton Thomas presents research showing some of the merits of increased public participation: better channels of communication between government officials and community members; improved program implementation; more services for the dollar; protection from criticism; and increased political clout with other government agencies. He also contrasts these benefits with some of the challenges that he and other scholars have found with increased participation in public decisions: “the first focus is on who participates and who does not; the second, on how involvement affects the managers’ job; and third, on how the involvement affects the quality of public policy” (Thomas, 1995).

Thus the debate on civic engagement and public participation has moved beyond the question of whether or not this is desirable, to one of what are the best ways to maximize the benefits of this participation while minimizing its costs. In this chapter, I will present a sampling of the scholars that have studied the impact of civic engagement on community development

(and vice versa), utilizing a three part structure implied by the following questions which will be central to my analysis in the rest of this thesis:

1. What exactly is participation and in what community development contexts is this participation appropriate?
2. How is participation most effectively achieved?
3. Why do community members choose not to participate?

II.1 Definition of terms - What is participation and in what contexts is it appropriate?

Before embarking on a review of the literature regarding civic engagement outcomes of community development interventions, I want to first clarify my own interpretation of three key terms that are central to the concepts discussed in this thesis, and which have almost as many definitions as scholars writing about them: “community development”, “civic engagement” and “public policy”.

As for the first term, I am choosing to take a purposefully broad interpretation of “community development”, knowing full well that the origins of this term are such that a relatively limited interpretation would be understandable, and indeed more commonplace in the literature. The term “community development” first became widespread with the creation of community development corporations (CDC) in the 1960’s, which as both Alice O’Connor and Susan Saegert have pointed out, resulted in the de-radicalization and professionalization of a grassroots movement of inner-city activists trying to address problems faced by their own communities (O’Connor, 1999) and (Saegert, 2006). Since that time, the CDC model of development, which includes a network of government agencies, private institutions and a

system of laws and regulations set up to support them, has been the model for most interventions attempting to address the challenges faced by low-income, marginalized communities like the one described in the Introduction of this thesis.

The literature, however, is full of other types of place-based, community-driven development, implemented even after the CDC-era began in the 60's. Xavier Briggs refers to "community planning" or "advocacy planning", popularized by Richard Bolan and Paul Davidoff, respectively, in the 1960's (Briggs, 1998), while Susan Saegert herself has described community development as just one type of community-based initiatives that emerged in the first half of the 20th century. (Saegert, 2006). Robert Chaskin and others utilize the term "community capacity building" to describe the process of cross-fertilization between community-based initiatives and among a diverse group of actors working within a community but with strong ties to partners outside. The use of the term "capacity" is intended to imply that the end objective of this work is to increase the ability of a community function well on its own (Chaskin, Brown, Venkates, and Vidal, 2001). For the sake of simplicity, and also, in recognition of the fact that many community development corporations have already started to incorporate these other models into their work, for the purposes of this thesis, I am going to consider within the definition of community development as the entire constellation of organizations, interventions and individuals, located both inside and outside of a community, whose objectives are to address, in a holistic way, the inter-related needs of that community.

Another term whose conceptual boundaries I will clarify here is "civic engagement". Various scholars have used this term, together with other related terms such as, participation

(preceded by the words “public”, “community” or “citizen”) or “public involvement”, to refer to a wide range of activities. It is clear that not all these activities are equal and that a community where the only “participation” is in grassroots-type neighborhood or cultural associations—without also demonstrating other types of direct participation in the political process—is a weak community, indeed. As a result, scholars arguing for a more strict interpretation of the terms “engagement” and “participation”, such as those activities which are directly connected to the political process (such as voting, advocating to elected officials, campaigning and running for office), tend to be particularly concerned with measuring different levels of power among different types of communities. Examples of these scholars are Michael Jones-Correa, David Leal, Loretta Bass and Lynne Carter (Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001; and Bass and Carter, 2001).

On the other hand, there are some scholars whose interpretation of the concept of “participation” include the more grassroots type of associationalism mentioned above. These scholars argue that participation of all kinds, even in activities that have little to do with political power, have repercussions that can extend far beyond the immediate object of participation. James Coleman, Robert Putnam and Alejandro Portes have produced some of the most well known works on the subject of “social capital” in recent years (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; and Portes, 1998). As Portes points out, the term, “social capital” is often misunderstood by researchers eager to show that low-income or marginalized communities, simply because there is evidence of tight-knit family structures, or because there are some cultural or sports organizations, that this might mean they can become less marginalized.

There is little ground to believe that social capital will provide a ready remedy for major social problems, as promised by its bolder proponents. Recent proclamations to

that effect merely restate the original problems and have not been accompanied so far by any persuasive account of how to bring about the desired stocks of public civiness (Portes, 1998, pg. 21).

In other words, civic engagement or public participation is a conscious action of support for a cause, based on a sense of trust and reciprocity. It may take the form of attending a meeting, or even something as passive as adding one's name to a mailing list.

Social trust in this sense is strongly associated with many other forms of civic engagement and social capital. Other things being equal, people who trust their fellow citizens volunteer more often, contribute more to charity, participate more often in politics and community organizations, serve more readily on juries, give blood more frequently, comply more fully with their tax obligations, are more tolerant of minority views, and display many other forms of civic virtue (Putnam, 2001, pp. 136-137).

Portes cites four important critiques to the notion that build-up of social capital is an unqualified "good". *First*, that increased social cohesion can also lead to the exclusion of outsiders, *second* that it can lead to excess claims on group members, *third*, that it can contribute to a restriction of individual freedoms, and *fourth*, that it can promote downward leveling norms (Portes, 1998). The critique that is suggested from an analysis of the case studies in this thesis, however, is a different one altogether: Merely participating in activities that contribute to the greater cohesion of a socially does not necessarily constitute real civic engagement without the existence of a larger support network capable of leveraging it to achieve real political and socioeconomic power. The conceptual roots of this critique go back to the important work of Mark Granovetter, who in 1973 wrote about the unique benefits that such "weak ties" from informal or grassroots social networks can provide to a community that did not possess other strong connections to power (Granovetter, 1973).

Also helping to shed some light on the usefulness of an expanded notion of “civic engagement” “public participation”, is the work of some scholars who have been developing a conceptual framework for the academic study of “public policy”. Specifically, I would like paraphrase the work of Stella Theoloudou, in her book chapter, “The Contemporary Language of Public Policy” and Paul Burstein in his book chapter, “Social Movements and Public Policy” to propose a definition of the term “public policy” that—similarly to the working definitions of “community development” and civic engagement”, previously mentioned in this chapter—goes beyond traditionally understood definitions of the term. According to this thesis, public policy is:

- **Iterative:** It involves more than just laws on paper but also the subsequent actions of implementation, enforcement and evaluation (Theodoulou, 1995)
- **Multi-stakeholder:** It is created not just by government decisions, but through interaction between government and civil society organizations (Burstein, 1996)
- **Discursive:** It is not developed in a vacuum, and is affected by changes in societal norms and reflective of popularly held values—this is an area in which non-governmental actors have a special ability to influence public policy (Burstein, 1996)

II.2 Implementation – How can participation be most effectively achieved?

The tradition of scholarship that began in the 1960’s with Paul Davidoff and Alan Altshuler is good example of this type of approach. Altshuler took aim at the ambitiousness of some of the development projects attempted by earlier generations of planners, claiming that would instead do well to narrow their focus and pay more attention to the political process, which is another way of saying, incorporating the expressed needs and opinions of the people who might be potential opponents for their projects (Altshuler, 1969). Davidoff, meanwhile,

provides the example of the legal system in the United States as a model for the potential role that planners might take vis a vis community members in planning and implementing development projects (Davidoff, 1965).

In a similar tradition, Xavier Briggs, continues to research and develop practical solutions for planners and community development practitioners to implement appropriate community engagement strategies. Some examples of this work are two practitioner-centric online publications: www.community-problem-solving.net and the Working Smarter series, found at <http://web.mit.edu/workingsmarter>. One of the main ideas behind Brigg's research in this field is that in the current context of community development, "much of this problem-solving capacity, though not all, must be created and put in motion at the local or "community" level" (Briggs, 2005). For Briggs, and others who are trying to provide practical answers specifically to community development practitioners, promoting more civic engagement might be viewed in some ways a function of increasing the capacity of community members and practitioners to address specific challenges.

For others, namely those researchers in the fields of sociology and political science, community development initiatives are relevant primarily as settings in which civic engagement activities are implemented. Among these scholars, there are some specifically interested in the mechanisms by which community members can become more involved in the public policy decisions that are made that might impact their lives. Biaocchi's work as a participant scholar with the experience of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil is a good example of this line of research, which represents a medium-level of scope (Biaochi and Melo, 2006). As

opposed to the scholars who study civic engagement as a component of community development interventions, Baiocchi and other colleagues like Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright (Fung and Wright, 2003), are studying how the civic engagement that occurs in the course of these community development interventions can be institutionalized and sustained over time. The scope of civic engagement opportunities can go far beyond those decisions which are primarily found in community development interventions.

Other researchers, such as Robert Putnam and Benjamin Barber have an even more macro focus to their research. These scholars, in many ways, are carrying on the legacy of Alex de Tocqueville, in trying to understand what are the factors that determine a strong and healthy democratic culture. Putnam's quote cited earlier shows us the importance that he places on everyday examples of sociability, such as participation in community organizations, to the creation of a strong democratic culture at local and even national levels (Putnam, 2001). Barber, meanwhile, claims that this type of associationalism is what ensures that a democracy is truly representative of the interests of the people being governed, drawing a distinction between unitary and direct democracies (Barber, 1985). Labeling governments that use the unitary democracy model as "vicious or merely irrelevant", Barber goes on to explain that in direct democracy, self-government does not necessarily have to occur...

...at every level and in every instance, but frequently enough and in particular when basic policies are being decided and when significant power is being deployed. Self-government is carried on through institutions designed to facilitate ongoing civic participation in agenda-setting, deliberation, legislation and policy-implementation (in the form of "common work") (Barber, 1985).

The target audience for this thesis are community development professionals that are trying to develop new ways to connect with the community they hope to serve, integrating them more into the planning and implementation of interventions. In this sense, this thesis will have a similar scope as those in the first group of scholars profiled in this framework. Within the work of Davidoff and the others is a commitment to social justice and a concern that community development interventions truly reflect the wishes and needs of the community. These normative moral opinions will be an important component of my analysis of the case studies found in this thesis. On the other hand, a special focus of the analysis will be on the role of non-governmental organizations in creating new opportunities for the sustained civic engagement of historically marginalized communities, even in the face of active or passive resistance to their inclusion in decision-making processes. As a result, this thesis will compare the differing degrees to which community development organizations are able to build “social capital” among the historically marginalized communities in which they are working.

II.3 Focus on community members – Why don't they participate?

Taking a perhaps less pragmatic approach, there are other scholars more focused on exposing inherent contradictions within the way that many civic engagement strategies are currently being implemented by community development practitioners in the public and private sectors. Faranak Miraftab's research on civic engagement in the creation and implementation of housing policy in post-Apartheid South Africa is one example of this approach.

Although a democratic government and tightly organized communities are important conditions for meaningful participatory processes fostering a generative relationship

between communities and other actors, they are not sufficient. It is true that South African housing policy has recognized the right of communities to participate; indeed it has made that a requirement for publicly assisted housing projects. But in practice, the institutional requirement has not furthered the power of low-income communities in decision-making and exercise of their participatory right (Miraftab, 2003, pg. 236).

Thus, according to Miraftab, calls by housing officials in the South African government to participate in public policy-making ring hollow and false in the ears of community members. In all likelihood, they are all too aware that the decision to participate or not will not affect them materially or improve their position of relative powerlessness in regards to society as a whole (Miraftab, 2003).

In addition, as Luisa Garcia Bedolla shows, through her work with Latino adults and youth in Los Angeles, the positions of relative powerlessness do not even have to be in the realm of political or economic power. Garcia Bedolla shows us that some of the most important obstacles keeping members of a historically marginalized community from becoming more civically engaged, have to do with psychological processes of internalized stigma. As a result, the analysis of the case studies in this thesis will attempt to do as Garcia Bedolla recommends: “consider how feelings of stigma affect attachment to... social groups [within marginalized communities], as well as to the political system as a whole” (Garcia Bedolla, 2005).

Lastly, another conceptual pillar upon which the analysis included in this case study is built is the idea, put forth by Richard Bolan, that community participation is possible to the extent that actors within that community possess each of the three following attributes: motivation, opportunity and skills (Bolan, 1969). Much of the community development literature that deals with the problem of promoting greater, more sustainable public participation tend to focus on

what practitioners can do to promote more of the second and third of these attributes. This might be because the third pre-requisite, motivation, is much more dependant on the personal choices and experiences of individual community members. As my thesis will hope to show, however, a greater awareness of the motivation (or lack thereof) on the part of community members to become active and civically engaged, is an important part of the task of a community development practitioner.

CHAPTER III: PRESENTATION OF THE CASES

This thesis will present two different cases of communities in which community members have attempted to integrate themselves into substantive decision-making roles for community development initiatives in the neighborhoods where they live. One case is in Lawrence and another in Mexico City's Centro Historico. For each location, I will provide a general socio-political historical context and a description of the major stakeholders involved in community development activities.

III.1 Lawrence, Massachusetts

Lawrence, Massachusetts, located 90 miles north of Boston, near the border with New Hampshire, has often been referred to as the "quintessential mill town". Indeed, the town was created from scratch—one of the first planned communities in the country—by the same group of investors that also built the large mills along that point of the Merrimack River, taking advantage of the deep water and fast-running current. Until the first decades of the 20th century was one of the most important manufacturing centers in the world, particularly in the area of textiles (Schinto, 1995). Like many other small towns in the northeastern United States whose economies were largely based in the industrial sector, Lawrence underwent a long, steady decline during the 20th century, as factories closed and jobs moved south.

By the 1990's, it had become one of the poorest cities in Massachusetts and one of the 20 poorest, per capita, in the entire country (Andors, 1999). It had also gained notoriety nationally for the large amount of illegal activities that took place: at different times, it was known as the

“arson capital”, the “car theft capital” and the “auto insurance fraud capital” of the country, as well as one of the regional centers for illegal drug trade (Andors, 1999; Schinto, 1995). Although the economy has improved slightly in recently years, the numbers in Lawrence are still not very promising, as can be seen by the table below.

Table 1: Economic and social statistics for Lawrence and Massachusetts

	Lawrence	Massachusetts
Educational attainment (25 years or older) – High School	62.5%	87.9%
Educational attainment (25 years or older) – Bachelors’ Degree	9%	37%
Language other than English spoken at home	74.1%	20.2%
Median family income	\$31,296	\$74,463
Families below poverty line	22.9%	7%
Renter occupied housing	64.1%	35.1%

Source: US Census

Another aspect that has defined over the years has been its high immigrant population. The use of predominately immigrant labor in the mills since the town’s origins, earned Lawrence its official nickname as the “immigrant city”, and to a large extent, the demographic changes in this city have reflected larger patterns of immigration in the entire country. In 1878, two-thirds of the total population working in the mills was foreign-born, and by 1917, the area around Lawrence had the highest proportion of foreign-born residents in the United States (Andors, 1999). Initially there was a predominate amount of Irish workers, followed by a large wave of Italians and Eastern Europeans, with small percentages of Middle Eastern workers throughout (Schinto, 1995). Even today, this nickname is still very apt, despite the fact that what originally

drew immigrants to Lawrence—relatively high-paying, low-skill factory jobs—have largely left the city. The majority of immigrants today, however, are Latinos and the story of this demographic transition is relevant enough to the socio-political context for community development in Lawrence that it is worth a detailed description.

III.1.1 Latinos in Lawrence

The first Latinos to arrive in Lawrence in large numbers were Puerto Ricans in the 1960's. Even though the supply of jobs was nothing like it used to be in the early part of the 20th century, low-paying industrial jobs were in even shorter supply in the large Eastern cities of Boston and New York where Puerto Ricans had been concentrated previously. In addition, coinciding exactly with the large influx of Latino immigrants in the US as a whole after the 1965 immigration reform, the 60's and 70's saw ever-increasing numbers of Latinos in Lawrence—in particular people from the Dominican Republic. With an economy already de-stabilized by mill closings, the crash of the real estate market in the 1980s, which affected the northeastern United States as a whole, hit Lawrence especially hard. This contributed to the continued dwindling of economic indicators and increase in crime for Lawrence, but the dramatic drop in real estate prices also had the interesting side effect of attracting more low-income Latinos. Dominicans and other Latinos in the 1980's who were living in New York and Boston found Lawrence, with as bad a reputation as it had, to be a welcome (and affordable) safe-haven from the extremely crime-ridden streets of the big cities.

As the percentage of Lawrence’s population that was Latino increased and it became known as a Latino city (in terms of population, if not in terms of political power), this had the effect of attracting more and more Latinos. In 1970, there were 2,325 Latinos in Lawrence (approximately 5% of the population), while in 1980, this figure had risen to 10,289, (under 20% of the population). (Schinto, 1995) As we can see from the table below, the Latino population has continued to grow at exponential rates. It is worth mentioning, of course that these numbers, taken from the US Census are significantly skewed downward, due to the census reporting challenges that are so common among immigrant populations.

Table 2: Demographic change in Lawrence 1990-2000

	1990 Census	2000 Census
Total population	70,207	72,043
Foreign Born	20.9%	30.6%
Ancestries		
Irish	11.9%	6.6%
Italian	10.9%	6.4%
Other	38.1%	58.0%
White population	65.0%	48.6%
Latino population	41.6%	59.7%

Source: US Census

The overwhelming majority of Latinos in Lawrence are originally from the Dominican Republic. In fact, after New York City, which contains over half of the Dominican diaspora living in the US, Lawrence has the second largest population of Dominicans in the US, an estimated 22,111. By comparison, other much larger cities, such as Providence, Rhode Island and Boston have substantially smaller Dominican populations: 19,915 and 19,061 respectively (Hernandez and Rivera-Batiz, 2003).

Another interesting fact about the Dominican population in Lawrence, cited in an article in Lawrence's local paper, *The Eagle-Tribune*, in 2005, is that a large portion of them (some estimates have said as much 70%) are from the small 25,000 person town of Tenares. In other words, possibly *one third of all "Tenarenses"* (people from Tenares), are currently living in Lawrence (Boburg, 2005b). The above-mentioned statistic has been called into question by some of the Lawrence Dominicans interviewed for this thesis, however, some of whom have estimated the proportion of Tenarenses to be closer to 25% of the entire Dominican population of Lawrence. On one hand, this discrepancy of opinion could be due to a recent change in immigration patterns. An interview with a local official in the town of Tenares itself suggests that the number of Tenarenses emigrating to Lawrence each year, while still substantial, has dropped off in the last 5 to 10 years. This phenomenon, combined with an increase in immigration to Lawrence from other parts of the island has probably resulted in a recent decrease of the proportion of Tenarenses among the entire Lawrence Dominican population.

On the other hand, however, another reason for the discrepancy between the statistic cited in the *Eagle-Tribune* and the information gathered from interviews might have to do with the type of Dominican Lawrentians I was able to interview in this thesis. None of the Dominicans I interviewed in Lawrence were from Tenares. Instead, most of my interviewees were from the capital, Santo Domingo, and had much higher levels of educational attainment than the average Dominican in Lawrence. As a result, the interviewees' perceptions of the Dominican population in the city is likely to have been skewed by the types of Dominicans with which they tended to interact. Yet another factor, however, might be stigma. The *Eagle-Tribune* article indicates that

immigrants arriving in Lawrence from Tenares tend to be especially low-income and with low levels educational attainment (Broburg, 2005d). Thus, a more well-educated, wealthier individual from a more urban center in the DR might consciously or subconsciously act to promote an identity of Dominicans in Lawrence that is not as closely associated with the rural, poor town of Tenares.

Assuming this phenomenon is true, it would point to the existence of an doubly-marginalized community within Lawrence. Not only do Dominicans represent an underprivileged majority of the population of the city, but also Tenarenses potentially represent an underprivileged majority of the population of *Dominicans* in the city. And yet, Tenarenses in Lawrence continue to represent a vital part of the economic, social and political life of the town on the island, through constant transnational flows of capital, people, votes and social mores between Lawrence and Tenares. Thus, it is not hard to understand the challenge in promoting greater civic engagement in Lawrence and why many in the city—Whites and Latinos alike—complain about the large number of immigrants that “care more” about their communities back on the island than they do about the ones in which they currently reside.

III.1.3 Latinos vs. Whites and the “hunker down” mentality

Although Lawrence, the “immigrant city”, had experienced massive demographic shifts due to immigration in the past, there are a few factors that make this change different from the ones in the past. First, there is the fact that even Lawrence did not receive very many immigrants in the decades prior to the reforming of the restrictive quota-based federal government’s

immigration policy in 1965. As a result, native Lawrentians who started to see more and more immigrants arriving in the 70's, 80's and 90's were much more likely to be children of immigrants (or even grandchildren), rather than immigrants themselves, reducing the likelihood for solidarity. Another factor that differentiated this period of immigration from previous ones, was that of race. While most immigrants in Lawrence had previously been from Europe, the Latinos that started arriving in the 1960s often looked very different, physically from the older Lawrentians, making it even more difficult for this new group to be accepted (Schinto, 1995).

These early 20th century immigrants, too, faced discrimination, both at the hands of native-born mill owners or immigrants from earlier waves in the middle and end of the 19th century. As has always seemed to be the case, in all parts of the US, unfortunately, a disproportionate amount of the blame for the social problems of the Lawrence has been and is currently lain on the newest wave of immigrants (Schinto, 1995). One of the most important differences, however, between the discrimination that took place in the early 20th century and that which started taking place with the arrival of Latinos in the last decades of this century, is the radically different economic climate. Previous waves of immigrants had arrived in a Lawrence that was literally booming with the sound of mills running at full speed. The Lawrence of the end of the 20th century was economically depressed, politically marginalized, environmentally degraded. Upward social mobility among many Lawrentians became associated with moving out of town. Those that chose not to (or could not afford it), would often try everything possible to retain a connection with an earlier more prosperous time—and would be likely to resent anyone or anything that represented a change from that prosperous past. In

addition, as the public world changed around them, older Lawrentians retreated more into their homes, participated less in neighborhood activities and became more concerned about their safety (Schinto, 1995).

It is very common for Lawrentians with roots in the city going back several generations who still identify strongly with the important historical legacy, to resent the major changes the city has undergone in the last 40 years as a result of the wave of Latino immigrants. This phenomenon, which Putnam has named a “hunker-down mentality” (Putnam, 2007) means that the Lawrentians who have been in positions of power during the 20th century are less likely to view the necessity to include the participation of these “new Lawrentians” as the central component to planning and implementing the revitalization of the city. Latinos, on the other hand, pointing to their majority status in the city and their importance to the small business economy are interested in having more of a say and eventually “being in charge” of the programs and institutions that promote Lawrence’s revitalization.

One of the most well-known examples of the struggle of the minority White population in Lawrence attempting to hold on to political power and resist attempts by Latinos to make important and symbolic assertions of their presence, have been the City’s policies and practices regarding elections for which the City of Lawrence was sued by the Federal Justice Department, under the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The lawsuit, which was filed in 1998, alleged that there were unreasonable barriers for Latino voters in Lawrence—although in 1998, 34% of the registered voters were Latino, only 5% of the poll workers were Spanish-English bilingual—among other problems that were cited. As part of the partial settlement with the Justice

Department in 1999, the City of Lawrence agreed to hire more bilingual poll workers and re-draw its districts after the release of the 2000 Census in a way that met the standards of the Voting Right Act. When, the re-districting did not meet these standards the Justice Department had to go to court again in order to require the City to re-draw them more fairly (US Dept. of Justice, 2002).

It is not surprising that after the election reforms were implemented in 2001, the representation of Latinos among elected officials in Lawrence went from the miniscule—only one school board member and one city councilmember—to the more reasonable—3 city council members and a few more school board members. However, there is still more to go to achieve proportional representation. Although, Latinos, as of 2005, have finally achieved majority in terms of the number of registered voters, they are still in the minority in terms of typical voter turnout at most elections (Medaglia, 2005). It is perhaps this fact that accounts for the fact that there has yet to be an elected Latino mayor and there are still only 3 Latino city council members, out of 9 total members, including only one Dominican—despite the fact that Dominicans make up the overwhelming majority of Latinos in Lawrence. In 2007, there was another striking example of how this lack of political representation still negatively impacted the Latino community. A vacant lot in Lawrence's North Common neighborhood, which was a property of the City, was being disposed to private hands, as part of a larger initiative to develop vacant lots and increase the City's tax base. The two main bidders for the property were a local nonprofit community development corporation (Lawrence CommunityWorks) that was planning to turn the site into a mixed-use affordable housing development for seniors, and a liquor store

from across the street that was looking to expand its operation. Despite avid support from local schools, the hospital down the street, and that neighborhood's Latino City Council member, the City Council as a body, decided to award the property to the liquor store owner, a long-time Lawrence resident of Italian descent.

III.1.2 Cultures of Participation: The impact of the Dominican Republic on Lawrence

The Dominican Republic is now recognized to have one of the most vibrant democracies in Latin America, in which local and even national politics enjoys a deep-level of penetration in the everyday lives of citizens on the island (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2002; Jimenez Polanco 1999; Levitt, 2001). More than one of the people interviewed for this thesis even described politics as the “second national sport of the Dominican Republic, next to baseball”. This reality seems at first to be counter-intuitive, in light of the comments from several other interviewees that Dominicans in Lawrence do not seem to care about their communities. Did Dominicans leave their culture of political engagement behind on the island when they decided to emigrate to the United States?

This thesis suggests two main reasons for a lack of this type of carryover from the island to the city. First, is the question of stigma, brought up by Garcia Bedolla.

For Latinos to perceive that they are full members of the US political community and that they are empowered to act within that community they must develop a positive attachment to their group and a belief that, however, stigmatized it may be, that group is worthy of their political effort. This process entails shifts in Latinos' internal and external boundaries (Garcia Bedolla, pg. 3).

Earlier in this chapter we discussed the presence of both conscious and unconscious exclusion of large portions of the population of Lawrence. This exclusion occurs not only between Whites and Latinos, but even within different sectors of the Latino community there. This exclusion is based in large part on deep-seated stereotypes, many of which have been internalized by the same groups who are marginalized by them.

Another reason that the type of vibrant democratic processes that can be seen in the Dominican Republic are not as present among the large Dominican population of Lawrence has to do with the specific condition under which this vibrancy in the Dominican Republic came about. In the first place, democratic elections—and for that matter, any amount of public participation in the affairs of government at all—are relatively new occurrences in the DR. The most well-known authoritarian regime that this country has experienced took place during the 1930-1961 period known as the *trujillato*, so named because of the megalomaniacal dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo that maintained a firm control of nearly all economic, political and even social life on the island (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2002; Jimenez Polanco, 1999; Diaz, 2007).

In reality, however, in its nearly 200 years of history as a country, the Dominican Republic has experienced many periods of authoritarianism, both initiated domestically and imposed directly by a foreign occupying force. In the 19th century Haiti and Spain occupied the country at different times for a total of 44 years, while 20th century saw two different military occupations by the US government (in 1916-1924 and again in 1965-66). In addition to overt military occupations, beginning in the late 19th century also began to carrying out a series of measures that might be considered economic colonialism. These activities reached their apex (or

perhaps their nadir) in 1907-1924, the period immediately before and during the first US military occupation, when the US directly controlled, managed and received the income generated by the Dominican Customs Office (Jimenez Polanco, 1999).

The political scientist, Jacqueline Jimenez Polanco has made a connection between this lack of economic, political and military sovereignty and the brutal authoritarian regimes that the Dominican Republic suffered during the 20th century. According to Jimenez Polanco, this economic and military occupation “created the means by which it would become possible to impose an authoritarianism in order to bring about political stability”¹ (Jimenez Polanco, 1999). Even after Trujillo’s assassination in 1961, the combined forces of external military occupation and economic manipulation, together domestic repression and authoritarianism continued to ensure a very limited space for large-scale community participation in the public sphere. Following the US military occupation of 1965, was the 12-year presidency (1966-1978) of Joaquin Balaguer, a former aide to Trujillo, which is often referred to as a pseudo-dictatorship, because of widespread repressive activities by the State and allegations of electoral fraud (Jimenez Polanco, 1999).

Thus, the fact that the vibrant political scene in the Dominican Republic today is really only 30 years old is one important reason why this vibrancy is not as evident among Dominican-Americans’ participation in political and community affairs in Lawrence. If an immigrant arrived in the United States during the 60’s, 70’s or 80’s—as many Dominicans living Lawrence today did, particularly the ones who are more likely to be naturalized US citizens—then she would

¹ Translation from the original in Spanish by the Author.

have never experienced the vibrant political culture in the DR. In addition, in order to understand the political culture that even newer immigrants might be “bringing over” with them from the island, it is important to look more closely at the factors that have motivated the recent culture of grassroots democratic activism in the Dominican Republic.

As might be expected, this phenomenon is not a result of a sudden, new-found faith in the accountability of elected officials nor is it the result of a wide array of political parties or candidates from which to choose in national elections. Jimenez Polanco and others have characterized the first two decades of democratic rule in the Dominican Republic (at least through the 1990’s) as a “gerontocracy”, as a result of the dominance of three major political figures: 1) the aforementioned Joaquin Balaguer (who was president once more from 1986-96); 2) Juan Bosch (an opposition leader during the *trujillato* who had briefly served as president before being pushed out by a US-sponsored coup in 1965, and was the founder of two of the three main political parties), and 3) Jose Francisco Pena Gomez, the unquestioned leader of the PRD (Partido Revolucionario Dominicano) from 1973 until his death in 1998 (Jimenez Polanco, 1999).

A series of surveys about attitudes regarding democracy and government in general, cited by the political scientists Isis Duarte and Ramonina Brea help to shed further light on the Dominican Republic’s unique political culture. A comparative survey of attitudes regarding democracy and government in the general population and in different Latin American countries, conducted in 2001, shows that the Dominican Republic ranks second in the entire region in terms of the percentage of people who stated that democracy was their preferred system of

government. Only in Uruguay, a country with a much longer history of democratic governments, did a higher percentage of citizens prefer democracy (79% compared to 77% in the Dominican Republic). Meanwhile, when Dominicans were asked if they were satisfied with their elected officials, only 26% responded “yes”. While in each of the countries in the survey, the percentage of affirmative answers to this question were always lower than the percentage of people stating democracy as their preferred system of government, no country came close to the Dominican Republic in terms of the degree of difference between these two statistics (Duarte and Brea, 2002).

What, then, might be a possible explanation for such a large percentage of Dominicans approving of an increasingly “failing” democratic system? According several of the people interviewed for this thesis, Dominicans tend to participate in political and community life because this participation is likely to lead to direct material benefits for themselves of their families. Many jobs on the island are acquired through political connections, to the extent that as soon as a new political comes into power at the national level, thousands of party “militants” throughout the country are awarded with jobs at all levels of government. Even supposedly “volunteer” positions such as serving as a local committee head, or even president of a neighborhood association, can often come with privileges ranging from increased access to funding for community projects to gifts of rum, food, and free travel expenses for political party-related activities.

Thus, the notions about democracy and community engagement that a Dominican immigrant is “bringing along” into her new context of Lawrence are likely to be very different

than the notions of a pluralist democracy, and the virtues of civic engagement, most commonly taught in the United States. Dahl tells that a pluralist democracy is the system of government that does the best job of balancing the interests of different competing groups of stakeholders in a community (Dahl, 1994; Domhoff, 1978), while Barber tells us that community members participate in the public sphere in order to ensure more accountability of their governments (Barber, 1985). Meanwhile, a Dominican might feel that a democratic system of government is one in which a larger number of people are able to benefit themselves from the task of governing and his reasons for participating in the public sphere might have much more to do with how much he anticipates to stand to gain in a material way for this participation.

The above statement might sound like a moral judgment against Dominican political culture, but it is not. Another way to perceive the analysis presented in this part of the chapter is that people from the Dominican Republic, after generations of political repression, economic neo-colonialism and military occupation, are simply more cynical about the supposedly benevolent nature of governments, especially at the national level. As a result, Dominicans in Lawrence may start to participate in larger numbers in political and community life there when they are able to see the same type of direct material benefits that participation in Dominican political life is able to give them.

III.2 Mexico City's Centro Historico

Very few people would argue that the 20th century was the most glamorous one for Mexico City's Centro Historico, an rectangular area of approximately 9 square km. In the heart

of Mexico's capital city. Today this area is just one small part of the sprawling 20 million person megalopolis that is the metropolitan area of the Valley of Mexico. In the 19th century, however, what is now known as the Centro Historico used to comprise the entirety of the urbanized area of Mexico City. Then, in the 20th century, what had been one of the great political, economic, cultural and architectural centers of the pre-colonial and colonial eras slowly slid into decay due to systematic neglect from institutional and large private capital actors (Mora Reyes, 2003). Due in part to political and economic neglect for the zone, the Centro Historico experienced a mass exodus of population, which at one point in the 19th century had a population of almost 500,000 people, by 2000, had a population of barely over 50,000. In addition, the destruction and decay of many beautiful historic buildings and a lack of support for small-scale local commerce helped to contribute to the Centro Historico's general fall from its status in centuries past as one of the world's premier city centers.

Particularly, in the last half of the 20th century the few attempts by government to regulate land use in the area and ensure a more productive built environment, to a large could best be described as minimal and ineffective (Mora Reyes, 2003). This was especially true, in the poorer, eastern half of the Centro Historico, where the significantly smaller number of buildings of historic, political or economic importance ensured a greater degree of neglect on the part of government policy-makers. This is compared to the western half of the Centro Historico, where buildings such as the Presidential Palace, City Hall, the National Cathedral, the main square (el Zocalo), the Palace of Fine Arts, the Alameda (a 19th century park designed by Le Corbusier), Torre Latinoamericana (Mexico's tallest building) and the Mexican Stock Exchange building

continued to be well-maintained, even during the periods of greatest neglect for the Centro Historico.

The irony is that the climate of governmental neglect may have created an opportunity for greater empowerment of non-governmental actors to “participate” in the development of a *de facto* land use public policy. The character of the eastern half of the Centro Historico, going back as far as pre-hispanic days, has been predominately commercial and within its borders is located the largest open-air market in the world, Mercado La Merced. One reason that this market was so large—virtually every type of commodity imaginable was bought and sold here—is that it not only served as a retail market for the low and middle class neighborhoods surrounding the Centro Historico (mostly to the east, north and south), it also served as the main primary wholesale market for the country. The sheer size and historical precedent of the commercial activity in the zone meant that even when its economic *raison d’etre* was seemingly struck a fatal blow by a municipal government decision to construct a new national wholesale market in the outskirts of Mexico City in 1983, this was not the end of the story.

Despite this powerful blow, the economy of the eastern half of the Centro Historico eventually recovered to some extent, thanks in large part to the dramatic rise of informal commerce. By the 1990’s, the national reputation of La Merced as a wholesale market became replaced as the epicenter of the national phenomenon of informal commerce—according to some estimates, by 2007 there were as many as 30,000 vendors along dozens of streets in the eastern half of the Centro Historico. An additional irony to this situation is that one of the reasons originally given for constructing the new national wholesale market was to reduce the traffic

burden in the downtown areas. In actuality, however, the mass of informal street vendors spilled out into the streets and blocked off many of the streets in Centro Historico almost entirely to daytime traffic.

III.2.1 *The different faces of the revitalization of the Centro Historico*

The activities of the Autoridad Centro Historico (in other words, the way in which Mexico City's municipal government has chosen to interpret land use and public participation laws) also do not tell the complete story. Indeed, there are two important ways in which non-governmental actors have been instrumental in shaping public policy regarding the revitalization of the Centro Historico in such a way as to reinforce the vertical power dynamics. On one hand, grassroots organizations and individual Centro Historico community members groups compete with each other to negotiate better positions for themselves by relying on personal connections to individuals in power. Thus, the winners are individuals and groups with the most powerful connections. On the other hand, there has been an overall shift in the amount of attention paid to the Centro Historico by large-scale private investors, members of the media and the general public. As a result, this additional involvement and participation from outside stakeholders has translated into less involvement and participation from those stakeholders who have been living in the zone for years.

Although there has been an increase in political and economic attention directed at the revitalization of the Centro Historico for the last ten years, for most of this time the bulk of this attention has been focused on the western half of the Centro Historico, which has long been

dominated by offices, government buildings and other buildings of historical or cultural significance. Some of the physical improvements included a repaving of the streets to resemble cobblestone, the installation of new, neo-historic lampposts and the burying underground of overhead electrical and telephone wires. In addition, to further reclaim the old glory of this formerly upper class residential part of the city, special financing was made available to incentivize the renovation or reconstruction of these historic buildings to create housing primarily for young, relatively wealthy downtown office workers—Mexico City’s version of “yuppies”.

More recently, however, statements by the current Mexico City Mayor, Marcelo Ebrard, since he has taken office in 2006, indicate that the “social and physical rehabilitation” of the Centro Historico is a major focus of his administration (Porvenir, 2006). To this end, it has implemented policies designed to quicken the pace of revitalization and ensure that it is spread to more parts of the Centro Historico. A major component to this new, more aggressive revitalization strategy has been the creation of the Autoridad de Centro Historico (ACH). The director of the ACH, a cabinet-level position in the municipal government personally appointed by the mayor, is Alejandra Moreno Toscano, who oversees a team of approximately 20 architects, planners, engineers and urbanists whose officially stated capacity is to “support and coordinate the activities of existing governmental entities to help promote the revitalization of the Centro Historico” (Ebrard, 2007). In practice, however, as I will show below, there have been instances when the Autoridad de Centro Historico has been given the authority to over-ride decisions made by other governmental agencies. Indeed, according to one government official

interviewed, the ACH director, Dr. Moreno Toscano, who purportedly was meeting with the mayor at least once a week during the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008, has become the *de facto* boss of other directors of municipal government departments, at least with regards to their activities in the Centro Historico. This opinion was corroborated by several more government officials that we spoke to in January 2008.

Almost everyone interviewed during the course of this research project, from outside observers to local community members, agreed that the speed with which the Autoridad de Centro Historico has been able to push revitalizations into the implementation stage—particularly physical improvements, some of which were mentioned above—is astounding and unprecedented in a typically bureaucratic Mexico City. The Autoridad de Centro Historico itself has indicated that one of the reasons for its urgency to “get things done” is the objective of celebrating Mexico’s 200th anniversary as a nation (in 2010) with a vibrant and revitalized Centro Historico (Porvenir, 2006). In the interest of speeding up this process, however, the ACH has sacrificed opportunities the engagement of community members most affected by these revitalization activities: the low-income people who live and work in the Centro Historico.

As my description above has shown, the revitalization of Mexico City’s Centro Historico has had mixed results and different sets of stakeholders have chosen to highlight different aspects of these. The narrative told by the municipal government is one of the rebirth and the reclaiming of a community that had long been written off and allowed to deteriorate. In other words, according to this narrative, the Autoridad de Centro Historico has managed the seemingly impossible task of “improving” land use through an aggressive strategy of capital

improvements, negotiation with key community leaders and a new level of strict-ness in the control of the use of public space. If one were to apply the two different typologies of public policy described above to this version of the story of the revitalization of the Centro Historico, one would probably say that it represents a public policy that is both material (as opposed to symbolic) and liberal (as opposed to conservative).

On the other hand, the other narrative regarding the experience of public policy in the Centro Historico of the last ten years, that which is told primarily by people who were living and working in the area before the revitalization activities began, is one of frustration, broken promises, and ultimately, the triumph of the interests of outsiders and elites over those of the community. There is frustration because, as we have mentioned, some of the activities with which low-income people had been able to pursue their livelihoods in a political climate where the Centro Historico was politically and economically neglected, were no longer possible when attention began to be focused on the zone. Broken promises have come largely in the form of the near-total ineffectiveness of measures that would have allowed for public participation in the revitalization activities. In addition, one might consider the fact that the government officials charged with directing this revitalization are motivated, to a large degree, by a desire to make a statement at municipal and national levels with the Centro Historico, or even that the Centro Historico plays a very central role in the historical and cultural identity of many people who live outside the neighborhood. Thus, it is not hard to see that the interests of low-income community members in the Centro Historico stand little chance, should they differ or contradict in any way those of more powerful outside stakeholders.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF THE CASES

This chapter will be devoted to analyzing the case studies to determine which actions may be taken to promote greater participation among community members who are likely to be affected by development initiatives. Conversely, I will also be analyzing which actions have tended to discourage participation, to reduce the impact of this participation on the decision-making processes. In order to best accomplish this, I will be utilizing the following 3-part structure of analysis:

- 4) ***Organizational level:*** What are the characteristics of an organization or network of organizations performing community development functions that are more successful at promoting long-term and broad participation? What types of organizations are best suited for circumventing the government's exclusionary tactics?
- 5) ***Project level:*** What are the characteristics of a community development intervention that results in stronger and more sustainable participation of the population being impacted by this intervention?
- 6) ***Individual level:*** What factors contribute to individual decision-making about whether or not to participate in activities that positively impact their communities?

IV.1 Organizational level of analysis

It is easy to imagine that the average member of a low-income community is not likely to have initiative to become engaged community development activities on his or her own—an example of why this is so, was presented in the story included in the Introduction to this thesis. In addition, in the face of active or passive resistance from elements of the local government power structure, it becomes even more difficult to achieve broad, long-lasting engagement. Thus, the support of organizations—grassroots and local as well as second-tier and external—is

essential promote civic engagement, by providing an alternate power structure to counter this resistance.

IV.1.1 Mexico City

In Chapter 3, it was mentioned that Mexico City's Centro Historico is not a monolithic area and that instead, there are at least two different areas, each with a decidedly distinct history and identity. The struggle regarding the revitalization of the Centro, then, is about the extent to which people living and working in each of the zones are able to influence the way in which revitalization activities are implemented there. In the lower-income eastern half of the Centro Historico, this is a struggle that has been, to a large extent, lost by the community members there and the grassroots organizations working to advocate on their behalf. How did this happen? First it is important to revisit who the players are.

There are some stakeholders in the eastern half of the Centro Historico that are opposed any kind of revitalization activities, or for that matter, any changes to the status quo, in terms of changes to the physical and social make-up of this zone. These stakeholders include the informal vendors, who until recently, have been a major political and economic force in the zone. With revitalization, however, comes increased political and economic attention, which in turn, lend a greater degree of order to the notoriously chaotic (both politically as well as physically) streets of the Centro Historico. It is this chaos and disorder that informal vendor leaders have relied on, until now, in order to ensure the continued expansion of this semi-legal industry. For similar reasons as the informal vendors, there are other stakeholders in the Centro Historico who engage

in activities that, according to the law are not just semi-legal, but explicitly illegal. These stakeholders, which I will from here on refer to as “other marginalized groups” for the purposes of this thesis, include sex workers and homeless, among others.

Other groups of stakeholders, such as low-income residents, small-scale property owners, and small businesses (formal merchants), have a different set of priorities with regards to the revitalization of the Centro Historico. In interviews with different constituents of this group, it became clear that many support the municipal government’s revitalization activities, but that they are concerned that these activities are not being taken with their interests in mind. Specifically, there were some people who genuinely feared that the municipal government’s revitalization activities would eventually result in the displacement of low-income residents and small-scale formal merchants. This fear was partially justified because of recent tactics that the municipal government has used in nearby neighborhoods to expropriate apartment buildings and literally flatten them, with the pretext that these building had been hotbeds for delinquency.

Meanwhile, others did not fear displacement, but they did express frustration regarding specific elements of the revitalization activities that were being implemented in ways not reflective of their own needs. An example of this group were the residents and merchants involved in a dispute regarding parking with the municipal government, which will be discussed more at length later in this chapter.

Whatever the feelings of community members in the low-income areas of the Centro Historico, the reality is that the municipal government’s Autoridad de Centro Historico has shown a surprising lack of concern for engaging this group of people in the planning or even

implementation of its revitalization activities. This is in marked contrast with the high degree of involvement and influence that representatives of big businesses have had in the creation of policies, particularly real estate developers. Indeed, much of the initial plan for revitalization upon which the *Autoridad de Centro Historico* is basing its activities was developed by the FIDEICOMISO. A public-private partnership, incorporating representatives some of the largest financial interests in the country (including the world's richest man, the telecommunications tycoon Carlos Slim), FIDEICOMISO has two main objectives: First, to create plans for how to make Mexico City's Centro Historico into a more economically viable area, and second to secure the public and private financing and investment to make possible the implementation of these plans. Although the FIDEICOMISO has been in existence since 1990, it was not until 2002 that a plan to bring about this revitalization was actually developed and significant public and private financial interests were leverage to bring this revitalization about (FIDEICOMISO, 2007).

These large financial interests are not the only outside non-governmental stakeholders that have played a role in shaping public policy regarding the revitalization of the Centro Historico. There are also individual artists and historians, as well as university researchers and other cultural nonprofit organizations, who do not necessarily live in the area, but whose work has been successful in highlighting the cultural and historical importance of the Centro and in helping to establish a cultural corridor there (Mora Reyes, 2003). The work of these outside non-governmental stakeholders has played an indirect but important role in shaping the public policy-making environment in the Centro Historico in the two following ways.

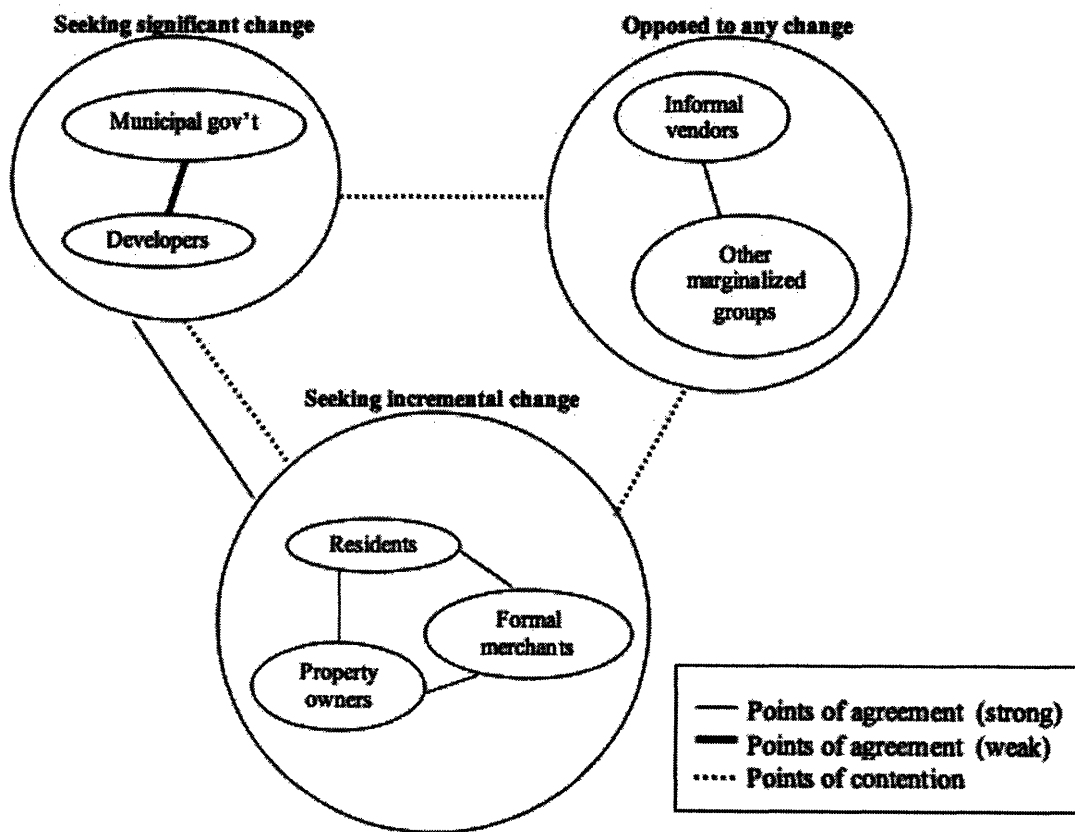
On one hand, this special attention has helped to re-shape public opinion and, thus, the decision-making of government officials. In so doing, these non-governmental actors are re-shaping the political map in the Centro Historico: representing the interests of stakeholders in this area no longer means simply catering to the needs of the low-income population that has lived and worked there for generations. Now, a new and much more politically powerful constituency has been created for the municipal government with regards to the Centro Historico—a growing number of young, middle-class “users” of the space, for work, home or recreation. Thus, it becomes easy to understand why the official mechanisms for public involvement of local community members, however well ensured they are by the written law, would not be effectively implemented in practice.

The second important way that outside non-governmental actors have significantly impacted the policy-making process has been by eliminating the special benefits that low-income non-governmental actors were enjoying as a result of political neglect. As Burstein points out, even interest groups with a relatively small degree of clout are more capable of influencing the policy-making process in areas to which the larger power structure is not currently paying much attention. When this dynamic changes, so, too, does the power structure (Burstein, 1996).

Figure 1 below is a visual representation of the above-mentioned description of organizational environment in Mexico City’s Centro Historico, with regards to attitudes about revitalization. This figure is the result of the several interviews with representatives of each stakeholder group listed. In this figure, the three large circles represent the three main affinity groups with regards to revitalization: those who are seeking significant change (the municipal

government and real estate developers); those who are opposed to any change (informal vendors and other marginalized groups); those who are seeking incremental change, particularly with regards to the built environment and infrastructure (residents, small business owners and small-scale property owners). The dotted lines connected each of the affinity groups with each other represent points of contention, while the solid lines connecting the affinity groups, as well as the groups of stakeholders within each affinity group, represent points of agreement. The thicker the solid line, the stronger the relationship and the more points of agreement exist.

Figure 1: Map of actors in Centro Historico, in terms of attitudes regarding revitalization



As the figure above suggests, the research I conducted in Mexico City showed that the strongest set of relationships between any two stakeholder groups in the world of Centro Historico revitalization was found between the municipal government and the large financial interests of real estate developers and other large corporations. The particular strength of this relationship, in combination with the relative weakness (or complete lack) of the other relationships between all the other stakeholders does much to explain the reason why revitalization activities were implemented in the top-down manner that they were. There was simply no political motivation to do it any other way. The description below shows exactly how this top-down revitalization was able to take place in spite of strong measures in place that supposedly ensured and helped to promote greater community participation in public policy-making.

At first glance, it would seem that the average resident of the Centro Historico has much more opportunity to participate in governmental affairs and decision making now than at any other time in history. It was not until 1996 that Mexico City's mayors were even popularly elected by the residents of that city—before then they were appointed by the president of the country. In addition, it has only been since 1999 that the position of Delegado has not been appointed by the mayor, but by a popular election voted on by residents in the delegacion he or she represents (Portal Ariosa, 2000). Also, at all levels of government, there is now more competition between political parties. It used to be that the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Party of the Institutional Revolution) was the “only game in town”, nationally and locally. Now, the local and municipal political powers are controlled by (albeit different veins of) the Partido

Revolucionario Democratico (the Revolutionary Democratic Party, in Spanish). Meanwhile, the national government—along with all the federal institutions, such as the National Institute of Anthropology and History—is in the hands of another party, Partido de Accion Nacional (National Action Party), which takes a great deal of interest in the Historic Center as a result of its national prominence as the historic, political and cultural seat of all Mexico (Portal Ariosa, 2000).

Lastly, 1997's Ley de Participacion Ciudadana (Law of Citizen Participation, in Spanish) promised to give residents all over Mexico City a much greater political voice over governmental affairs. The following are some of the participation mechanisms this law put in place:

- **The plebiscite (or citizen-driven ballot initiative):** By collecting signatures from people representing at least 0.5% of the registered voters in Mexico City, any citizen or group may be able to automatically trigger a plebiscite, which if it should receive a majority approval, would become law
- **The referendum:** Law-makers may, at any point, request a referendum on a possible or existing law or policy which would be taken into consideration for policy-making
- **The *Audiencia publica* (or “Town Hall” meeting):** Local delegacion governments are required to hold bi-annual town hall meetings during which citizens may ask questions and make comments to government officials
- **Public Outreach:** Municipal officials are required to notify community members who will be impacted by a governmental intervention or the provision of public services, with an appropriate amount of anticipation
- **Popularly elected neighborhood councils:** Members of the councils were elected by residents within each district's territorial jurisdiction, and each council worked with the corresponding Delegado to implement activities in their areas of local importance.

(Source: Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal, IV Legislatura, 2004)

Unfortunately, many of the mechanisms for participation guaranteed by the Law of Citizen Participation listed above were not available to community members in the Centro Historico who wanted to have some say on the Autoridad de Centro Historico's revitalization

activities. In the case of the neighborhood councils, the problem does not have to do with the Centro Historico specifically. By 2001, less than 5 years after it was first implemented, this participation mechanism had already lost some of its relevance—elections for new neighborhood council members were postponed indefinitely and these council members, no longer worried about re-election, lost much of their accountability with the community they were supposed to serve.

There are however, examples of specific public policy decisions during the Centro Historico revitalization that either differ to some extent, or make essentially irrelevant other mechanisms for participation ensured by the 1997 law. For example, there are some instances in which the ACH carries out projects, such as building demolition or street repaving, in which the provision ensuring appropriate anticipation for public outreach to affected community members is loosely interpreted. In fact, members of the ACH have candidly admitted that they avoid wide distribution of their schedule for physical streetscape improvements and tend to wait until the very last moment to notify community members in the area near these projects (sometimes, giving community members only 1-3 days of warning). Their reasoning given for these *de facto* policies was equally candid: they want to limit the ability of community members to protest (and potentially) block their revitalization activities.

In other cases, such as with the “Town Hall meetings”, mechanisms for participation are still taking place regularly, but they are being implemented by the government of the Delegacion. Meanwhile, the Autoridad de Centro Historico, which we mentioned above has been given authority to coordinate and direct implementation of all revitalization activities in the Centro, is

working directly under the Mayor, and there is not much coordination between these two levels of government. In fact, officials working the Delegacion Cuauhtemoc, which has jurisdiction over the Centro Historico, have told us they themselves have very little power to affect decisions taken by the ACH. If government officials in charge of implementing citizen participation mechanisms have little ability to influence revitalization activities, it is very unlikely that the citizens participating in these mechanisms will be able to influence them, regardless of the fact that they are the people most impacted by these activities.

But is the municipal government, with its top-down revitalization strategy, the only group to blame for the conservative and symbolic nature of public policy regarding citizen participation? The description of the process of public policy-making included above would suggest otherwise. Since the formal mechanisms for participation do not offer community members an ability to influence (or even be aware) of the municipal government's revitalization activities, community members have taken the logical step of seeking informal mechanisms for participation—namely, personal connections with government officials, power-brokering, and more than a little bit of corruption and bribery. In other words, the failure of community participation in the revitalization of the Centro Historico might be described as a classic prisoner's dilemma, in which different sets of actors work self-interestedly to maximize benefits for themselves, causing them to reap smaller individual rewards than if the different sets of actors had worked *cooperatively*.

A very similar critique as the one just described was written by Richard Klosterman about the pluralist school of planning: “the political arena is dominated by individuals and

groups who use their access to government officials and other elites to protect their staff, privilege and wealth and ensure that government acts in their own interests.” According to Klosterman, the only solution was to have a governmental entity—planners—that intervenes and ensures that the public goods not be neglected in favor of the individual ones (Klosterman, 1985). In the case of Mexico City’s Centro Historico, of course, the government has demonstrated a clear bias in favor of the already powerful groups and individuals in the area. This phenomenon will be discussed more at length in the next section of this chapter that will analyze the case of the municipal government’s interaction with informal street vendors in the Centro Historico.

IV.1.2 Lawrence, MA

While many of the interviewees in Lawrence during the course of this research openly talked about discriminatory practices on the part of the City government against Latinos, especially in years past, many have also talked a severe lack of capacity at the local government level. Indeed, sometimes it has been difficult to tell the difference between discrimination and lack of capacity. For example, is the fact that the process by which the City disposes its vacant land (which many nonprofit affordable housing developers are often keen on acquiring) intentionally vague and lengthy in order to facilitate corruption, or is simply a management failure? Are the sometimes dubious hiring and firing practices for City jobs examples of corruption and discrimination or simply lack of systematization in Human Resources (Brewer-Garcia, Cherry, Harris, Hines, Schweiger, and Stelson, 2006)?

In fact, lack of capacity at the local government level has been a reality for many years in Lawrence. Here are just two examples: In the 1990's, Lawrence High School lost its accreditation and the school district went into State receivership for several years before regaining autonomy and accreditation again (Schinto, 1995). In 2003, the federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) threatened to revoke the significant Community Development Block Grants that it provided to Lawrence, unless it undertook a major reform of its planning and community development activities, a final result of which was the creation of the Community Development Department.

One of the interesting side effects of this lack of capacity is that it has created a kind of power vacuum into which have stepped Lawrence's many nonprofit community development organizations. As a network, these grassroots organizations have provided services to the Lawrence community in the following areas: Economic development; Affordable housing; Environmental education, advocacy and cleanup; Education youth support services; Health Services; Immigrant advocacy and civic engagement; Neighborhood planning; and Cultural programming. Please refer to Table 1 below for a partial list of all the nonprofit grassroots organizations in Lawrence that are providing these services, developed by the author as a result of several interviews with key community members in Lawrence.

Table 1: Who is doing what in Lawrence?

Economic development	Lawrence Community Works (LCW)	Greater Lawrence Community Action Council	Northern Essex Community College		
Affordable housing	Lawrence Community Works (LCW)	Merrimack Valley Habitat for Humanity	Lazarus House Ministries	Bread and Roses, Inc.	
Environmental education, advocacy and cleanup	Groundworks Lawrence	Arlington Community Trabajando			
Education and youth support services	What's Up Lawrence	Boys and Girls Club of Lawrence	YMCA	Movement City (affiliated with LCW)	Padres Association Council
Health Services	Casa Dominicana	Groundworks Lawrence			
Immigrant advocacy and civic engagement	Lawrence Community Works (LCW)	Greater Lawrence Community Action Council	Instituto Internacional	Holy Rosary Catholic Church	St. Mary's Catholic Church
Neighborhood planning	Lawrence Community Works (LCW)	Arlington Community Trabajando			
Cultural programming	Lawrence Community Works (LCW)	Casa Dominicana	Semana Hispana	Desfile Dominicano	

(Source: Interviews with community members, public officials and community organization staff members in Lawrence)

As will be discussed further, the lack of local government capacity and corresponding flourishing of the nonprofit community development field in Lawrence has provided a unique opportunity. The ability of these organizations to provide a range of services that in other places are provided by public entities—or at the very least, in collaboration with public entities—has given the network of grassroots community development organizations a higher degree of legitimacy. In some ways, this network might be considered a parallel governing apparatus to

that of the local government. This type of state-like legitimacy allows an organization to open up new pathways for engaging community members in development activities that might otherwise be marginalized by a more typical political participatory environment. In an environment like Lawrence, where many residents are non-citizen immigrants and where even those Latinos who are citizens have experienced both explicit and inadvertent disenfranchisement, these new pathways for engagement become even more important.

Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW) is one organization in Lawrence that has understood this very well and has learned how to capitalize on their special legitimacy in the local political context in order to redefine what it means to be civically engaged. Formed in 2001, out of the ashes of a nearly defunct community development corporation, LCW has in a relatively short time, one of the model CDCs in the region and even at the national level². As a member-based community development corporation, its tangible signs of success—a 3,000-plus membership base, a multi-million dollar annual operating budget and a real estate portfolio that includes over 200 units of affordable housing, with nearly another 200 currently in construction—are only part of the success of Lawrence CommunityWorks (Kirk, 2008). Other aspects of the success of the organization are less easily quantified.

As a precursor to the re-christening of the community development corporation as LCW, three former Masters' students in MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning—Jess Andors, Tamar Kotelchuck and Kristen Harol—worked with Bill Traynor, a Lawrence native

² In 2007, the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Foundation of San Francisco, CA selected three models from around the country of community development organizations with strong community organizing component, in order to inform the Foundation's programmatic objectives. Lawrence CommunityWorks was one of the models.

and veteran community development practitioner, to organize community members in the city's North Common neighborhood. In fact, the members of the North Common Neighborhood Alliance (NCNA) became the first members of Lawrence CommunityWorks. These members, in turn, became not only the first users of LCW's youth development and economic development services, but they also helped to shape the organization's programming by participating in several planning committees and they became the front lines in LCW's attempt to continue expanding its membership base.

Capitalizing on existing social networks within the North Common neighborhood and within the city as a whole, LCW's grassroots leaders/members (many of whom had been identified during the early NCNA organizing efforts), continued to refer more people to LCW's growing list of services and programs that it offered to the community. These leader/members, which the organization referred to as "weavers"—perhaps, in recognition of the fact that the overwhelming majority of them are women and also in reference to the metaphoric "social fabric" that LCW hoped its presence in the community was hoping to strengthen—also serve as the backbone for the organization's political advocacy work. These weavers, and the webs of social networks to which they are connected, form a central part of the LCW's model for community organizing, which they refer to as "network organizing" (Traynor and Andors, 2005).

According to LCW's philosophy, community organizing models utilized by other community development organizations have focused on "institution-building", "engaging fewer people in a more narrow set of leadership roles and a more rigid organizational structure". While the institution-building strategy does help to solidify the base of power of an organization in some

situations, it makes the organization susceptible to questions regarding its legitimacy and representation. In the words of LCW's Executive Director, Bill Traynor and Deputy Director, Jess Andors, in order for a community development organization to avoid the risk of having the actual primary purpose of its community organizing activities be the continued consolidation of its own power as an organization, it "must become a part of a network – not just suppliers, but catalysts of the demand environment" (Traynor and Andors, 2005). This "demand environment", is created through a two-pronged approach: On one hand, LCW strives to offer real choices to its members on how and to what extent they can be involved in their community. At the same time, they work to ensure that this participation might actually lead to substantive change on issues that directly impact members' lives, by continuing to maintain important institutional relationships (Traynor and Andors, 2005).

The first part of this strategy, offering choices, relates to the multiple opportunities and many different levels of involvement that LCW members can choose to participate in. These opportunities begin with the multiple points of entry, or "entry doors" into the organization's network. Community members might first become involved with Lawrence CommunityWorks through its English as Second Language Courses, or its First-time Homeownership Assistance program, or they might become active in the organization's micro-level community organizing efforts, known as Neighbor Circles. Once a person has passed through the "entry door" of LCW's network, however, there are also various levels of involvement at which he or she can participate. Participants in all of LCW's programs are given the opportunity to learn about other programs that the organization offers. They are also encouraged to tell other people about these programs, and bring more people into the network. LCW members are offered special material benefits, such as discounted goods services at local businesses, but just as importantly they are offered the opportunity become decision-makers and leaders about issues that impact their lives.

Internally, members are constantly recruited to participate in committees to guide the direction of each of the organization's programs and projects (for example, there is the Family Asset Building Committee, the Member Services Committee and a committee for each of the organization's development projects).

Lawrence CommunityWorks also works to educate its members and encourage their active participation on important issues taking place at a local or regional scale. To this end, the Organizing Department has provided a series of leadership development trainings (called PODER) to nearly 100 members and constantly encouraging members to speak at City Council meetings and engage with other civic institutions in Lawrence. LCW also offers regular opportunities for members and neighbors to express their concerns, either through the neighbor circles, periodic member meetings, and the annual Member Appreciation Day.

The other half of Lawrence CommunityWorks' strategy to create a "demand environment" is that of maintaining institutional relationships. This is just as important as that of creating a flexible network that offers choices of participation to its members. According to one former staff member, "LCW is most effective when it functions as an institution". In other words, as important it is to focus on network-building, an organization should not neglect its task of institution-building. Community members who have been inspired with a degree of civic consciousness and pull together to express their demands "are likely to get creamed" without the institutional heft of an organization with relationships to the larger power structure. Lawrence CommunityWorks manages to maintain these relationships due to a savvy maneuvering of the city's political landscape on the part of staff members and specially trained community members. An example of this maneuvering is described at length later, in the "project-based" section of this chapter.

Thus, through this two-pronged strategy to developing a demand environment in Lawrence (working first with community members to encourage them to voice their demands and then with

the “environment” at large, in order to ensure that these demands can be heard), Lawrence CommunityWorks has found a way to be many things to many people. It is simultaneously a provider of needed services in the city; a space for unity-building in the community; a movement to engage and organize community about issues that affect them; and a mechanism by which these community members may be able to impact decision-making about these issues at a local government level. Success in each one of these areas has contributed to greater success in the others, and as a result LCW has established a level of grassroots as well as institutional legitimacy that would be the envy of many local governments, to say nothing of nonprofit community development corporations.

While the network-building organizing strategy employed by Lawrence CommunityWorks, combined with the overall capacity that Lawrence’s network of nonprofit community organizations provide to community development and civic engagement initiatives throughout the city, certainly represents a model of success worth emulating, it is also not without its shortcomings. Principal among these shortcomings is the tendency towards insularity of many of the community development organizations in Lawrence. By virtue of the relatively long distance between Lawrence and the Boston metropolitan area, the city itself is already somewhat isolated. Some interviewees mentioned that it was precisely this distance and isolation from the major urban center of Boston that ensured Lawrence continued to be an affordable place to live, even during the real estate boom of the late 90’s and early 00’s. Lawrence’s reputation for lawlessness—acquired particularly during the era of arson, insurance fraud and car

theft in the 80's and early 90's—also helped to create an additional psychological barrier between itself and the rest of the State.

Community development organizations in Lawrence have worked hard to combat this tendency towards insularity, by seeking out collaborations and partnerships with counterpart organizations, foundations and universities in other parts of the State. Most notable of these partnerships has been the MIT@Lawrence Initiative, “a long-term commitment to support dynamic and mutually beneficial relationships between faculty, students, and staff at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], together with civic leaders, residents, and community-based organizations in Lawrence, Massachusetts” (MIT@Lawrence, 2008). As a member of the MIT@Lawrence team of researcher, I often found, however, that organizations in Lawrence would succumb to the time and energy demands of their day-to-day work, letting their capacity for communication and coordination with outside entities deteriorate.

Lawrence CommunityWorks has been especially susceptible to this tendency in the last year, during which it experienced a great deal of staff turn-over and it moved the location of its main offices. There were several weeks during which it was virtually impossible to reach any staff member via email or phone, and a period of several months during which the only way to do so was to call or email individual staff members repeatedly. The organization's website has been either out of date with crucial contact information or not functioning for a period of 10 months. This lack of capacity for maintaining what might be considered basic communication apparatus is somewhat unusual for an organization of the size of LCW. In most cases, the most effective way for me, as a student researcher to get in contact with staff members at Lawrence

CommunityWorks was to simply show up at their offices unannounced and attempt to catch them while they are at their desks. Other student researchers have expressed to me similar difficulty in communicating with the organization. When I did manage to find the person I needed to talk, they were often very happy and willing to re-work their schedule in order to dedicate some time to me.

One interpretation of the communication challenges facing Lawrence's community development organizations³, is that some of the factors that contributed to their success in serving the needs of city residents and adding capacity to the City government are also the same factors that make it more difficult to maintain regular coordination and communication with outside stakeholders and resource-providers. On one hand, Lawrence's relative distance from Boston means that people who live there tend to work near-by, which means that the city has less feel of a suburban "bedroom community" than it does the feel of a small town. On the other hand, however, the distance from the urban centers in Boston (both physical and mental) makes it more difficult for organizations in Lawrence to access resources and benefit from participation in information-sharing networks with other similar organizations there. Another two-sided coin is the question of flexibility. The ability and willingness on the part of LCW and other community organizations in Lawrence to stay flexible and drop other priorities in order to fulfill the needs of community members contribute to their ability to connect with and gain the trust of these community members. These attributes are also what makes it difficult, however, to

³ Incidentally, the communication problems faced by LCW are small compared to the ones faced by Lawrence's city government. At one point in the early 00's, the Internet connection at the City's offices was down for 6 months and City of Lawrence email addresses did not function for an entire year and a half!

maintain regular communication with stakeholders and potential resource-providers outside of Lawrence.

IV.2 Project-based level

In this section of the chapter I will profile two different conflicts (one in each of the case study locations) resulting from the implementation of community development activities. In both cases, at the center of the conflict is the debate regarding *who* has a right to participate in the decision-making process on community development activities, and *how* this participation should be done. Rather than compare the tangible programmatic outcomes of both of these interventions, I will develop for each intervention that describes how the planning and implementation resulted in varying types and degrees of civic engagement. I will glean different lessons learned from each narrative, and thus construct a set of recommendations about how community development interventions can be structured in such a way as to promote more civic engagement among the target populations. Important questions I will be attempting to answer through each of these narratives are the following: What connection is there between the success of achieving “tangible outcomes” and success in engaging a broad cross-section of community members in the planning and implementation of the project? To what extent has the participation of community members in this particular project shown itself to be sustainable over the long-term? How do community engagement efforts regarding a particular project led by a community development organization impact the level of participation in the community in general?

IV.2.1 Informal street vending in the Centro Historico

The top-down process described above by which the Autoridad de Centro Historico is carrying out its revitalization activities has resulted in several contentious public policy decisions, particularly with regards to land-use issues. There are perhaps none so contentious, however, than the set of decisions regarding informal street vendors in the Centro Historico. Strictly speaking, since the period during which Alfonso Corona del Rosal served as Mayor of Mexico City (the mid-1960's) it has been illegal to be an informal vendor on the streets of the Centro Historico (Delegacion Cuauhtemoc, 2008). There are, of course, exceptions within this law. According to an interview with the Delegado (elected representative, similar to the concept of Borough President in New York) of the district of Cuauhtemoc, in which the Historic Center is located, it is possible for individuals to sell commerce on certain streets legally, if they are able to get a permit from the delegacion. The quota for permits in the Centro Historico, however, has been exceeded since 2001, and since it is very rare for individuals to lose or give up their permits once they have them, it is virtually impossible to become a legally permitted street vendor in the area. In addition, the number of permitted vendors in the Centro Historico (approximately 2,000) is far exceeded by the number vendors that actually worked in the area regularly (various estimates range from 8,000 to 30,000).

These unofficial street vendors (and even many of the official ones) are affiliated with one of the many street vendor associations operating in the Centro Historico. Since the massification of street vending in the early 90's, each of the leaders of these associations have "controlled" different sections of the public curbsides and, in exchange for weekly payment,

provides street vendors with a guaranteed space to sell, protection from the law enforcement (which the leaders pay off), and access to suppliers of the (often contraband) merchandise to sell. Thanks to the big business that is informal street vending—each vendor typically pays \$10-20 per week for a space, and some of the largest associations of street vendors have over 2,000 members—some street vendor leaders have amassed large amounts of wealth and political power. Also, though most street vendor leaders control public curbsides and plaza in many parts of Mexico City, most of them are based in the place where the majority of their members operate: the Centro Historico.

Thus, municipal government officials attempting to implement revitalization activities in the parts of the Centro Historico that were covered with street vendors faced a very serious problem. Many expert observers, commenting on the Autoridad de Centro Historico's plan to revitalize the Centro Historico, predicted that the street vendor leaders would prove to be a force too powerful and intractable for them to contend with. Most people expected that the revitalization area would have to exclude the areas controlled by the street vendors, or that it would at least take many years of negotiation and political pressure to free up the streets of the Centro Historico that had been for years choked with vendors. But contrary to these expectations, in October 2007, barely a year after the new Mayor, Marcelo Ebrard, took office, dozens of blocks in the central area of the Centro Historico, were indeed completely freed of street vendors.

The process by which the Ebrard administration was able to eliminate street vendors from such a wide area of the Centro Historico in such quick and relatively violence-free manner is still

not very well understood and would likely make a very interesting research project in its own right. What is clear, however, is that the mayor's administration achieved this outcome by negotiating directly with the street vendor leaders and offering them a range of incentives, from money (some reports claim that the most important leaders received up to \$3 million), to pathways to legalization. In exchange, these leaders agreed to relocate the street vendors under their control to officially designated commercial plazas or abandoned buildings within the Centro Historico, or to public curbsides in other parts of the city. I was also able to discover that the government's negotiation strategy was to engage only with the 10 largest and most powerful street vendors. Not only did this limit the number of people that government officials had to negotiate with, but it allowed the government to offer these leaders yet one more incentive for cooperating with their agenda. By contrast, municipal government negotiators completely excluded the other, smaller street vendor leaders in the Centro Historico from the negotiation process, and yet still required these leaders and the small numbers of vendors that they controlled to evacuate. Thus, the Ebrard administration essentially provided these major street vendor leaders with an official sanction to "muscle in" and steal members, turf and economic power from the small leaders. According to one of these major leaders that our research team was fortunate enough to interview, this last "incentive" proved to be one of the most important that the government provided to ensure the evacuation of the street vendors from the Centro Historico.

Common experience in the field of planning suggests that it is not surprising that a governmental agency to choose not to engage directly with local stakeholders involved in illegal

or semi-legal activities such as informal street vending. In this case, however, the outcome is in some respects counter-intuitive in light of the fact that for decades the municipal government's policy with regards to informal street vendors in the Centro Historico had been one of direct engagement with all or most of the street vendor associations. This was even the case during the pre-1997 era, when Mexico City mayors were not popularly elected and a single political Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) still maintained a firm grip at all levels of government. In other words, there seemed to be more vibrant community participation in the Centro Historico when the area was still languishing in political and economic neglect and when a single-party dictatorship was still in power.

The outcome of this story, however, becomes less counter-intuitive when one is reminded of Gerald Rosenberg's point that one of the key conditions that is necessary in order for a particular law to bring about any change in the status quo, is that there must be popular and elite support for this law (Rosenburg, 1991). It would have been difficult for any governmental decree to run counter to more than 500 years of history and to the enormous flows of capital represented by the daily commercial activities in the area. In addition, as Paul Burstein would point out, the overall climate of political neglect for the area, helped create an environment where it was easier for non-governmental actors (such as the informal street vendors, their leaders, suppliers and customers) to play more of a role in the formation of public policy (Burstein, 1999). The economic resurgence of the Mercado La Merced, which was centered around an ostensibly illegal activity, informal street vending, could only have flourished in an area with weak government oversight.

The consequences of this strategy—which might be called, in a sense, a top-down negotiation strategy to help facilitate a top-down revitalization strategy—were that the vertical power relations and division between “haves” and “have-nots” in the world of informal street vending were significantly reinforced. I encountered several smaller street vendor leaders who had been excluded from the negotiation process and were understandably very bitter. These men and women, who in a sense are the informal equivalent of a medium-sized business owner, have been forced to join forces with one of the larger leaders (in other words, a forced merger with a large corporation), or get out of the business completely. In addition, the results of the negotiations included no safeguards as to the financial and employment security of individual informal street vendors. Each leader was left to decide how he or she wanted to pass on their “incentives” to his or her members.

IV.2.2 Public land disposition conflict in Lawrence

Elsewhere in this thesis, I have mentioned that the disposition of city-owned vacant land is a sensitive issue in Lawrence. This is, in part, due to the large amount of properties that fall under this category—in 2006, there were 173 vacant properties directly owned by the City, with over 700 more vacant or abandoned properties that might eventually be transferred to city ownership through property tax default or land court mediation (Brewer-Garcia, Cherry, Harris, Hines, Schweiger, and Stelson, 2006). While these properties stand vacant and unused, they remain a drain on city resources by not contributing to the city’s tax base while still requiring city resources to maintain them clean. The brunt of the impact from these vacant properties,

however, is felt by the people who live nearby and endure the ripple effect of environmental degradation, crime, and lowered house values that these properties produce. Also, it is not surprising that majority of these vacant properties are concentrated in the northern half of Lawrence, particularly in the three neighborhoods of Lawrence with the highest concentration of Latinos and lowest income per capita. (Brewer-Garcia, et al, 2006) One might think that this case would be a situation in which the interests of low-income residents are perfectly in-line with those of the City of Lawrence: by disposing as many properties as possible into the hands of private and nonprofit developers, one can add to the city's tax base and improve the quality of life for low-income Lawrence residents at the same time. The reason that this has not occurred⁴ has much to do with the competing visions for revitalization that exist in Lawrence (Brewer-Garcia, et al, 2006).

Earlier in thesis I described the controversy surrounding the disposition of a particular parcel of land in Lawrence's North Common neighborhood to a liquor store owner so that he might expand his business instead of to a nonprofit developer that hoped to build affordable senior housing. A closer look at this controversy reveals that there are those in Lawrence (who are obviously still powerful enough to influence a near-unanimous decision in their favor by the City Council) who are mistrustful of the vision for revitalization put forth by nonprofit community development organizations and the low-income, Latino community members whom they represent. A White resident of one of the city's wealthier neighborhoods, while testifying

⁴ Between 1987-2001, only 11 publicly owned vacant properties total had been disposed, and though the numbers increased substantially after this, thanks in part to the increased activities of nonprofit housing developers, by the end of 2006 there were still only 64 total properties that had been disposed (Brewer-Garcia, et al, 2006).

before the City Council in defense of the liquor store owners bid for the property, referred to the nonprofit affordable housing developer with a competing bid, as a “multi-million dollar political action committee”. The fact that both the liquor store owner and the man testifying on his behalf are long-time Italian-American residents of Lawrence, in combination with the fact that the North Common neighborhood where this disputed property is located is a former Italian-American enclave that is now predominately Dominican American suggests that competition for the “true” historical identity of the neighborhood is still very much alive.

The organization referred to in this article was Lawrence CommunityWorks, and the language used (“multi-million dollar political action committee”) by the community member arguing against their proposal to purchase the city-owned property is telling. The loss of this particular bid notwithstanding, LCW has managed to be quite successful at acquiring these city-owned parcels, and in so-doing, encouraged the City to increase the volume of total property dispositions. Of the 49 publicly-owned properties disposed between 2001 and 2006 in Lawrence, over 20% of them were disposed to Lawrence CommunityWorks, including 8 of the 10 that were disposed in the North Common neighborhood (Brewer-Garcia, et al, 2006).

LCW’s success at acquiring properties through the City’s disposition process, despite the obstacles of a slow and inefficient system, as well as active resistance from some powerful actors has been due to its multi-pronged approach and strong base of support in the community. According to a former LCW staff member, in some cases the organization will identify a particular vacant property, together with a steering committee of members from the community that is a priority for redevelopment. Then, if this property is not currently owned by the City

outright, LCW will do much of the research and administrative work needed to help this property through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Land Court process in order to finally be transferred to City ownership. Once this has been accomplished, LCW has a higher degree of political leverage regarding that property, which can help ensure that the property is disposed to them. In other cases, if a property that LCW is interested in acquiring is going up for bid, then the organization may decide to simply submit a proposal that is financially competitive with those of the other bidders.

If neither of these property acquisition processes is appropriate or effective, however, then LCW has another, very powerful recourse: mass mobilization of community members at a city council meeting. On numerous occasions, not all of them having to do with property acquisition, Lawrence CommunityWorks has shown itself to be capable of mobilizing large numbers of community members to appear at City Council meetings and other important public functions. The moral and political force created by these actions—which could only have been possible through long-term, committed grassroots community organizing, leadership development and public education—has allowed Lawrence CommunityWorks to have a seat at the table with regards to determining public policy on public property disposition, despite the presence of resistance and administrative obstacles. The clout that this strong base of community support enjoyed by LCW extends beyond the municipal government of Lawrence, however. It has also provided the organization with the authority to engage and seek alliances with major private interests, such as Lawrence General Hospital, the owners of large real estate (such as the massive old mill buildings) as well as the State government of Massachusetts.

IV.3 Individual level of analysis

In this section I will abandon the dual structure of the other two sections, in which I compared examples from Mexico and then Lawrence. Instead, I will present case studies of two individuals in Lawrence, both Dominican-American, Mario Salgado and Monica de Jesus. The selection of interviewees is in no way intended to be representative of the larger Dominican-American community in Lawrence. First of all, they are related—Mario is Monica’s brother-in-law—and they were identified as key interviewees because of their close ties to Lawrence CommunityWorks, where I was doing an internship in the summer of 2007. Secondly, both Mario and Monica are considerably more active in community activities in Lawrence and the Dominican Republic than most other Dominican-Americans I encountered in Lawrence.

The usefulness of these case studies, however, does not come from their representativeness but more from what they might tell us about the need for possible future research. Earlier in this thesis, I discussed the factors that contributed to the broad context of civic engagement within an entire community, with the idea that this knowledge could in turn help to inform a public participation strategy for a community development intervention. The ideas that this final section of my thesis touch upon and encourage additional research about have to do with the factors that contribute to the creation of a *consciousness of civic engagement* among individuals in neighborhoods with a community development intervention in place.

IV.3.1 Mario Salgado

As of the summer of 2007, Mario Salgado was active in the following community-based organizations in Lawrence. He was a Lawrence CommunityWorks board member and a member of LCW's Our House Committee, which guided the development and programmatic activities of the organization's major new community center and staff headquarters. He also was a co-founder of the Parents' Association Council, affiliated with Lawrence High School and a volunteer for two other community-based organizations in Lawrence that provide housing and support services to low-income people in Lawrence.

His involvement with political and community activities in the Dominican Republic involved the following. He was the Director of Operations for the Lawrence branch of the DR's Partido Democratico Revolucionario (Democratic Revolutionary Party, in Spanish) or PRD, for which he was in charge of organizing fundraising parties, recruiting new members to the party and registering people to be able vote from Lawrence in the Dominican Republic's presidential elections. He also participated in fundraising activities for La Casa Rosada, an orphanage and residential clinic for children living with HIV/AIDS in Santo Domingo, of which Monica de Jesus is a co-founder. These are the activities that Mario participates in from Lawrence, where he spends 9 months of the year. The other three months he spends in Santo Domingo, where he says, "I dedicate one month to the Party [the PRD], one month to La Casa Rosada, and one month to my family".

How did Mario such active and engaged member of his community? He did not start out his life this way. Although he had briefly been a member of a young Communist organization

during his student days in the Dominican Republic, for most of Mario Salgado' adult life—which he spent entirely in the United States, having emigrated from the Dominican Republic when he was 17 years old—he was not very active in his community. In his own words, Mario spent much of his young adulthood “on the streets of New York City, getting into trouble” Not only was he not an active participant in community affairs, but he was not even very participatory in his own family life and, as he says, he did not spend as much time as he says he should have with his wife and 4 children.

Everything began to change for him when he had a very serious accident, in which he broke his spinal cord and spent 6 months in a convalescent hospital. Although he had “a thousand friends”, the only people who came to see him at the hospital were his wife and children, which led Mario to have an epiphany as to what were the most important types of relationships in life. Shortly after being released from the hospital, Mario and his family moved from New York City to Lawrence, Massachusetts (in 1996) in search of “escape from the “hustle and bustle”. With a newly acquired appreciation for the importance of participating in family life, and in the smaller, more suburban community of Lawrence, Mario began to turn his life around. He began to be involved in a group at a Catholic church that he attended, with which he participated in an outreach visit and speaking tour at a local prison.

Mario was still very much new and un-developed as a community leader when he met Jess Andors in 1999, who was then a Masters' student at DUSP working with Bill Traynor to organize the North Common Neighborhood Alliance (NCNA), and who would eventually become Lawrence CommunityWorks' Deputy Director. Mario has credited Jess with being the

person who truly helped him realize his leadership potential and says that one of the principle reasons that he started to become active in NCNA is simply that Jess, someone that he had grown to respect, kept asking him for his help in various projects. As he began to participate in various community-related activities, Mario developed stronger relationships with other community leaders, especially with his sister-in-law, Monica de Jesus. These relationships, in turn, became another strong motivating factor to encourage his continued participation in these activities, providing a sense of social fulfillment and lending sense of purpose to his life.

Monica de Jesus was especially instrumental in Mario's return to participation in political and community activism in the Dominican Republic. Although the two of them claim that they are the only people that they know of who are active in this way in both the US and the island, this does not match the research that has been carried out by Luis Guarnizo and Alejandro Portes or that carried out by Peggy Levitt. These scholars have found evidence to suggest that, particularly within the Dominican-American community, there is a high degree of continued participation in political and community life on the island. Additionally, these scholars point out that the more active that an immigrant is in his host community in the US, the more likely he is to be active in the Dominican Republic (Guarnizo and Portes 2003, and Levitt, 2001).

IV.3.2 Monica de Jesus

Contrary to Mario, Monica de Jesus' consciousness of civic engagement began at an earlier age, shortly after having arrived in New York City from the Dominican Republic at age 16. According to Monica, this desire on the part of her family to differentiate themselves from

those people in the street (in other words, people who got into trouble with the law, or at least associated with others who did so), was in many ways a self-preservation mechanism in a scary and crime-ridden Upper Manhattan in the 1970's. The path to this type of differentiation led her to occupy her time with school and church and it was her involvement in these that led her to become an active leader in her community. In her church community, a Catholic church whose congregation was made up almost entirely of Latino immigrants from Central America and the Caribbean, participation began through a youth group that performed volunteer activities in the community.

As a student, Monica went to college (first at SUNY in Long Island and then at CUNY in New York City) to become a teacher, like her mother and some of her sisters, where through participation in classes, as well as workshops and seminars, she realized that she enjoyed speaking in public. In part because of her concurrent involvement in church activities, Monica gravitated to courses, seminars and volunteer and work experiences through her university that emphasized the importance of "mobilizing the Latino masses" through education and awareness-raising. In New York City, Monica, together with her husband, went on to be the leaders of a youth group in her church, and to win a "community organizing" award in the public school system through her job as a bilingual teacher's aide.

Thus, by the time that Monica was a young adult, she had already developed a strong consciousness of civic engagement and it was only natural that when she and her family moved to Lawrence in the late 90's (for much the same reason as Mario Salgado, in order to escape the hectic pace and crime of New York City), she began to be an active participant in her community

there. In Lawrence, she co-founded the Parents Association Council at Lawrence High School with her brother-in-law, Mario, volunteered as the after-school program coordinator for the North Common Neighborhood Alliance (which later became Lawrence CommunityWorks), and was a regular contributor to a community affairs program on a local Spanish-language radio station. As an active member of her Catholic Church, Monica has been a youth group leader, Sunday School and confirmation class teacher, among other activities. This is in addition to her day job as a high school teacher and her duties as a mother of four and, for several years until 2001, a part-time graduate student.

Monica always maintained an interest in Dominican politics and community affairs, even as she was developing herself as a community leader in New York and Lawrence. Her more direct involvement in the politics of the island, however, was facilitated when her sister Joanna (a different one than the sister that is married to Mario), moved back to the Dominican Republic after graduating from college and working in New York City for a few years, and became an active organizer and leader within the Partido Democratico Revolucionario (PDR). As a result of her hard work and militancy for the party, when the PDR president, Hipolito Mejia, was in power from 2000-2004, Joanna served in a few different appointed positions, including that of Consul-general to Japan and Director of Customs at the international airport in Santo Domingo.

As a result of this connection, Monica de Jesus, has become an active supporter of the PDR in Lawrence, MA, becoming the lead organizer of the fundraising and campaign tour visit to Lawrence in spring of 2008 of Manuel Alvarez Maldonado, the PDR's 2008 presidential candidate. In addition to her overtly political participation, Monica also helped to co-found and

has been a lead fundraiser in the United States of La Casa Rosada, the orphanage and residential clinic for children with HIV/AIDS of which Mario Salgado is also a supporter. Lastly, when Monica is in the Dominican Republic (her visits back to the island have been less regular and typically for shorter lengths of time than Mario's), she is also an active participant in the local Neighborhood Council near her home in Santo Domingo. Through this work, she has helped to raise funds and ensure the construction of a local park and put pressure on the municipal government to resolve the problem in her neighborhood with improper street drainage and flooding.

Both Monica and Mario listed a major part of their activism, in Lawrence as well as in the Dominican Republic, as reaching out to others and encouraging them to become more civically engaged. Mario used the term “jalar” (which means “to pull” in Spanish) to refer to this process and says that he is good at doing this because he knows how to ask with the right amount of directness and friendliness and because he is well-known and trusted as a leader in the community. Monica provided a similar reason for her success as a “jaladora” (in LCW's terminology, this would be a “weaver”), telling a short anecdote about two women that called the radio show that she was appearing on in order to raise funds for La Casa Rosada. The women donated money, announcing that they were happy to do so because they had received help from Monica at some other point in the past (one of them had been Monica's ESL student while the other had received advice from her as a newcomer in Lawrence and the United States a few years before. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this phenomenon, however, is not *how* Mario and Monica manage to be good at “weaving”, or “pulling” new people into community activism, but

that it forms such an important part of their own identity as activists. When asked directly why he is such an active participant in his community, the first thing that Mario said was that he likes to have a following (a group of people that see him as a leader in the community and look up to him).

It is also interesting to note another similarity between Monica and her brother-in-law: the participation of both of them in community activities seems to carry with it a significance that is the opposite of a life on the streets. “No vinimos a ser de los malos, sino de los buenos... con mucho respeto a los amigos que estaban en la calle”. This quote shows that for Monica, a consciousness of civic engagement is explicitly connected to a moral identity (and less explicitly to a class identity). This is important to keep in mind because it might point to a challenge in developing a similar type of consciousness of civic engagement among community members who come from a different type of class background or who do not share the same moral identity as Monica.

Monica’s words also point to some opportunities for initiating in civic engagement activities, however, since there are a great many Latino immigrants who do subscribe to a church-based system of morality but who may not currently be transferring this identity into a greater participation in the community. The impact of church affiliation on civic engagement is a topic that has received a lot of attention from scholars in the last 15 years (Putnam, 2001; Verba, Schulman and Brady, 1995; Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001; and Campbell, 2004). The majority of this scholarship has been focused on determining whether or not the associational networks that a church can provide an individual are effective ways to produce and transmit resources that are

needed for civic engagement. According to Campbell, while churches do provide some of the resources for greater civic engagement (tight social network and political information, leadership development opportunities, access to a political power structure, etc.), they also “ask for so much of their members’ time and energy that they pull their members out of participation in the wider community”. Thus, church congregations (in Campbell’s case he was studying White evangelical, but Jones-Correa and Leal’s research in the Latino church community produced similar results) do not represent “hotbeds of activism” as much as the *potential* for “periodic bursts of mobilization” around specific issues that mattered to the congregation (Campbell, 2004).

There appears to be much less scholarly research on the civic effects of moral identity in religious involvement, as distinct from the effects of associational structure.⁵ In her article, “From Shame to Confidence: Gender, religious conversion and civic engagement of Mexicans in the US South”, Marie Friedmann Marquardt argues that the results from her research, “call for us to look beyond the organizational structure of churches to the religious and theological content of conversion.” The women in Friedmann Marquardt’s study underwent processes of religious conversion in which they “unexpectedly and almost unwillingly develop[ed] the fruits of the [Holy] Spirit with which she was endowed, allowing them to “become confident, articulate and capable persons with the habits and dispositions necessary for thriving, participatory, democratic societies” (Friedman Marquardt, 2005). This process sounds similar to the process of developing

⁵ For a less scholarly work on the subject, see Jim Wallis’ inspirational book about the search for the connection between spirituality and social justice, *The Great Awakening: Reviving faith and politics in a post-religious right America* (Wallis, 2008).

a consciousness of civic engagement that Monica de Jesus describes about herself and her family.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION & LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons learned from the case studies included in this thesis are not intended to be universal, nor is there even sufficient information to be able to say specifically what conditions must be in place in order for increased community engagement to occur. Instead, the final product of this thesis might most accurately be described as a set of suggestions of ideas to keep in mind while conducting the planning and implementation of community development projects.

In recognition of the uniqueness of each of the case studies, the lessons learned will not be presented with the same three-part analytical framework utilized in Chapter 4 (organizational-level, project-level and individual-level analysis). Instead, the lessons will be organized by case. I will first present the lessons that the case of the revitalization of Mexico City's Centro Historico can teach us about how efforts at grassroots civic engagement can break down in the face of a municipal government's top-down community development agenda, a renewed interest from influential outsiders and a long-established culture of corruption. The lessons learned from the case study of community development in Lawrence, Massachusetts, on the other hand, speak to the possibility of success at promoting meaningful, sustainable civic engagement at a grassroots level, even among a community of people that has historically been marginalized from participating in the public sphere.

V.1 Lessons learned from Mexico City

One of the primary lessons that an analysis of the case of the revitalization of the Centro Historico provides for grassroots organizations advocating on behalf of marginalized individuals

in their communities is the following: Sometimes direct engagement with governmental institutions that are attempting to implement public policy in a top-down manner is not the best strategy for a community-based organization to achieve the most amount of power over the long-term. Instead, alliance-building between other non-governmental entities in the area affected by these policies—even if the ultimate objectives of each entity are not the same—is a way to counteract the strength of existing power dynamics in which they find themselves disadvantaged. For example, if the groups of stakeholders represented as being opposed to any type of revitalization in Figure 1 (included in Chapter 4) were to have sought alliances with groups of stakeholders seeking only incremental changes through revitalization—instead of both groups of stakeholders attempting to engage directly with the government—the resulting failure of civic engagement efforts may not have been as devastating.

Ironically, the ability of outside stakeholders to influence policy decisions regarding the Centro Historico—in this case, to the detriment of grassroots civic engagement efforts within the Centro—does speak to a strategic opportunity for grassroots activists. It can help to remind us that non-governmental entities that do not have direct access to governmental power structures can still impact policy decisions utilizing the important tool of public opinion. To this end, it may be true that the most helpful alliances for grassroots community organizations may even be with outside groups and individuals. In a similar vein, the failure of some grassroots efforts at civic engagement point to a necessity to understand the larger power structures at work in order to know with which entities negotiation might actually lead to sustainable positive results.

Lastly, the Mexico City case study shows that while moments of adversity for a community organization can serve further unite a marginalized community, they can also contribute to its dissolution. Learning from this example, one might say that in order for grassroots organizations that find themselves in similar situations to avoid the same type of failure, strong leadership is needed. Leadership that consists solely of acting as a mediator or bridge between the organization's membership base and the decision-makers in government is not strong, sustainable leadership and does not contribute to greater communication and trust-building between different interest groups in the community that the organization is supposed represent.

V.2 Lessons learned from Lawrence

Although the story of civic engagement and community development in Lawrence is not a total success—there are still many who do not participate and even those that do still encounter resistance at times, be it advertent or inadvertent—the lessons learned from this case study do point, on the whole, in the direction of new and exciting ways of generating and maintaining a large, civically engaged network of community members. Studying the model provided to us by Lawrence CommunityWorks, in particular, can open our eyes to new ways of understanding the role of community development organizations vis a vis the communities that they serve. One of the most important concepts that form a part of LCW's organizing philosophy is that of a “demand environment”, which is a context in which community members feel empowered and motivated to express their needs to institutions that can help to address them. This is as opposed

to being a passive recipient of assistance, which has all too often been the model followed by the community development field.

There are two important aspects to creating this demand environment: 1) Creating opportunities for participation that offer community members with real choices and 2) Ensuring that this participation can lead to substantive positive impacts in their lives. Lawrence CommunityWorks shows us that the first of these aspects can be achieved by creating a flexible and responsive organizational structure, and relying on existing social networks and natural leaders to continuously expand the base community support. Thus, community-based organizations that focus on network-building, in addition to institution-building strategies are better able to empower the communities that they are trying to serve.

Meanwhile, the second aspect is achieved by maintaining relationships with other powerful institutions and savvy maneuvering of the political landscape. Also, the experience of Lawrence shows that non-governmental organizations are more successful at promoting civic engagement among historically marginalized groups of community members in cities where the municipal government has demonstrated a lack of capacity to address the basic needs of these groups. These non-governmental organizations can gain legitimacy among community members, as well as political leverage with the municipal government, if they are able to provide services and fill needs that the government is not able to fill sufficiently well. Additionally, when several organizations, working together as a network to fulfill a more complete range of community needs and serve a broader cross-section of the city than any particular organization can do on its own, the legitimacy and political leverage of each individual organization is increased. An

important characteristic of this dual strategy is that success in achieving either of these two aspects can contribute to success in achieving the other, leading to a potential virtuous cycle of power consolidation and community empowerment.

The example of Lawrence CommunityWorks also shows us that in order to most effectively leverage an empowered and civically engaged base of community members (achieved through a network-building organizing strategy), it is important to be strategic. Depending on the context, there are different areas in which participation from community members can be the most effective. In some cases, direct, adversarial participation (or even the threat of this type of participation) is enough to break the stalemate of power between two institutional entities. The utilization of this type of participation in every instance can divert attention from other potentially useful (and less adversarial) tactics that involve relationship-building with powerful institutional players

Another important opportunity for community participation that is relevant regardless of the tactic employed to engage with other institutional players, is at the beginning of a project. If decision-making and prioritization are done in a collaborative and inclusive manner at this stage, a community-based organization has greater political and moral leverage with which to conduct its relationship-building activities.

In addition to a “demand environment”, another concept which the experience of Lawrence calls to mind is that of a “consciousness of civic engagement”. This concept, which has important ramification for the way in which community development practitioners approach their task of promoting more widespread, sustainable civic engagement among the communities

that they serve, can be understood through an analysis of the two case studies in Lawrence. The first insight regarding the development of a consciousness of civic engagement is that this process can be a very personal one. It can begin in moments of individual crisis and grow out of a desire to seek self-improvement and personal redemption, as was the case with Mario Salgado. Mario's case study also shows us that sometimes motivating someone to participate can be a matter of developing a relationship based on mutual trust and respect (a task that is much easier said than done, of course) and then simply asking them for help on a specific task.

Mario's experiences also show us that the more that one is an active participant in community activities that matter to them, the stronger his or her identification with a consciousness of civic engagement is likely to be. Thus, since a member of an immigrant community is likely to have interests that span international boundaries, their participation in activities in their country of origin might indirectly help to strengthen their consciousness of civic engagement and increase their motivation for participating in community activities in the US.

Meanwhile, an analysis of Monica de Jesus' case study reminds us that the consciousness of civic engagement that members of immigrant communities is heavily influenced by the class consciousness that they bring with them from their countries of origin. Her case also shows us that the utilization of church-based networks for community organizing is a double-edged sword. While church congregations provide many of the resources needed for civic engagement (tight social networks, access to information, affiliation with an institution that has affiliations with other powerful institutions), church participation itself can be a major time commitment for

people, especially low-income immigrants, leaving little time or energy to be active in other types of civic life. Looking at participation in church activities not from the perspective of what resources for civic engagement this provides, but instead of how this participation contributes to an individual's development of a consciousness of civic engagement creates a different scenario: A person with a moral identity that is connected to a consciousness of civic engagement is already apt to be an active participant in their communities. The challenge becomes trying to find out what issues will draw forth this participation.

Lastly, the example of both Maria and Mario tell us that for some community leaders, the development of their consciousness of civic is positively correlated with their ability to develop a following—a group of people within their communities that trust them and look up to them as leaders. Thus, when an organization relies on these community leaders to do outreach and community organizing, they are not only taking advantage of pre-existing social networks to grow their base in the community (utilizing *opportunities* for civic engagement), but they are also possibly increasing the *capacity* of these leaders, as well as contributing to their *motivation* to continue their service to their communities.

V.3 Final thoughts

Much of the community development literature that deals with the problem of promoting greater, more sustainable public participation tend to focus on what a community development organization can do provide community members with the opportunities for meaningful participation or with the resources to take advantage of these opportunities. Opportunities and

resources, however, are only two of the three principle pre-requisites to participation identified by Bolan in his influential work. This might be because the third pre-requisite, motivation, is much more dependant on the personal choices and experiences of individual community members. (Bolan, 1969) Indeed, many of the community development practitioners I have worked with and talked in the past have tended to assume that there is little that an outsider can do to influence the motivation of community members to participate. As a result, according to this line of thinking, one must focus attention on working with those community members who already motivated. The result of this phenomenon, of course, is that many individuals, particularly those living low-income and immigrant communities that are further marginalized from mainstream American society, continue to be excluded from the processes of community development that directly impact their lives.

The responses from my interviews with both the community development practitioners and the two people profiled in this chapter support the idea that in large part, the above mentioned are the most commonly-discussed reasons that community members do not participate in community development projects. An understanding of the problems of community participation and civic engagement that stops here, however, leaves us with few options to improve the current situation in a long-term and sustainable manner. Alternatively, developing an understanding of how a consciousness of civic engagement is created among individuals, presents us with the opportunity to take a more proactive stance to promote community participation. Instead of simply designing a response to the monumental obstacles to

participation (competing interests or lack of time and resources), we can generate new motivation to participate.

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