

Upgrading from Below: a Collective Approach to the Right to the City in the Federal District, Mexico

By

Claire M Evans

B.A. Urban Studies

B.S. Society & Environment

University of California, Berkeley, 2011

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Signature of Author _____

Department of Urban Studies and Planning

May 10, 2015

Certified by _____

Professor Balakrishnan Rajagopal

Department of Urban Studies and Planning

Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____

Professor Dennis Frenchman

Chair, MCP Committee

Department of Urban Studies and Planning

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ABSTRACT

In 2010, then-Mayor Marcelo Ebrard of Mexico's Distrito Federal (DF) signed the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*. Echoing a global movement by activists, academics, citizens, and government officials, a consortium of municipal activist organizations had written the charter over a three-year participatory process. However, like many Right to the City movements and charters globally, Mexico City has struggled to ground the principles of the Charter through policy, financial resources, and programs at the citywide level. This thesis will suggest an alternative framework for grounding the Right to the City: through local collective action that is connected by transnational networks of civil society actors. Drawing on the experiences of Frente de Renovación Fase 2, a self-built community in the eastern delegation of Izatapalapa, this thesis illustrates how local action is effective in achieving the Right to the City in the short-term, but that long-term gains must be maintained through city-, national-, and global-level networks.

Thesis Advisor: Balakrishnan Rajagopal
Title: Associate Professor of Law and Development

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*“there are already multiple
practices within the urban that
themselves are full to
overflowing with alternative
possibilities”*

— David Harvey
Rebel Cities (2012; xvii)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the Eastern Iztapalapa delegation of Mexico City, a small community has achieved something rather miraculous: over the last 20 years, the members of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 have built a new community, both physical and social. As they set out, the goal was not just to build new homes and businesses, but also, as one community member remarked, to “construct a responsible citizenry.” The project was entirely driven, managed, and funded by residents. This thesis will explore how the case of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 presents a promising framework for grounding the collective Right to the City on a local level. Perhaps controversially, this thesis argues against recent trends to codify the Right to the City into charters and laws. I contend that the Right to the City cannot, and should not, be viewed as a legal framework. Instead, as Lefebvre intended, the Right to the City must be conceptualized as both a cry and a demand; a rallying call for collective action and social mobilization to reclaim the city.

Simultaneously, this case study provides practical lessons for communities hoping to implement similar informal housing upgrading programs. As such, the thesis has two goals: to revitalize a Lefebvrian understanding of the Right to the City and to provide a broad guide of the techniques Frente de Renovación used to make and achieve claims to their urban environment.

Research Question

Engaging collective action theory, how can we understand the upgrading project of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 as an alternative to contemporary endeavors to codify the Right to the City in existing liberal-democratic frameworks?

In order to answer this larger question, this thesis will explore the following sub-questions:

- a) What are the global contemporary dimensions and understandings of the Right to the City? (Chapter 2)
- b) How did the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 mobilize collective action to make and achieve claims to their urban environment? (Chapter 4)
- c) If local social mobilizations must be linked through a transnational Right to the City network, how would such a network be structured? (Chapter 5)

Thesis

The Right to the City is not a legal construct; it is a political-philosophical “cry and demand” for a new urban order. To achieve the Right to the City, civil society must turn to collective action rather than the drafting of ineffectual charters. However, disparate local mobilizations, such as the case of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 are also ineffectual. If the Right to the City is to be achieved, networks of civil society actors must foster the development and networking of local movements across multiple geographic scales.

Methods

The research for this thesis was conducted between March 2014 and May 2015. This included two trips to Mexico City, one two-month trip in June and July of 2014 and one three-week trip in January 2015. The 2014 research trip focused on gaining a solid understanding of the constellation of actors, policies, financing mechanisms, and issues at stake in self-built

housing developments and urban social movements. The 2015 trip was focused on the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 where I conducted a survey, participant observation, and interviews.

While a thorough ethnographic study was not possible given the constraints of the academic year and research adjustments, the methods for this thesis are based on those practiced by ethnographers. During the 2014 trip, I focused my research on interviews. In 2015, I employed more typical ethnographic methods, such as participant observation. In addition, I conducted a survey and interviews with community members and leaders.

Research methods include:

Interviews

Interviews were conducted during both the 2014 and 2015 research trips. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes, and in exceptional cases, 2 hours (usually when combined with site visits). I conducted interviews with community leaders and members of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 as well as surrounding communities in Iztapalapa. I also interviewed academics, activists, and ex-government officials working on housing and Right to the City themes in the larger Mexico City sphere. The 2014 interviews gave insights into the broader context of the Right to the City in the DF while the 2015 interviews focused on the experiences of Frente de Renovación Fase 2.

Survey

The survey consisted of demographic, socio-economic, and upgrading process questions and was conducted during January 2015. I surveyed 32 families of 114 total. The results of the survey will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The survey and raw data can be reviewed in Appendix B.

The main purposes of the survey were to:

- a) analyze the socio-economic and demographic make-up of the community before and after the upgrading process;
- b) determine the driving forces and outcomes of the upgrading program;
- c) understand community participation and leadership in the upgrading process; and
- d) explore community needs and interests moving forward.

The survey results discussed in this thesis were calculated using statistical means and a 95% confidence interval. I analyzed the statistics using excel & R-Studio (*Confidence Interval Estimation for the Binomial Parameter P*).

A Note on Subjectivity

As a researcher from the United States, a woman, a Caucasian, a first generation American, an urban planner, and a relatively wealthy individual compared to those in the community I studied, my subjectivity had an influence on the stories I was told and the reception I received. I bonded mainly with the women of the community. While I interviewed and surveyed many men, it was the women who spent the time to discuss their experiences and opinions with me. Moreover, when I shared my aspirations to start a housing cooperative with the community leaders, they appeared to open up more to me.

While many residents of Frente de Renovación shared details of their experience and history in the community with me, it is likely that they held many details from me based because I was an outsider. Without a doubt, my subjectivity not only influenced the information I was told, it also influenced how I interpreted this information. My subjectivity adds a layer of analysis and abstraction to the story of Frente de Renovación discussed here.

Theoretical Framework

Right to the City

This thesis tackles the question of how to best ground the Right to the City. Originally theorized by Lefebvre in *Right to the City* (1968), the concept was posited as both “a cry and a demand” for urban revolution. Fundamentally, the Right to the City as conceptualized by Lefebvre can be understood as the collective right of communities to participate in the development of the city and to enjoy the full range of urban goods and services.

Set against the backdrop of the student protests in France in 1968, Lefebvre imagines a world where the every urban citizen would be able to develop themselves (socially, economically, and politically) by developing the city. Lefebvre envisions the “right of all urban dwellers to collectively enjoy the benefits, cultural plurality, social diversity, economic advantages, and opportunities of urban life, as well as to actively participate in urban management” (Fernandes, 2007: 217).

Lefebvre’s use of rights language is in reaction to the growing irrelevancy of Rousseau’s social contract and the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* of 1789. Lefebvre argued that the rights outlined in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* are limited by their narrow interpretation of the social unit of analysis: the individual. Lefebvre argues that, instead, humans exist in social networks and that a new set of rights should focus at the collective/community level. Lefebvre puts forward the idea of “social citizenship,” an idea which would change the relationship not only between the individual and the community, but also between the individual and the state. This would require an expanded set of rights of citizens, a deeper democracy, to “fully enjoy urban life with all its services and advantages – the right of habitation – as well as taking direct part in the management of cities – the right to participation”

(Fernandes, 2007: 208).

In equal measure, Lefebvre pushes back against the pattern of urban capitalist accumulation. Lefebvre understands cities to be loci of capital accumulation. As such, there is an unceasing need to find outlets for capitalist investment and economic growth. While the capitalist machine spreads to new aspects of urban everyday life, it simultaneously concentrates wealth in fewer hands through a process described by David Harvey as “accumulation by dispossession.” As Harvey explores in his work *Rebel Cities*, the Right to the City is achieved by “establishing democratic control over the deployment of the surpluses through urbanization” (Harvey, 2008: 23). This was (and is) a revolutionary vision: examples of the democratic control of economic surplus are few and far between, let alone at a city-scale.

Rather than a right to a certain good (water and sanitation, education, housing, etc), the Right to the City can be seen as a Meta right. As Lefebvre writes, the Right to the City “manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habit and to inhabit” (Lefebvre, 1996: 173). Whereas many other human rights call for access to certain goods and services, the Right to the City calls for a total re-engineering of society and economy. Much like the Right to Development, the Right to the City can be understood as a tool for achieving access to other human rights. However, the Right to the City cannot be summarized as a list of sub-rights. It must be understood not as a supplement to existing political-economic structures, but a complete re-imagining of society.

Lefebvre’s idea is often described as simultaneously a “cry and a demand;” a denunciation of past urban capitalist power structures and a call for new socio-economic paradigms. It requires that a group “shake off” dominant political and economic systems in order to create something completely different (Purcell, 2013: 145). Indeed, as interpreted by David Harvey, the “Right to

the City has to be construed not as a right to that which already exists, but as a right to rebuild and re-create the city as a socialist body politic in a completely different image” (Harvey, 2008: 138). The Right to the City is the right to something that does not exist, yet: an urban future shaped by the collective. Lefebvre termed this collective urban work the *oeuvre*.

While we cannot be sure what form a new collective urban *oeuvre* might take, we do know the tools for achieving it: *autogestión*. *Autogestión* is the act of a community coming together to achieve independence in the management of all aspects of their everyday lives. *Autogestión* is the process through which the *oeuvre* will be truly democratized by claiming independence from existing dominant political and economic elites and systems. But *autogestión* is not a simple representative democracy, it is a deep democracy where citizens and community members participate directly in the planning and production of urban space and programs. This type of self-management requires intensive involvement of all community members.

The goal is not to write Right to the City elements into existing legislation, but to bring about a revolution of consciousness to the basic order of everyday life in the city. Unlike many human rights that can be achieved within existing socio-political-economic systems, the Right to the City calls for paradigm shifts in the very way we understand cities and our relations to them.

Since Lefebvre, the definition and intention of the Right to the City have been debated and contested. As Harvey characterizes in *Rebel Cities*, “the definition of the right is itself an object of struggle” (Harvey, 2008: xv). Perhaps on purpose, Lefebvre defined the concept amorphously. Without the clear and concise definitions that surround other human rights, the Right to the City remains a concept with growing popularity but without growing clarity. As a nebulous concept, the Right to the City appeals to a wide cross-section of civil society. Movements of students, women, the displaced, environmentalists, people of color, and more can be united under the

banner of the Right to the City. This broad appeal is what David Harvey stresses as the key mobilizing force in *Rebel Cities*. Harvey calls for all these social movements to unite under the banner of the Right to the City.

Unlike traditional human rights, which tend to focus on access to certain goods and services such as water, food, and housing, the Right to the City demands access not only to these services, but to a new urban future. It is meant to serve as a rallying cry and an impetus for a new urban order. Its language is vague because it was not intended for legislation, but for revolution. In his article on the Right to the City Statute in Brazil, Edésio Fernandes writes, “Lefebvre’s concept of the ‘Right to the City’ itself was more of a political-philosophical platform and did not directly explore how, or the extent to which the legal order has determined the exclusionary pattern of urban development” (Fernandes, 2007: 208). In this sense, the Right to the City is seen as an aspiration, not a distinct and delimited end goal. In recent years however, the Right to the City has served as a basis for feeble and unenforceable Charters which dampen the cries and demands of urban movements.

Today, the Right to the City has been re-conceptualized and revived through global, national, and local movements. It has been codified in charters and laws for the Right to the City, used as a basis for anti-gentrification protests, and a wielded by politicians to gain popular support. However, while the Right to the City holds a certain cultural and social significance, implementation of the concept has been difficult to realize. Originally intended to be a political-philosophical construct, the Right to the City is difficult to translate into law. Meanwhile, the Right to the City has become vogue among politicians and academics.

These characteristics have led to the proliferation of Right to the City charters that lack the financial and policy backing to seriously achieve substantive change. In fact, the idea that the

Right to the City can be successfully achieved through legislation is flawed from the outset. The Right to the City is fundamentally incompatible with capitalism and limited democratic systems typical of cities and nations with Right to the City charters. As I argue in Chapter 2, the Right to the City has, in some cases, become a tool for political gain and reinforcement of the status quo.

This thesis challenges trends to incorporate the Right to the City into law and seeks to reorient the Right to the City as a call to social action. The Right to the City is a revolutionary concept. It calls for community mobilization at the local, national, and global levels (Harvey, 2008). It also calls for a radically different social, economic, and political urban form; one that is based on deep economic and political democracy.

The Right to the City is a fundamentally collective right grounded in *autogestión*. I argue that in order to achieve *autogestión*, communities must mobilize collective action at both the internal and external levels. Two bodies of theory on Collective Action exist: Elinor Ostrom's work on the internal organization of communities to self-manage, and the Latin American tradition of social movements and claim-making at external levels.

Collective Action

If the Right to the City and the collective *oeuvre* are the ends, *autogestión* through collective action can be seen as the means. Collective action is the way in which individuals come together as a group to achieve common interests. Collective action theory addresses a range of social mobilization forms from the management of natural resources to the protests of New Social Movements. In this case study, the residents of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 came together through collective action in order to achieve their goals: an improved physical space, community development, and more control over their urban environment.

Nobel Prize-winning economist Elinor Ostrom is perhaps one of the most famous collective action theorists. She first theorized collective action theory in response to Garrett Hardin's tragedy of the commons. Hardin believes that collectively-owned limited resources (his famous example was communally-owned grazing land) are rapidly depleted due to individual self-interest and the mistrust of other users. Conversely, Ostrom argues that the collective management of common pool resources (CPRs) is not only possible, but preferable to private ownership and outside management (Ostrom, 1990: 25).

Ostrom laid out the following institutional conditions for successful CPR management systems:

1. Define clear group boundaries;
2. Match rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions;
3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules;
4. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities;
5. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behavior;
6. Use graduated sanctions for rule violators;
7. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution; and
8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.

While Ostrom's theories address natural resources, they have since been applied to other realms, including housing and urban development. Collective and cooperative housing theorists have adopted a set of institutional arrangements first developed by Ostrom to analyze community-based housing provision programs. These theorists have added the following to the list of

institutional conditions necessary for the collective management of housing common pool resources, notably housing cooperatives (adapted from Brandsen et al., 2012).

Successful collective housing cooperatives:

1. Invest broadly across the whole city;
2. Share the return on capital investments among residents; and
3. Emphasize social interactions to build a thriving community.

Ostrom wrote her seminal book on collective action, *Governing the Commons*, in 1990. Around the same time in Latin America, social theorists including Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez were developing social movement theory, also known as collective action theory. Whereas Ostrom's theories address the collective management of common resources, Escobar and Alvarez explore how collective identities (whether gender-, sexuality-, community-based, etc) are the basis for social mobilization and action.

Escobar and Alvarez's theories explore how small-scale and community-level collective action and protest lead to cultural and changes on the level of everyday life. They explain that “‘minor’ forms of resistance... should not be despised merely because they do not lead to the fulfillment of sizable demands or important structural transformations” (Escobar et al., 1992: 7). Indeed, these identity-based small-scale movements are sites of alternatives to dominant structures of power and development.

Combined, Ostrom's theories on internal collective action mechanisms and social movement theory serve as a useful theoretical framework for understanding the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2. With this framework, it is possible to understand how the community mobilized their collective identity (as low-income urban residents with a shared

history of dispossession and common interests) to make external demands while internally organizing themselves. Collective action forms the basis for both the cry and the demand element's of Lefebvre's theory. The cry is the protest element. The demand is the creation of viable collective alternatives (the *oeuvre*).

A Brief Outline

With a strong background in the theoretical framework of the Right to the City and collective action, we move to an analysis of how the Right to the City has been (mis)interpreted as a subject for legislation rather than social action in Chapter 2. This chapter will explore Right to the City charters at global, continental, national, and metropolitan scales: in Europe, Brazil, Montreal, and most importantly, Mexico City. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight how the Right to the City is fundamentally incompatible with existing liberal-democratic and neoliberal economic regimes.

Chapter 3 contains a brief geographical context for the case study of Frente de Renovación Fase 2. In this chapter I explain the urban development policies & trends of Mexico City. I also explore housing policies and the development of urban social movements in Mexico City. I also give a background on community histories, demographics, and physical characteristics of the Frente de Renovación Fase 2 development.

In Chapter 4, I will investigate the case of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 as an alternative grounding site for the Right to the City. Here, I discuss my major findings of the ethnographic and survey portion of my research. I will explore how the community mobilized collectively to achieve *autogestión* and their claims to collectively produce the urban *oeuvre*. However, while the community was at first successful in their efforts to achieve a form of *autogestión*, they were

unable to maintain the momentum necessary to reinforce their gains and spread the movement to other communities. Today, the community suffers from a lack of unification and shared vision. However, the first stages of community development provide an example of how a local movement can achieve the Right to the City.

Chapter 5 explores the need for a certain form of institutionalization and linking of such movements as Frente de Renovación through a transnational network. Such a network can learn from the successful organizing experiences of rural transnational organizations including Brazil's Rural Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and La Vía Campesina. I believe that existing civil society organizations, specifically the actors who are pushing for Right to the City Charters, are in an ideal position to ignite the formation of a transnational urban network. Re-focusing their efforts on fostering Right to the City social movements, instead of producing futile Charters, may be a more effective use of the time and resources of these organizations.

I conclude the thesis in Chapter 6. Zooming in, I will discuss the future hopes and aspirations of the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2. Zooming out, I will conclude the thesis with a discussion of the relevance of this research to the future of the Right to the City as a revolutionary concept in Mexico City.

The appendix includes both the survey data and the two-page guides in Spanish and English on how Frente de Renovación Fase 2 was able to exercise its Right to the City over the community. I hope that this thesis will not simply sit on a shelf, but provide an example of how, even at the small scale of a community in Eastern Mexico City, the Right to the City can be achieved through community mobilization and collective action.

CHAPTER 2: THE RIGHT TO THE CITY: A LEGISLATIVE APPROACH

What are the global contemporary dimensions and understandings of the Right to the City?

The Right to the City Worldwide

In recent decades, there has been a resurgence of the Right to the City in academia, on the streets, and in legislation. Now a vogue theme in urban theory and law (Lopes de Sousa, 2010; Fernandes, 2007; Polanco, 2012, others), the Right to the City has lost much of its revolutionary spirit. New interpretations of the right have been legalistic and limited in scope. Rather than inciting an urban revolution, as perhaps Lefebvre may have hoped, the concept has been tamed and molded to fit into unenforceable charters. Attempts to position the Right to the City into existing liberal democratic frameworks have failed. From the global to the local scale, these charters lack the financial and policy backing necessary to implement them. More troubling, these charters constitute an attempt to consolidate two fundamentally contradictory concepts: the Right to the City and liberal democracy. Contrary to the intentions of their authors, these charters often serve to maintain the status quo.

This chapter will explore the global liberal-democratic approach to the Right to the City by analyzing various charters written in the last two decades. As I argue below through examples, four problems arise from attempts to institutionalize the Right to the City:

1. The Right to the City is irreconcilable with contemporary liberal democracy.
2. The charter process fails to address the two pillars of Lefebvre's theory: social mobilization (the cry) and the creation of alternatives (the demand).
3. The charters often lack the financial and policy backing necessary to be implemented.
4. The charters often serve the interests of the politically powerful to garner support and maintain the status quo.

The most significant difficulty with institutionalizing the concept through law is the fundamentally incompatible nature of the Right to the City with current forms of democratic governance and neoliberal economics. The Right to the City cannot be incorporated into the very institutions it seeks to change or eliminate. Attempts to reconcile the two concepts through law are symptomatic of a misinterpretation of Lefebvre's theory. The Right to the City is foremost a call for a new society, one that cannot be reached through existing institutions.

Secondly, instead of using the concept to mobilize citizens, the authors of Right to the City charters neglect the two most important elements and tools of the Right to the City: the "cry" and the "demand." Lefebvre described the Right to the City as both a "cry and a demand." These two elements together are the tools which society can use to achieve their Right to the City. The "cry" is the protest element of the concept. It is the denunciation of current and past practices that have led to an unjust and inequitable city. The "demand" is the creation of alternatives, of *autogestión*. *Autogestión* is the search for and creation of alternative urban futures, managed by autonomous groups. The Right to the City centers on the collective production of *alternatives* to current economic and governance models. Together, the cry and the demand are the tools for achieving the Right to the City. While charters discuss the need to change aspects of the city, they do not create direct and enforceable demands on existing powers. Nor do they create alternatives to existing systems.

Another failing of these charters is their lack of financial and policy backing. Without such institutional support, the charters become little more than suggested guidelines and their provisions range from difficult to impossible to enforce. It is no wonder that such charters fail to find the political and financial backing necessary for their implementation; politicians are

unwilling and unable to sign into law anything that would fundamentally change business as usual. Because of this core incompatibility, such charters are ill fated to gather dust on the shelf.

A final negative outcome of attempts to institutionalize the Right to the City through legal mechanisms is the practice of politicians and governments to co-opt such charters. Approving such charters is politically beneficial to representatives who wish to appear cognizant of and responsive to citizen needs and social movement demands. Without any binding provisions, the charters require no actual implementation and thus morph from a well-intentioned effort to promote the Right to the City into a tool for political gain. Contrary to their intentions, drafters of such charters render the Right to the City sterile.

Right to the City charters have found particular traction in the Western Hemisphere among activists and some politicians; Montréal, Canada; Brazil; and Mexico City have all enacted Right to the City charters in the last decade. The World Charter for the Right to the City also has its roots in Latin America from the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit to the World Social and Urban Forums hosted in Latin America. However, one of the first of such charters is the *European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City*.

The European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City

One of the first Charters for the Right to the City was written in 2000 in Europe. Approved by over 350 cities and 21 countries in the European Union, the *European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City* emphasizes blanket participation in urban planning and quality of life of all inhabitants. Arising from a 1998 conference in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights in Barcelona, the *Charter* was written by a

cohort of cities, civil society, and politicians. This cohort formed the Network for Human Rights and is responsible for writing and disseminating the *European Charter*.

Uniquely, the *European Charter* does not focus solely on the role of the state in achieving human rights. Instead, it “focus[es] on governance, citizens, and civil society, rather than on the state” (Brown et al., 2009: 18). Recognizing that the state is not the sole actor in the realization of human rights, this more inclusive focus is The *European Charter* reflects a global shift toward understanding human rights as a relationship between and within all elements of society, not just between the citizen and the state. The *European Charter* delineates a specific list of human rights in the city including some second- and third-generation rights to social protection, housing, health, efficient public service, justice, information, and participatory budgeting.

However, like many of the charters discussed below, the *European Charter* is a guarantee to rights *in* the city, not the Right *to* the City. While the *Charter* does address the Right to the City in Article 1, it does not guarantee the Right. Essentially a list of human rights, the *European Charter* does not address the revolutionary and grassroots elements of the Right to the City. As a charter for rights *in* the city, it does not pretend to be a mechanism for achieving the Right to the City.

The Brazil City Statute

Written in 2001, Brazil’s City Statute is perhaps the most well-known piece of Right to the City legislation. With origins in the 1988 “Citizen’s Constitution,” the City Statute was largely written and promoted by civil society organizations in Brazil. The Statute provides a regulatory framework to guide urban development in the country in accordance with the Brazilian interpretation of the Right to the City.

The Statute is comprised of two main elements. As Fernandes explores, these two elements are based on the two pillars of Lefebvre's concept as identified by Edesio Fernandes in his article on Brazil's City Statute. Fernandes explains that the first principle of the Statute, the recognition of the "social function" (use value) of land in addition to the recognition of the exchange value, is based on Lefebvre's habitation pillar. The second theme is the need for democratic participation in planning (the planning pillar). The statute is progressive not only because of its social focus, but also because it was one of the first pieces of legislation of its kind approved at the national level.

Beyond the recognition of the habitation and participation pillars, the City Statute provides an extensive list of tools that municipalities can use to achieve these goals. Tools to achieve the habitation pillar include the legalization of informal settlements, the right to *usucapião urbano* (or adverse possession), the requirement of landowners to utilize vacant/unused parcels of land, and the payment of development taxes to support infrastructure and public service projects. These tools are all in support of the habitation pillar: to increase the importance of the use value in land in urban planning decisions.

The second set of tools, to support the achievement of the participation pillar of the Statute, includes provisions for public involvement in not only the drafting but also the subsequent management of municipal master plans. Public participation is encouraged through councils, public hearings, conferences, and participatory budgeting (Friendly, 2013: 165). The Statute outlines provisions for participation at the national, state and municipal level.

However progressive, the City Statute faces a significant implementation gap. While the City Statute provides a robust list of tools that would empower the progressive planner and citizen to create a more just and equitable city, the truth is that none of the tools and programs in the

Statute are mandatory. Unfortunately, this implementation gap between Brazil's progressive laws and their inadequate realization is not uncommon. Two Brazilian expressions rightly explain the situation: the City Statute is a "*lei que não pega*" (law that does not stick) and is truly "*so pra ver*" (only to see). Like many other laws and charters for the Right to the City, the City Statute fails to provide the financial and legal/political backing necessary to achieve its lofty goals.

Moreover, the Statute fails to conceptualize the Right to the City beyond property rights and participation (Purcell, 2014: 142). Even the provisions for the promotion of the use value of land do not trump personal property rights. This leaves planners and other decision makers with unclear guidance on what to do in the event of a dispute between the exchange value and the use value of a site.

While largely ineffectual at achieving the Right to the City, Brazil's *City Statute* is an example of progressive urban law. It has served to inspire other cities to draft legislation for more just and equitable cities.

The Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities

In 2006, the City of Montréal approved the *Montréal Charter of Rights and Responsibilities*. The *Montréal Charter* "covers the main sectors of municipal activity: democracy, economic and social life, cultural life, recreation, physical activities and sports, environment and sustainable development, security, and municipal services" (ville.montreal.qc.ca). Unlike the *European Charter* which focused on relations of all society, not just the citizen-state relationship, the *Montréal Charter* is intended to be a "memorandum of understanding between the municipality and its citizens" (Purcell, 2014: 143).

Arising from the 2002 Montréal Summit, the *Montréal Charter* was developed through a process of consultation between the City government and 4000 members of civil society. Drafted by the Committee on Democracy, the *Montréal Charter* guarantees a new set of human rights not previously granted under other provisions. Among many others, these rights include the rights to financial transparency, the involvement of women and minority groups in city-level decision-making processes,, environmental protection, sport, cultural and natural heritage, and adequate housing. Like the *European Charter*, the *Montréal Charter* can be understood as human rights *in* the city, but not necessarily the Right *to* the City.

Like the *Brazil City Statute*, the *Montréal Charter* also fails to adequately address and enforce implementation. As the charter clearly states, it “is not intended to serve as the basis for legal action nor to be used in a judicial or quasi-judicial forum” (Article 32). In fact, the only real action a citizen can take is to report their complaint to the Ombudsman who can then choose to investigate and mediate the grievance, or not. Moreover, as explored by Julie Debeljak, a professor of human rights law, rather than securing the human rights outlined in the charter, the authors included too many provisions for rights restrictions. This has the potential to reverse the gains made in the charter (2008: 424). While perhaps well-intentioned, the *Montréal Charter* lacks the financial, legal, and policy strength to bring about structural changes of significant magnitude.

The World Charter on the Right to the City

Finally, a global movement of urban social organizations has joined together to write a *World Charter on the Right to the City*¹. The movement grew from the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth

¹ Not to be confused with the *Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City*, a mayoral initiative arising from the 2005 World Social Forum. The *Charter-Agenda* aims to create a “framework in which cities from all over the

Summit, the Right to the City movement in Brazil in 2001, and subsequent World Urban Forums and World Social Forums. Since then, a global network of social movements has come together to write the *Charter*. Based on the *European Charter on the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City* (see above) the *World Charter*'s goal is to "establish effective legal monitoring mechanisms and instruments to ensure the enforcement of recognized human, social, and citizenship rights" (Fernandes, 2007: 216). Like Lefebvre, those drafting the *World Charter* do not believe that existing human rights mechanisms (from the 1789 *Declaration* to contemporary human rights as recognized by the United Nations) are sufficient to achieve the aim of the *Charter*. However, unlike Lefebvre, the authors of the *World Charter* take a legalistic human rights approach to the Right to the City.

Beyond the drafting of the actual document itself, the process has brought together urban social movements from across the globe to discuss the Right to the City and urban mobilization. The development of the *World Charter* is a collaboration between academics, NGOs, citizens, and activists. Through multiple conferences and forums, the drafters of the *World Charter* have grown a strong global network of activists and supporters. As such, the *World Charter* incorporates different global perspectives and experiences in its approach to achieving the Right to the City.

Unlike many of the charters described above, the authors of the *World Charter* directly address the Right to the City, rather than rights in the city. The first parties to the drafting of the charter came to the process with different interpretations of the Right to the City and the best way to achieve it. One camp believed that the end goal of such a charter would be the drafting and adoption of a piece of legislation by the United Nations and its member states. Those first to the

world commit to the development of inclusive policies for safeguarding human rights at the local level" (Brown et al., 2009: 25).

table, and largely from Latin American civil society, first conceived of the *World Charter* “as a political document which would serve to mobilize broad social sectors” (Ortiz, 2006: 3). While the *World Charter* at first attempted to unite these two aspirations (legal and mobilizational) under a dualistic approach to the *Charter*, it has since shifted to a solely legal strategy. Although the drafters continue to see the outcome of this process as the creation of an “other possible city” (Ortiz, 2006: 7), their narrow interpretation has limited the pathways of achieving this goal.

The *World Charter* defines the Right to the City specifically as a collective, interdependent right that guarantees citizens the ability to participate in the equitable use of the city. This definition interprets the Right to the City as a human right:

“The right to the city is the equitable use (*usufructo equitativo*) of cities according to principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice. It is a collective right of urban inhabitants that confers upon them the legitimate right to action and organization, based on respect of their differences, cultural expressions and practices, with the objective of exercising their right to self-determination and attaining an adequate standard of living. The right to the city is interdependent with other internationally-recognized human rights, including civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights as defined in international human rights treaties”

Based on the above definition, the authors of the *World Charter* highlight three guiding principles for the drafting of the document:

1. The full exercise of citizenship;
2. The social function of the city and of urban property; and
3. The democratic management of the city.

It is of no surprise that given the above definition and the three guiding principles, the *World Charter* has been reduced to a list of rights. These rights include: water, food, housing,

public services, democratic use of public space, healthy environment, consumer protection, etc. But the right to the city is not simply one of many rights, or even an umbrella right. It cannot be interpreted from a simple human rights framework, because it is not a traditional human right. Like other Charters, the *World Charter* fails to understand the revolutionary nature of the Right to the City and its incompatibility with existing legal, political, social, and economic frameworks.

While there is a current draft of the *World Charter*, it is still being amended and altered by the participating drafters. The formulation of the *Charter* is a “participatory, complex, and long-term” (Ortiz, 2006: 6) process. During my time in Mexico City, I sat in on a meeting held by Mexico City activists in which changes to certain provisions of the *Charter* were discussed. This dialogue on the Right to the City from all corners of the globe enriches the debate and complexity of the *Charter*, but still approaches the Right from a legalistic angle.

Since its first drafts, the *World Charter* has influenced the framing of other Right to the City charters, including the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*.

The Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City

On July 13, 2010, Mayor Marcelo Ebrard, the *Movimiento Urbano Popular* (MUP- Urban Popular Movement), Habitat International Coalition-Latin America (HIC-AL), the Mexico City Commission for Human Rights, and the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (*Espacio DESC*) all signed the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*.

The culmination of three years of writing and advocacy, the *Charter* involved the input of 3,500 citizens in its development. At first a grassroots movement started by the MUP in 2007, the development of the *Mexico City Charter* later involved input from municipal bodies and

academics. Many of the principles in the *Mexico City Charter* stem from the Housing Improvement Program (*Programa de Mejoramiento de Vivienda*). This program included participation elements previously unforeseen in government initiatives. Participatory budgeting and collective decision-making over urban design decisions were elements of this program and set a precedent for including them in the *Mexico City Charter*.

Following in the footsteps of the *World Charter for the Right to the City*, the *Mexico City Charter* has the same definition of the Right of the City (see above). Based on this definition, the drafters of the *Mexico City Charter* propose three objectives of the Right to the City Charter and six “aspirations” that inform what the Right to the City might look like in a new and possible Mexico City. The three objectives of the Charter are:

1. “To contribute to the construction of an inclusive, livable, just, democratic, sustainable, and enjoyable city;
2. To contribute to advance processes of social organization, strengthening of the social fabric, and construction of active and responsible citizenship; and
3. To contribute to the construction of an equitable, inclusive, and solidarity urban economy that guarantees the productive insertion and economic reinforcement of the popular sectors”

-*Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*, 2010: 5

The aspirations of the Right to the City Charter are to produce a “democratic, inclusive, sustainable, productive, educational, and livable city” (*Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*, 2010: 14). While the *Charter* outlines the lofty definitions, objectives, and aspirations as outlined above, it fails to establish requirements for the implementation and enforcement of the Right to the City. Even the numerous strategies outlined for the aspirations of the project lack institutional grounding and clear responsibilities. Like Brazil’s City Statute, the tools described in the *Mexico City Charter* lack any legal enforceability- they are simply a list of programs and

policies that the municipality *may* implement. The enforcement and liability sections of the *Charter* do not bind any branch of local government to specific actions, programs, and financing to support the implementation of the Right to the City.

Another downfall of the *Charter* is its relatively passive conceptualization of citizen actors. As explored by Jill Wagle and Lorena Zárate, the *Charter* “conceives of urban inhabitants as the ‘subject’ of the rights” (2010). This preserves the traditional liberal-democratic approach to human rights whereby the citizens rely upon the state for the deliverance of a certain set of rights and in exchange give up certain freedoms. The concept of the passive citizen is in direct contradiction with Lefebvre’s vision of an activated citizenry achieving their Right to the City through *autogestión* (self management).

Like other attempts to systematize the Right to the City into law, the *Mexico City Charter* essentializes the concept into a long list of rights. Such a human rights interpretation fails to understand the difference between human rights and the Right to the City. Whereas regular human rights (of any generation) can be written into law, the Right to the City is less of a right and more of a call to action. It is, moreover, a call to action that cannot be written into law and approved by those who hold an interest in the status quo.

On the occasion of signing the *Charter*, then Mayor Marcelo Ebrard announced that the “Charter will form the basis for the elaboration of a constitution for Mexico City within the next year, and committed to redesigning the way in which government is structured and functions to guarantee citizen participation in governing the city” (Translation from Wagle et al, 2010). However, this particular aspiration never came to pass. As Victor Manuel Delgadillo Polanco highlights, the promises of politicians surrounding the Right to the City in the DF are in direct contradiction to the policies and programs they implement. Polanco begs us to question how we

can expect a sudden shift in the entrenched political-economic systems simply based on the ratification of an unenforceable charter. He underscores the blatantly contradictory policies implemented around the same time as the *Charter*: lack of consultation in megaproject planning, inconsistencies in the social function of land and the Urban Development Law of 2010, and failure to regularize informal housing settlements (Polanco, 2012: 132). In the end Polanco argues, “the signing of the *Charter* was purely an act of political marketing” (2012: 132).

Indeed, this sentiment was echoed throughout the interview process with Mexico City activists and academics. The excitement first created by the signing of the *Charter* has since turned sour. Many feel that Ebrard used the *Charter* to increase political support for him and his political party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). One community leader that I spoke to described how the *Charter*, which was intended to guarantee the rights of citizens, has been turned not only into a marketing tool for the government, but also as a tool to make demands on the citizens to “behave responsibly.”

Polanco calls into question not just the specific *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*, but the practice of codifying the Right to the City into law on a broader scale: “Does the Right to the City consist in a ‘conquest’ of institutionalized law, or does it consist of the fight to construct a better city, society, and world?” (2012: 119). Unfortunately in Mexico, the civil society and institutional approach to the Right to the City has fallen in line with the former interpretation. While busying themselves with the drafting of the *Charter*, Mexico City’s activists have failed to seek the very alternatives to existing frameworks. As Lefebvre and others have argued, it is in these alternative sites of *autogestión* and revolution that the Right to the City is truly achieved.

The experience of the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City* does not differ much from that of other charters. Like its contemporaries, Mexico's *Charter* is largely unenforceable and lacks the policy and financial teeth to bring about any substantial change. Unfortunately, Mexico City's case is not unique; like many charters for the Right to the City, Mexico City's has served as a platform for the political re-appropriation and misuse of the concept.

From Legislation to Mobilization

As I argue above, the Right to the City can be interpreted in a myriad of ways. The nebulous concept can be contorted to fit the needs of radical urban social movements and corrupt politicians alike. In this process of political appropriation, the Right to the City loses its revolutionary nature and its powerful essence first described by Lefebvre. Like the concept of "sustainability," it becomes a washed-out term open for any and all uses.

However, while the Right to the City has been re-appropriated and diluted in some cases, there are examples of social movements using the Right to the City as a call to action. The United States is home to a growing urban social movement that continues to view the Right to the City as a rallying cry. The Right to the City Alliance, headquartered in New York City, is a national network of organizations (racial, environmental, and economic) focused on democracy-building, human rights, and justice.

The organization's self-stated goal is to:

"build a city where tenants, homeowners, youth, women, workers, citizens and immigrants are respected and can meaningfully participate in a democratic

process, shape the development plan for their city, live in a healthy environment, and have access to quality jobs and housing”

-Right to the City Alliance website, righttothecity.org

At the same time, the Right to the City has the potential to mobilize small-scale movements for the local control and enjoyment of the urban environment. This process, known as *autogestión*, was Lefebvre’s dream for the Right to the City. When a community is able to take control of its own development and management, it achieves its own Right to the City. These sites of insurgent citizenship not only serve as sites for alternative urban futures, they also incite similar projects around the city.

As I will argue in the Chapter 4, Frente de Renovación Fase 2 presents just such a case in which a small community made and achieved demands on their local urban development. Rather than waiting for government officials to materialize the aspirations of the *Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*, the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 pursued, and achieved, *autogestión* in their small corner of the Federal District.

Before I explore the case of Frente de Renovación Fase 2, it is crucial to understand the context of urban development in Mexico City. Chapter 3 will provide not only a background on Mexico City, but also a brief history of Frente de Renovación Fase 2.

CHAPTER 3: GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Mexico & The Federal District

Over the past 30 years, Mexico's population growth has concentrated in the nation's urban centers and has greatly altered the housing needs of the nation's residents. Mexico's population (now 123.8 million) has grown 170% and roughly 54% of the population is urban. With 20.1 million residents, Mexico is the largest urban agglomeration not only in Mexico, but also in the Western Hemisphere. It is the third largest metropolitan region in the world covering 1,485 square kilometers. Roughly one out of every six Mexican citizens lives in the city. Colloquially, Mexico City is known as the Federal District (*Distrito Federal* or DF) although technically the DF only accounts for a portion of the urban area considered to be Mexico City. The urban agglomeration stretches across the Federal District, the State of México and the State of Hidalgo. It is divided into 16 *delegaciones* (delegations), each with a degree of local autonomy. Though the City is large, its annual growth rate is only .27%. Today, only 45% of the urban population of Mexico City is in the Federal District and much of the urban growth is occurring on the peripheries (Aguilar et al., 2011: 651).

Along with population growth, income inequality is also increasing. Although the World Bank classifies Mexico as an upper middle-income nation, its gini coefficient increased from 47.2 to 48.1 in just two years from 2010-2012. 52% of the population is below the poverty line while Mexico's billionaires like Carlos Slim are among the wealthiest individuals in the world. Mexico is the second-most inequitable country (after Chile) in the OECD (OECD Better Life Index).

The DF is home to the administrative functions of the Estados Unidos Mexicanos and is arguably the economic hub of the country. In 2011, the city's GDP was \$411 billion and

accounted for 22% of national GDP. Only 61% of Mexican's are employed formally and average family income is just over \$14,000 USD. This places Mexico at the bottom of employment rates and income among OECD countries.

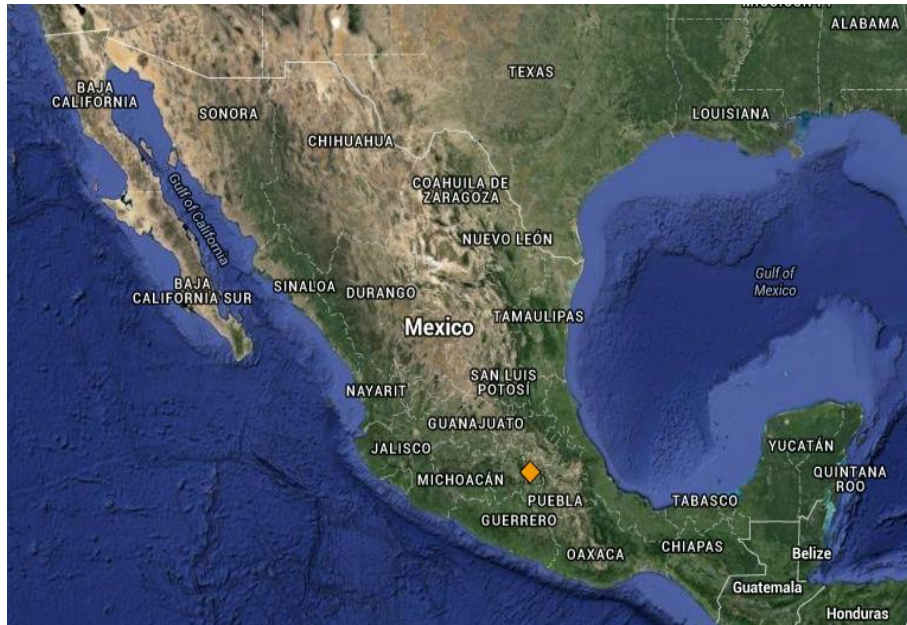


Figure 1: Mexico City (Source: maps.google.com)

Until the 1990s, the President of Mexico appointed a mayor. As a result, the federal government directed municipal policy much to the frustration of residents. However, in response to widespread demand, the federal government awarded partial autonomy to Mexico City in 1997. Today, Mexico City residents elect a mayor and representatives to a unicameral legislative assembly. Since 1997, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) has controlled both the legislature and mayor's seat. Each of the sixteen delegations has some autonomy over local planning decisions, but city services are provided almost exclusively at the city-level.

Mexico City, located on the bed of Lake Texoco, has been the economic and political hub of the region since before the Aztecs first settled on the lake in the 13th century. Between their settlement and defeat by Cortés in 1521, the Aztecs rose to prominence in the region through military and political skill. Tenochtitlan, the island capital of the empire, grew in size,

complexity, and influence as the Aztecs exerted their power over much of central Mexico. When Cortés and his Spanish army deposed the Aztec government, they retained the City of Tenochtitlan as the capital of the new colony. After independence from the Spanish in 1821, the new nation yet again retained Mexico City as its capital.

Through boom and bust economic cycles, revolutions, and civil wars, the DF has remained the center of the Mexican state. However, while at the national level Mexico City is “all powerful and all dominant,” internationally it is seen as “highly dependent, forms part of the global semi-periphery, and has relatively little clout” (Ward, 25).

Urban Policies and Trends in Mexico City

Researchers anticipate Mexico’s population will increase by 7 million new households within the next ten years (Yarza 2014). Currently, half of the housing stock is government- or market-built, the other half is self-built (Yarza 2014, 30). Mexican’s spend an average of 21% of their income on housing (OECD Better Life Index). Modern and historical housing policy has attempted to formalize housing production in the country by offering subsidies and programs to families and later developers. Support for self-built/informal housing has seen only nominal support in short-lived and under-funded programs. Moreover, official policy has failed to provide housing solutions to very low-income families (two minimum wages or below) leaving poor families few choices but to seek out housing in peripheral and informal communities.

Before the 1970s, housing was predominantly self-built. Combined, public housing and private market provision accounted for only 35% of housing production in the early 20th century (Bredenoord et al., 2010: 361). During this time, low income housing in Mexico City consisted largely of overcrowded illegal subdivisions of large mansions or apartment buildings known as

vecindades (*ibid*: 360). *Vecindades* were often located downtown close to manufacturing and service jobs. They were home largely to rural migrants who came to the city for work and were often in poor condition because landlords were unable to afford repairs and maintenance under the rent freeze enacted in 1942 (The State of Mexico's Housing, 2004: 7).

While rental *vecindades* provided housing for early waves of rural migrants, they were not sufficient to meet housing demand. When the formal construction industry and the rental market were unable to provide affordable and accessible housing options to low-income families, groups of homeless and landless families began to occupy unused land throughout the city starting in the 1960s. Known as *colonias populares*, these communities were gained land by invasion or purchase.

The majority of the original *colonias populares* were constructed on communal agricultural (*ejido*) land. *Ejido* land was established after the 1910 Mexican Revolution. *Ejido* lands were originally intended to divide large plantation estates amongst the peasantry for agricultural uses and to provide political support for the newly-forming Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) (Snyder, 1998: 4). However, as urban areas expanded, *ejidos* were “incorporated into the city through three interrelated processes: government expropriation for urban development, illegal subdividing, and land takeovers” (Barriga, 1995: 373). Though at first only members of the *ejido* could urbanize and settle on this land, the informal (and illegal) sale and rental of these lands to non-members became common practice.

The illegal sale provided a safety valve for low-income housing in Mexico City and other urban centers. Because the state and market did not provide enough housing for the rural-urban migrants who had come to work in the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) newly-industrializing urban centers during this period of strong economic growth, workers “had to

develop an alternative form of urbanization based on self-constructing their housing (*autoconstrucción*) and gaining access to land through illegal purchases or land takeovers” (Barriga, 1995: 368). Because *ejidatarios* were not able to formally sell their lands on the market and because they were unable to offer security of tenure to settlers, *ejido* land was often “sold” at a low price to settlers who formed *colonias populares* in these areas. In this way, *ejido* lands served an important social function: as a source of land for low-income residents of Mexico City.

Federal housing policy in the 1970s consisted of a two-prong system: home-buying finance systems for the middle classes and self-help financing for lower economic classes. First, the government created finance institutions intended to serve much like social security in the United States. These institutions collect a portion of every formal worker’s paycheck as well as a proportional contribution from formal employers to create a fund for the production of affordable housing. The funding is made available to families with formal employment to buy housing. Two such institutions were created, INFONAVIT, for private-sector employees, and FOVISSSTE, for public-sector employees. Homes constructed using these funds were largely privately provided. Significant amounts of funding were made available for these programs and an average of 65,000 units were produced per year (Bredenoord et al., 2010: 362). This housing was largely limited to households with 2-4 times the minimum wage and not at all to informal sector workers.

The second prong of federal housing policy during this time was through FONHAPO, an institution aimed to address housing needs in the lowest income and informal housing sectors (below two minimum wages). FONHAPO’s work targeted *colonias populares* and consisted mainly of assisted self-help housing programs including sites-and-services and land titling.

However, starting in the 1980s, with a turn toward privatization of public goods, the federal government shifted to hiring private contractors to construct low- and lower-middle

income housing in peripheral areas. In addition, constitutional reforms in 1983 and 1997 decentralized planning and housing finance to municipalities and delegations. Meanwhile, the federal government cut FONHAPO's funding and upgrading programs were cancelled in the lowest income communities.

Recent housing policy has continued to privatize low-income housing provision, with disastrous results. Approximately 14% (5.2 million homes) of the housing stock is currently abandoned (Yarza 2014, 29). The overwhelming majority of these homes are in peripheral mass housing settlements built in the last 20 years by a massive public-private partnership designed to produce high quantities of low-quality housing. These developments often lack social, economic, and physical infrastructure including schools, jobs, public space, water, sanitation, and electricity. These privately-produced developments are often built hours from cities and jobs and their homes are too small to fit the average Mexican family size (3.9 individuals). Not only are homes inadequate, they are also only available to formal-sector employees who earn two or more minimum wages (only about half the population). In addition, current housing policies focus on home ownership; purpose-built rental housing has not been a focus of housing policy since the 1970s.

Meanwhile, self-built developments have continued to be an important source of shelter and community for low-income families. While the 2006 Federal Housing Law emphasized the production of "social housing" by non-profit organizations and "self-help and community organized procedures which prioritized the value of use of the home above its market value," these programs are generally under-funded (Article 4, VIII). While *colonias populares* sometimes lack secure tenure and adequate infrastructure, they are often the best option for families needing to

live near employment and government services. For many families, self-built housing is the only option.

Currently, three federal housing institutions provide assistance to self-built communities and families. The three programs *Ésta es tu Casa* (CONAVI), the Sociedad Hipocrataria Federal (SHF), and Hábitat (FONHAPO). *Ésta es tu Casa* is a CONAVI (Comisión Nacional para el Fomento a la Vivienda) program aimed at providing housing subsidies to workers who earn less than 5 minimum wages. The SHF offers credit and mortgages to a larger and lower-income pool of borrowers than traditional formal-worker housing schemes. Finally, *Hábitat* was designed to provide funding (\$219 million USD in 2014) to local municipalities for informal housing upgrading programs. In an effort to centralize and re-align federal programs, the federal government recently nested all of these programs and organizations under a new ministry of agricultural, territorial, and urban development (SEDATU). Despite this support, there is not enough institutional recognition and financial backing to assist self-built communities in achieving healthy settlements.

Frente de Renovación Fase 2

Frente de Renovación is a self-built community that has struggled to attain its Right to the City through collective action. Before understanding their process of achieving the Right to the City, it is important to understand the community's history and context.

Geographic Context & Demographics

Frente de Renovación Fase 2 is located in Iztapalapa, one of the sixteen delegations of Mexico City. Iztapalapa is the most populous delegation in Mexico with 1.8 million inhabitants

and a growth rate of .23% per year. It is located in Eastern Mexico City and borders the State of México. Until the 1970s, the area was largely rural but today over 90% of the area is urbanized. Iztapalapa is also one of the poorest delegations and many residents can only find employment in local informal markets. Formal employment opportunities are largely limited to manufacturing jobs and commerce (iztapalapa.gob.mx/demografia). In addition, there is a large daily influx of workers from outside the delegation (largely the State of México) to work in both formal and informal enterprises.



Figure 2: Iztapalapa (Source: maps.google.com)



Figure 3: Frente de Renovación Fase 2 (Source: maps.google.com)

At 2.24 acres, the community of Frente de Renovación is comprised of 104 houses and 40 apartments. Approximately 1.4 miles south of the Tepalcates metro and one hour from downtown Mexico City, Frente de Renovación is in the Northeast corner of Iztapalapa. Surrounded by a low-income area with high crime rates, the community is surrounded on either side by public housing projects known as the “Geovillas.” Upon completion of the project, there will be 111 houses and 50 apartments allowing for a total of 161 families.

During my January 2015 research trip I conducted a survey of families to gain a better understanding of community demographics. Only owner-occupied houses and apartments where

original families had participated in the upgrading process were eligible for the survey. This totaled 90 houses and 24 apartments. Of the 114 eligible units, 32 (28% of the total units) were surveyed: 20 houses (22%) and 12 apartments (50%).

In the houses, the average occupancy is 4.1 and the household income mode is \$4,500-15,000 Pesos/month². Houses range from one to three floors and are fourteen to a block. The average house is 1090 square feet (2.78 floors). A typical arrangement is a bathroom, kitchen, dining nook, and living room on the first floor; two bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor; and a bedroom, bathroom, and service patio on the third floor. Each family has customized their home and there is some degree of variability in layout.

In apartments, the average occupancy is 4.4 and the household income mode is \$4,500-7,500 Pesos/month. The average apartment is 650 square feet and has three bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. There is less flexibility in the layout of the apartments, but there is some ability to customize the kitchen and living room in these units.

² Incomes were calculated using income brackets because it was a delicate question with survey respondents. This method however makes it impossible to take an average income.

The average family moved to the community in 2002. 44% of survey respondents had lived with their extended families prior to moving to the community. Another 25% of survey respondents rented prior to moving, and another 31% of survey respondents owned their own home or apartment prior to moving to the community. According to interviews, more than 50% of

The average family moved to the community in 2002. 44% of survey respondents had lived with their extended families prior to moving to the community. Another 25% of survey respondents rented prior to moving, and another 31% of survey respondents owned their own home or apartment prior to moving to the community. According to interviews, more than 50% of

the families in the community were part of the original community organization Frente de



Figure 5: A typical house in the development. (Source: Author)

Renovación. Others joined through social mobilizations and family connections.

In addition to the houses, there is also community and business infrastructure. Throughout the community there are 25 stores owned exclusively by community members. Most of these shops are in the front block of the community and accessible to the street. Some are located inside homes and apartments within the community and are only accessible to community members. These locally-owned businesses include bakeries, bodegas, laundromats, and barbers. While some have

changed hands since construction, all businesses remain owned by community members. In addition to these brick-and-mortar shops, many community members own stalls in local *tianguis* (markets). 50%³ of the community self-identifies as a “*comerciante*” (merchant).

Neighborhood meetings and social events are held in a community center at the gate of the development. Community members can reserve the space for private events and pay only a cleaning fee. During the week, community leaders often gather at the community center for informal meetings, to prepare legal documents, and plan social events.

³ +/- 14%

Across from the community center is the security booth. The front gate to the development is locked at all times and to enter visitors must sign a register. Members with parking spots have vehicle badges that entitle them to enter and use the community parking lot. The *vigilancia* (security booth) is staffed by members and is paid for by monthly dues from each family.

While most of the community is built, one section of houses remains unfinished in the very back of the development. A group of original families unable to save enough to pay for the basic construction materials for their homes lives here. There are 10 homes here constructed of sheet metal, cardboard, and plastic sheeting. These families, while unable to pay to build their homes, have not been asked to move. As a twice-displaced community, as I will explore below, Frente de Renovación Fase 2 will not displace residents. Because of this, there is no timeline to complete this final segment of the development.



Figure 6: Frente de Renovación Fase 2 Community Center with state housing development in the background. (Source: Author)

History

The community movement of Frente de Renovación (Renovation Front) was formed in 1991 when approximately 500 families were displaced from Santa Catarina Hill, an area on the border between the Federal District and the State of México. While the Iztapalapa delegation promised to relocate the whole community to one area, families were relocated to various locations around Iztapalpa. As many community members and leaders told me, the original location was to hold 600 families, but it only was large enough for 200. This community became Frente de Renovación Fase 1 (Renovation Front, Phase 1)

In 1993, the Secretary of Urban Development and Housing (at the city-level) granted the community a plot of land near the current site of Frente de Renovación Fase 2. In the same year, Lorena⁴, the community's most prominent leader, was elected president of the association. However, after just one year on the land, the community was displaced again, this time by a violent attack by a group of waste pickers who had previously tried to co-opt the movement and demand payment from the community. The homes and possessions of 100 families were burned during the attack and the community was uprooted for a second time.

On January 27th, 1994, the Secretary of Urban Development and Housing granted the community a final plot of land, the current site of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 (Phase 2). The 100 families displaced by the earlier attacks moved to the site and began to construct small houses from cardboard, sheet metal, and other materials. Determined not to be displaced again by the government or other groups, the community formed a leadership group that “would be in charge of uniting the community and carrying out the work necessary to build a definitive

⁴ Names of community members have been changed to maintain privacy.

settlement with families on the property” (SEMBLANZA). The community was united in its intentions to build a permanent settlement. They had no intentions to be displaced again.

From this beginning, the upgrading process and affiliated social movement began. As one community leader explained, the strength and commitment from community members was born of “necessity and courage.” The goal of the movement was not just to build dignified houses, but also to claim definitive ownership over their land and the process of urbanization. These goals were an attempt to build a better and more secure life for community members and their families. The upgrading process and integrated social movement of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: FROM THE GRASSROOTS: FRENTE DE RENOVACIÓN FASE 2

How did the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 mobilize collective action to make and achieve claims to their urban environment?

Frente de Renovación

As explored above, charters are an inappropriate mechanism for grounding the Right to the City. The Right to the City cannot be incorporated into existing liberal democratic frameworks and, even if it could, there is not the financial and political support necessary to successfully implement it. In the end, charters can end up supporting the maintenance of the very systems they aim to change.

Lefebvre, and a number of contemporary urban theorists cited above, argue that only through *autogestión* (the demand) and urban protest (the cry) can citizens achieve their Right to the City. *Autogestión* is the act of communities coming together to take over the management of their environment and to create a new *oeuvre* that is based on collective, rather than individual rights. Through *autogestión*, communities make existing liberal democratic frameworks of inequity obsolete. With enough communities pursuing *autogestión*, a new urban future is possible. When these communities join together in protest and the creation of alternatives, it is the urban revolution.

Frente de Renovación Fase 2 achieved *autogestión* through the physical and political process of constructing their community. Mobilizing residents through collective action, the community was able to both self-organize internally and to make external claims to assert their collective Right to the City.

The Upgrading Project (*Autogestión*)

The upgrading process in Frente de Renovación Fase 2 followed in the tradition of the social production of housing. Developed by and for the community, the goal was to “produce housing for people, rather than for profit.” Families who wanted to be a part of the community were expected to participate in all aspects of decision-making, construction, and savings programs.

Land and Infrastructure

As discussed briefly in Chapter 3, the members of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 were granted permission to build by the Secretary of Urban Development and Land after being twice displaced. Subsequent to gaining permission to build, Frente de Renovación Fase 2 members immediately began collecting money to pay for the land. Wanting to be independent and secure, the community sought to confirm clear title to their land. They have since made multiple attempts to pay for the land to receive title, but have been impeded by bureaucracy (discussed in more detail below).

In addition to granting the community permission to build, the government also waived construction permit fees and provided sewage lines. The second concession, sewage, was only granted after the community staged numerous protests and participated in multiple rounds of negotiation. Sewage lines are regularly provided to urban developments by the municipality, and Frente de Renovación Fase 2 was able to secure access to this service through collective action.

Other than these three concessions, the community managed and financed the urban development independently. They were responsible for hiring an architect, submitting plans, managing finances, purchasing materials, leveling the earth, overseeing construction, and organizing social programs alongside the physical development program.

Planning

Both families who were originally part of Frente de Renovación, and new additions played a role in the planning process. Community meetings were held once a week and leaders were elected democratically. During these meetings, elected leaders would share updates with the community on various planning, permitting, design, infrastructure, and construction processes. The leaders would solicit feedback and proposals from both leadership and community members. Proposals were debated and then voted upon by simple majority.

While community sentiment has changed in recent years as described below, there was initially strong support for a career community leader, Lorena. Lorena shares a common history with the people of the community and Frente de Renovación. She lived in both of the communities that were displaced and, as a single mother, Lorena learned how to organize herself and others for a permanent and autonomous housing solution. Because of her success in Frente de Renovación Fase 2, Lorena has since been asked to consult and lead fifteen other community groups across the nation hoping to achieve similar goals. During one of our interviews, Lorena mentioned that she had been tapped to run for political office, but that she refused: “I could have been a council member, but I want to make houses. All my life I have made houses.” Her goal is not only to construct better houses, but also to construct a better city.

The rest of the leadership in the community is all-female as well. Most are from the original community, with one significant exception. The main community leader to assist me with my investigation, Paula⁵, joined the movement when she was just 18 years old in the early 1990s. Also a single mother, Paula is Lorena's protégé. Whereas Lorena manages long term goals and external relations, Paula is responsible for day-to-day operations and finance.

For technical assistance, the community hired an architect and engineers to provide technical expertise. Basic construction of all the houses and apartments was the same and included eight separate plans for the house model and apartment model. Because each house and apartment has the same basic structure, it was only necessary to pay the architect and engineer for one plan for each structure. The community submitted plans for the development to the local delegation. The delegation supported the development by waiving planning fees for the project.

Financing

The entire upgrading process in Frente de Renovación Fase 2 was self-financed. In order to join the community, families were required to deposit money into a group account and make regular contributions to the community savings account. At first, this money was the basis of the construction materials, land payments⁶, and shared infrastructure costs. When a family had deposited \$26,000 pesos (roughly \$1,700), they joined with thirteen other families to form a block (*tanda*). This block of families purchased materials in bulk and constructed their homes together. The base funds were used to pay for the materials necessary to build each family's *obra negra*, the basic foundation and walls of the first floor. Since the construction of the *obra negra*,

⁵ Names of community members have been changed to maintain privacy.

⁶ While funds to pay the Secretary of Urban Development and Housing for the land were collected, the land has still not been purchased because the Secretary refuses to recognize the land claim. The original sum collected from each family amounts to \$3,500 pesos (\$232 USD).

individual families have added on to their homes in a piecemeal fashion. Today almost all houses have been completed. They average 2.78 floors. Most apartments are also complete.

This form of saving not only allowed the community to avoid taking out a loan from the government or private sources (at high interest rates), it also allows the community to leverage economies of scale and approach their housing in a flexible and incremental fashion. The families of Frente de Renovación pride themselves on the fact that they did not seek funding from federal housing institutions or from private banks. As one community member commented, when you have a government loan from the National Housing Institute, “you pay for your house over 25 years and end up paying three times the value of the house when you add interest.”

The flexibility of the saving program is essential to these families, many of which entered the community with low incomes (mode: \$4,500-7,500 pesos/month per house). Since the initiation of the upgrading project, household income has increased (see Figure 7) among households in the community and families own the full equity in their homes, equity that they can liquidate should they decide to move.

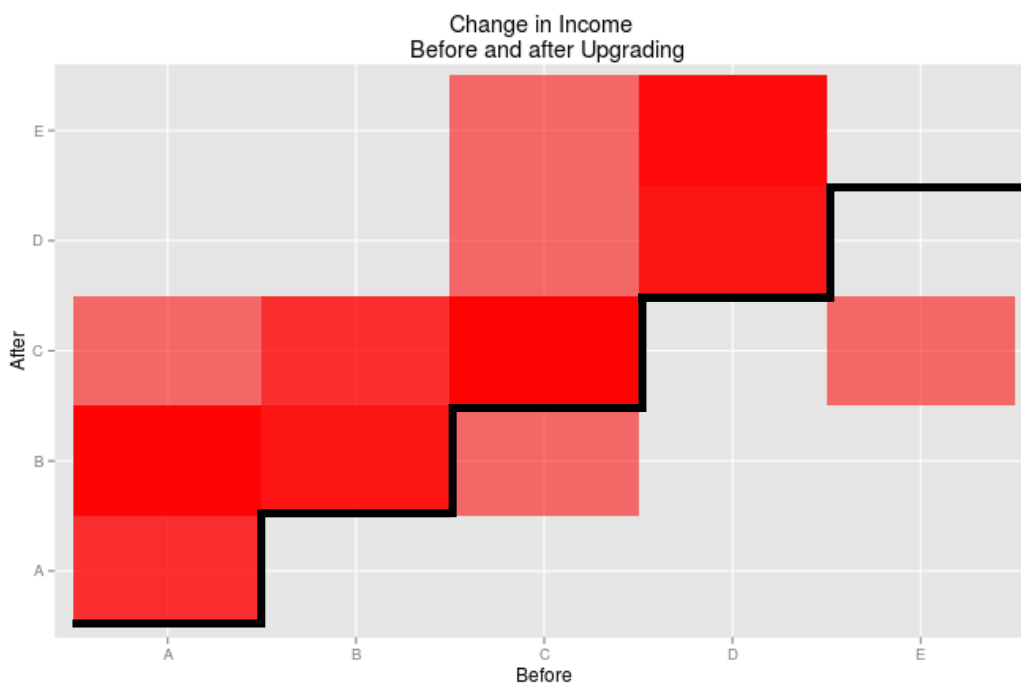


Figure 7: Heat map showing change in incomes. The area of the plot above the line shows families where income remained constant or increased. The area below the line is where incomes decreased. (Source: Author)

Today, the deposits are still used to save money for shared infrastructure projects in the community such as the parking lot. If a family leaves the community, they are permitted to withdraw the unused funds and sell their home. As one community leader explained, “we are a community of savers. If you do not save money, you cannot build a home here.” Indeed, leveraging community savings is the financial mechanism through which all homes and communal infrastructure have been built.

Construction

In the early stages of development, group construction workdays were held weekly. These events, known as *fainas*, were mandatory for all members. If a family could not participate for one reason or another, they could hire another community member to do the extra work. Aside

from the group construction projects, families were responsible for building their own homes using construction materials that were collectively purchased in bulk. Similarly to *fainas*, if families were unable construct their own homes, they paid others within the community to build for them. This solution kept investments within the community and allowed financially-poor/labor-sound families to pair with financially-sound/labor-poor families in housing construction.



action.

Through the *autogestión* methods described above, the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 were able to avoid the intrusion of both market and state actors into their community development process. In this way, the group also achieved a greater degree of political and administrative freedom. This was an important process of community empowerment not only over the physical development of their urban environment, but also of political empowerment as the community recognized its ability to create an alternative future for themselves through collective

Figure 8: A community leader poses in front of one of the houses in construction. (Source: Frente de Renovación Fase 2 Archives)

Collective Action

With a background of the community upgrading process, we can now understand how this process constituted a collective action approach to the Right to the City. Many survey respondents cited the important role of the union between community members as the key to their success. With a desire to own their home, avoid displacement, and build community, members identified the significance of collective action to the formation of the development. This sentiment was echoed throughout the survey and interview process. One community member told me that though the problems the collective faced were significant, “the solution was to come together as a community.” Another remembered the upgrading process fondly: “it is something beautiful to work together in community.” While their motivations to join the group may have been self-interested (75%⁷ of the residents main reason for joining the movement was to obtain their own home), community members realized that together they would be stronger than individually.

Using the collective action theories discussed in Chapter 1, it is possible to identify three core principles the community of Frente de Renovación used to achieve their Right to the City: deep democracy, self-reliance (*autogestión*), and claim-making. These three principles are described below.

Deep Democracy

Although the core leadership in the community has remained stable throughout the upgrading process, there are regular elections every three years to elect the community president and other administrative positions. While there is a strong core of leadership, major decisions are made by simple majority vote during monthly meetings on the 15th of each month. While at first

⁷ +/- 12%

meetings were held weekly, these new monthly meetings are still important to community cohesion and participation. During such meetings, members discuss community upgrades, conflicts, and social programs. Today, 72%⁸ of families believe that their voice is heard during the meetings. Another 81%⁹ of membership participates actively in the community. Through deep democracy, the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 achieved Ostrom's third community design principle: "ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules."

In the early phases of the project, all members of the community were expected to participate in planning, community development, finance, and construction decisions. Planning decisions were made democratically during weekly community meetings. According to my survey, 61%¹⁰ of families believe that decisions during this stage were made fairly during these planning and construction phases. Any member could make a proposal and argue their case in front of their constituents. All families who hoped to benefit from the project were required to participate in these meetings, which kept the upgrading process moving forward and increased buy-in from membership. Smaller sub-committees were responsible for executing plans and decisions made during these meetings. This practice is in alignment with another one of Ostrom's design principles: "build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system."

These practices build deep democracy within the community. Deep democracy led to the community decisions and programming that made self-reliance an achievable goal for Frente de Renovación Fase 2.

⁸ +/- 12%

⁹ +/- 11%

¹⁰ +/- 13%

Self-Reliance

To the members of Frente de Renovación Fase 2, the actual construction of their homes themselves was a form of protest and social action. One resident told me “building the houses was a political act. Through community action we built these homes.” Constructing their own homes through self-reliance was a major goal of the community members. Because of their painful past relations with the state, the community was reluctant to rely upon the government for housing and related services. As one community member remarked, “we didn’t want a state house. We knew we could do our own.”

The self-finance and savings program explained above was another critical element of self-reliance for the community. While the community opened a savings account with a bank for deposits, they did not rely upon loans or other financing mechanisms that would threaten their autonomy. The members searched for a solution that was entirely community-based and did not require the intervention of private capital or government agencies.

In addition to financial and administrative self-reliance, the community also established a social safety net of programs. These programs helped to provide the lowest-income families with goods and services to meet their basic needs. In alignment with Ostrom’s second design principle; “Match rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions,” these programs were in alignment with community needs. These programs were paired with social events and parties. Such social events agreed with the housing additions to Ostrom’s principles to “Emphasize social interactions to build a thriving community.”

Members established additional protections for children, single mothers, and abused women. Children’s programs, including extra tutoring by two older women, and boy/girl scouts,

were set up to improve academics and provide structure for children. Many children of the first generation have gone on to pursue graduate studies in law, medicine, and psychology.

Women in the community set up networks to protect other women and children from abusive husbands. Because of the supportive nature of the community, women who were suffering from abuse often moved in together to maintain network ties and support one another. These households were often home to up to three single mothers and their children. In such households, mothers shared resources and childcare responsibilities.

According to my interviewees, the act of saving money, taking charge of the planning and management of their upgrading program, and organizing safety net programs empowered members to think about other ways in which they could improve their urban environment. New community goals developed during the upgrading process included making sure each family had access to childcare, food, education, and health services. Through these processes, the community hoped to “construct a responsible citizenry.”

The community’s self-reliance, or *autogestión*, not only supported membership, it also contributed to the creation of an alternative urban space. Self-reliance allowed the community to “shake off” structures of power (to a certain degree) and take control of their own urban *oeuvre*. This establishment of authority separate from outside bodies is in alignment with Ostrom’s fourth design principle: “make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities.” Frente de Renovación is a space produced by and for the community.

Claim-making

Through collective action, the community was able to not only make claims within the group, but also to express their claims to the world outside their small association. The group

mobilized themselves to do the physical work and internal management necessary to achieve the upgrading project. They also mobilized themselves, and others, to publicly demonstrate at rallies and sit-ins across the city. Community members regularly participated in marches for human rights (the right to housing, women's rights, right to education, etc) as well as in public demonstrations for the delivery of certain permissions and resources from the delegation and city. These rallies included protests against the two displacement events, to get sewer infrastructure, and to pressure the Secretary of Urban Development and Housing for title.

Frente de Renovación resisted the trend to promise votes or to align themselves with any one particular party. One community leader explained adamantly: "We were totally independent from all political parties." However, social action tactics of the community included participating in negotiations with politicians during and after protests and sit-ins. These negotiations resulted in the sewage connections and permission to build on the land, as discussed above. While the community leaders are still in negotiations and talks with the Secretary of Urban Development and Housing for title, these discussions have been so far unsuccessful. Recent negotiations have led to renewed hope that the land title will be secured in the coming year, for the original payment the community was promised at the beginning of construction.

The main community leader, Lorena, once explained the importance of the political demonstrations: "We have to fight for our rights. Everything we have, we have had to fight for." She described that in Mexico, there are two factors that influence government decisions: pressure from people with money and power and pressure from social movements. The community vocalized their demands through social demonstrations and successfully exerted the pressure needed to influence government decisions.

In addition to public demonstrations, residents often participated in workshops held by the Mexico City Human Rights Commission, local NGOs, and other community groups. Like the public demonstrations, these meetings and workshops varied from the right to housing to the rights of women to the right to water. During the early years, the community was highly political and engaged with a variety of themes beyond the right to housing and their immediate physical space. This union of varied political and social movements is what David Harvey highlights as the urban revolution: “it is a ‘movement of movements’ rather than a single-minded organization” (2008: 119).

Community Decline

As described above, the planning and construction phases were successful in organizing and mobilizing community involvement and collective action. However, today much of that momentum has tapered off and the community suffers from a lack of involvement, trust, and shared vision. While there is no disagreement that Frente de Renovación Fase 2 has been in decline, two conflicting opinions exist on why the community has suffered. One camp, mostly comprised of newer community members, believes that leadership has become corrupted. Others, mostly community leaders and some long-term residents, see the loss of a shared vision as the culprit.

The community decline is evidenced in measurable and non-measurable dimensions. Whereas early phases of community development involved regular social events; weekly workdays and community meetings; and safety net programs, as described above, almost all of these elements have been reduced or eliminated in recent years. Community celebrations for Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, Children’s Day, Halloween (*Día de las Brujas*), and Christmas

parades (*Posadas*) were attended by almost all community members in years past. Then, as construction of the majority of houses was completed, these events drew fewer and fewer community members. One organizer of such events explained that she no longer planned events because community members no longer attended them.



Figure 9: The final apartment buildings are still under construction and have been for many years. (Source: Author)

Now that the houses and apartments have been completed, there is no need for community members to meet weekly or participate in regular construction workdays. Instead, these reunions have been shifted to a monthly scale, and are

often cancelled due to a lack of participation and interest from neighbors. It appears that this trend has caused a downward spiral. As more and more meetings and workdays suffer from low attendance and are cancelled, fewer and fewer members attend the next iteration. Without an involved membership, leaders are left to delay decisions or make them without community input.

Unfortunately, many of the social programs for children, women, and the lowest-income residents have been abandoned. Some of the previous residents, mostly elderly, who ran such programs have passed away or moved in with their families in other areas of Mexico City. Without a safety net provided by the community and opportunities to interact during meetings

and social events, neighbors have lost trust in one another and leaders. A few houses have been abandoned and some original community members have sold their homes and moved away.

The once tight-knit community has lost its strong ties. Even some of the community leaders are unsure of who some of the newer residents are. Some new residents are unaware of the community history or governance structure. Though some leaders and activists have made attempts to re-energize the community, most residents now return home from work, shut their doors, and only interact with their immediate neighbors.

While there is disagreement on why community cohesion has declined, my research points to a lack of shared vision and goals. When Frente de Renovación had been recently displaced and eager to achieve housing and socio-economic goals, people shared a vision of what their community could be. They were united to work toward this vision through collective action and deep participation in all aspects of community development. Now that residents each have their own homes and have risen economically (on average, families have seen an increase in household income between the beginnings of the upgrading project and today- see Figure 7), they no longer need to rely upon collective action to communally achieve their basic needs.

Today, residents point to corrupt leadership because group decision-making is no longer what it was. The negative feedback loop, where poorly-attended and cancelled meetings lead to even lower attendance the next month, have meant that community leaders must make decisions without enough community input. There is no longer the transparency in leadership that there once was, and forms of communication between leaders and neighbors have withered. Today, 42%¹¹ of residents believe that leadership is no longer elected democratically. In addition, 28%¹² of members name leadership as their biggest dissatisfaction in the community.

¹¹ +/-14%

¹² +/- 13%

While my study did not uncover clear signs of corruption, it is possible that the decline in participation and oversight has opened up opportunities for leaders to take advantage of their position. It is also possible that leadership has been targeted a scapegoat for community decline due to other factors, including the absence of a shared vision. My research did not point to any of these or other conclusions.

Land Title Struggles

Another significant challenge for the community is obtaining clear title to their land. When the government granted permission to build Frente de Renovación Fase 2, they also settled on a purchase price of \$563,000 pesos (approximately \$37,325 USD) with residents. As part of the saving scheme set up to collect money for construction materials, there was also a component to pay for the land. Each of 161 families originally slated to be part of the community were to pay \$3,500 pesos (roughly \$230 USD). When the money was collected, community leaders attempted to pay for the land title. However, these attempts have been stalled due to bureaucratic processes, government changes, and what was described to me as reluctance on behalf of the Secretary of Urban Development and Housing to fulfill their agreement. One of the community leaders explained that the Secretary has demanded higher land prices than what was agreed upon and what the community can afford. In late 2014 and early 2015, it appeared that the community might be close to receiving title due to increased communication and interest from the municipality of Iztapalapa and the Secretary. Unfortunately, neither the Iztapalapa municipal government nor the Secretary of Urban Development and Housing responded to my requests for interviews.

Right to the City?

Did the residents of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 achieve their Right to the City? The answer is not a clear-cut affirmation or denial. Based on my findings outlined above, I conclude that the community partially achieved their Right to the City, and for a limited time. Three considerations come into play: the definition of the Right to the City, the alignment of community goals and methods with Right to the City theory, and the permanence and spread of change. I outline these three considerations briefly here, and then explore the second and third consideration in-depth below.

Firstly, if the Right to the City is understood as an aspiration for a city that does not exist (the collective *oeuvre*), rather than a definable end, then perhaps no community can achieve its Right to the City in full. As described in Chapters 1 and 2, existing political and economic frameworks are incompatible with the Right to the City. It is hard to imagine any community achieving the total independence from capitalism and inequitable systems of governance. However, we can interpret how a group's aspirations, rhetoric, and methods align, or do not, with Right to the City theory as a proxy.

This leads to the second consideration. To ascertain whether Frente de Renovación Fase 2 achieved their Right to the City, it is necessary to understand the movement from the perspective of its aspirations, rhetoric, and methods. As described above, the early planning, design, construction, and activism stages of the project do align with the political, deep democracy, and holistic social and urban development tenets of Right to the City theory. I argue that the culmination of these elements constitute a Right to the City approach to community building through *autogestión*.

Thirdly, the permanence of the changes is an important consideration. While Frente de Renovación Fase 2 did achieve some degree of the Right to the City, they were unable to sustain the momentum necessary to create permanent change in their community. The movement also failed to extend its work beyond the confines of their physical development and to unite with other Right to the City groups to affect larger change.

The Cry and the Demand

As described in Chapters 1 and 2, the Right to the City is both a cry and a demand. A Right to the City approach requires a denunciation of existing political-economic systems and the creation of alternatives. Through *autogestión* (the demand) and social action (the cry), Frente de Renovación Fase 2 worked to achieve their Right to the City. Collective action guided the internal management and external claim-making aspects of the Frente de Renovación approach.

Internally, the community organized itself based on a shared identity, that of the twice-displaced but united community. In addition to a shared identity, the community also had a common goal: to achieve independence, better livelihoods, and a permanent home for themselves and their neighbors. As Arturo Escobar explains, these common goals and identities are at the core of a strong social movement: “social action is understood as the product of complex social processes in which structure and agency interact in manifold ways and in which actors produce meanings, negotiate, and make decisions” (Escobar et al., 1992: 4). The agency of Frente de Renovación as twice-displaced, as well as their goals and decision-making processes formed an important base for the organization’s success.

However, beyond their shared history and aspirations, the community also managed themselves in alignment with Ostrom’s design principles described in Chapter 1. Without prior

knowledge of these principles, the community set about establishing a management system that included elements of Ostrom's theories. Most notably, these included: "3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules"; and "8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system."

As described above, Frente de Renovación Fase 2 struggled to attain independence and self-reliance. Through their finance and management mechanisms, the community successfully reduced the need to consult with state and market actors while increasing their autonomy. This process allowed membership to participate in a deeper form of planning and management than would be possible if the process was state-run or financed and monitored by financial systems. Because Frente de Renovación achieved a significant degree of autonomy and self-management, they attained a form of *autogestión*. Though impossible to completely "shrug off" existing economic and political systems, as Purcell might advocate for, the approach of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 did achieve a significant degree of independence.

The community also approached the urban development project from a holistic point of view. Realizing early on that the construction of homes was insufficient to build the type of community and "responsible citizenry" the community desired, they quickly added in social programs. These programs ensured not only that the community was responsible for managing the physical infrastructure of the development, but also that they were also able to develop themselves through the social safety net programs described above.

In addition to its methods for developing and managing its physical and social structures (the demand), the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 also denounced existing structures of power in Mexico City. Through the protests and sit-ins described above, the community drew

attention to the shortcomings of current power structures and the need to invent something new for citizens.

At its peak, Frente de Renovación Fase 2 truly was approaching community and physical development from a Right to the City approach. Through holistic programming, *autogestión*, and social action, the community was calling for and creating an *oeuvre* that was truly collective and fundamentally different from existing economic and political structures.

Permanence

While the early stages of development in Frente de Renovación Fase 2 were characterized by impassioned collective action, today's community is troubled by a lack of cohesion and action. As explained above, the community no longer organizes social events, community work days, or support programs. In addition, the decision-making structure has lost legitimacy and community meetings are poorly attended.

The residents of Frente de Renovación were unable to sustain the momentum necessary to maintain their Right to the City and to spread the movement. Unfortunately, the community has reverted to a typical urban development in Mexico City. Neighbors are not united under a common banner, individual gain reigns, and the community no longer socializes together. Today, a major concern of some families is to gain title so that they can sell their home and move to a new area. Although there is much work to be done in relation to this community's Right to the City, they have lost the union and collective action spirit that made their previous success possible.

The successes of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 could have been maintained and multiplied with the support of an institution targeted to unify and reinvigorate such movements. Although I

argue above that institutionalization through Right to the City Charters and legal programs is unsuccessful, I do believe that some type of institutionalization is necessary to the widespread success of the Right to the City movement. Civil society organizations are poised to connect and sustain local Right to the City efforts through a transnational network of Right to the City movements.

Indeed, the Right to the City has the potential to unite varied social, environmental, economic, and identity-based movements under one banner. In *Rebel Cities*, David Harvey argues for the unification of urban social movements under one network. To achieve this goal, Harvey argues that not only must social movements see the right as collective, they must also make conscious efforts to reach out to other movements (Harvey, 2012: 138-139). For Harvey, this movement is necessarily a global one. In order to sufficiently disrupt the status quo, social movements must join together across the world to wrest power from the politically and economically wealthy. Chapter 5 explores how such a network might take shape.

CHAPTER 5: INSTITUTIONALIZATION THROUGH TRANSNATIONALIZATION

If local social mobilizations must be linked through a transnational Right to the City network, how would such a network be structured?

The Need for Institutionalization

If both pure legislative and pure local approaches are insufficient to achieve the Right to the City, how can it be realized? I argue that some degree of institutionalization is necessary to maintain and grow local Right to the City movements. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, this institutionalization cannot occur through existing economically and politically powerful actors interested in maintaining the status quo. Instead, the Right to the City must be institutionalized through a multi-scalar transnational network of Right to the City movements based in cooperation.

In *The Urban Revolution*, David Harvey identifies the need to think about how such an organization would be structured: “Relations between independent and autonomously functioning communities have to be established and regulated somehow... how such higher-order rules might be constituted, by whom, and how they might be open to democratic control” (Harvey, 2008: 83). Indeed the considerations Harvey raises are complex and nuanced.

A transnational, nested urban organization of Right to the City movements does not exist. However, the experiences of successful transnational rural movements, such as Brazil’s Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST) and Vía Campesina demonstrate important lessons on how to grow an international network that retains its powerful local roots. Moreover, organizations such as Banco Palmas (BP) and the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC) show how financial

and knowledge resources can be shared among local groups to further the realization of an alternative, collective future.

Benefits of a transnational Right to the City movement include a) maintaining momentum, b) spreading the movement; c) sharing knowledge and resources, d) framing and public education, and e) gaining concessions. All of these benefits make individual, local community efforts stronger by amplifying the voice of the movement and encouraging small scale action to continue and spread.

The MST & La Vía Campesina

Two of the world's most powerful rural social movements, Brazil's Landless Rural Worker's Movement (MST) and La Vía Campesina, were both founded in Latin America. They have since grown to international scales, explored below. With a rich history of successful transnational social movements, Latin America, and perhaps Mexico, is poised to be the locus of a successful urban movement. Such a movement can learn from the organizational structures of both the MST and La Vía Campesina.

Founded in 1984 the MST was founded by peasants decrying the inequitable distribution of rural land in Brazil. The organization calls for the democratization of politics and economy. Like Frente de Renovación Fase 2, the MST has achieved gains through both demonstration and *autogestión*. Specifically, the MST has two tactics: advocating for agrarian reform and starting new communities by occupying unused rural land (Robles, 2001: 147). These autonomous rural communities feature not just housing and agriculture, but also schools, clinics, a University, and commercial services. The goal of these communities is to foster economic cooperation, rather than competition (ibid: 149).

The organization is horizontally managed and composed of local consensus-based units. As Eric Sippert points out, the horizontality of the organization simultaneously “increases the mobilization potential... [and] the legitimacy of the movement” (2014: 182). While the MST has grown in power over the last decades, they have steadfastly maintained their independence from the Brazilian state. The MST uses their strength to back certain candidates, but is not aligned with any particular political party (ibid: 183).

The MST has grown powerful nationally and has begun to provide solidarity training and technical assistance to similar movements around the world, particularly in South Africa. MST’s unique horizontal structure, autonomous political engagement, and self-managed communities are tactics that would translate to an international Right to the City network.

Like MST, La Vía Campesina has its roots in Latin America. Founded in 1993, La Vía Campesina has been described as the rural equivalent of the women’s movement or the environmental movement, but with “tighter, more formal coordination than either of those two examples” (Martínez-Torres et al., 2010: 150). Like the MST, La Vía Campesina has remained fiercely autonomous from political parties and state institutionalization.

Whereas the MST has remained largely a national movement, with some international partners, La Vía Campesina is a truly transnational movement. Influencing policy not only in domestic spheres, but also at the UN, FAO, and World Bank, La Vía Campesina defines its own agenda. Through protest and the creation of alternative food sovereignty agricultural approaches, La Vía Campesina is able to influence policy and foster new rural communities. Again, like the MST and Frente de Renovación, La Vía Campesina employs strategies of *autogestión* and claim-making to achieve their ends.

Also like the MST, La Vía Campesina is comprised of local and national-level organizations, overseen by a central decision-making group, the International Coordinating Committee (ICC). The network serves as both an actor (decision-making and advocacy roles), and a structure to connect smaller local movements (Borras, 2008: 261). As such, it efficiently provides resources to member organizations while serving as a loud voice for the global peasant movement.

Mondragon Cooperative Corporation and Banco Palmas

The Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC) was founded in 1956 in Spain's Basque Country. Initiated by Arizmendi, as Spanish priest, the organization was founded in the wake of the Spanish Civil War. The organization was founded on the principles of solidarity and participation and was targeted to create jobs during a high-unemployment stage of Spain's history. Today, the corporation has spread across the globe and now has over 74,000 employee members. MCC also networks with other employee-owned companies and labor unions, notably United Steelworkers in the United States, on strategies for economic solidarity and independence (Mondragon-corporation.com).

Banco Palmas (BP) was founded in 1998 in the periphery of Fortaleza, Brazil. The founders, originally attempting to fight displacement and create security of tenure, realized the need for financial and economic security in the community. They formed the community development bank to offer financial services to those excluded from traditional mechanisms. The focus was to retain profits within the community and to build a "solidarity socio economy." Beyond banking services, BP also supports education and training as well as the creation of

alternative local currencies. The success of Banco Palmas has started a chain of community development banks across Brazil and ignited a discussion on the solidarity economy worldwide.

Structure and Strategies of a Transnational Right to the City Network

La Vía Campesina, MST, MCC, and BP all provide important lessons for the formation of a transnational and multi-scalar Right to the City movement with a basis in shared resources. While locally powerful, small movements are insufficient to achieve global change. As Harvey explains, “valuable lessons gained from the collective organization of small-scale solidarity economies along common-property lines cannot translate into global solutions without resorting to ‘nested’ and therefore hierarchical organizational forms” (Harvey, 2008: 70). Hierarchy and institutionalization are not necessarily incompatible with a deeply democratic movement. If established with intent and forethought, a transnational network structure of Right to the City movements could prove beneficial to igniting global change.

The following guiding principles are derived from the experiences of the MST, La Vía Campesina, MCC, and BP. These strategies are adapted from Rachel McKane’s thesis *The Globalization of Social Movements* and Saturnino Borra’s 2008 piece on La Vía Campesina:

1. Autonomy

All four organizations derive strength from their autonomy from political and economic apparatuses. In so doing, these movements are able to preserve their agenda and avoid co-optation and taming by the political and economic elite. It will be crucial for a Right to the City network to possess similar goals of autonomy. Moreover, the examples of MCC and BP show how the creation of autonomous financial institutions allows communities to retain wealth creation and avoid supporting entrenched and powerful economic systems.

2. Multi-scalar

MST and La Vía Campesina are successful because they link small-scale social movements with one another, creating a network stronger than the sum of its parts. Mondragon and BP, while geographically rooted, have partnered with and inspired other organizations hoping to achieve similar goals. The organizations preserve their local roots while also making international gains. A Right to the City network would need to draw on multiple scales to engender both small- and large-scale change.

3. Horizontal management

The MST's horizontal organization is a good example of how a Right to the City network might preserve collective decision making and deep democracy while also scaling up globally. As explained above horizontal management systems maintain legitimacy and mobilization potential. Even in larger and more complex organizations, such as Mondragon, decisions are made by the general assembly or member direct representation. A transnational Right to the City network would need to preserve horizontality in order not to stymie local movements and to increase accountability.

4. Shared goal

While Frente de Renovación Fase 2 started with a shared goal, they soon lost cohesion when the goal was achieved and a new one was not established. Both the MST and La Vía Campesina have preserved shared goals and added new campaigns to rally their base. A

transnational Right to the City organization would need to preserve its momentum by creating a shared vision and organizing multiple campaigns to achieve it.

5. Shared Resources

Like the MST (described below), a transnational Right to the City movement could share knowledge and resources through summits, online courses, and workshops. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, network members would share best practices and consult each other on successes and challenges of different strategies.

Moreover, financial solidarity both at the community and inter-community level keeps profits and value creation within the network. One such example of this type of resource sharing is the practice of allied lending between cooperatives in the United States. Once a cooperative begins to create excess returns, they often will lend capital to other budding cooperatives. This model could be used among local groups that are part of the transnational Right to the City movement.

6. Networked allies

Allies both within networks and between networks will be important to furthering the cause of the Right to the City. A transnational Right to the City organization might find allies in both the MST and La Vía Campesina as well as environmental, racial justice, women's, and LGBTQ movements. Allies can also come in the form of academics, NGOs, and politicians. However, keeping allies as just that and preserving autonomy will be important considerations in the development of a transnational Right to the City network.

Identifying an Organization

Organizations with local, national, regional, and international ties are the ideal candidates for sparking the formation of a transnational movement. Although there is no network which aims to network among multi-scalar Right to the City movements, there are some organizations which may serve to initiate such a process.

One such organization is Habitat International Coalition (HIC). HIC has the local, national, and international contacts which might form the basis of a transnational Right to the City network. HIC could initiate such a network by calling together these partners and providing some training and structure. However, in its current state is not political enough or singularly focused on urban Right to the City movements. They have the international connections and Right to the City focus necessary to form a transnational network.

Perhaps in collaboration with a HIC initiative, the international network of actors drafting the *World Charter on the Right to the City* could do additional organizing. Instead of focusing their attention on pushing for legislation that will in all likelihood produce no tangible outcomes, such networks could shift this energy to the process of researching micro-movements and connecting them to macro-movements.

There has been no shortage of urban social movements in the past decade. From the Occupy movement, to the Arab Spring, to student protests in Turkey, there is a certain restlessness in our cities. In order to make substantive change, these local and national movements must unite under a transnational urban Right to the City network.

Change must come from the grassroots, but it must also be united. Individual, local movements are a start, but they can only create temporary and confined change without a

framework to augment and connect them. The urban revolution cannot be achieved if local movements are unaware of each other and do not unite.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis argues for a multi-scalar, collective action oriented approach to the Right to the City. A Right to the City network must be at once both locally-rooted and internationally-facing in order to maintain and spread small-scale momentum. This interpretation realigns international Right to the City discourse with a Lefebvrian interpretation of the concept.

A return to a Lefebvrian approach to the Right to the City would shift away from legislation and toward mobilization. As the experiences of Montreal, Brazil, and Mexico City have shown, legal Right to the City methods are ineffectual. Change must come from the grassroots.

Future Research

However, while research indicates that a successful Right to the City movement might take shape similar to the transnational structure of MST or La Vía Campesina, it is still unclear if and how such an organization might arise. Multiple organizations are poised to ignite the creation of such a transnational organization, but whether or not they will shift priorities to do so remains a question.

Additional research is needed on both scattered Right to the City movements as well as how such movements might join together under the banner of a united network. Such studies can help inform and guide the creation of a Right to the City transnational network that empowers and connects small-scale movements for greater global urban change.

In the context of Mexico City, more research is needed on how *Charter for the Right to the City* has influenced decision-making and programming at the urban level. This research could

also examine how local Right to the City movements and actor in Mexico City are interacting (or not) with the *Charter*.

The Role of the Planner

In this context, what are the lessons that planners can learn? If change must come from an urban rebolution, how does the institutionalized planner fit in to the equation? While some may argue that planners simply perpetuate systems of inequality, others, such as James Holston, argue that insurgent citizenship and changing instutitnos from the inside is an important force. This research teaches us the increasingly important role of social movements and the creation of collective alternatives to entrenched systems of inequitable capitalism.

Planners can contribute their knowledge and skills to creating alternative futures either through their work in public and private spheres by engaging with and encouraging alternative economic and social systems. Contracting with cooperatives, providing resources to community groups, and identifying organizations who are furthering the Right to the City in everyday communities are just a few of the ways that planners can help create an alternative & collective urban future.

Beyond the Thesis: Informational Memo

In addition to the academic thesis, I have also prepared a Spanish language report for the community of Frente de Renovación Fase 2. This report, attached in Appendix A, outlines my findings from the community survey and interviews. It is my hope that the informational memo serves to spark conversation within the community on needs and opportunities for improvement. When faced with a list of community concerns, members may step up to take on projects for

community improvement. Leadership in particular, was interested in the list of neighborhood concerns so that programs could be improved and introduced.

The informational memo can also be used by organizations such as Habitat International Coalition (HIC) and local communities to inform their approach to upgrading programs. While Frente de Renovación Fase 2 has not been successful in maintaining their momentum and collective energy, they were able to achieve significant gains in both the upgrading of their settlement as well as early social safety net support programs. Frente de Renovación's methods can help nearby communities shape their strategies for achieving independent and supportive urban *oeuvres*.

Looking Forward: Frente de Renovación Fase 2 & Mexico City

Frente de Renovación Fase 2 is a community with a successful collective past heading into an individually-centered future. As outlined above, there are many indications of community disintegration: dissatisfaction with leadership, lack of community events, termination of social programs, and a general turning inwards. Without the shared vision that spurred Frente de Renovación Fase 2's initial momentum, the community has become simultaneously apathetic and angry.

While many residents are disappointed with the disintegration of the community and social programs of the early stages, they are satisfied with the result of the initial stages of the movement. Residents now have safe homes and businesses built in a way that was responsive to community needs and demands. In this sense, the community has achieved its initial goals. They came together to achieve their goal and proved that together, they were stronger than acting individually.

The future of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 is unsure. Will the community receive title? If so, will families sell their now valuable properties or will they stay rooted? Will the sense of collective action return to the community, or will now middle-class families continue their inward-looking trajectory? Will the social safety net and community celebrations be revived by a new generation of residents? While the answers to these questions are unknown, Frente de Renovación has proven its ability to accomplish great things in the past.

General unrest in Mexico City, due to recent revelations of government corruption, gang-related violence, and state-sponsored murder, has grown. The generally apathetic middle class has begun to participate more in protests and speak out against broken systems at local and national levels. Now would be the ideal time for the birth of a Right to the City movement which unites the demands of multiple urban constituencies fighting for women's rights, housing rights, environmental rights, LGBTQ rights, participation rights, and more under one banner. As the case of Frente de Renovación has shown us, the creation of an alternative urban *oeuvre* is not only possible, but within the grasp of communities united to achieve the Right to the City.

WORKS CONSULTED

ACUERDO de la Junta de Gobierno por el que se modifican las Reglas de Operación del

Programa de Esquemas de Financiamiento y Subsidio Federal para Vivienda Esta es tu

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APPENDIX A: INFORMATIONAL MEMO

Summary

In the Eastern Iztapalapa delegation of Mexico City, a small community has achieved something rather miraculous: over the last 20 years, the members of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 have built a new community, both physical and social. As they set out, the goal was not just to build new homes and businesses, but also, as one community member remarked, to “construct a responsible citizenry.” The project was entirely driven, managed, and funded by residents.

Residents and leaders of Frente de Renovación successfully organized themselves to plan, finance, and construct their homes while advocating for their community in demonstrations. While today many families have stopped participating in community projects and social events, the original goals of producing better, more stable housing and community support have been largely achieved.

This memo is based on surveys and interviews conducted by a graduate student of city planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in January 2015. The survey included 32 families (20 houses and 12 apartments) of 114 eligible families (original members of the community and houses that were occupied).

Community History

- *1991*: First displacement
- *1994*: Second displacement
- *1995*: Community granted permission to build on current site
- *1996*: Community begins construction
- *TODAY*: Most houses and apartments are completed, a parking lot was recently finished, and a cistern project is in the financing process

Demographics

Based on the indicators explored in the survey, the residents of Frente de Renovación Fase 2 now have a better life than before they moved to the community. Income levels, housing density, perceptions of neighborhood safety, and homeownership indicators have all improved.

Today, an average of 4.4 residents live in the houses and apartments in Frente de Renovación Fase 2. Incomes in the community have either stabilized or risen since the 1990s. Half of the community’s residents identify as merchants, and many children of the first generation have gone on to college and post-graduate studies. Residents commute an average of 43 minutes per day to work, each way. Today, 72% of residents believe that their neighborhood is “safe” or “very safe.”

75% of residents joined the movement to gain their own home. 44% of residents lived with family before moving to the community. Another 31% owned their own home before moving, and 25% rented their home. The households where residents lived before moving to Frente de Renovación Fase 2 were approximately 60% larger than they are today. Before moving to Frente de Renovación Fase 2, residents commuted an average of 54 minutes per day to work, each way. Before moving to the community, 53% of residents believed that their neighborhood was “safe” or “very safe.”

Planning, Finance, and Construction

The community of Frente de Renovación acted autonomously to plan, finance, and construct their homes. While many of the residents would have qualified for state support, they were adamant about their goals to build a community that would be controlled by residents.

In the 1990s, residents met weekly to discuss the physical and social planning of the community. They elected leaders and made decisions democratically during these meetings. In addition, the community hired an architect and an engineer to help with the technical aspects of planning and housing design.

Finance was another important democratic tool of the community. Each family was required to save money by depositing it into a group account. This money was then used to buy construction materials for the houses. Today, the community still saves money for common construction projects including a parking lot and a water cistern. This saving mechanism allowed families to slowly build up the money necessary to build their home. In addition, it allowed the community to buy materials in bulk. Without having to rely on loans, the community also saved a significant amount of money in interest payments.

Finally, construction was also very participatory. Residents were all required to participate in weekly construction events, *fainas*. During these events, community members worked on their homes and on group amenities such as walkways and the community center.

The community's success was due to a democratic approach not only to decision-making, construction, finance, and social action. Each family was deeply involved in all aspects of community development.

Community Recommendations

Today, the community of Frente de Renovación enjoys the benefits of their hard work, but lacks a shared vision and motivation to continue the struggle. Originally, the community was united to create a strong community with individual homes for families. Now that they have achieved this goal, there is not the same motivation to work together for community change. Today, there is a significant lack of participation in community workdays, social events, and interactions with neighbors.

Identifying a common goal for the community, such as improving education for children, making the neighborhood safer, and providing training and resources for small businesses could re-unite the neighbors. This goal would have to be one all, or most, of the neighbors share. Strong leaders would need to step up to help guide and motivate community members.

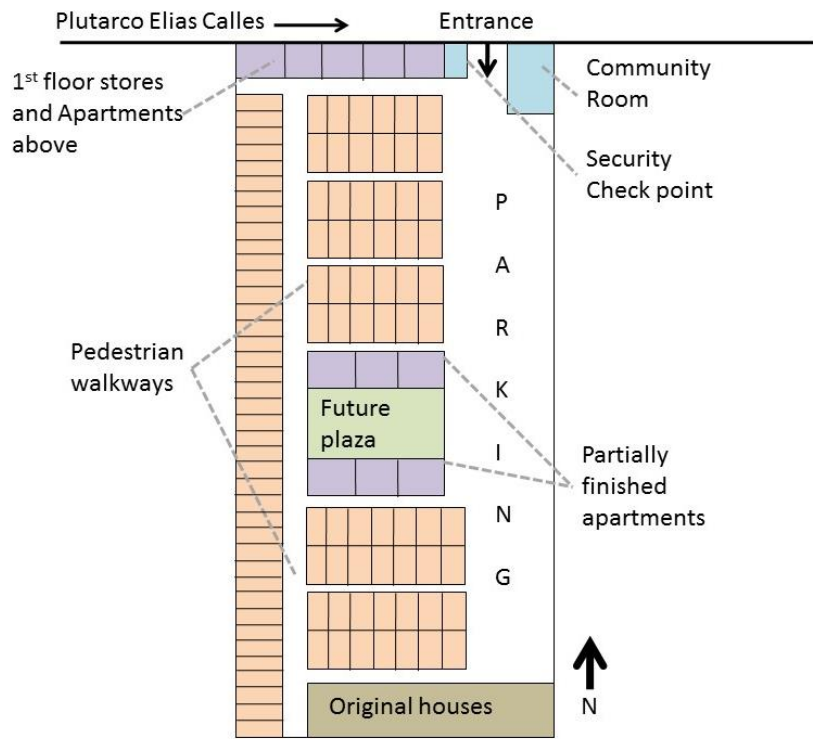
In addition, many community members noted that they would like to see more social events in the neighborhood. Bringing back the Posadas, Children's Day, and other events might create more community cohesion. These events could also be tied to community workdays, as they have in the past.

Prepared by: Claire Evans, clairemevans@gmail.com

Pictures & Diagrams



Frente de Renovación, highlighted



Community Layout



Frente de Renovación Community Center



Typical house in the development

APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Survey Instrument

Family Number:_____ Date interviewed:_____ Explanation of Survey:_____

Apt / House House # levels:_____ Moved in:_____

Before upgrading

1. Where did you live?
 - a. Did you own or rent?
2. How many people lived in your home?
 - a. Adults:
 - b. Children:
3. Occupation of adults & Household Income
 - a. Occupation:
 - b. Commute time:
 - c. Income
 - i. Less than \$3,000
 - ii. \$3,000-\$4500
 - iii. \$4500-\$7,500
 - iv. \$7,500-\$15,000
 - v. More than \$15,000
4. Size of home
 - a. Was your previous home bigger or smaller than your current home?
 - b. How many bedrooms did your previous home have?
 - c. Did you have your own bathroom?
 - d. What was the principal material of the home?
 - i. Wood
 - ii. Cinder block
 - iii. Metal siding
 - iv. Other:
5. What infrastructure services (water, electricity, sewer, phone etc) did you have?
 - a. How much did you pay for them per month?
6. How safe was it where you lived previously?
 - i. 1- Poor: Frequent violence, robberies; always felt unsafe in home and neighborhood
 - ii. 2- Low

- iii. 3- Average: Little violence, robberies; usually felt fairly safe in home and neighborhood
 - iv. 4- Good
 - v. 5- Exceptional: No violence, felt secure in home and neighborhood
 - vi. Other:
- 7. How often did you interact with your neighbors?
 - a. Never
 - b. Monthly, formally during meetings
 - c. Weekly
 - d. Daily
 - e. Other:
- 8. What was your overall Satisfaction with where you lived?
 - i. 1- Completely dissatisfied
 - ii. 2- Somewhat dissatisfied
 - iii. 3- Average
 - iv. 4- Satisfied
 - v. 5- Very satisfied
 - vi. Other:

After upgrading

- 1. How many people live in your home?
 - a. Adults:
 - b. Children:
- 2. Occupations of adults & Household Income
 - a. Occupations:
 - b. Commute time:
 - c. Income
 - i. Less than\$3,000
 - ii. \$3,000-\$4500
 - iii. \$4500-\$7,500
 - iv. \$7,500-\$15,000
 - v. More than \$15,000
- 3. What infrastructure services do you have (water, electricity, phone, etc)?
 - a. How much do you pay for them per month?
- 4. Do you feel safe in the community?
 - i. 1- Poor: Frequent violence, robberies; always feel unsafe in home and neighborhood
 - ii. 2- Low

- iii. 3- Average: Little violence, robberies; usually feel fairly safe in home and neighborhood
- iv. 4- Good
- v. 5- Exceptional: No violence, feel secure in home and neighborhood
- vi. Other:

5. How often do you interact with your neighbors?

- a. Never
- b. Monthly, formally during meetings
- c. Weekly
- d. Daily
- e. Other:

6. Did you spend more on the physical construction of your house now or where you previously lived?

- a. More
- b. Less
- c. About the Same
- d. Other:

7. What do you like about your house?

- a. What would you like to change?

8. Satisfaction

- i. 1- Completely dissatisfied
- ii. 2- Somewhat dissatisfied
- iii. 3- Average
- iv. 4- Satisfied
- v. 5- Very satisfied
- vi. Other:

Participation in program

1. What were your family's motivations for joining the upgrading group?
2. How did you join the upgrading group?
3. To what extent did you participate in decision-making?
 - a. Were decisions made fairly?
 - b. Did you feel your voice was heard?
4. How was the leadership selected?
5. Why do you think the project was successful or unsuccessful?
6. Is there a strong sense of community here?
 - a. Do you and your family participate? Why/why not?

Is there anything else you would like to say or talk about?

Do you have any questions for me about the study?

Meta Data Key

General

code

Randomly assigned code to anonymize data

apt_house

H: house

A: apt

floors

1: 1 floor

2: 2 floors

3: 3 floors

date

day of the month in January 25 that family was surveyed

year_moved

what year did the family move to the community

B: Before the project

b_prev_loc

Previous house location

b_rent_own

R: rent

O: own

F: family

b_adult

of adults in previous household

b_child

of children in previous household

b_occ

Occupations of adults in family

b_commute

Average commute time (minutes, 1 way) of adults in family

b_income

combined monthly income of all adults in household

a: less than \$3,000 pesos/month

b: \$3,001-4,500 pesos/month

c: \$4,501-7,500 pesos/month

d: \$7,501-15,000 pesos/month

e: \$15,000+ pesos/month

b_size

smaller: previous house smaller than current

larger: previous house larger than current

b_bed

number of bedrooms in previous home

b_broom

did family have their own bathroom?

yes: own bathroom

no: shared bathroom

b_material

W: Wood

CB: Cinderblock

S: Metal or wood sheets

B: Brick

O: Other

b_serv

What services did the family have?

A: all (water, sewer, electricity, telephone)

NW: without water, sewage

NE: without electricity

NT: without telephone

N2: without more than one service

b_pay_serv

Average monthly cost of services (today's pesos)

b_secur

Level of security in the previous neighborhood

vlow: very low

low: low

med: medium

good: good

vgood: very good

b_neigh

How often did the family interact with neighbors?

N: never

M: monthly

W: weekly

D: daily

b_satis

Satisfaction level in the old home

vunsatis: very unsatisfied

unsatis: unsatisfied

med: medium

satis: satisfied

vunsatis: very satisfied

A: Today

a_adult

of adults in previous household

a_child

of children in previous household

a_occ

Occupations of adults in family

a_commute

Average commute time (minutes, 1 way) of adults in family

a_income

combined monthly income of all adults in household

a: less than \$3,000 pesos/month

b: \$3,001-4,500 pesos/month

c: \$4,501-7,500 pesos/month

d: \$7,501-15,000 pesos/month

e: \$15,000+ pesos/month

a_serv

What services does the family have?

A: all (water, sewer, electricity, telephone)

NW: without water, sewage

NE: without electricity

NT: without telephone

N2: without more than one service

a_pay_serv

Average monthly cost of services (today's pesos)

a_secur

Level of security in the current neighborhood

vlow: very low

low: low

med: medium

good: good

vgood: very good

a_neigh

How often does the family interact with neighbors?

N: never

M: monthly

W: weekly

D: daily

a_const

Does the family pay more or less on the construction of the current house than the previous house?

less: family pays less now

more: family pays more now

same: pays the same

a_like

what does the family like about the house/community?

a_dislike

what does the family dislike about the house/community?

a_satis

Current level of satisfaction

vunsatis: very unsatisfied

unsatis: unsatisfied

med: medium

satis: satisfied

vsatis: very satisfied

P: Participation in project

p_motives

What were the family's motives for joining the project?

home: to have their own home

patri: something to pass on to children

p_how_join

How did the family join the project?

friend: joined through a friend

family: joined through a family member

other

p_how_partic

all: family participated in all decision making

none: family participated in no decision making

p_eq_decis

Were the decisions about the community made fairly?

yes

no

sometimes

p_voice_heard

Was the voice of the family heard?

yes

no

p_leadership

How was leadership selected?

vote: democratically-elected

no vote: not democratically-elected

p_success

What was successful about the project?

p_no_success

What was unsuccessful about the project?

p_community

Is there a strong sense of community?

before: before there was, now no

yes

no

p_com_partic

Do you participate in the community?

yes

no

p_com_par_why

Why do/why don't you participate?

Code	apt_house	floors	date	year_moved	b_previous_lc	b_rent_own	b_adult	b_child
zc	H	3	13	1995	campamento	O	2	5
cs	H	3	12	1999	house	F	12	0
sj	H	2	14	2000	house	F	7	1
ay	H	3	13	2001	house	O	7	0
kn	H	3	14	1994	here	R	2	1
fo	H	2	12	2000	apt	R	2	1
eu	H	3	16	2002	house	F	8	5
gg	H	2	13	2004	campamento	O	2	1
ey	H	3	16	2005	campamento	F	2	4
fp	H	3	12	2004	house	F	3	4
fj	H	3	14	2000	house	R	3	2
ef	H	3	12	2000	house	F	4	3
yt	H	3	13	1993	campamento	O	2	1
px	H	3	19	2005	house	O	3	1
iv	H	3	20	1999	campamento	O	2	2
yf	H	3	12	2004	house	F	4	4
dt	H	3	20	2003	apt	R	4	1
wm	H	2	13	1995	house	F	11	5
fs	H	3	13	2002	campamento	O	3	1
tu	H	3	14	1999	house	O	4	3
ng	A	N/A	19	2005	campamento	O	2	2
bh	A	N/A	19	2007	house	F	4	3
tn	A	N/A	20	2010	apt	R	2	2
bx	A	N/A	13	2006	house	R	2	1
jr	A	N/A	14	2010	campamento	R	2	3
fl	A	N/A	16	2009	apt	R	2	2
xm	A	N/A	16	2005	campamento	F	2	3
vs	A	N/A	14	2010	house	F	9	6
hr	A	N/A	19	2000	house	F	2	0
aj	A	N/A	20	1994	house	F	2	2
op	A	N/A	12	2003	apt	O	2	4
uu	A	N/A	13	2003	house	F	5	0

b_tot	b_occ	b_occupation_merc	b_commute	b_income	b_size
7	taxista	0	0	A	larger
12	merchant	1	30	D	smaller
8	merchant	1	40	B	larger
7	chauffer, administrator	0	120	C	larger
3	merchant	1	90	C	smaller
3	construction	0		D	
13	merchant	1	90		smaller
3	construction	0	60	A	smaller
6	merchant	1	90	A	larger
7	house cleaner	0	120	C	larger
5	merchant, administratc	1	120	E	smaller
7	secretary, administrato	0	60	A	larger
3	merchant, teacher	1	0	B	smaller
4	nurse	0	20	C	smaller
4	merchant, construction	1	45	A	smaller
8	merchant, doctor	1	120	D	larger
5	merchant	1	30	C	smaller
16	house cleaner	0	30	A	smaller
4	administrator, mainten.	0	60	C	smaller
7	self-employed	0	60	A	larger
4	employed abroad	0		D	smaller
7	mechanic	0	90	C	larger
4	merchant	1	90	B	larger
3	self-employed	0	30	B	smaller
5	merchant	1	10	B	smaller
4	engineer, nurse	0	30	C	smaller
5	construction	0	30	A	smaller
15	merchant	1	15		larger
2	nurse	0	60	D	larger
4	mechanic, secretary	0	15	C	same
6	administrator	0	60	D	smaller
5	merchant, administratc	1	10	D	larger

b_bed	b_broom	b_material	b_serv	b_pay_serv	b_secur	b_neigh	b_satis	a_adult
4 yes	CB	A		0 med	D		satis	2
8 yes	CB	A		500 low	N		vunsatis	2
4 yes	B	A		500 good	D		satis	2
3 yes	S	A		1200 vgood	D		satis	3
1 yes	CB	A		500 low	N		unsatis	1
yes	B	A		med	D		med	2
1 no	CB	A		0 good	N		med	4
0 no	S	A		0 vlow	D		med	4
4 yes	CB	A		100 good	D		satis	4
4 yes	CB	A		600 med	W		unsatis	1
2 yes	S	A		250 low	N		unsatis	1
4 yes	B	A		350 good	N		satis	4
2 yes	CB	A		300 good	N		unsatis	3
2 yes	W	A		300 good	N		satis	4
0 yes	S	A		0 vlow	D		unsatis	4
5 yes	S	A		2500 vlow	M		vunsatis	3
2 yes	CB	A		700 good	M		satis	2
1 no	S	A		3000 med	N		unsatis	1
2 yes	CB	A		0 med	D		satis	3
3 yes	S	A		60 good	D		vsatis	4
2 no	W	A		0 low	D		unsatis	4
4 yes	B	A		500 vgood	N		satis	2
2 yes	CB	A		1500 good	N		satis	2
1 yes	CB	A		300 good	N		unsatis	2
0 yes	CB	A		good	N		med	3
2 yes	CB	A		200 low	N		satis	5
0 no	S	A		0 low	N		unsatis	1
0 yes	B	A		200 good	N		med	2
3 yes	B	A		450 vgood	D		vsatis	2
1 yes	CB	A		50 vgood	D		vsatis	6
2 yes	CB	A		0 med	D		satis	6
5 yes	B	A		1000 vgood	N		satis	2

a_child	a_tot	a_occ	a_occ_merch	a_commute	a_income
3	5	construction, com leader	0	120	C
3	5	merchant	1	15	D
2	4	clerk	0	40	B
0	3	chauffer	0	60	C
1	2	secretaria	0	60	C
2	4	security salesman	0	30	D
4	8	merchant	1	90	
3	7	construction	0	60	B
0	4	merchant	1	120	B
2	3	merchant	1	0	B
0	1	chauffer	0	30	C
0	4	administrator	0	60	B
3	6	merchant	1	0	C
2	6	nurse, engineer	0	90	E
1	5	merchant	1	15	B
0	3	doctor, psychologist	0	75	E
1	3	merchant	1	20	C
0	1	merchant	1		B
1	4	administrator, maintenance	0	60	C
0	4	construction	0	60	A
1	5	merchant	1	5	E
0	2	construction	0	60	C
2	4	merchant	1	15	B
3	5	self-emploed	0	30	C
2	5	construction	0	5	B
1	6	merchant, construction	1	75	D
3	4	taxi driver	0	0	A
1	3	merchant	1	15	
0	2	merchant, nurse	1	10	E
1	7	merchant, mechanic	1	5	C
0	6	administrator, merchant	1	90	E
2	4	merchant, education	1	10	D

a_pay_serv	a_secur	a_neigh	a_like	a_dislike
350	vgood	D	compact house	add to kitchen
700	good	D	own home	nothing
700	low	D	everything	nothing
1600	vgood	D	all, space	not enough participation
800	vgood	D	larger, services	not enough participation
3000	good	D	peaceful inside	poor gov administration
400	vgood	N	everything	water
	good	D	tranquilidad	nothing
200	vgood	W	everything, tranquilidad	walkways between houses
920	vgood	D	everything	not enough participation
1000	med	N	everything	nothing
500	low	N	own home	titles
1500	good	D	everything	too cold
650	good	S	everything	wish house was larger
600	good	S	everything	more green space
1500	vlow	D	tranquilidad, own home	the area/safety
1500	vgood	D	tranquilidad	to finish houses, dogs
800	vgood	D	own home	nothing
450	vgood	N	size, community	too much violence
500	vgood	D	everything	nothing
100	good	N	privacy, more space	administration
200	low	W	own home	not enough participation
1500	med	N	location	services
400	good	only eve	everything	stairs in apt building not finished
2500	vgood	N	own home	nothing
600	vgood	W	own home, lots of space	nothing
3000	good	N	location	neighbors
0	good	N	tranquilidad	not enough participation
500	med	N	everything	larger home, not enough participation
0	vlow	D	own home	wants to leave
1500	low	M	size, location	security, communication, garden
600	good	N	everything	wish for no dogs, cleaner

a_satis	p_motives	p_motive_h	p_how_join	p_how_partic	p_eq_decis	p_decisions
satis	home, patri	1	family	all	yes	1
satis	home	1	family	all	no	0
satis	home	1	family	all	yes	1
satis	home	1	family	some	yes	1
vsatis	home	1	family	all	yes	1
med	home	1	family	all	yes	1
satis	home	1	family	all	yes	1
satis	patrimony	0	friend	all	yes	1
satis	home	1	family	none	no	0
vsatis	home	1	family	all	yes	1
med	home	1	family	all	yes	1
satis	patrimony	0	friend	all	yes	1
vsatis	home	1	founder	some	yes	1
vsatis	home	1	family	all	yes	1
satis	better life	0	friend	some	sometimes	0
med	home	1	family	all	yes	1
satis	home	1	friend	all	sometimes	0
med	home	1	family	some	yes	1
med	home	1	family	all	yes	1
satis	home	1	friend	all	yes	1
satis	home	1	friends	all	sometimes	0
med	home	1	friends	all	yes	1
med	home	1	advertisemen	all	no	0
satis	home	1	friend	all	yes	1
satis	better life	0	family	none	no	0
satis	home	1	family	all	sometimes	0
satis	home	1	family	none	yes	1
satis	home	1	friend	none	sometimes	0
satis	location	0	friend	none	no	0
satis	home	1	family	all	sometimes	0
satis	political	0	family	none	no	0
satis	better life	0	friend	all	yes	1

p_voice_hear	p_voice	p_leadership	p_democratic
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 no vote		0
no	0 vote		1
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
sometimes	0 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 no vote		0
yes	1 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
no	0 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
no	0 vote		1
yes	1 vote		1
no	0 no vote		0
sometimes	0 no vote		0
no	0 vote		1
no	0 vote		1

[p_success](#)

participation, own homes

houses

houses

houses

everything

organization to build homes

houses

houses

houses

everything

nothing

everything

community help, social events

security, convenience, houses

houses

united

houses

community was strong before

everything

houses

united

united

houses

better homes

houses

houses

tranquility

location

houses

houses & obtaining the land

houses

p_no_success

people who don't participate
 no title, wants leaders to leave
 small houses
 people haven't finished home
 people who don't participate
 titles
 nothing
 people who don't participate
 can't park large cars
 people who don't participate
 titles
 leadership and participation, no way to elect new leaders
 people who don't participate
 people who don't participate
 administration is not democratic
 people who don't participate
 drugs outside of community
 problems with decision making
 pressure and abuse from leaders
 small houses
 services
 some people have had to move away
 majority rule
 not finished yet
 not in agreement with decisions, no equity
 not finished yet
 titles
 services
 leaders weren't willing to help disabled people
 titles
 houses small; no title
 not finished, don't have titles, can't leverage home for lo

p_leadership_issu p_community

0 before
 1 sometimes
 0 yes
 0 yes
 0 yes
 0 sometimes
 0 yes
 0 yes
 0 no
 0 yes
 0 yes
 1 no
 0 yes
 0 before
 1 yes
 0 no
 0 sometimes
 1 yes
 1 before
 0 yes
 0 yes
 0 yes
 1 yes
 0 yes
 1 yes
 0 before
 0 yes
 0 yes
 1 yes
 0 sometimes
 0 before
 0 no

[p_com_partic](#) [p_com_par_why](#)

yes	help with faenas, posadas, social events, to improve community
yes	in what they can
yes	feels good to participate
yes	maintain union/cleanliness, change our own future, healthy life
yes	everyone participates
yes	try to organize with neighbors, respect everyone's rights
yes	to have good connections
yes	
yes	only the mother
yes	system o fhel
no	no time
yes	meetings
yes	talk with neighbors
no	no time
yes	"union makes us stronger"
yes	in what there is
yes	"we are very un-united"
yes	in what there is
yes	only the children, bad communication
yes	to make the community better
yes	very busy
yes	we need to take care of one another
yes	don't know when meetings are
yes	"we are a big family and we must support each other"
no	no community events
yes	to communicate and know what is happening
yes	to be social with neighbors
yes	good of the community
no	leadership economic abuse
yes	we have to participate
yes	very little
no	