

CONCLUSION

In this study I traced the re-emergence of neighborhood associativism in Recife after 1964 and the forms it assumed in the course of time. Neighborhood associativism has been used as a broad term for the variety of territorially-based associative practices related to "urban contradictions." It is shaped "in and by" diverse discursive and organizational matrixes and involves a variety of actors. Forms of neighborhood associativism should be understood as social constructs in constant transformation and re-elaboration. The differential impact of the various actors involved, including the "adversary," should always be taken into account.

The notion of "urban social movements" was bracketed to highlight its role as a discursive matrix in the construction and signification of the forms of neighborhood associativism that emerged in the 1970s. The notion, one might say, emerged at the time as the symbol of an alliance, a common ground for various groups in search of political as well as professional alternatives. This involved local leaders, pastoral agents and sympathising "technicians" in a process of "community formation" which contributed to the signification, the shaping and the impact of the "new urban social movements."

The role of "external agents" in this context has been linked to the broader process of the emergence of the "new middle classes" and the rapid expansion of technical/scientific and bureaucratic professions. Usually this development is viewed as being parallel and separate from the emergence of the neighborhood associativism of the popular classes. Nevertheless the pervasive, active presence of the often somewhat obscure "external agent" suggests that the "interface" between the two processes and the ensuing dynamics in the context of political developments in Brazil does play an important role. The interaction with processes of professional redefinition, as in the case of the clergy, or the emergence of new professions, as in the case of the social science sector, provides a key to understanding the emergence and trajectory of the "new urban social movements" in Brazil.

Reviewing the discussion of "urban social movements" in Brazil, I traced the emergence of a "paradigm of the 1970s" and its subsequent fracturing as a result

of the confrontation with an evolving "reality" and a theoretical shift from a reified dualism to a processual approach. The evolving "reality" drew attention to the increasingly important processes of actual interaction between neighborhood associations and state agencies, first in relation to the "communitarian" and neo-populist policies of the authoritarian government in its aftermath, and then in relation to the practical issue of substantiating democracy, exploring its margins of variation and searching for modes of their enlargement (Barros, 1986:58). The concomitant shift in focus to the "institutional dimension" implies a departure from the usual theorizations which, for a variety of reasons¹, view "movement" and "institutional system" as each other's negation. The imagery of social transformation as a totalizing event taking place outside institutional arenas, which had been a cornerstone of the "paradigm of the 1970s," lost its credibility in theoretical as well as practical terms. It was in this context that the reified opposition between "social movement" and institutional system was redefined in terms of a relation between two poles. This opened the way for thinking about the democratization of this relation and required a far more differentiated analysis of "the state" itself. The development of the complex relation between the contemporary Brazilian local state, democratization and neighborhood associativism and the concomitant transformations of the "poles" involved, was examined in this study, taking the municipal level as a vantage point. Including the pre-1964 developments, this relation has been analyzed throughout four periods.

The spread of neighborhood associativism during the 1955-1964 period was linked to the emergence of the *Frente do Recife*. Neighborhood associativism was promoted by the post-1955 *Frente* administrations. The aim was to support the municipal executive in the face of the right-wing dominated legislature. The organizational matrix derived from this aim, and I noted how a master organization -the FABEP- was created in 1962 through articulations of *Frente*-related organizations such as the trade unions in response to the activities of the right-wing state government, which sought to extend its influence by promoting neighborhood associations partly financed through the Alliance for Progress. The FABEP-related associations were thus strongly embedded in the *Frente* organizational framework and, in addition to defending neighborhood interests, they were aimed at the divulgation of the radical *Frente* version of national developmentalism. The radical content of the *Frente* discourse and its modes of organization and mobilization distinguished it from mainstream populism. In the specific case of neighborhood associativism, the absence of spontaneity did not have its counterpart in a lack of authenticity, as C ezar (1985:179) put it. In this Recife associations contrasted with

¹ These range from the old opposition between "formal" and "real" democracy, reifying oppositions between State and Civil society (Touraine, 1973, 1978; Castells, 1983; cf. Cohen, 1982) and alienation theories in their secular (Evers, 1985) and Liberation Theologist's versions to the post-industrialist emphasis in post-materialism and post-politicism (Melucci, 1980; 1985; Touraine, 1973, 1978).

their counterpart in São Paulo, the *Sociedades de Amigos de Bairro* which were initially related to right-wing populism and, after 1964, tended to be coopted into clientelist schemes. The populist and clientelist features of the Paulista SABs turned them into a negative reference for the "new urban social movements" that emerged from the Ecclesial Base Communities by the mid-1970s. The relation between *Frente* administrations and neighborhood associations in Recife, by contrast, could later serve as a positive reference in the attempts at municipal democratization after 1985, which went under the slogan *É Povo de Novo*.

The installation of a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime in 1964 heralded a restructuring of the Brazilian economy. Urban policies came to play a central role in this process. After the 1964 *coup*, urban policies initially focussed on the housing question in an effort to gain legitimacy for the new regime. It was not long, however, before the efforts were geared to boosting the construction industry through the BNH financing schemes. Meanwhile the BNH dissociated itself from the low-income sectors. This development was accompanied by the ascent of a highly hierarchic planning bureaucracy at the federal, state and municipal level, with the metropolitan agencies somewhat suspended between the nominally autonomous state and municipal levels. Analysis of urban development in Recife demonstrated how the policies implemented through these agencies contributed to the spatial division of the city and the deepening of the "urban contradictions" thematized in neighborhood associativism in the city, namely the issues of urban land use and urbanization.

Neighborhood associativism in the municipality started to be rearticulated in the wake of the 1965 and 1966 floods, which were the occasion for launching initially assistentialist emergency programs. Subsequently the focus of *Operação Esperança* shifted to promoting dweller's councils in a restricted number of neighborhoods. This shift linked up with the pre-1964 discourse of developmentalism, human promotion and the "transformation of the mass into people," though it maintained a low profile by relating this developmentalism to self-help by the local community. Nevertheless, activities of this kind were deemed subversive, particularly as authoritarianism hardened and the relations between Church and state deteriorated. The local variety of the Ecclesial Base Communities was initially also framed by this inward-turned developmentalism.

By the mid-1970s, involvement in neighborhood associativism began to be signified in terms of "urban social movements." Rather than aiming at the multifaceted and somewhat vague "integral development" of the human being within the community, strategic aims related to "social transformation," such as the issue of urban landholding, began to inform the practice of the promoters of neighborhood associativism. This did not take place without any friction, as the conflicts accompanying the attempt at reorientation of *Operação Esperança* reveal. Nevertheless, the new signification of neighborhood associativism played an important role

orienting and motivating the people involved in promoting neighborhood associativism, notably the NGOs, as well as the local leaders and *animadores* they were most directly involved with.

The mobilizations of the *Movimento Terras de Ninguém* and of Brasília Teimosa in the late 1970s can be regarded as the culmination of this formative phase of the "new urban social movements" in Recife. A comparison of these mobilizations and their modes of operation reveals some of the dynamics of this reorientation. The *Movimento Terras de Ninguém* was strongly linked to the Church, though it also relied on a group of older cadres, some of whom had already been involved in the struggles in Casa Amarela before 1964. Its discourse was strongly religious and its practice remained somewhat traditional where the role of oppositionist politicians as mediators was concerned. The dynamics of the Brasília Teimosa mobilization were different in that the role of the Church was not as prominent, though it was far from negligible, and the discourse was more secular. This mobilization relied on a group of younger leaders in alliance with committed technicians and the local parish, while politicians played only a marginal role. In Brasília Teimosa the reorientation was marked by the election of a new directory for the Dweller's Council in 1977. In Casa Amarela a new articulation eventually emerged alongside the *Movimento Terras de Ninguém*, namely the FEACA.

This group of new leaders emerged through pastoral activity networks and the secularizing *assessorias*, and eventually became the spokespersons of the "authentic neighborhood movement." The cadres for supra-local articulations, such as the *Assembléia de Bairros/FEMEB*, came from their ranks. The dynamics of this process was gradually to set them apart from the rank and file. Discussions about the broader aims of neighborhood associativism and its "social movement" dimension with political implications tended to remain restricted to the leadership level and the circuits leaders were involved in.

The period from 1979 to 1985 was marked by the "politics of *abertura*," and the secularization or "emancipation of the social movements from the pastoral." The "politics of *abertura*" included a shift in policy style and a reorientation of urban policies, both aimed at boosting the declining legitimacy of the departing authoritarian government to influence the increasingly significant electoral process and facilitate the transaction with "reliable" interlocutors without too much outside interference. In the reorientation in urban policies, the policy of removing *favelas* made way for upgrading policies, complemented with a concern for "the social" at a moment when the resources for urban policies were diminishing due to the deepening recession of the post-miracle years.

In a number of *favelas* in Recife, upgrading programs were started. However, the new policy orientation was not accompanied by a clear deconcentration of investments. Rather than shifting investment to the areas of greatest need,

areas on the fringe of the historically privileged parts of the municipality were included. This choice of focus, was immediately criticized by the *Comissão Justiça e Paz* which suspected ulterior motives behind the *Projeto Recife* when it was launched in 1979. The *Comissão* increasingly focussed its activities on conflicts over land and the struggle against speculation and *expulsão branca*, all viewed as consequences of capitalist selfishness, which was syncretized with theorizations of "urban social movements."

The "politics of *abertura*" went together with a policy style the neo-populism of the Krause administration in Recife, with its "capilarization of democracy," was a relatively radical exponent of. It consisted of promoting "communitarian action" and involved the "appropriation" of elements of the communitarian action methods employed by the Church, and their articulation into a new discursive and organizational matrix. The communitarian self-help method of the *mutirão* was actively propagated by state agencies as a form of "participation." The frame of reference for this communitarianism was "the nation" rather than "the poor" or the "popular classes." In the case of these associations some forms of participation were sponsored, mainly in the execution of works. The relationship to "authentic" associations was however one of unilateralism in that a response might come to their protests or demands, but would hardly ever be discussed with the demand-making association. Brasília Teimosa, was an exception in this respect, thanks to its relatively strong local organization and outside support. Later, top level technicians of the Krause administration claimed that the institutionalized negotiations that developed in Brasília Teimosa and some other areas (e.g. Coque, Coelhos) should be considered "pilot projects" representative of the new policy style (cf. Lostao, 1991:53). The more generalized tendency toward unilateralism, and the attempts at creating parallel organizations through clientelist mechanisms, contradict this claim. The "pilot projects" did not result from the benevolence of the administration, but from the pressure of the local population and the groups supporting it.

Meanwhile, the clientelist features of the new policy style and the concomitant politicization of the planning bureaucracies fueled the debate over the "cooptation of professional practice" and contributed to the demoralization of the planning agencies. This process was therefore not simply the result of an "external" impact, but also of "internal" developments involving the pursuit of alternative professional practices and social recognition at a time of political redefinition. If, by the late 1970s, the NGOs emerged as a locus for alternative professional practice in a "field of forces" constituted by the Church, the universities, the parties and the state, the poles constituting the "field" also should also be taken into account. This outlines the circuits and professional networks through which the "urban social movement" discourse propagated and signified neighborhood associativism as a vehicle of social change. The notion of "urban social movement" did not just stand for a phenomenon, but also for a commitment, and the activities of some of the

clergy or *assessores* were exemplary cases of alternative praxis. More broadly speaking, among social workers the notion of "social movement" played a role in the critique of assistentialism and the thinking about more emancipatory professional practices. Among urban planners, it played a similar role in the debates over "participative planning."

The post-1979 relatively responsive policy style and the dispute over the hegemonization of neighborhood associativism contributed to a rapid rise in the number of local organizations and a change in the mode of organization and operation of these organizations. The multistranded dynamics of this period resulted in a rise in the number of neighborhood associations, while neighborhood associativism "ceased to be a reserved terrain for the 'authentic' movement" (ETAPAS, 1989:60). These changes were related to the general climate of mobilization of civil society during the 1979-1985 period, including the shift to pluripartidarianism, and to the reorientation of the Church in the context of the "democratic transition" process and the broader reorientation resulting from the "retrenchment in Rome." The contradictory "emancipation of the social movements from the pastoral" and the climate of liberalization and mobilization contributed to the growth of more "formal," in contrast to "communitarian," forms of organization at the grassroots-level. More formal organization was not simply imposed by the state, as has sometimes been argued. It also provided the organizational framework for broadening the local population's involvement in neighborhood associations and it reflected a concern with representativeness on the part of local groups.

The range of political orientations may be said to have broadened in that, in contrast to the existing relatively politicized "authentic" neighborhood associativism, a professedly "anti-political" *pelego*-associativism was promoted by state agencies. Between these two poles, less outspoken associations emerged which, because of their "lack of consciousness" and their rather pragmatic non-political attitude to state agencies, were often regarded with suspicion by the more militant "authentic" leaders. In this respect, the development in Recife resembles that in São Paulo, noted by Ruth Cardoso (1988) in her description of the complex relation between "ideology" and "pragmatism" in dealing with state apparatuses or between manifestations of autonomy and "practical conquests" in neighborhood associativism at the grassroot level. Practical conquests often involve some form of negotiation with state apparatuses or politicians, which stand in a relation of tension to the affirmations of "autonomy." Though the rhetoric of "autonomy" suggested confrontation, local associations could hardly be that autonomous if they were to achieve anything. The virtual coinciding of "expressive" and "instrumental" action at the time when the authorities could only be pressured by way of public demonstrations, was replaced by an increasingly complicated process, related to the changing attitude to neighborhood associativism on the part of the state agencies. This process, which tended to undermine the confrontationist representations in

practice, was more clearly observed in São Paulo, where a PMDB mayor had been appointed by the newly elected PMDB state government in 1982, than in Recife which continued to be dominated by the PDS/PFL.

While the relationship between local associations and state apparatuses was undergoing a process of change, supra-local articulations of the "authentic" movement emerged in Recife with the aim of strengthening its position. The shift in policy orientation actually served as a catalyst for this development. The eventual selection of public transportation as the main theme for the mobilization and articulation of the "authentic" movement is a somewhat curious one, however. Rather than directly arising from "expressed needs" of grassroots organizations in Recife², it linked up with a nationwide Church-sponsored campaign stemming from the earlier *Movimento do Custo da Vida* (Doimo, 1989:9). Its mobilizational effectiveness partly derived from this continuing link to Church-related neighborhood associativism and from its coinciding with the *Diretas Já* campaign. This mobilizational capacity obscured the tenuousness of the relationship between local organizations and supra-local articulations, such as the *Assembléia de Bairros*. It showed a capacity to "get people out in the street" but it also obscured the fact that the action repertory of the local associations was broadening with the growing range of opportunities.

Beside the practically changing relationship between neighborhood associativism and state apparatuses, the revalorization of democracy and the practical issues arising in the process of democratic transition contributed to the crumbling of the "paradigm of the 1970s." It implied the pursuit of alternatives to the stark opposition between autonomy and clientelism, and to the unilateralism of the policies of the "bionic" administrations of the municipality of Recife. These features had turned the demand for "participation" into one of the "banners" of the "urban social movement." Participation and restructuring the relationship between civil society and the state at the municipal level became central issues in the 1985 electoral campaign in Recife.

By then, some scattered experiments in participation and municipal democratization had taken place elsewhere in Brazil, and after 1982 such experiments also started in larger municipalities which came to be administrated by oppositionists. The democratization policies of the PMDB administration in São Paulo remained segmented, implemented in their own ways by the various administrative sectors without any general guidelines (Cardoso, 1988:371). The effort in Recife after 1985 resulted from the peculiarly movementist character of the electoral campaign and tended to go a step further toward something like "popular

² Criticism of municipal policies on the regulation of urban land use or the Projeto Recife was articulated in a public debate where professional groups, e.g. architects and engineers, and the assessorias, including the Comissão Justiça e Paz, played the central role.

councils" at the level of political administrative regions and, eventually, at a municipal level. Besides this comprehensive attempt at democratization by creating popular council-like bodies, I have discussed the development of participatory policies on regularization and urbanization of *favelas* and the reorientation of the *Projeto Recife*.

Where the more comprehensive efforts and the issue of "popular councils" are concerned, we have seen how the discussion about the longstanding, but rather vague demand of "the movement" evolved during the electoral campaign and how "the movement" gradually lost the initiative in the discussion by failing to come up with operational proposals. Although "participation" had been a general slogan and ideas about "popular councils" had been ventured, practical forms had remained rather nebulous. The *Assembléia de Bairros* and its leaders were geared to getting people out into the street in support of slogans, a way of doing politics the leaders had derived their legitimacy from. It was in keeping with the circumstances as well as the imagery of "urban social movements" and the Church's views on "doing politics," i.e. a politics of denunciation rather than formulating specific solutions. These emphases tended to simplify complex issues and left people unprepared to cope with them. In the end, they reinforced the idea that practical politics should be left to politicians, which movements might appeal to or whom they might denounce. It presents a critique, but no alternative. Although "participation" and "popular councils" were demanded, the ideas about what this might mean in actual practice had remained nebulous. If they are not to be part of the administrative institutions, nor organs of parallel power or pretend to stand above the constituted powers, what should "popular councils" be (Gohn, 1991b:38)? Faced with such dilemmas, the movement spokespersons made increasingly maximalist demands regarding the competencies of a "popular council." Rather than setting in motion an expansive or cumulative dynamic, this resulted in a downward spiral, despite efforts of the *assessorias* to infuse the process with a different dynamic by organizing seminars aimed at breaking through the ingrained manichean representations by thematizing a triangular relationship between negotiation, cooptation and organized pressure (cf. ETAPAS, 1989:77). The spokespersons of "the movement" increasingly marginalized themselves due to their autonomist and anti-cooptationist discourse, which rejected any form of participation not fully under the control of "the movement." This orientation clashed with the new administration policy principle of respecting the pluriformity and heterogeneity of neighborhood associativism and refusing to implement a favoritist policy with inverted signs by granting privileged access to the "authentic movement."

The stalemate resulting from the opposition between "combativeness" and "representativeness" partly accounts for the absence of controversy over the municipal democratization program. The initial uneasiness among some of the city councilors dissipated when the *Programa Prefeitura nos Bairros* remained confined

to the local level and did not develop into a platform for substantial debate. In the absence of broader proposals on the part of the articulations of the movement, it remained a platform for topical demand-making presenting much less of a challenge than its promoters had hoped for. Some city councilors, particularly from the right-wing minority, may have resented the direct and tendentially non-populist, non-clientelist relation between the executive and the local population, but this never resulted in any clear opposition to the Program. More recent experiments, for example in São Paulo, seem to be more controversial in this respect.

This suggests that the vicissitudes of the municipal democratization program and the similar fate of the participative reorientation of the *Projeto Recife* should be due at least in part to local and conjunctural variables. As to the former, the heterogeneity of neighborhood associativism in Recife, due to the active promotion of parallel organizations during the 1979-1985 period may be one reason. The conjuncture played a role in the sense that issues tended to be polarized in relation to the question of the legitimacy of the *Nova República*.³ This polarized representation lost appeal in subsequent years.

In her review of participatory experiments in Brazil prior to 1985, Grossi (1989:122) attributes the lack of continuity and institutionalization of new channels of participation to their dependence on the good will of the executive. In the case of Recife the issue was more complicated. In addition to the good will of the executive, it makes clear that the commitment of the articulations of the movement and their capacity to organically relate to grassroots associations are required. Instead of imposing a ready-made scheme, the executive aimed at gradual institutionalization, but this strategy was thwarted by the paralysis of its main "authentic" interlocutor. As a result, the "margins of variation" in the democratization of the municipal administration were neither fully explored nor enlarged. The failure to institutionalize the participatory policies in Recife can not be simply extrapolated to subsequent attempts in other municipalities where the process may take a more dynamic form.⁴

The *Comissão Geral do Projeto Recife* met a fate similar to the *Programa Prefeitura nos Bairros*. The case of the PREZEIS however demonstrated that a more dynamic process is not altogether inconceivable, though it can hardly be

³ At a later stage, this revolved around the priority accorded to direct presidential elections, against the five-year mandate pursued by Sarney. The "more radical groups" tended to regard this as the main issue, whereas others tended to accord relative priority to the confection of the new Constitution.

⁴ In Recife the issue of "popular participation" came up again during the elaboration of a new "municipal constitution," the *Lei Orgânica do Município*, in the course of 1990. The municipality was divided into political-administrative regions. The PT-proposal to institutionalize territorial "popular councils" to monitor the municipality interventions, including local budgetary allocations and the guidelines for local planning, was rejected by the City Council. On the other hand, "popular organizations" were granted some access to municipal "sectoral commissions" (e.g. healthcare, education, urban development) and to the technical commissions of the municipal legislative.

regarded as a success story. It illustrates that a process of alliance-making between *assessorias*, "urban social movements" such as the MDF and to a lesser degree the *Assembléia de Bairros/FEMEB*, and committed civil servants can result in an institutional platform for pressuring a municipal administration. The rise in the number of Special Zones of Social Interest and the increased tenancy security resulting from the adoption of the PREZEIS as an operationalization of urban zoning in favor of these areas served to generate some vague expectations among the local populations. At the same time, local organizations more or less transmitted these expectations through participation in local commissions as well as in a broader and relatively autonomous *Fórum*, which managed to withstand the marginalization by the right-wing municipal administration after 1988. The issues of tenancy security and the urbanization of areas so that people "can live in dignity" remains on the agenda. The PREZEIS serves as a tool in the struggle, and can become a rallying point as it is still regarded as a "major popular conquest." It can serve in reactive mobilizations if ZEIS are threatened by large real estate interests. In such cases, it can serve as a framework for mobilizing a defensive alliance between local groups and "sectors of civil society." It might even become a vehicle for more proactive mobilization. The new independent *assessorias* which emerged from the purge of the progressive Church are committed to the PREZEIS scheme, and are likely to reinforce the still existing core group revolving around the PREZEIS Forum. At the same time, they are strongly committed to grassroots pedagogical action. The PREZEIS was included in the *Lei Orgânica do Município*, elaborated in 1990, as an instrument for urban policies. In a more hospitable political climate than that of the post-1988 neo-liberal administration, this may contribute to turning the PREZEIS into a rallying point to pressure for the urbanization of areas and the allocation of budgetary funds.

For the moment, however, things seem to be going in another direction. They surely did not turn out the way people thought in the 1970s. The "transition to democracy," and the unrealized promise of reform gradually resulted in disillusionment with the *Nova República* when the country went from the "worst crisis of the century" in the early 1980s, to another "worst crisis of the century" in the late 1980s. It was accompanied by a gradual deepening of the "urban crisis" in the broadest sense of the term. In this context, neighborhood associativism evolved from a relatively unified movement in terms of organizational and discursive matrixes in the early 1980s to an increasingly dispersed and heterogeneous phenomenon ten years later. It was a process of "broadening" rather than "deepening." This process did not imply a simple relapse into populism and clientelism in the sense of a trade of favors. Though this aspect and the exclusively vertical relationship it implies certainly play a role, enhanced by the difficulties of survival in a deep economic crisis, a substantial number of the new neighborhood associations seems to have retained a relatively autonomous position by maintaining a multi-

plicity of connections.

In the 1970s the theorizations of "urban social movements" played an important role in shaping and signifying the forms of neighborhood associativism emerging under the protective wing of the Church. The imagery of the "paradigm of the 1970s" was not simply an optical illusion. It was functional to the self-understanding of the leaders of the newly emerging associations and reflected the actually repressive context. Although it served to define "strategic interests" for "the neighborhood movement," it took little account of the practical interests motivating local people to become involved in the associations, i.e. the interest in "getting out of the mud." When new opportunities arose to achieve this aim, replacing local Church-sponsored self-help and denunciatory demonstrations, the blind spots and the reifying features of the paradigm became ever more apparent. The spokespersons of "the movement" who had emerged in the "time of resistance" and their action repertory started to lose practical usefulness. At the same time, the dualist and cataclysmic imagery of social transformation that had informed "the movement" lost its legitimacy in the context of the "rethinking of democracy." It increasingly became the empty rhetoric of a "vanguard," dissociated from the practical concerns of the rank and file, who were criticized for their "backwardness" and "lack of conscientization." In the absence of viable proposals effectively relating the practical interests of the rank and file to more broadly defined strategic objectives, the appeal of the supra-local articulations diminished. Neighborhood associativism spread as an increasingly dispersed phenomenon.

Of course it is hard to predict future developments as they depend on the broader dynamics of the Brazilian political process. The hopes generated by the "democratic transition" have been dashed and Machado da Silva (1989:144) is probably right in describing the political moment in the Brazilian cities as one of "suspension." Such a term could be applied more broadly to refer to a situation of generalized hegemonic crisis and an incapacity to articulate particularistic and increasingly fragmented interests into a unifying political discourse that could sustain a project of progressive social change.

