Governance, Urban Environment, and the Growing Role of Civil Society

María Elena Ducci

translated by

Lake Sagaris

WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS

WASHINGTON, D.C., 2000

About the Author

María Elena Ducci received her Architecture degree from the Universidad Católica de Chile, and her Master and PhD in urban studies from the UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico).She was professor and researcher at the Postgraduate Division of the School of Architecture at UNAM, Mexico for 15 years where she was in charge of PhD research in urban studies and taught graduate and postgraduate courses. Since 1990, she has been working at the Instituto de Estudios Urbanos de la Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago, where she has coordinated several studies and projects related to poverty, housing, health and environment. She is currently the coordinator of a Progran on Urban Environment at the Universidad Católica de Chile. María Elena Ducci is also a founding member of Accion Ciudadana por el Medio Ambiente, a coalition of more than 50 NGOs working for the improvement of the environment in Santiago's Metropolitan Region and a member of the Board of Casa de la Paz, an NGO focusing on peace and environmental initiatives. Through her work with these organizations, she has participated in numerous initiatives on environmental education, environmental campaigns, and developing relations and understanding between the official, private, and third sectors. Ducci has authored several publications. She has been a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a Fulbright fellow at the Latinamerican Program of the University of Chicago.

Executive Summary

In urban areas in developing countries, the current experience indicates that well organized and well-informed citizens have become the best motors for positive change within cities and it is the state that has fallen out of touch, in spite of constant declarations about the importance of citizens' participation. María Elena Ducci explains how in Latin America, the urban social movements that focused on the fight for land and housing from the sixties to the eighties today have become citizens' groups seeking to maintain and improve quality of life. Once again, territory has become the focus for city inhabitants who are discovering new ways of being social and becoming the political protagonists of their own lives in the city. According to Ducci, the dynamic of urban politics is changing as these new players—the citizens' groups that are defending their urban environment—come to the fore with enormous strength and energy. They oppose and block public and private urban projects of enormous scope, which raises costs and lengthens time frames for the companies involved. This paper focuses on how these groups, which demand a better quality of life and more equality, are working in an increasingly globalized and polarized city.

GOVERNANCE, URBAN ENVIRONMENT, AND THE GROWING ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

María Elena Ducci

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Instituto de Estudios Urbanos

Introduction

The concept of governance (*gobernanza* or *governabilidad* in Spanish, sometimes translated as governability) attempts to encourage the development of a new relationship between citizens and the state which facilitates cooperation and reduces conflict. There are a variety of definitions of this concept, some of which are clearly oriented to helping governments maintain "governability": "Governance, to the degree that it differs from government, refers to the relationship between civil society and the state…, between those who rule and those who are ruled, the government and the governed" (McCarney, Halfani, and Rodriguez 1998:119). It is also understood as referring to "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the economic and social resources for development" (World Bank, quoted by McCarney 1996:13).

Many authors who deal with this subject underline the importance of "good governance," that is, trust between governors and the governed, and particularly the idea of credibility, be this for politicians or governmental institutions (McCarney, Halfani, and Rodriguez 1998). Good governance also depends "on the representative quality and efficiency of local government" (Borja 1995:25). The other side of the coin concerns the risk involved: "an active civil society vis-à-vis a weak state at the local level can also lead to ungovernable cities in the long term" (McCarney 1996:12). The crucial concern seems to be expressed as a fear that a dynamic civil society could overwhelm existing government structures.

The urban social movements that focused on the fight for land and housing from the sixties to the eighties have today become citizens' groups seeking to maintain and improve quality of life. Once again, territory has become the focus for city inhabitants who are discovering new ways of being social and becoming the political protagonists of their own lives in the city (Castells 1986:401). The dynamic of urban politics is changing as these new players—the citizens' groups that are defending their urban environment—come to the fore with enormous strength and energy. They oppose and block urban works and projects of enormous scope, which raises costs and lengthens time frames for the companies involved. This paper will focus on how these groups, which demand a better quality of life and more equality, are working in an increasingly globalized and polarized city.

Background: Urban Social Movements, Shaping the Cities of the Seventies

Population growth rates reached record levels in Latin America during the sixties and seventies, particularly urban population growth.[1] At the time, urban dynamics were ruled primarily by three opposing forces: the state, the private sector, and the "popular" (low-income) sector. Working with limited resources, the Latin American state followed the Keynesian model,[2] focusing its efforts on development based on industrialization oriented to the internal market and import substitution.[3] At the same time it implemented limited social welfare policies; for example, most social housing programs reached lower middle-class households rather than the poorest segment of the population.

The property-owning private sector had first pick of the most appropriate sites for urban growth (a situation that continues to this day), and large construction firms developed residential or social housing heavily subsidized by the state. The popular (poorest) sector, numerically the majority, with no chance of participating in formal land and housing markets, solved its housing problem "informally" by invading open land left aside by the real estate developers and building their own homes.

A large part of the urban population of Latin America participated in this form of urban life,[4] and the battle for land, a home, and services characterized urban dynamics. By the late sixties, thousands of squatters who had invaded urban land on the city's outskirts began to form popular urban movements "endowed with effectiveness, continuity, institutional response, social recognition, accumulative progress and organizational development" (Borja 1975:100). National governments, completely overwhelmed by the organizing strength and size of these popular groups, let them be, and little by little began to implement policies of service provision and the legalization of property held in these irregular areas.

During the eighties, Latin America's "Lost Decade," the welfare state went into crisis and the neoliberal model began to take over, offering policies for restructuring the state and the economy inspired by the idea of "less government" (de Mattos 1996:6) at the same time as supporters advocated an economy open to foreign markets, leading to a process of globalization based on the rapid development of informational technology (Sassen 1997; Castells 1989).

The Current Situation: Urban Dynamics in the Face of Economic and Cultural Globalization

The changing shape of national and local government is explained as a function of the flowering of the neoliberal rationale, global and national economic restructuring, and the decline of the effectiveness and legitimacy of Keynesian political economics and "welfare" capitalism.[5] The forces underlying urban dynamics have changed in this new scenario. The smaller size of the state has tended to reduce its role to one of supervision, leaving the production and management, even of basic services (water, energy, etc.), in the hands of an increasingly powerful private sector, which demands clear economic rules to ensure its continued growth. With the building of large infrastructure becoming increasingly difficult for a state facing strict cost restraints and strong pressures to privatize, this aspect has also been taken over by the private sector, which obtains concessions in exchange for charging for services or the use of highways.

Similarly, demographic growth, which peaked in the seventies, has slowed and the significance of country-city migration has waned.[6] In the nineties, the region's population lives primarily in cities, and Latin American poverty is basically urban (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1989). Popular (i.e., working poor) neighborhoods have undergone regularization and receive basic services, although this process has tended to be extremely slow and services are often deficient.[7] The fight for land and housing, typical of the seven-

ties, has abated, even in those countries that did not face repressive political systems. Once basic services and a certain security about land ownership were obtained, many participants focused their energy on improving and enlarging their homes, and former leaders of popular urban movements tended to lose interest in participating; in many cases the struggle has disappeared completely.[8]

A more open economy has brought with it the liberalization of urban regulations, expressed in different ways in different countries.[9] For a variety of reasons, among them a general contempt for the importance of planning as a tool to guide urban development, Latin American cities are becoming more and more the product of the market, entering a phase of "fragmentary urbanism" (Ramos 1999), in which cities now compete for their insertion into a global network of cities for which they need to attract foreign investment capital. The government's role is to concentrate on generating the conditions necessary for private investment to "do business" in cities and, in the absence of any consensus or plan for the model of city aspired to, it is the "free market" that defines how cities grow and what they become.

In this context, there are three important forces at work shaping the cities of the developing world. First, large infrastructure projects. These are promoted by different branches of government, often with little coordination, and frequently generate unforeseen impacts. These projects are becoming a major source of conflict between citizens and governments, and their construction is more and more threatened by citizen opposition, as we shall see below. Second, real estate capital. This capital, by definition, pursues the maximization of profits by developing large housing areas on the outskirts along with megaprojects that can be located in outer city areas or inside the urban area (malls, office centers, closed residential areas, gigantic social housing projects).[10] Third, organized citizens' groups. These generally form to oppose a specific

project (highway, high-density residential area, gas pipeline, garbage dump). They work in unexpected and innovative ways, generating a new kind of mobilization within cities.

In general, these forces act in an uncoordinated and often antagonistic way. On the one hand, the government builds or promotes the building of infrastructure (for example, improving access to an area) to attract megaprojects to the city. On the other, citizens feel their quality of life is being threatened by the introduction of such infrastructure or megaprojects.

New Citizens' Organizations

In the nineties we have seen the reemergence of citizens' movements in Latin America capable of becoming important players for change; there seem to be several reasons for this. Once the region's countries began the process of democratization and decentralization at the end of the eighties, they also began to enjoy more sustained economic growth. With economic improvement came the conditions necessary for the development of civil society organizations, given that there has to be some balance between social forces and economic possibilities to generate a social movement. "Only this way can people express their demands, which may be accepted at least partially, therefore helping to legitimize them socially and providing for the victories and the organizations that make the continuity and development of a movement possible" (Borja 1975:101).

These citizens' organizations have generated political movements around issues of environmental quality, citizens' safety, and so on. They are beginning to weigh more and more heavily in the definition of what is happening in cities today. Even in developing countries like Chile there is already evidence to indicate that these groups cannot be taken lightly; they have proven strong enough to paralyze or at least signifi-

cantly increase the costs associated with some major urban infrastructure projects. It would seem therefore that a new kind of social movement is emerging within the developing world, with some unexpected characteristics:

> Associations in Latin American, Asian and African cities are no longer simply striving for subsistence needs. Their organizational mandate with respect to their local constituencies has broadened over time. Their own management capacity has deepened and become more sophisticated, and now extends into creating local policy. Civic organizations are imposing fees and taxes and/or membership fees to fulfill their mandates, and establishing organizational rules, procedures, and systems of accountability and transparency in their operations. As a result of the trust they have gained in their respective communities, their ability to organize their constituencies as a political voice has also expanded. Therefore, these groups, together with other more formal, private sector organizations, constitute an urban civil society which has increased its political and economic space and created a power block in the urban centres (McCarney 1996:11-12).

One important difference compared to previous periods is that these new urban movements are socioeconomically heterogeneous. Heretofore, struggles referred to issues directly related to social class, such as the impossibility of obtaining land or entering the housing market, the lack of economic and political resources necessary to obtain services, and so on. One reason behind this heterogeneity is that a new issue, environmental problems—many of which affect large areas, regardless of urban subdivisions into socially segregated sectors—now lies at the roots of the controversy. Thus, just as a highway or pipeline cuts through urban areas occupied by different social strata, air and noise pollution and toxic waste invade urban territory with no respect for borders or propinquity.[11]

Another difference is that in the seventies, popular groups in Latin American cities had to form massive movements in order to acquire the political weight necessary to give them some negotiating power; now even a small well-informed middle-class group can achieve great visibility and negotiating strength. If the group includes one determined professional, journalist, artist, or television personality, the organization can gain media access that will strengthen the group's position and allow it to be heard (although this does not guarantee the success of its efforts). Furthermore, when organizations include a small upper middle-class group with access to political, economic, and communications resources, the chances of success rise enormously. It is true that upper middle-class groups fighting to defend their urban environment often will not ally with other groups, preferring to find support among neighbors with greater economic capacity and strength, and relying on personal influence and access to ministers, mayors, and so on.[12]

In this sense, we see a profound change in the urban dynamics in the seventies as compared to the end of the nineties. Then, the world was polarized, and positive social change could only come from the popular sector, while the work of middle-class elites with a social conscience was to support the demands of the poorest members of society. Today, many environmental movements are led by middle-class groups and, above all, by multiclass alliances. There are also interesting examples of positive change in cities produced by groups, not necessarily popular or multiclass, but still marginalized by society in some way. This is the case with artists, hippies, or gays who have taken over abandoned and devalued areas of cities and turned them around completely, often improving their value enormously in the process. Examples include the

Castro neighborhood in San Francisco, transformed by a gay community into a tourist attraction (Castells 1986), and to a lesser degree the Bellavista neighborhood in Santiago, whose repositioning on the urban map is due to middle-class artists and intellectuals, and which has now been invaded by restaurants and discotheques that generate intense night life in the area.

The State versus Civil Society

The relationship between the government and citizens in the production of a city would seem to be conflict-ridden by definition. To some degree, problems arise when local government structures overlap neighborhood institutions in the field (McCarney 1996:16). Some authors in the developing world maintain that problems occur because the state is incapable of administering cities adequately, and therefore citizens must take control of solving their problems: "The result is that many functions of urban administration continue to be provided by 'informal' institutions generally supported by urban inhabitants, who are prepared to make significant financial contributions to them, and which are transparent and accountable to the people" (Mabogunje 1995: 42-67).

However, even in more developed countries, citizens' organizations are constantly in conflict with government. One possible explanation for this is that civil society is so much more dynamic than government structures; it organizes and disorganizes much more easily to face the problems affecting daily life, and to find solutions it must of necessity confront the state, which is either the responsible party (for example, in the building of new infrastructure) or at least able to prevent the project from going ahead (as with the building of a garbage dump, high density buildings in residential areas, etc.). The state, on the other hand, weakened, and with old-fashioned bureaucratic structures (some of them remnants from the colonial pe-

riod; Migdal 1988), tends to be conservative and must respond to pressures from many actors, some as powerful as the owners of capital, whom governments are trying to convince to invest in cities. Thus, almost by definition, the relationship with the state will be difficult and the level of conflict will depend as much on the ability to organize and mobilize civil society as the flexibility of local government to respond to citizens' demands.

Traditionally, citizens, especially if they are organized, are viewed as enemies by the private sector and also by government. However, the most active people in citizens' organizations are often those who, in their professional (non-neighborhood) lives, work for government or the private sector. In private industry they must do everything possible to maximize profits, and in government their work (at least in theory) is to reconcile different interests. As citizens, however, their priority is to maintain or improve their quality of life; when something directly affects their home they will take measures to organize in their own defense against the "aggressor."

Similarly, when citizens try to improve their neighborhood or deal with the problems that exist there, the government often appears as the one who obstructs, prohibits, limits, and defends the interests of the external forces viewed as "the enemy" (the company that wants to build high-rise condominiums, the bus association that invades the neighborhood with its terminal, etc.).

This all suggests that the simple fact that the city is constantly changing makes conflicts of interest among different groups inevitable. What is important is to learn to manage these conflicts. An important step toward this is to raise awareness that everyone has more than one role to play and an equilibrium among the needs and aspirations of different groups must be pursued, recognizing that it is impossible to achieve "perfect" solutions made to the measure of all the city's inhabitants.

The key to understanding why these new citizens' organizations are attracting so much support and achieving such strength is that they are based on local needs and the concerns of their respective communities; they earn the confidence of the citizens they serve and people contribute money and effort to keep them functioning (Mabobunje 1995). Faced with a state that seems distant, untransparent, and all too often incapable of understanding the needs of the ordinary citizen, local organizations, with leaders elected directly by the community on the basis of shared interests, are the ones who earn citizens' co-operation.

Defending "One's Own"

Today, most groups organize to defend something "of their own," that is, to prevent some element or project that will deteriorate the environmental quality and /or the area in which their homes are located. "We have to defend what's ours," neighbors say angrily, when they face a danger that threatens their livelihood or the value of their home. This sensation of "one's own" seems to refer more to quality of life associated with the use of a space than its material territory; thus, people do battle against noise, smells, smog, crime, and so forth.

Defense of "one's own" seems directly tied to a sense of identity that, in the city, is usually intimately connected with the neighborhood where one lives or works. This seems to be the main reason why people become so passionate about neighborhood battles. People need to form an image for themselves, an identity that helps to make sense of daily life and establish one's place in the world. When people feel their place of residence or work is threatened, they unite to defend themselves in the face of a common enemy. In a study on the importance of having one's own home, Agnew (1982:72) explains: "first, to con-

trol one's own private space gives people a sense of freedom from the control or interference of others. Second, and more importantly, people feel that with control of their own private space they have the power and the chance to do something themselves, to become 'more of a person,' to reach a kind of self-realization."

When citizens' battles originate in a search for a positive identity, an interesting phenomenon occurs: citizens' associations often open the participants' eyes to the potential of acting together to improve the environment and their quality of life. Thus, some of them move from being neighbors angered by a specific problem to urban-environmental leaders, with a sense of the importance of the task before them that they did not have until they reacted by defending their immediate environment. The feeling of strength that these groups experience as they realize important achievements in their struggle produces a sense of euphoria among participants, which in turn gives them the strength to carry on and to broaden their vision beyond the immediate problem, to connect their street with their neighborhood and their neighborhood with the rest of the city. Although few neighbors reach this new phase, their strength and enthusiasm is so great that it begins to exercise growing influence on general urban dynamics.[13]

An important aspect of some current urban battles is linked to the social status associated with the place where one lives. Because of this, a significant motivation for neighbors to organize, especially middle and upper class neighbors, is the possible devaluation of their property. "Along with its contribution to personal autonomy, having one's own home has other very significant qualities, among them, it is a status symbol and a safe investment, serves as insurance against old age and as accumulated capital, since it has been demonstrated to be one of the investments offering the most surplus value" (Agnew 1982:809-881).

In its more negative expression, this led people in white neighborhoods in the US to prevent the integration of blacks into their area (Sennet 1970:33-34); but in other expressions it has encouraged residents to defend their neighborhood environment as they try to conserve or recover a sense of community that modern life seems to have devalued completely.

Sometimes groups arise because of a specific problem, for example, to protest against the poor quality of government housing or because of a major environmental disaster, such as occurred in Bhopal, India. A case of this nature in Santiago has had important consequences. On December 17, 1995, in the Lo Espejo area,[14] explosions in the warehouses belonging to the Mathiensen Molypac chemical firm generated a fire and a toxic cloud that affected all the surrounding government housing. In the two months that followed, the old plant experienced one toxic fire after another. Some examples of the effect of this disaster as expressed by tenants themselves:

> "My children had problems in their throats, ears, indigestion for over two months. . . . In the clinic where we took them the doctor said I was the source of the contamination. Although I washed my whole body it was completely impregnated. . . ."
> "I've lost 17% of my hearing because of the drums exploding. I've had diarrhea and my eyes are affected . . . none of us received medical attention." (Comisión Lo Espejo 1999)

Neighbors organized to protest; they demanded that studies be done to assess the seriousness of the damage. After almost four years of battling they had only a few specific successes. However, they have consolidated their organization into a Centro Comunal de Ecología y Medio Ambiente, CECOEMA (Community Center for Ecology and the Environment) and publish their own magazine, *Pantalla Verde* (*Green Screen*). They have also received support from

nongovernmental organizations and universities, and have created awareness among citizens and the authorities about environmental safety, which was absent before from urban debate. Although this organization arose in response to an environmental emergency, we see here the beginning of a true urban movement, with strong grassroots in low-income sectors and support from middle-class and environmental sectors.

Ciudad Viva (Living City): How a Neighbors' Group Became a Citizens' Movement

In late 1996, a group of neighbors in Bellavista attending a meeting of the Bellavista Ecological Committee "Silvino Zapico" heard the first rumors of a highway project. The project, sponsored by the Public Works Ministry (MOP)—the first private urban concession prepared by President Frei's government—was a toll-paying urban highway to unite the city's north-east with the south-east. It would cut through the neighborhood. Bellavista, an older community located immediately to the north of the city center, already had a history of battling to improve conditions. It had become known within the city of Santiago as a neighborhood of artists, of alternative lifestyles, with restaurants, dance halls, and so on. Residents already had six years experience working together, fighting the problems of noise and garbage, and learning the basics of citizens' participation: "how to organize and chair meetings in a friendly, but productive way; how to research and prepare reports on any conflict; how to initiate contacts with the authorities and other relevant bodies and how to follow up on those contacts; how not to burn out from the enormous effort consumed by each meeting, each attempt to seek improvements" (Araya and Sagaris 1997, p.2-3).

They started to search for information, and called a meeting attended by some three hundred residents "horrified by the news of the highway and concerned about the lack of information, a situation that would become a constant in the relationship" between the proponents of the project and those affected by it

(Araya and Sagaris 1997: 2-3). MOP functionaries appeared at the meeting, making many promises but offering little concrete information. There had been no impact studies on the project.

The neighbors worked to learn about the impact of highways on the urban environment. In June 1996 they launched their campaign "No a la Costanera Norte" ("No to the Costanera Norte") during an assembly in a neighborhood square that was well attended by residents and their supporters and had good media coverage. Residents opposed the project not only because of its direct impact on their community but also because it would encourage the use of cars in the already congested streets of Santiago.

Other groups arose, among them the Comité de Defensa de Recoleta (Committee to Defend Recoleta) and the Comité de Desarrollo de Patronato (Committee for the Development of Patronato), along with the organizations already existing in the Vega Central (Central Market).[15] While these groups worked and studied (meetings with the Ministry, academic seminars, technical consultations, etc.), the MOP reached agreements with groups representing the Vega and other groups in Patronato (the MOP promised a series of advantages that would result from building the project). The Junta de Vecinos de Pedro de Valdivia Norte, #12 (Pedro de Valdivia Norte Neighborhood Association), representing a middle-class neighborhood located immediately to the east of Bellavista that would be heavily affected by the highway, began to stand out for its fighting spirit.[16] Another very active group developed in early 1997, the Comité de Defensa del Parque Metropolitano (Committee to Defend the Metropolitan Park), joined forces with the other organizations. The tender process for building the project opened in April 1997; it was stopped by a court order obtained by the residents, which forced the MOP to make an environmental impact study; this, in turn, led the companies involved to ask the government for more time. The residents were dissatisfied with COREMA (the Greater Santiago branch of the national environmental commission, responsible for the environmental impact evaluation

process), claiming that the authorities were "trying to impose a methodology based on the proponents' criteria and erroneous theoretical concepts" (Araya and Sagaris 1997: 72).

At this point, a Coordinating Committee for the "No to the Costanera Norte," known simply as the "Coordinadora," was formed by fourteen citizens' groups, among them the associations of the Tirso de Molina (an open-air fair on the banks of the Mapocho River) and the Vega Chica (popular food bars located in an old trolley warehouse), the Asociación de Comerciantes de la Periferia de la Vega (Association of Shopkeepers Located Around the Vega), and the Associations of Owners and Renters of Independencia, communities threatened with expropriation. All these organizations are strictly popular (working poor), and well known for their fighting spirit and prestige throughout the city, which they traditionally supplied with fresh produce. Unity brought great strength and created an organization with enormous ability, despite limited resources. By late 1998, twenty organizations formed part of the Coordinadora, eighteen of which played an active role in leading the process. They participated in the Environmental Impact Assessment System led by COREMA; although very critical of this process, it allowed them to progress in their work as a group.

> July 23rd, the day we handed in our reply to the COREMA, was a great day in our process as Coordinadora. We held a news conference on an improvised stage in the Tirso de Molina [traditional market]. This was organized by the associations of the Tirso de Molina with the people from Independencia, while the Vega Chica contributed buttons, posters, balloons and other elements. A lot of media attended. The leaders of each community spoke, along with Ignacio Santa María, a distinguished urbanist and one of our advisors,[17] and Mauricio Montecinos, the head

of the team that prepared our reply. Over 300 people attended and most of us marched to the COREMA office downtown and back again (Araya and Sagaris 1997: 47).

The organization also sent well-prepared delegations to speak to the Environmental Commission of the Senate, to a Congress organized by the Chamber of Deputies Environmental Commission, to the Santiago College of Physicians, the Environmental Commission of the National College of Physicians, several commissions of the National Architects Association, the College of Psychologists, and environmental organizations, among them RENACE (a national network of environmental groups), the Instituto de Ecología Política (Political Ecology Institute) and the Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales (Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts). All of them provided extremely important moral and technical support. They also received the support of the Clínica Jurídica de la Universidad Diego Portales (Diego Portales University Judicial Clinic), the Engineers National Association, and many distinguished professionals.

The group's strategy was based on five points: judicial action, the Environmental Impact Assessment System (EIAS), mobilization, political pressure, and information using the mass media and their own media (pamphlets, posters, etc.). There was a gradual change in the attitude of journalists and the media in general as they became concerned about the project's implications. The Municipality of Providencia commissioned an independent evaluation of the MOP's Environmental Impact Assessment from one of the firms specializing in such studies; the result was extremely critical. In June 1998, the Court of Appeals found against the writ filed by the Coordinadora, leading to an immediate appeal. The residents and other leaders defined their position as follows:

From the start, they've told us that the Costanera is going to happen, that there's nothing to be done, that we should try to negotiate, to get some benefit for ourselves. But although we started out concerned about its impact on our corner of the city, we continue with this enormous effort because we feel that we carry on our shoulders an enormous responsibility: to ourselves, to our communities, and above all, to all those sons and daughters who fill our hospitals with their tears and cries every time pollution levels rise.

We're not prepared to shut up or to sell out. The effort is enormous, but the reality of the damage that this model of the city, made to measure for the car instead of living beings, would do, forces us on and we'll continue to the end.

This, plus our conviction that this is a fight that can be won and that the victory would be a real contribution to a greener, more friendly Santiago, where it's a pleasure to breathe, walk, ride a bike without fear, is enough (Araya and Sagaris 1997: 35).

It is important to note that the original project, which cost some US$180 million, has tried to incorporate some of the citizens' demands and to answer complaints of different neighborhoods (adding noise barriers in Pedro de Valdivia Norte, filters in Bellavista, etc.), with costs rising to over US$300 million; this has led participating companies to demand a series of extra guarantees to ensure the success of the venture.

In late 1998, the project was "suspended" when the tender failed for lack of participation from the companies, with many assuming the project had failed. However, on May 2, 1999, the MOP announced that the Costanera Norte would be tendered again, with the ministry itself assuming a cost of US$80 million to make the project viable. Meanwhile, the participants of the Coordinadora decided to continue to work together with a broader outlook and toward more general goals, given that unity had given them a level of effectiveness that none of the organizations would have achieved on its own. They are working to incorporate "Living City" as a nonprofit organization, whose goals reflect the vision of a sustainable city that they hope to build.

Although the Coordinadora continued its battle and maintained pressure on the authorities and interested firms, to date there has been no clear victory. However, the people of Santiago, other organizations, and many politicians view this citizens' group as an exemplary organization that is opening the way to achieving a city that is truly sustainable and livable.

The Challenges Ahead

There is a series of challenges that the diverse players concerned with urban dynamics must recognize and face if they wish to progress toward cities that work more efficiently, that are sustainable and friendly, and whose citizens can feel satisfied and proud to belong to them. To do this it is essential to mobilize citizens' energy, enthusiasm, and capacity for work with the efficiency of the private sector and the state's capacity (at least in theory) for creating spaces for agreement.

If the three forces of the state, private-sector capital, and organized civil society can manage to coordinate, we could start to speak of realistic, positive urban management capable of rescuing and strengthening local values. This joint cooperation and work offers people the opportunity to develop true citizenship and offers cities in this globalized world the chance to discover their particular potential and give them a positive value based on specific attractions from the perspective of both citizens and investors.

However, this all requires a process of negotiation that we have so far been unable to develop. In spite of the fact that in most instances the government and even some large companies are trying to establish processes referred to as "citizens' participation," most of these efforts only go as far as listening to complaints or getting requests for the benefits people think they should provide. At this point appropriate relationships must be developed among the diverse players, recognizing weaknesses characterized by mutual distrust, the lack of transparency, and the apparent incapacity to develop a common language to reach agreements. "If local government structures are to be developed that represent the local citizenry and offer more open channels of communication and participation, then what is also required is an improved understanding of local political organizations, how they are organized and how they are linked to their own constituencies on the ground" (McCarney 1996:14-15).

Governmental structures must lose their ancestral fear of what might happen if civil society plays an active role in the decision-making process. Current experience indicates that seriously organized and well-informed citizens have become the best motors for positive change within cities and it is the state that has fallen behind, in spite of constant declarations about the importance of citizens' participation. In general, the participation systems implemented by the government consist (in the best cases) of providing the population with partial information about what is happening, listening to their complaints, and "letting the technical experts decide." As long as this goes on, infrastructure- and project-related conflicts will continue and the city will become a potential center of "ungovernability," an arena for disputes over the predictable contradictions involved in urban change and growth. Even multilateral institutions constantly emphasize the need to progress in this sense: "(L)ocal governments

could take measures to ensure more regular consultation with constituents, develop stronger channels for monitoring user satisfaction with local services, and link career progression of civil servants more strongly to their responsiveness to constituents" (World Bank, quoted by McCarney 1996:14).

In spite of the many signs that the information era would bring to a close the importance of territory in the lives of urban inhabitants,[18] we are witnessing the rebirth of struggles in defense of the place where we live or work, struggles that are strongly influencing the way cities are being built today. Furthermore, this same informational technology is becoming an important working and support tool for citizens' groups who use it to facilitate their labor and as a source of contacts and learning about experiences, including those from other countries and groups facing similar problems.

Similarly, we must avoid the tendency to idealize civil society and its capacity to cooperate to improve the urban environment. Most citizens' mobilizations arise in response to a specific problem, and when this disappears the movement falls apart. Few groups survive and go on to a more advanced stage, as in the case of Living City described here. However, although citizens may originally be moved by motives that can be considered selfish, those who discover the depth of the problems they face, realize that to achieve improvements in the immediate environment for themselves and their families they must think of the city as a unit, given that major problems, such as traffic and air pollution, cannot be resolved without cooperation amongst a variety of players.

Environmental activism is changing traditional political and social patterns; this is reflected in the pioneering groups described here. In spite of having started due to a specific, immediate problem, they have found solid leaders and fertile ground for moving on from the original problem to work and to fight for better conditions for their city and even the world in which they live.

References:

Agnew, John. 1982. "Home Ownership and Identity in Capitalist Societies." In *Housing and Identity,* edited by James S. Duncan. New York: H.M. Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc.

Araya, Ricardo, and Lake Sagaris. 1997. *Costanera Norte, La Ciudad Que Queremos.* Santiago: Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales.

Borja, Jordi. 1975. "Movimientos sociales urbanos." Buenos Aires: *Ediciones SIAP*.

_____ (ed). 1995. "Barcelona, Un modelo de transformación urbana." PGU, *Serie Gestión Urbana,* No. 4.

Browne, Enrique. 1992. "War on Waste and Other Urban Ideals for Latin America." In *Rethinking the Latin American City*, edited by Richard Morse and Jorge E. Hardoy. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Castells, Manuel. 1986. *La ciudad y las masa: sociología de los movimentos sociales urbanos.* Madrid: Alianza Universitaria.

_____. 1989. *The Informational City.* Oxford: Basil-Blackwell, 1989.

Comisión Lo Espejo de Acción Ciudadana por el Medio Ambiente (ACPMA). 1999. "Rebrota el incendio de la industria Mathiensen Polypac." Public declaration.

de Mattos, Carlos A. 1996. "Modelos de crecimiento endógeno y divergencia regional." Instituto de Estudios Urbanos, Documento Serie Azul, No. 11.

Ducci, M. E. 1986. "El papel del habitante in la producción y transformación del espacio urbano." Ph.D. thesis, UNAM, México.

Fadda, Giullieta and María Elena Ducci. 1993. "Polìticas de desarrollo urbano y vivienda in Chile." In *Chile: 50 años de vivienda social,* edited by Luis Bravo and Carlos Martinez. Universidad de Valparaíso.

Hardoy, Jorge, and David Satterthwaite. 1989. *Squatter Citizen: Life in the Urban Third World.* London: Earthscan Publications, Ltd.

Mabogunje, Akin. 1995. "Local Institutions and a Local Agenda for the 1990s." In *Urban Research in the Developing World*, vol. 4, edited by Richard Stren and Judith K. Bell. Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.

McCarney, Patricia L. (ed.). 1996. "Considerations on the Notion of "Governance - New Directions for Cities in the Developing World." *Cities and Governance: New Directions in Latin America, Asia and Africa.* Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto Press

McCarney, P., M. Halfani, and A. Rodriguez. 1998. "Hacia una definición de gobernanza." *Proposiciones*, No. 28, SUR ediciones, September.

Migdal, Joel. 1988. *Strong Societies and Weak States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ramos, Javier. 1999. "Lo local y lo global in la lógica de localización del terciario avanzado." Masters Thesis, IEU, Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago.

Sassen, Saskia. 1997. "Electronic Space, Embedded and Segmented." In *Planning Studies* II, No. 2.

Sennet, Richard. 1970. *The Uses of Disorder*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Stenson, Kevin and Paul Watt. 1999. "Governmentality and `the Death of the Social´? A Discourse Analysis of Local Government Texts in Southeast England." *Urban Studies* 36:1:189-201.

Notes:

[1] At first due mainly to intense migration from countryside to cities.

[2] Between the forties and the seventies, welfare states emerged in advanced capitalist democracies that promoted full employment, integrated social services, and extensive support networks for the most vulnerable (Stenson and Watt 1999).

[3] In Latin America, the Keynesian model was characterized by state intervention, significant public investment, creation of public companies, and policies aimed at specific sectors and territories (de Mattos 1996:4).

[4] Up to 40% in some cities (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1989).

[5] This is the focus of the Foucault neo-Marxist school (Stenson and Watt 1999:189).

[6] The average annual growth rate of the urban population in Latin America was 4.2% between 1960 and 1970, and only 2.9% between 1980 and 2000 (Browne 1992:117).

[7] In February 1998, during a visit to recently improved favelas in São Paulo, the tenants' major complaint dealt with the new drainage system; whenever it rained (and rain tends to be torrential in that area) their new homes flooded with sewage water. This situation occurs frequently in cities.

[8] This was one of the critical points presented by leaders of poor communities in the preparatory meetings for Habitat II, organized by Chile's Housing and Urbanism Ministry (MINVU) in 1995 (Habitat Forum).

[9] For example, in Chile between 1979 and 1985, Santiago's city limits were eliminated because the military government believed that urban land was not "a scarce good," leading to the tripling of the urban area in six years. In 1985, a new urban development policy tried to stop this situation, but its effects are still felt today (Fadda and Ducci 1993:93-94).

[10] Examples of these megaprojects include Puerto Madero in the center of Buenos Aires, and to a lesser degree, the Entrepreneurial City on the northern edge of Santiago.

[11] Chernobyl is an extreme case of an environmental impact on an enormous expanse of territory.

[12] In the mid-eighties, Bosques de Tletalmeya, a wealthy neighborhood in the south end of Mexico City, closed off its streets with barriers to protect itself from the poor areas around it. Even though this was against the law, they managed to do it with the help of an influencial neighbor, formerly a top-level civil servant in the Federal District Department. Within a few years, many middle- and lower middle-class neighborhoods began to do the same, even paying for private security. Today, this phenomenon has spread throughout many Latin American cities (Ducci 1986).

[13] "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful and committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has"—Margaret Mead.

[14] Lo Espejo, once a traditional small town, is now absorbed by Greater Santiago. Located in the city's south end, it is primarily home to the working poor, as well as the site for several industries.

[15] Bellavista is a middle-class neighborhood; Recoleta and Patronato are popular (working-poor) neighborhoods; the Vega Central is the city's most important wholesale fruit and vegetable market.

[16] The Pedro de Valdivia Norte neighborhood is professional middle-class, not overly wealthy but with a social background of some standing. They quickly became a group with a great capacity to resonate in the media and among sectors of the right.

[17] Awarded the National Prize for Urbanism 1998.

[18] "Between ahistorical flows and the irreducible identities of local communities, cities and regions disappear as socially meaningful places" (Castells 1989:350).