NETWORKS OF SURVIVAL AND POLITICAL IDENTITY:
A STUDY OF TWO NEIGHBORHOODS OF LIMA, PERU*

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I. Introduction

Over the last decade and a half Peru has undergone major transformations as a result of economic crisis and political mismanagement, devastating violence and, in the last five years, the drastic efforts of President Alberto Fujimori to structure a new liberal economic and social order. The combination of these processes has led to the breakdown of many established forms of social reproduction, the generalization of informal employment, and a dramatic increase of poverty and scarcity to levels previously unknown even in Peru.[2] It has also brought a serious loss of legitimacy for traditional political parties and state institutions (Cotler, 1993; Panfichi, 1994).

In this context, many analysts argue that the social fabric in Peru has been permanently damaged, and that the solidarity and collective action so notable among the urban poor in the seventies and early eighties have given way either to apathetic and individualistic behavior or to sharp divisions along ethnic and cultural lines (Pasara, 1992). It has also been argued that such trends provide fertile ground for authoritarianism and help explain the strong urban support for Fujimori (Arias, 1994).

This study, however, challenges these depictions of the urban poor. While it is true that poverty and violence have forced the poor of Lima to modify certain patterns of social action in order to survive, this has not lead to generalized anomie or some kind of Hobbesian state of war. Instead, my argument is that dominant forms of collective action have shifted—from political parties, trade unions, and neighborhood associations, to more informal networks of contact and exchange among neighbors, relatives and friends. These networks, through flexible management of diverse types of social ties, provide the information and resources necessary for the survival of those involved in them. The survey findings analyzed thus far demonstrate the existence and characteristics of these networks, as well as their material, cultural and political significance.

[2] According to Cuanto S.A., sixty percent of the Peruvian population in 1993 was considered poor or extremely poor. See Peru en numeros 1993, Cuanto S.A., Lima: 1993.

This research also demonstrates that these networks are constructed largely on the basis of face-to-face relationships, that take place within a reduced geographical area, often (but not exclusively) within or close to one's neighborhood. This is because the size and dangers of the city, the cost of public transportation, and the scarcity of resources restrict the geographic mobility of the poor. Within any poor neighborhood, therefore, the most basic social relations are converted into resources for survival, oriented to obtain access to material goods, crucial information about jobs, housing and services, and emotional support. Based on this research, I argue that the capacity of an individual or family to survive in Lima today depends more on their capacity to manipulate diverse social ties and become part of different social networks, than on characteristics ascribed to ethnic or migrant origins alone.

Addititionally, this research suggests that such networks go beyond sheer survival, helping to forge new political identities. My argument here is that it is through social interactions within different networks that individuals formulate, and change, their perceptions about politics and political ideas. These interactions, especially those that produce a mutual recognition of shared meanings among individuals, lead to the generation of new political identities. These identities, I believe, are not cultural inheritances defined by belonging to specific ethnic or class groups, but artifacts created in the processes of interaction themselves.

What kind of new political identities are being formed? And how different are they from the clientelism and patronage networks of past decades, cited by authors like Collier (1976), Dietz (1977, 1979) and Stein (1986)? My tentative response is that the militant popular organizations and surge in support for the Marxist left that characterized the seventies and early eighties in Lima was exceptional, and that in the recent context the urban poor have indeed returned to more localized and pragmatic identities, with greater volatility in their party and electoral choices. However, in contrast to the clientelistic networks of the past, this research suggests that these newer networks have a more horizontal and democratic character, forged largely among the poor themselves.

The theoretical framework for this study draws from the growing international literature on Network Analysis, one of the most promising perspectives in sociological studies today. Scholars such as Claude Fischer, Barry Wellman, Mark Granovetter and S.D. Berkowitz, have reconceptualized the notion of "community" and defined it as social forms based on different patterns of ties and interactions between and among people. In this perspective, behavior cannot be explained only on the basis of "categorical" attributes such as class membership, political party affiliation, ethnicity or urban or rural residency, but rather must also take into account the ways in which people construct patterns of interaction

with specific goals (Wellman, 1983; Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1992). The ties that individuals establish are themselves the key to interpreting their social and political behavior. Thus, as Fischer points out, the participation of any one individual in any social network presupposes a reciprocal recognition of obligations and rights between that individual and the people with whom he/she interacts (Fisher 1982). These recognized rights and obligations can be organized through vertical and hierarchical exchanges (such as patron-client relationships) or more horizontal ones (such as compadrazgo or amiguismo). And as Granovetter argues, by analyzing the strength of these exchanges and the ways in which people react within them, we can understand the nature and functioning of a particular network (Granovetter 1972, 1983).

Granovetter's theory of strong and weak ties has been particularly useful for analyzing the data in these cases.
According to this theory, the individuals in a given community who share common charactistics, spend considerable time together, and have reciprocal trust (e.g., family members and close friends), form networks linked by "strong" ties. At the same time, these individuals develop instrumental relations with other persons, of medium to low trust, which constitute "weak" ties, but which can serve to connect these individuals to wider circles. The paradox here is that when weak ties function as a bridge between different groups linked by strong ties, they take on considerable importance, since they permit greater circulation of resources, information, and influence. In this way individuals can connect themselves to different social circles, and thus have greater possibilities of receiving different types of benefits. The reverse happens with strong ties, which reinforce obligations and solidarity among their members, but generally offer more limited access to resources found in other social spheres.

Network Analysis is rarely used in Latin American social science.[3] Yet I believe it has considerable potential for helping to understand the organization and behavior of Latin America's urban poor today. Most importantly, it offers a powerful critique of ideological conceptions that have sought to explain the behavior of individuals by class or ascribed characteristics.

This research, for example, directly challenges the long dominant Marxist perspectives of Peruvian scholars such as Sulmont (1975), and also the recent work of Degregori (1987), Golte and Adams (1987), and Franco (1991), who argue that the poor of Lima have different patterns of

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[3] The only studies I know of that that explicitly use this approach are Lomnitz (1977) in Mexico and Espinoza (1992) in Chile. Anderson (1991) has done an ethnographic study of networks among women in one neighborhood of Lima.

organization based on ethnic and cultural traits. According to the latter argument, communities located in the historical center of Lima, which have a population that is largely black and mixed-race, with coastal and <u>criollo</u> origins, should be characterized by the propensity to establish individualistic and clientelistic ties with members of outsider institutions (such as traditional parties). On the other hand, poor communities on the outskirts of Lima, with more a recent Andean immigrant population of largely indian and <u>cholo</u> origins, should be naturally more communitarian and self-sufficient.

Such a dualistic perspective, I argue, is inaccurate and stems from a lack of detailed, comparative analysis of different communities. As this survey confirms, the poor neighborhoods of Lima are not homogeneous communities where ethnicity, class and political practice are so tightly bounded. On the contrary, today their residents have a diversity of backgrounds and cultural legacies, as well as distinct individual political experiences. In order to understand how social and political behavior is actually structured, therefore, it is essential to examine more closely how residents build their own networks of interest and solidarity.

II. Case Studies

The survey upon which this study is based constitutes an in-depth analysis of informal networks in two distinct neighborhoods of Lima, Barrios Altos and Independencia. Although both are considered part of the poorest sectors of Lima, they were established in different periods of the city's history and have different traditions of collective action. These are considered by most Peruvian analysts to be archetypical of the two distinct ethnic and cultural groups that constitute the popular sectors of Lima, the criollos costenos and the andinos serranos. My reason for selecting these two cases, therefore, was to assess whether these characteristics still hold and, most importantly, whether or to what extent they now determine or shape behavior.

As I will discuss in Findings (below), what the survey data suggests is that it is the nature and process of social network formation, rather than cultural traits alone, that best explains the forms of social organization and political identity dominant in each today. Furthermore, although these neighborhoods do have important social and cultural differences, they appear to have similar networks of survival and, increasingly, of political identity formation.

Barrios Altos

Barrios Altos (BA) is a community that officially forms part of what is now the historical center of Lima. It comprises several smaller neighborhoods which were formed around a series of churches and small plazas of colonial origin, between 1600 and the late 1800s. During its formative period, BA was a place where Lima's upper and lower classes lived together; the mansions of wealthy elites placed side-by-side with the squalid quarters (callejones) of slaves and servants. However, in the early 1900s the social hetergeneity of BA diminished, as wealthy families moved to new and more exclusive neighborhoods to the south of the city. The poor remained behind, occupying the available abandoned spaces and then, as demographic pressures and early migration expanded, pressuring for more housing. This growing demand for housing was met by rich propertyowners who subdivided their old mansions and built numerous callejones and multi-family dwellings in order to generate rents.

From this point on, the residential structure of BA has retained the same basic characteristics; numerous dwellings of a collective nature

which are rented by residents.[4] This fact is of central importance for the social and political behavior of BA inhabitants. When maintained over many generations, the properties yield extremely low rents. This situation produces the progressive deterioration of the dwellings, high population density, and increasingly poor living conditions, due to the lack of investment by either the landlords or the tenants. In this context, the inhabitants prefer to make their own patchwork repairs rather than endanger their continued inhabitance of these low rent buildings by making demands. Especially given the location of this housing in the center of Lima, where a work force with low skills can find an assortment of odd jobs for survival.

Historically, BA has been a bastion of support for the nationalist, populist Peruvian Aprista Party (APRA), founded by the legendary Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, and for various other political movements constructed around popular caudillos, such as Generals Sanchez Cerro in the 1930s, and Manuel A. Odria in the mid-1950s. Nonetheless, this presence was never translated into strong local political organization, nor did it attract much attention from successive Peruvian governments.

The population of BA descends from the traditional lower classes of Lima--African slaves, Indians, Chinese, mestizos, and poor European immigrants, largely Spaniards and Italians. Recently, however, an increasing number of migrants with peasant backgrounds has moved into the area, attracted by the informal street commerce of downtown Lima.[5]

Independencia

Independencia (IND) is one of the poor neighborhoods of Lima formed in the early 1960s by successive invasions of the agricultural lands of the Hacienda Aliaga, located on the northern outskirts of the city (Stokes, 1988). The initial invaders were a group of families from congested poor neighborhoods of Lima and the nearby port of Callao, and recent immigrants of Andean origin. But soon they were joined by other poor families, mainly newcomers from the highlands, giving this area a stronger ethnic identity. The first area invaded, which was originally called

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[4] The Housing Census of 1940 shows that 90 percent of the housing of Barrios Altos was rental property. In 1989, a survey by the Patronato de Lima found that 87 percent of the collective housing was in the same condition. Our survey, applied to a specific zone of BA, confirms these same characteristics--78.3 percent of the households surveyed were rental property and just 19.2 percent were owned by their inhabitants.

[5].According to the Census of 1981, 70 percent of the population of BA had been born in Lima, 13.5 percent on the Pacific coast, and 12.5 percent in the Andean highlands.

"la Pampa de Cueva" and later changed to "Independencia", became the first established community in the area. This community was the point of departure for a series of new invasions, social struggles and political disputes that in the mid-1960s gave rise to the formation of the municipal district of Independencia (Bossio, 1985a and 1985b).

The social history of Independencia, as that of many other poor neighborhoods formed during these years, was marked from the beginning by the collective experience of struggles for property rights, the construction of housing, and social movements in demand of urban services. The distinct forms of communal organization always had a "revindicative" (or demand-making) character and involved different external actors. The organizer of the original land invasion was a well-known lawyer with strong links to the Communist Party, although some militants of the APRA party were also involved. During the 1970s and 1980s there was increasing influence of populist government officials, as well as progressive Catholic activits and new Marxist parties. Each of these actors tried to give distinct shape to community organization projects in this neighborhood.

By the mid-1980s, however, there appeared to be a predominance of Marxist Left political identity in Independencia, reflected in the electoral triumphs of the United Left Front (IU) in local municipal elections in 1983, 1986 and 1989. These electoral victories, and the apogee of local social movements oriented towards gaining access to urban services, led to the view, best expressed by Stokes (1988), that IND was a progressive community in which residents had developed a strong leftist "consciousness", and a confrontational and ideological pattern of behavior. In this view, IND residents were seen to have made a major evolution in political culture, rejecting traditionally dependent attitudes and past tendencies to secure benefits through clientelistic and face-to-face relationships.

Yet during the 1990s there was a general weakening of revindicative community organization in IND, which was accompanied by fratricidal political struggles and successive electoral defeats by the local Left.

Despite the dominant image of Independencia as a bastion of Andean migrants, its social composition was more diverse from the start. Today it is comprised of a mixture of natives from Lima and Callao, as well as migrants from the Southern, Central and Northern Highlands. Furthermore, over the years there has been a natural growth in the number of Lima natives, as the children
of early migrants remain in the area. These new generations contribute to a growing population density within the original core of IND.

III. Survey Design and Methodology

The survey used in this study was especially designed to identify and analyze personal networks. It was applied in both neighborhoods in October and November of 1994, and the data was entered and processed in December. This has generated a rich original data base for comparative analysis, that my assistants and I began to analyze in January.

The survey is a modified version, adapted for the Peruvian context, of one originally designed by Claude Fisher in his 1982 study, To Dwell Among Friends. A adapted version of this instrument was recently applied in Santiago, Chile by Vicente Espinoza (1992). Our survey design follows the basic framework of Espinoza's questionnaire, but while his study focuses on economic and work issues, our version also incorporates questions aimed at assessing how these relations influence political identity and experience. In each of these studies, however, the units of analysis we are using are social relations themselves, analyzed in terms of their strength and the range of their component ties.

Operationally, in our survey we have defined "networks" as a set of individuals with whom a head of household develops contacts and exchanges in order to obtain resources, ideas and information. Our survey involves a set of 95 questions organized in six modules, each of which refers to different spheres of activity through which individuals obtain and distribute these resources, ideas and information. These six modules or spheres are Domestic (cleaning, shopping, food preparation, etc.), Housing, Employment, Childcare, Money, and what we generally call Reciprocal Recognition (recreation, religion, emotional support, and politics).

The survey was applied to a sample of 125 heads of household in Barrios Altos, and 122 heads of households in Indenpendencia. The areas (or blocks) where they are located were intentionally selected on two main criteria; (1) because they are the original "core" zones of BA and IND, and are considered to best reflect the historical character of each, and (2) because our close contacts with community leaders in these areas guaranteed an effective application of the survey. The selection of households to survey in each was systematic. The data was stored in the Fox Pro 2,6 and processed with the SPSS 6.0 package.

The findings presented below are preliminary and based on initial review of the survey data, and will be subjected to more detailed analysis in the coming months. My observations also draw from previous ethnographic work in these areas and several secondary sources.

IV. Preliminary Findings

1. Characteristics of Households and Networks

The first important finding is that although we have approximately the same number of households in each case, the size of these households and of the networks formed by the household head differ substantially. In BA, the total number of people reported in our sample of households is 31.8% less than in those of IND. However, the networks we identified in BA are 26.8% larger than those in IND. In other words, the households of BA are smaller in size but their networks are more extense, while the households of IND are larger but their networks are smaller.[6]

The differences in household size are due to the fact that in IND there is a larger number of families per dwelling than in BA. We have various indicators of this. The first is the number of stoves per household. While 96% of the households in BA have just one stove, in IND 71.5% of them have one stove, while the other 28.7% have between 2 and 4 stoves. The second indicator is the number of grandchildren and relatives by marriage (of the household head) in these households (Figure 1). The data show that households in IND have a larger number of both, which suggests the existence of more than one family group, though often constituted by children of the household head. In BA the data show that the nuclear family (head, spouse, and their children) comprises 76.9% of the members of households, while in IND this percentage is 60.4%.

In contrast to household size, the differences in the size of networks is due, in part, to the fact that in BA these networks involve a much larger number of friends (507), relatives by marriage (107), and close family members (159), than those in IND (241, 60, and 126, respectively). The numerous networks reveals an intense social life in BA, that does not seem to have the same importance in IND.

To this we must add the characteristics of housing in each case. As mentioned previously, the majority of dwellings in BA are rental properties, of small size, and located in multifamily constructions. These conditions have compelled BA residents to socialize in hallways and out in the neighborhood streets.[7] The situation is distinct in IND, where the homes

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[6] The 125 households in BA have 654 members, and their networks include 1,323 persons. In IND, the 122 households have 959 members and their networks 968 persons.

[7]. According to a 1983 study by the Ministry of Housing, 72 percent of the dwellings in BA have one or two rooms, with a maximum extension of 50 square meters.

were constructed by their owners, after successful land invasions, in lots between 120 and 160 square meters in size. After several decades, these owners also came to house the families of their children, and other relatives. In this way, their external networks are not so numerous.

The second striking factor about the networks in BA and IND is the place of origin of their members. The data (Figure 2) confirm the primacy of Lima natives among network members in BA (85%), although 15% are migrants from the interior of the country. However, the idea that IND is a community of Andean immigrants appears put into question by our data. Lima natives constitute 47.7% of the members of networks, followed by Andean migrants (25.7%) and people from other locations on the Pacific coast (24.7%). The social heterogeneity in IND also reflects the increasing importance of the children of the migrants of the 1960s and 1970s, who today comprise the majority of IND, and who are distinct from both the peasant past of their parents and the traditional culture of Lima's older popular classes. These "new Limenos" reside equally in BA and IND, which renders anachronistic efforts to differentiate their social or political conduct today on the basis of ethnic considerations.

A third factor is the occupational characteristics of the households and the networks of BA and IND. First of all, it is important to point out that the total number of people who work, formally or informally, are a minority in the households surveyed in both neighborhoods: 34.8% in BA and 38.1% in IND. Nonetheless, the number of people who are economically active increases substantially among members of the networks: 54.1% in BA and 61.4% in IND. These increases basically show that the external ties developed by household members tend to be with individuals who are economically active and thus generate resources.

A greater contrast emerges when examining the types of occupations held by the members of networks who work, formally or informally, in each neighborhood (figure 4). In BA, the most significant occupational group is white collar employees (33.7%), followed by formal sector workers (13.4%); which suggests the continued importance of traditional salaried work in the public and private sectors for nearly half of those employed. In contrast, IND has just half that number of employees (15.9), and a stronger core of independent merchants (28.2%), who are largely informal sector vendors.

These independent merchants are nonetheless present in BA as well (20%). Our previous work suggests that this is a more recent phenomenon linked to the formation of various new informal markets in the area. This group appears to be formed by a combination of relative newcomers to BA, and the growing involvement of young people descendent of longtime

residents, who are unable to find employment in the formal sector.[8]

Finally, another important contrast is the notably higher number of professionals and technicians in IND (14 and 6.6%, respectively, versus 9.4 and 3.1 in BA), suggesting a greater value placed on formal education and professional achievement.

2. Nature and Functioning of Networks: Strong and Weak Ties

As noted above, our study shares Granovetter's theory that the functioning of these networks is best explained by analyzing the nature of the interpersonal ties that bind their members. Our data show (Figure 5) that in both cases, the majority of ties among network members are developed within the same neighborhood. This is understandable, since spatial proximity allows greater possibility for daily interaction. This is especially the case in poor neighborhoods where economic scarcity often impedes greater mobility across a large city like Lima. However, we do find a greater concentration of ties in BA (72.1) than in IND (62.4). The difference is ten percentage points, which appear to correspond to the increase in ties that the residents of IND develop with individuals who live outside the neighborhood.[9]

Given this general concentration of ties within the neighborhood, we then examined what types of ties existed, and whether any of them showed a distribution different from the abovementioned general tendency. Figures 6 and 7 respond to these questions. Figure 6 presents three types of interpersonal ties with distinct degrees of strength. Following Granovetter, we constructed three indicators-- "strong", "weak" and also "medium" ties.[10] The results show that the majority of ties developed in both neighborhoods are strong ties. The primacy of strong ties is greater in BA (66.8) than IND (53.6), however, which suggests that in BA the networks are

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[8] See Panfichi (1993): "Juventud, Tradicion y Trabajo"; in Los Nuevos Limenos, Portocarrero G. eds., (Lima: SUR-TAFOS).

[9] The category "other parts of Lima" means that to reach this other neighborhood requires taking at least one bus.

[10] These indicators were constructed by crossing the variables "degrees of confidence" with "frequency of contact". This cross produced twelve cells, that were grouped in three levels of strength. This grouping was developed in the following manner: the cells of "much confidence" with "frequent contact" and "little contact"; and "regular confidence" with "frequent contact", were defined as "strong ties". The cells of "no confidence" with "frequent contact" or "little contact"; and "little confidence" with "almost no contact", were defined as "weak ties". The cells with intermediate values were defined as "medium ties".

more densely knit. This is consistent with predominance of Lima natives in BA, and with the larger core of salaried employees. This finding is complementary with the greater frequency of medium and weak ties in IND, which suggests that there are more flexible networks than in BA.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of strong, medium and weak ties according to place of residence of the members of networks. The data confirm with more detail the aforementioned tendencies; a greater concentration of strong ties in BA, and an important concentration of medium and weak ties in IND. What is new in this figure is that these tendencies remain in all categories of residence. In effect, in BA there are more strong ties not only among those members of networks who live in the neighborhood (64.7), but also among those who live in other parts of the city (71.3) and even outside of Lima (75.8). In IND, there are more weak ties within the neighborhood (17.7), in other parts of the city (10.7), and outside of Lima (24.2). The same is true for medium ties. In other words, while all three types of ties appear in both neighborhoods, this figure suggests that the networks in BA are more somewhat more homogenous, with a clear predominance of strong ties; while in IND there is a somewhat more hetergenoues combination of weak, medium and strong ties.

The strength or weakness of ties appears to be directly linked to the greater or lesser degree of kinship or friendship between the network members. Figures 8 shows that, in both neighborhoods, strong ties are established primarily with family members: with most frequency among relatives who share the same household, followed by other blood relatives, and then by other relatives by marriage. After relatives in general, strong ties may be formed with friends, neighbors and colleagues. In other words, there is an increasing correlation between the strength of ties and family proximity. The opposite occurs with weak ties. In both neighborhoods, weak ties are established with greater frequency in the economic and social spheres, and then with extended family members.[11]

What does it mean for our analysis that in BA the networks are more compact and homogeneous? Our study suggests that this makes them less flexible, as they are more subject to reciprocal obligations; and less effective in the circulation of resources, ideas and information, due to the lesser diversity of social contacts involved. Furthermore, the strong ties in BA do not produce strong cohesion across the entire neighborhood,

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[11] As Lomnitz points out, we should not take these tendencies as absolute (1975:210). In practice there are a series of gradations within each category of kinship and friendship. There are some siblings who are closer than others, preferred cousins, intimate friends and others less so. Thus it is important to complement statistical analysis with more detailed ethnographic research.

since they develop in small circles and, at best, there may be some overlap among the most active members.

In contrast, the networks in IND have a more heterogeneous mix of ties. This suggest that they may be more flexible, and better able to link internal and external groups. In this case resources, ideas and information can circulate more rapidly, creating the potential for more general neighborhood identity. However, since an important share of their ties are weak or medium, these have also been more ephimeral and linked to specific, time-bound conflicts.

3. Access to Resources

In this study, we have also tried to determine the ways in which networks facilitate access to the main channels of distribution of resources in society; ie, to the market, the state (and its various institutions), to social channels (groups and other individuals); as well as how they relate to self-help activities. Following Espinoza (1992), we constructed Figure 9, in which each indicator shows the proportion of resources that each household in our sample obtains through these different channels.

Our first observation here is that the market appears as the most important sphere in which our sample of households obtain basic resources such as food, clothing, and basic household artefacts. Almost all of the households in BA and IND use the market to obtain such resources. Nonetheless, given the extreme poverty in both neighborhoods, their access is limited to a very reduced level of consumption. Therefore, the market alone is not sufficient to satisfy all of their basic needs. And in fact, our data show that the other channels--institutional (the state), social, and self-help--are a necessary complement to the market for these households.

The institutional or state sphere in Peru also specializes in the distribution of a specific set of resources to the poor; particularly subsidized foodstuffs, and social security payments. With increasing liberal reforms of the Peruvian state this role has been weakened considerably, but it remains significant in Lima's poor neighborhoods. In this case, however, there is a significant difference between our two cases. In BA, 44% of the households surveyed receive food supports for their children, through the Glass of Milk program administered by the municipal government through the public schools. This situation is distinct in IND, where only 12.3% of the households receive external food supports, and this is channeled primarily through popular soup kitchens supported by the Catholic Church or private, non-governmental organizations working in the area, not the public sector.

This situation is particularly striking given that for many years IND had a solid fabric of social organizations and programs. However, after the electoral defeat of the Left at the municipal level in 1992, the new local authorities reduced their support for such public sector programs as the Glass of Milk. In this case, political variables appear to explain the differences in institutional distribution of resources.

Given the limitations of both the market and the institutional (or public) spheres for delivering various resources, it is important to note the significance of the links and exchanges that develop in the social sphere. It is in this sphere, of course, that personal networks are also constructed, and where the strength or weakness of their ties are relevant. Although this is a general characteristic, the importance of social links in our survey appears greatest in obtaining such resources as informal credit, emergency funds, employment opportunities, and household care. In these cases, we did not find substantial differences between BA and IND. The most relevant difference is that in household repair activities, the support of neighbors and friends appears more frequent in IND than BA. This is consistent with the tradition of land occupation and collective construction of housing and services that characterized the formation and consolidation of IND during the 1960s and 1970s.

There is, however, a final sphere of access to resources, that involves self-provisioning on the part of households. Such activity is present in both neighborhoods, especially in the area of foodstuffs (small family gardens) and clothing (sewing one's own garments). In IND, however, this sphere appears to be greater than in BA, as over half of the households surveyed participate in some form of self provisioning, in contrast to just 21.6% in BA. This is likely due to the greater role of institutional provision of such resources in the case of BA.

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Final Remarks

As mentioned in the outset, I believe that Network Analysis is a particularly promising approach to the study of Latin American societies today. It offers a useful critique of ideological conceptions that have sought to explain individuals' behavior by their class, ethncity, or party affiliation alone. Instead, this perspective examines the ways in which people, living under specific structural conditions, construct different ties and interactions with specific goals.

This preliminary report on our field research suggests that in a context of extreme necessity and high unemployment, the capacity of poor individuals and families to survive depends on the ties and networks they establish with other individuals in different spheres of social life. However, not all networks are constituted exclusively by strong ties based on ethnic or class solidarity, reciprocal exchange and collective action. There are also networks with weak ties, based on more instrumental relations and aimed at obtaining very concrete resources. The particular combination of these diverse forms of social interaction not only determines their potential and limitations for material survival, but also for the formation (or not) of local identities.

The cases analyzed here present an image that is distinct from the prevailing views of these communities. In IND, the existence of a population with long experience in revindicative and political organizations, gave the impression that this was a community united by strong ties. Furthermore, it appeared that IND had a collective identity defined by readicalism and ideological commitment. Yet with a more systematic network analysis, our study suggests that the community ties were not as strong as generally believed, nor were the networks so extensive. On the contrary, the ties were weaker, less ideological and more focused on obtaining concrete resources. Thus once the formative period of struggle for land and services had passed, the networks formed by these weak ties ceased to function, weakinging the popular organization. To this must be added the impact of new economic policies and the various offensives of political competitors. All of which led to a breakdown in the more institutionalized forms of communal organization. It is not so surprising, therefore, that in the 1990s, given the particular combination of strong and weak ties in IND, new networks have formed that are more pragmatic and volatile. These networks permit residents to access material resources and information of all types that circulate in different social circles.

On the other hand, we can say that in BA the historical absence of institutionalized organization and collective struggle does not mean, as is often said, that the population lives in a state of anomie or extreme individualism. On the contrary, this research suggests that there is an intense social life in this neighborhood, and networks with strong ties of loyalty and solidarity among their members. These characteristics are the result of common experiences as well as social traits. However, as previously mentioned, these strong ties present greater difficulties in the struggle for survival, as they offer more
limited access to resources found in other social spheres.

Finally, this research suggest that network analysis has considerable potential for use in programs and projects designed to reduce urban poverty. To give one example, by more effectively describing and explaining the dynamics of life in the neighborhood in this way, it is possible to identify local leaders or persons who form opinions or serve as communication "bridges" among different groups; by the frecuency with which neighbors turn to them to channel resources, seek emotional support, or solicit a political opinion. In other words, this may be a more effective way to enter into and work within a given neighborhood, than through "contacts" designated by an external public or private agency. As Anderson (1991) reminds us, the introduction of a development project in a given area always generates new alignments among the networks of persons who seek access to its benefits. What is important is that it does so in a sufficiently informed and sensitive way--such as with this type of analysis--so as not to endanger the project objectives.