El Barrio : Exclusion and Participation in a U.S. Urban Enclave

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"My mom is Mexican, no habla ingles [She does not speak English], they don't want to challenge because they've been oppressed for so long. It is a long process to make people feel they can challenge". Barrio Logan Resident

The City of San Diego, known as "America's finest city"[i], has recently become one of the wealthiest areas in the United States. It is home to approximately 1.2 million people. However, its economic success has not been distributed evenly, and the local Latino population has not benefited from it as much as the population at large. First, the residential segregation in San Diego has deepened in the last decade, both at the city and the suburb level. In 1990, Latinos in suburbs lived in census tracts 58% white, whereas in 2000, they live in census tracts 45% white. Segregation rates are even higher for Latino children than for the adult population[ii]. The San Diego inner city Barrio, located southeast of downtown is composed by three neighborhoods: Barrio Logan, Logan Heights and Sherman Heights. They host approximately 40.000 inhabitants, with 68% of the population made up of Latinos (primarily of Mexican-origin) and 39,5% living below poverty level. Second, 2000 Census data report a set of factors that reinforce political disenfranchisement in the area. The heterogeneity of migratory experiences within the Barrio population accounts for political invisibility. Two-thirds of the residents are native-born, whereas one third are foreign-born. Among the foreign-born population, only 22% are naturalized citizens. Access to the electoral process is thus limited to a fraction of the residents. Both at the local and state level, voter registration and turnout are indeed extremely low. For instance, turnout for City Council

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District 8 elections (that includes the Barrio) ranged from 7% to 30% of the registered voters between 1983 and 2001. In addition, another large segment of the Barrio population does not have legal immigration status. Not only is access to voting thus extremely limited, but the costs for visible participation is extremely high.

Moreover, socioeconomic criteria also influence negatively political participation. In the Barrio, unemployment rates are more than triple those for the entire city (21.7% versus 6.1%) and the median household income is 57% less than the median income for the city of San Diego ($19,968 versus $45,733). Education levels are extremely low, which disfavor involvement in politics. Finally, the Barrio is not a place invested by multiple formal organizations and institutions. The community organizations inherited from the Chicano Movement and that are still operating in the Barrio have been incorporated into social services provider-agencies (namely San Diego County Chicano Federation, Barrio Station, Logan Heights Family Heath Center, formerly known as the Chicano Clinic, and outside of the Barrio, the Centro Cultural de la Raza). The remaining organizations which are not incorporated yet (Chicano Park Steering Committee) and other organizations born at the end of the 1980s, are either mainly state-funded (Environmental Health Coalition and Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee) or voluntary grassroots organizations (Unión del Barrio, Raza Rights Coalition[iii]). They all encounter obstacles finding constituents in the Barrio. This situation contrasts with the mobilization of residents during the Chicano movement era. A number of organizations were created by Chicano activists and among the most symbolical results of political claims was the take over of the land to create a community public park. Chicano Park and the murals that then covered the Coronado bridge pillars in the 1970s and 1980s are significant artistic and political heritage of the *movimiento* at the heart of Barrio Logan[iv].

References to the Barrio in San Diego City official documents as well as in the main daily newspaper (San Diego-Union Tribune) demonstrate that a highly stereotyped and culturalist vision pervades. They describe the Barrio as a dangerous and apathetic space. For instance, the *2002-2004 Community and Economic Development Strategy Plan* for revitalization of the City of San Diego states that: "*low-income households are concentrated in the oldest and least expensive parts of the City. A concentration of poverty leads to what sociologists refer to as "culture of poverty", in which social interactions are governed by short term survival, including success in high risk, high-reward, illegal activities, while the values of the broader culture, such as workforce responsibility and success at school are avoided*"[v]. The use of of

'culture of poverty', Oscar Lewis' highly debated concept, is not a matter of controversy for policy-makers dealing with the Barrio community in San Diego. Nevertheless, when Lewis (1963, 1968) elaborated the concept of culture of poverty, he emphasized the pathological expressions of a particular subculture among the poors of Mexico City. He then applied the definition to Mexican immigrants in U.S. Barrios to explain the passivity of the population and the self-reproduction of poverty. As a consequence, this perspective does not account for structural causes to explain poverty and social and political marginalization. At the same time, the widespread perception of a culture of dependence was then a defining criterion to critically assess the welfare and assistance programs planned in marginalized urban areas (MURRAY 1984; MEAD 1986; for its critics KATZ 1989). To criticize this theory, academic insiders shifted the perspective in the 1970s and elaborated the concept of Barrio as "internal colonies". They suggested that Barrios were the result of a history of class, ethnic and cultural oppression. Nevertheless, they also pointed out Barrio residents' structural incapacity to participate in the political process (BARRERA et al. 1971). To sump up, scholars generally outlined the political disenfranchisement of Barrio communities and opened the ground for policy-makers in search of legitimacy to limit public investment in these areas.

In addition to San Diego policy-makers negative perceptions of the Barrio, the main local written media, the San Diego Union-Tribune, draws a quasi exclusively dangerous portrait of the Barrio. A coverage from 2000 to 2003 news articles accounts that over the 230 references to the Barrio, 65% are constituted by short headlines relating violence, crimes, gang and drug related activities. The remaining 35% are long articles that describe the multiple risks present in that space, along predominantly negative lines. Different topics appear: environmental hazards, homeless issues, education drop off, and health problems. The Barrio is: 'a crime-ridden area', the city 'poorest neighborhood', 'plagued by gang-related activities and drive-by-shootings', in brief a 'ghetto'. For instance, *"Over 42 homicides in the city during the period, 14 were in southeastern San Diego. Violence is just a part of life down here, always has been*", stated a newspaper article that seemed to quote only one side of the story[vi]. The only positive images of the Barrio are cultural references, especially to Mexican traditional celebrations (5 de Mayo, Virgen de Guadalupe), food traditions, and the Chicano Park murals. But even positive images recall internal problems of the Barrio. As an example, an article stressed the role of local artists in the revitalization of the neighborhood but emphasized at the same time a lost battle : *"Mario Torero restores a mural that he hopes will symbolize the rebirth of three San Diego inner-city neighborhoods. I thought the mural's poor condition reflected the mood of the community - neglected, old and tarnished"*[vii]. All representations of

the Barrio and discourses about it are of importance because the struggle over the meaning and the boundaries of the Barrio is also a struggle for power.

§ Barrios and political participation

The phenomena of residential segregation raise concerns not only of social justice but also of political incorporation. Residential segregation refers to the degree to which people live separately from one another. To the extent that segregation constrains social, educational, political, and economic advancement for ethnic groups such as Latinos in the U.S., it is thus a salient public policy issue (JOHNSON et al. 2002). Ghettos and Barrios are radical figures of the multi-faceted urban marginalization of minorities in American metropolises (WILSON 1987; MOLLENKOPF & CASTELLS 1991; MOORE 1993; MASSEY 1993). Barrio residents have been simultaneously defined as apolitical or politically deficient. Many believe that neighborhood poverty leads to political passivity and the few existing empirical studies certainly point out the lack of participation in these areas (WILSON 1987; MOORE 1993; BOURGOIS 1995; WACQUANT 2002). Barrios are defined as ethnic neighborhoods[viii] where at least 40% of the population is of Latino-origin and where at least 40% of the residents live in high poverty rates (LOGAN et al. 2002). In that respect, the San Diego Barrio fits perfectly in the above description. American Barrios' poverty is growing: from 1970 to 1990, the number of Latinos in Barrios rose from 730.000 up to more than 2 millions[ix]. In particular, when the Mexican-origin population represented 5,4% of the total U.S. population in 1990, 14,30% lived in Barrios (JARGOWSKY 1997, 2003). Barrios are also characterized by physical deterioration (vacant units, bad state of repair, abandoned housing, low rate of ownership); economic depression (low employment and labor force participation, high working hours and low wages, sectored occupation, low household income); and social marginalization (prevalence of single-parent families - specially female-headed families -, poor educational attainment, high teenager pregnancy rate). These characteristics are also present in the San Diego Barrio.

Nevertheless, a shift in perspective may lead to question the idea that Barrio residents are not politically involved. I argue that previous models are not totally accurate, because literature on political participation mainly focused on conventional forms of participation (such as electoral behavior, membership in unions, political parties or formal institutions, campaigning activities etc.) and ignores gender specificity. Instead of asking why Barrio residents do not participate and what conditions lead to political incapacity, I propose to widen the definition

of political participation to any "*activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action - either directly, by affecting the making or implementation of public policy, or indirectly, by influencing the selection of people who make those policies*"(VERBA et al. 2001)[x]. This broader definition enables to focus on a diversity of unorthodox forms of participation but also to measure outcomes differently. I ask the following questions: which unorthodox forms of participation may take place in the Barrio? Which resources make the emergence of collective action possible in the Barrio? Scholars have rarely addressed poor people's political actions, except in the negative context of urban riots or upheaval. When confronted to the Chicano movement involving Barrio residents in the late 1960s or to the civil rights movement, they opted to analyze collective action as a psychological disruption that serves to alleviate grievances (GURR 1970). Other authors have stipulated that violent protest was the only and most beneficial form of political participation accessible to marginalized population (PIVEN & CLOWARD 1979; BROWNING et al. 1984). I shall develop another approach to the study of poor people's political participation by stressing the role of representations, symbols, collective identities as determinants for collective action (TOURAINE 1984; GAMSON 1992; MELUCCI 1996; MEYER et al. 2002). In addition, I rely on Putnam's definition of 'social capital' (1993), that is "networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits" to formulate new hypotheses regarding participation in the Barrio. I take the case of the struggle against gentrification in Barrio Logan because respondents expressed resistance to the new urban process on-going in the Barrio. Interestingly enough, the voices heard are mainly women's voices. First I will demonstrate the extent to which gentrification has become a mobilizing agenda for Barrio residents, and especially for women. Second, I will emphasize that the constitution of certain forms of resources, such as social networks based on collective identity, extend the definition and role of social capital in determining participation.

§ Methodology

Barrio Logan, located southeast of San Diego - California - was not studied by political science scholars, except in the late 1960s and early 1970s. From a theoretical perspective, the specific literature dedicated to San Diego and to the Barrio is extremely scarce and dates back to the 'War on Poverty' program (BONJEAN & CROW 1969; STEWART 1972; ERICKSON et al. 1969, 1973a, 1973b). The City has always been portrayed and considered as a place where nothing much happens or where everything is "under the perfect sun" (DAVIS et al. 2003). Various hypotheses can explain this lack of

interest. First, Scholars studied mainly Chicago, Los Angeles and other southwestern cities. Scholars of Mexican American or Latino/a political participation focused more on electoral participation or pan-ethnic forms of participation. Local research center traditionally favored non local issues such as border issues, or binational and transnational politics. Second, the decline of political mobilization after the 1960s Chicano movement have given the impression there was no mobilization anymore. The remaining community organizations from that time have become part of regular urban politics. They are much less threatening to established power and work mainly within the political system. The context seems less favorable for the study of political mobilization. Third, minorities in San Diego have long been denied access to the electoral sphere. The 1990 redistricting and lawsuits led by the Chicano Federation of San Diego County helped terminate with the at-large elections system and initiated the rise of Hispanic/Latino electoral representation, both at city and state levels. Nevertheless, San Diego's political system is still perceived as "static and boring".

I conducted an ethnographic study in the San Diego Barrio from August 2002 to December 2003. I observed community meetings, cultural events, political demonstrations, and marches. I participated in community daily life at different stages and levels (voluntary work, citizenship classes). I designed a photographic database in order to present the diversity and complexity of the Barrio[xi]. In addition to participatory observation, I hold 98 semi-structured interviews with community leaders, members of organizations, elected officials and governmental agencies' representatives involved in the Barrio and 18 life-stories interviews with non-mobilized residents. More than a hundred informal discussions took place during the fieldwork. Besides, I observed citizenship classes in Barrio schools during a period of four months. During the classes, I distributed and collected a questionnaire to a sample of residents (with a 75% rate of return) composed by first-generation Mexican immigrants applying for citizenship. The questions concerned participatory issues, dual nationality, socialization, citizenship practices and representations. Finally, I examined local newspapers and archives from the San Diego City Redevelopment Agency for a twelve-year period, from 1991 to 2003. I used the triangulation of sources and methods to provide a picture of the Barrio as complex and comprehensive as possible (BOURDIEU et al. 1968, 1998; BECKER 1985, 2002; KING et al. 1994; WACQUANT 2000). It is often stated that poverty provokes a deficit in forms of trust and is strongly associated with fatalism. In particular, civic culture theorists linked this distrust to the development of a passive political culture specific to Mexican-origin people (GAMIO 1930; ALMOND & VERBA 1963; GREBLER et al. 1970; ALMOND & KNIGHT 1996). Indeed, people in Barrios have little confidence in the system

and/or in other persons. The '*desconfianza*' is expressed both at the horizontal level, following statutory and class lines, between legal and illegal immigrants, residents and citizens, first and second generations, renters and owners; and at the vertical level between residents and public authority, leaders and local representatives, developers and renters, etc. The 'desconfianza' factor affected my entry in the community. For instance, a local artist told me : *" the Chicano movement was like a big table, some of the people just seated there and were sharing their meal, some other just wanted to be close to the table, to grasp some part of the meal and leave: So, where will you be seated? What do you want from us and what will you do and give to us?"*. Multiple outsider factors (nationality, racial background, and gender) delayed the process of gaining contact with residents. Simultaneously, they helped differentiate the researcher from both community members and institutional representatives. They provided a source for curiosity and trust, openness and comfort (BOURDIEU 1998). This fieldwork leads me to argue that the main outcome of Barrio residents' resistance to gentrification is indeed the framing of the Barrio image and of its territorial and symbolical boundaries.

§ Gentrification in San Diego

Gentrification is the process "*by which poor and working-class neighborhoods in the inner city [neighborhoods that have previously experienced disinvestment and a middle class exodus] are refurbished via an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters*" (Smith and Williams 1986). It usually happens in three phases: the deterioration of life and housing conditions; a transitory period characterized by renovation of housing and 'beautification'; and a final phase where only former homeowners remain in a mainly Anglo neighborhood. Indeed, it is not a phenomenon specific to San Diego. Paradoxically, after a period of state retreat in deprived areas, a new form of interventionism is taking place in American cities (JONES-CORREA 2001). This newly adopted policies aim at accompanying the state disinvestment through a policy of preferential taxation to favor free enterprise in certain urban areas (*enterprise zones*) and the promotion of inner-city revitalization with community involvement (*empowerment zones)*. San Diego local government initiated the process of urban renewal in the late 1980s.   The 'redevelopment', 'revitalization' and 'beautification' programs started with large investments in the downtown transformed into an entertainment and commercial area (cafés, restaurants, movie theatres etc.). The current construction of the Padres Ball Park accelerates the gentrification. The *City of Villages* plan promotes a 'smart growth' approach and focuses on redeveloping 'historically or culturally

distinct communities'[xii] (GALE 1984; SORKIN 1992; SMITH 1996). Notably, part of the Barrio was then turned into a Redevelopment Project Area. Residents started suffering from a sharp increase in rents, eviction and displacement since 1998-1999. As a resident stated: "*They (elected officials) have to be aware that here, two or three families live in one house because they cannot afford the rent, there is no privacy for anyone, some of them live in garage rooms, that's true, and we need low-income affordable housing for people*"[xiii]. In fact, data show that 80% of San Diego inner-city Barrio residents are specified renters. More than 25% of the Barrio population spends over 50% of their household income in gross rent; and more than half pay one third and over (U.S. Census Bureau 1999).

The complexity of gentrification is reflected in the changing discourses by media and public officials about the San Diego 'poor inner-city area'. The metaphors have shifted from the Barrio as a 'gang-plagued neighborhood' to a 'vibrant residential community'[xiv]. An optimistic vision stresses the revitalization of neighborhoods through ethnic mixing and private investments. But a pessimistic approach would rather link beautification projects with a form of 'cleaning up' (also labeled 'strategy of containment'[xv]) that pushes away certain categories of the population from a historically Mexican-origin space[xvi]. I argue that because recent urban changes threaten Barrio residents both individually by displacement and collectively by the disappearance of the community, gentrification constitutes a mobilizing agenda. It activates social networks to resist displacement.

§ Gentrification and Participation

To demonstrate my argument, I take the example of DURO - Developing Unity through Resident Organizing (in Spanish a.k.a. *Desarrollando Unidad a Través de Residentes Organizados*). Barrio residents created DURO, an almost exclusively female grassroots group, in the fall of 2000. A loose voluntary association of first and second-generation Mexican-origin women and students composes DURO. It is dedicated, among other things, to the defense of Barrio renters and residents against forced and unlawful evictions. The association also asks for low-income and affordable housing units, and promotes community inputs for the use of vacant lots in the Barrio. As a flyer states, members "*who work or were born and raised in the communities of Logan Heights and Sherman Heights (gathered) to dialogue about signs of gentrification that seemed to have gained momentum with the Ballpark development and the downtown redevelopment efforts*". The community meetings were held either in private homes or in the local Sherman Community Center. The first 'victory' of the movement is recalled to be when a DURO member won an eviction court

hearing in May 2001. This resident lived 23 years in the same property, a two bedroom apartment she was renting from $300 up to $400 and 550$ a month. Now the same unit after being rehabilitated is rented for $1,500. The resident won the hearing but finally got displaced. She recalled the forced eviction as follows: *″I felt it was unfair, it was unfair the way the owner evicted us, because he said he was going to call the Migra. I got sick because of the dust and the stress, yes, because of the dust falling when he started to demolish and renovate the house while we were still leaving there. We were still in there, because the iwner only gave us a eight days notice, and we had nowhere to go (…). I lived 23 years in this house″*.

Different activities started, such as door-to-door contacts, bilingual flyers distribution on tenants rights and responsibilities, petitions for rent stabilization, community meetings and marches. As a resident noticed: *″In San Diego, everything is more expensive, homes, rents. Before, we paid $500 for a two-bedroom apartment, now it is almost double price. They renovate houses, they send the Migra (Border Patrol) to people, and then rents skyrocket. I am lucky because I bought my house ten years ago. But people cannot afford to live here anymore″*[xvii]. For instance, on June 30, 2001, over a hundred residents participated in a march to address displacement[xviii]. Another march entitled a Trail of Tears March (*Caminata de Lágrimas*) took place and slogan stated: "*We are organizing to claim our human right to housing. Our inherent dignity is being violated″ ; ″Make your Voices heard″ ;* "*Aqui estamos y NO nos vamos!*" "*en unión hay fuerza*"; "*únase a nuestro esfuerzo comunitario!*"[xix]. The association attempted to raise consciousness about the housing problem during city council meetings but got some limited media coverage, mostly from Spanish-speaking local channels and newspapers. In 2002 the organization tried to build up coalitions and networks with other groups, but the mobilization began to decrease. In 2003, DURO started to meet on a more regular basis, addressing the specific issue of the use of vacant lots in the Barrio, as well as low-income/affordable housing projects.

Gender difference in participation has been overlooked in the literature, especially because theory used to focus on certain forms of conventional participation (turn-out in the electoral process, access to elected official positions, participation through financial investment). Certainly, three main determinants affect the degree of women's participation: a differentiated access to resources, in particular to education; a lower integration in workforce and other social networks that decreases the chance to be recruited into political activities; finally a differentiation in political orientations: access to information, interest into politics, feeling of political efficacy being lower than for men (BOOKMAN & MORGEN 1988;

CONWAY et al. 1997; THAYER 2000). Classic literature would focus on women's political deficiency, in particular Mexican or Mexican-origin women of low-income background (BLEA 1992; RUIZ 1998; PARDO 1999). Melville (1980) labeled them 'twice a minority'. But Barrio women are more likely to be four times a minority: as women, as Latinas in a predominantly Latino environment, as Mexican-origin individuals in a racialized society, and as low-income Barrio residents. It is thus even more striking to show that Barrio women lead the resistance to gentrification. Why do women mobilize against gentrification? How is gentrification a gendered agenda that channels participation?

§ Public and private sphere

I suggest that Barrio women's participation is essentially linked to the gentrification issue for two main reasons: the Barrio space is highly invested by social meanings of the community; and domestic and community space are intertwined in women's representations and actions. By questioning the traditional dichotomy established between private and public spheres, women civic involvement in grassroots associations might provide more benefits than the entry in conventional politics (LISTER 1997; YUVAL 1999).

First, DURO members and residents' narratives constantly illustrate two conflicting visions of space, that is social versus abstract representations (LEFEBVRE 1974). In fact, elected officials, promoters, institutional representatives, and media's discourses present the Barrio as a materialized space, a product of costs and benefits. The terms revitalization, beautification, revival, clean up and redevelopment are metaphors of the reification of the Barrio territory[xx]. A District agent expresses in these terms her perception of gentrification: *" In terms of issues, I think housing is what my constituents are worried about, the first issue they are concerned about, to beautify the areas, such as Barrio Logan and Sherman Heights"*[xxi]. Redevelopment projects are conceived as a privatization of the space, carried out through rhetoric of progress and security, the stigmatization of homeless population, and claims for ethnic and economic diversity. On the contrary, representations of DURO members and Barrio residents recall that the neighborhood space is a product of common history which memory has to be shared among generations. Living in the Barrio means a collective desire to preserve the community cultural specificity. One activist stated: *" The rent is increasing a lot. Then there is no home anymore for low-income people. (…) This is not fair. This is a very old community, a Latino community, for Latino people, and it is not good that Americans come here. Because every community has its own thing, right?*'[xxii]. DURO members feel attachment to this territory, because - simply stated - living in a Mexican Barrio means

something important to them (PARDO 1993; HARDY-FANTA 1993; HONDAGNEU-SOTELO 1994; MUÑIZ 1998). Therefore, opposite types of representations show how some individuals seek to maximize the exchange value of the space whereas others privilege its intrinsic value. That's why the struggle against gentrification is not only a struggle for the defense of the physical space but also for the definition of symbolical boundaries and collective identities.

Second, resistance to gentrification is indeed a defense of private homes against eviction and rent increase, but also a defense of the overall community. Barrio women see gentrification as a threat, because it implies a dramatic disappearance of domestic and community space. Not only homes are being destroyed or renters are being evicted, but also vacant lots, public parks, community centers, or streets' characters are being redefined by gentrification. Studies show that women's common preoccupations for basic common rights, such as education, health and housing are essential for collective participation and politicization (VERBA et al. 2001)[xxiii]. In this respect housing and living conditions affected by increasing households costs are a key issue, as a DURO member stated: "*One of the main problem is affordable housing, because there is little affordable housing here. I think that for a kid to do good at school, his family has to be in a good situation, because when a kid go to school without food or without a home to sleep in, how do you think he is going to do at school?*"[xxiv]. As a consequence, Barrio women link the private and the public spheres, and by doing so they reinvent forms of participation, dialogue, and political activism that extends beyond the family space. As Pardo (1998) noticed on her study of Mexican American women activists in Los Angeles: "*The quality of life in a community reflects unrecorded social and political processes, often originating in grassroots activism. Different from electoral politics, grassroots activism happens at the juncture between larger institutional politics and people's daily experiences. Women play a central role in the often unrecorded politics at this level*". If gentrification threatens the public space, it also overlaps the domestic place, and vice versa. An instance of this overlapping is materialized in the lack of material resources that transforms private homes into meeting places for the association. One DURO members remembers the struggle to get a public meeting room: "*We struggled for a long time because we did not have any fixed place to meet, many people missed the meetings, because we were always changing from one house to another*"[xxv]. So, the mobilization against gentrification shows that collective action in the Barrio happens and that this political participation is gendered, in particular because of the issue at stake. It is then important to ask what kind of

non-material resources do Barrio women use to build on this participation. I suggest that ethnic and territorial identity forms one of the essential symbolical resources present in the Barrio.

§ Collective Identity and Participation

Collective identities are socially constructed processes difficult to label because they are both reasons and results of collective action, intimately imposed, voluntarily chosen and/or internalized. They have a complex situational, contextual and political genesis (TOURAINE 1984; MELUCCI 1996; CASTELLS) but might favor the emergence collective action. In the San Diego Barrio case, chosen or imposed Latino-origin, Mexican-origin or Barrio-origin identities are all situational. Ethnic identities are used as both reactive and proactive means to define and preserve Barrio community boundaries. Scholars have largely focused on ethnic identity as a resource for the elaboration of specific claims and as mean for collective action (BARTH 1969; MILLER 1981; NIE & VERBA 1993). They constitute a resource in the struggle against identified outsiders or gentrifiers. I argue that DURO members use both ethnic and territorial specific identities. The fact that Barrio residents share a set of symbols and representations of their community space helps building a sense for self-affirmation. Residential segregation experienced as social and political exclusion is paradoxically a source for claiming a right to 'live together-in-difference' (YOUNG 1999, 2001). They build a community, i.e. a unit of belonging whose members perceive that they share moral, aesthetic/expressive or cognitive meanings, thereby gaining a sense of personal as well as group identity. Communities are constructed symbolically over time (ANDERSON 1983).

First, narratives show that DURO members and women activists are limited in their choice of resources to build common frames of action and have to use ethnic identity as one of those. In fact, the construction of cultural similarities is not always rational, instrumental or conscious. It is not always a matter of choice but more often of matter of imposition. At the same time, involved individuals have the tendency to use the frames elaborated by the Other. Ingroup/outgroup thinking is constantly present in narratives that identify 'the enemy' as 'White', or more frequently, as a foreign: "they" or "them", or again as a pejorative other: "they" are 'not Mexican', or 'not Latino'. The gentrifiers or developers are identified as any

white representatives, be they public authority, property owners, developers, or journalists. The struggle against gentrification is often phrased as a denial a 'whitening' of the area, which highly contrasts with the metaphors of 'cleaning up' used by gentrifiers. A commentary by a community activist expresses this dichotomy: *"We are saving this neighborhood, with anger, determination, but we will save it from that, it has already been under attack, in particular with the urban city planning department, who is our greatest enemy. This is the issue of the last Mexican American community on the southeast of California"*. The preservation of the Barrio community identity comes through the protection of its Mexican history or Mexican-American roots.

But the reality is more complex, since identified outsiders can share the same ethnic background or in some cases live in the Barrio. Then, the narratives appear to be more diffuse and stigmatize the outsiders as people who are: 'not from here', 'not born here', 'do not live here', 'do not belong here', 'do not even come here'. During a meeting, a woman declared her anger against outsiders in the following way: *"We formed ourselves because there was no organization, or other organizations they come from outside. The other day we had a community meeting, people came from all over the place, they said: we need this here! They don't even live here!"*[xxvi]. More than referring to a racialized or ethnic categorization that fixes the limits of who is part of the Barrio and who is not, the discourses already show the complexity and debates on the determination of community boundaries.

The second use of collective ethnic identity for mobilization can also be affirmed by the use of Spanish language as a group marker. The capacity to speak English and the linguistic isolation of Barrio residents are indeed strong obstacles for participation. Being only Spanish-speaking in the first generation of Barrio immigrants or low-capacitated in English in the second generation of Barrio residents can be analyzed as a basis for discrimination and for political powerlessness (NIE & VERBA 1993). In fact, fluency in the dominant language also conditions access to workforce, educational success, and integration in the broader society. In the Barrio, data from the 2000 Census Bureau show that almost 38% of the population is linguistically isolated and over one-third express difficulties to speak English[xxvii]. At the same time, a more instrumental perspective of the language is interesting to consider. First, a voiceless minority might use the capacity to speak Spanish as an instrument for internal solidarity and community empowerment (FISHMAN; VERBA & LEHMAN 1993). Language can be seen as an oppositional resource that links Spanish-speaking people altogether. A second-generation DURO member expressed the desire to link non-English

speakers with bilingual ones: *"My mom is Mexican,* no habla inglés *(She does not speak English), they don't want to challenge because they've been oppressed for so long. (…) People were scared because they don't know,* pero si pueden hablar *(but yes, they can speak out)"* . It is a vehicle for intragroup protection and reciprocal support. Second, bilingual activists might prefer to use Spanish than English to mark politically and symbolically their relations to the outsiders. The contextual shifts from one language to another are striking. To speak Spanish during a meeting may force the outsiders to respect the use of the group language. It forms an attempt to both show a systemic oppression by the dominant group and a claim for the recognition of cultural rights. In part, the use of the language might substitute the lack of traditional resources (money, members, material capital) for political participation[xxviii]. For instance, the case of complaints about translations during public meetings frequently appears. One resident had to summarize a meeting with City and District representatives. The first thing he recalled was: "*The translation was terrible, he was downloading all what people said. (…) We have to track the entire process, because this is supposed to be an open process*". The presence or lack of translation, its quality or acuteness, its objectivity or distortion, is a matter of conflict. Symbolically and politically, the debate on the language use represents a discussion of cultural and ethnic-specific rights that give existence, voice and visibility to the group.

The notion of belonging to a specific territory forms the third component of collective identity. Surely deeply intertwined with ethnic-specific identities, the representations of the Barrio as a common cultural place constitute a powerful tool for the construction of a common identity. El Barrio is presented as a social space defined by its territorial boundaries that have to be preserved and not disintegrated (streets, parks, shops etc.). These physical boundaries delimit who is part of the community and who is not. Direct and personal contacts among residents are extremely important because they allow organizers and potential participants to align frames and transmit cultural messages to each other about the peculiarities of the space. Collective action against gentrification is rooted in reaction to the intervention of challengers: *"I want to leave here because this is my Barrio. If I buy a home, I will buy it here"*[xxix]. In addition, the Barrio is defined positively as our community (*nuestra comunidad*), a place of identification, which can become a place for self-determination. Affective ties to the space play an important role in strengthening horizontal networks. An evicted Barrio resident, active member in DURO, tells her desire to come back to the Barrio: *"What I want now… is to go back there (…) I feel very identified because everyone is*

Hispano there (…). Over there, there is the Bazaar, the Farmers Market, I feel more identified over there"[xxx]. Social ties are thus grounded in the emotional bounds among their members. They favor trust, civic and moral commitment thanks to identification to a common shared space.

The feeling of belonging to a group and a specific territory develop into group consciousness, group identity and eventually in feeling political efficiency and capacity. Different kind of social networks can be used for recruitment. Although they may not be political in origin or intent, affective ties may help recruit people and develop a commitment to the group or the community (KLANDERMANS & OEGEMA 1987; GOOWIN & JASPER 2003). In that sense, the feelings of injustice in front of evictions, rent increase and worsening of living conditions; and the feeling of efficacy to make a change are rather a product than a reason for the emergence collective action. In the Barrio, the 'cognitive liberation' process (McADAM 1988) is fomented through the activity of DURO members and residents who frame their action as a defense of a cultural and ethnic specific space. In the following, I argue that women use Barrio social networks and gendered social capital to develop collective action.

§ Social Capital and Participation

Gendered solidarity in the San Diego Barrio establishes bonding forms of social capital that overcome the distrust present within the Barrio population. Intimately associated people tend to build same views of the world and of the situation they are embedded into. These social ties increase the likelihood for common ideas, values, interests and identities, which are at the basis for collective action. As a consequence, informal sociability builds up relations of trust and reciprocity. The concept of social capital, in Putnam's definition (1993) of "networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits" is useful to understand how participation emerges in the Barrio. It suggests mobilization can rely on qualitative resources specific to the Barrio. In fact, social capital encompasses benefits from relations of mutual trust and collaboration[xxxi] (BOURDIEU 1988; COLEMAN 1989; DEKKER & USLANER 2001). But in an impoverished area, social networks are often truncated not only because distrust is deeply present but also because contacts with external social networks are almost non- existent (FERNANDEZ-KELLY 1995; WACQUANT 2000; BODY-GENDROT & GITELL 2003). Starting with the following question: what kind of benefits do women get from membership in DURO? I have come to distinguish three groups of women who have interests in linking together. Their promotion of reciprocal help generates

trust, lowers the costs of participation in the Barrio, and transforms social networks into political ones.

First, female-headed families or single mothers participate in collective action against gentrification because it provides them with resources they otherwise would not have access to. 2000 Census Data for family type by presence and age of related children show that in the Barrio, female-headed families with no husband present represent over 27% of the total families. 70% of those have children under 18, with an average of 4.5 kids per family. Single mothers share meals or information about jobs, prices, schooling, exchanging clothes, advice, or tips during meetings, potluck or fund raising events. A single mother affirms: "*The other women always tell me: go and study English at evening class. You can do it! After work, sometimes they come for me to take me to school. It is difficult; I am alone, with my kid. But they say: you can do it! And I go*"[xxxii]. As a consequence, they gain material and non-material advantages that help them cope with deprived living conditions.

The second group of women who establish horizontal solidarity networks in the Barrio are undocumented women. The fear of deportation and the risks of immigration status control or 'Migra' arrests in a border city such as San Diego are high, as post-9/11 Border Patrol cruises in the Barrio, in the trolley or even in front of the Mexican consulate have previously shown. For instance, a Barrio activist recalled: "*There is still a lot of people without documents here, one day the Migra came at the school entrance, outside of the school, and they arrested a father who was there waiting for his kids. The mother was supplicating to the Migra. They took him away, they arrested him, in front of his children*". But despite the risk of acquiring visibility in the community, the costs of collective action are evaluated in comparison to valorized symbolical benefits. Undocumented women give value to this only way accessible for reaching an existence. Being part of a semi-formal group gains social status, recognition, and embodiment. Involvement is perceived as part of a re-humanization of an invisible minority, as a resident said: "*For lots of people without documents, they think they have no rights, but as human being they have rights!*" Access to collective action provides acknowledgment of the contribution made by undocumented families to the community.

Finally, ties between generations - both between first and second-generation Mexican-origin women (immigrants and U.S. born); and between young and older women of the same generation cohort - are essential for two reasons. On one side, the transmission of knowledge, experiences and stories constitute a fundamental moment of the (political) socialization of young activists: "*What I like here is the presence of professional and community women (…). I can stay three hours in a meeting and I don't get bored, because I can hear them and their*

different points of view, and that's the way I learn about the situation"[xxxiii]. Meetings in private homes are particular moments to share experiences, cultural practices, and memory of past history and collective identities. On another side, collective events are key moments to transmit the action repertoires inherited from past struggles or mobilization (TILLY 1978). For instance the constant reference to the birth of Chicano Park by a community takeover of the public land during the Chicano Movement, socialize women into specific references of successful community demand. As a participant stated during a discussion, grassroots mobilization has come to victories in the past: "*The reality is that we have to get people active in the process, like when they took over Chicano Park land, right? The community took it over!*" Even idealized, romanticized or reconstructed, the collective memory is passed through generations and groups thanks to the social networks established among the different segments of women. In summary, women build up community-based activities and solidarity networks that develop a sense of belonging and civic duty. This form of gendered social capital enhances individuals' capacity to join together in collective action to resolve common problems. It capitalizes political engagement (LOWNDES 2003; NORRIS & INGLEHART 2003).

§ Conclusion

DURO members and Barrio residents' resistance to gentrification bring about a reflection first, on the meaning and value of active citizenship and political participation; and second on the existence of different forms available for exercising a political voice in a disenfranchised community. Barrio residents are not politically passive or deficient. Barrios are political spaces *per se*, where mobilization happens without intervention from outside. Women's community involvement against gentrification demonstrates the importance of pre-existing relationships of trust and mutuality among friends and neighbors. Shared concerns about housing and displacement, about community boundaries and collective identity, serve to mobilize residents. They reinforce the politicization of Barrio residents and reduce the costs of participation. In turn, they can catalyze more formal political activities as competence and feeling of political efficacy grow. The Barrio benefits from this gendered social capital because social ties are transformed into bonding social capital and political networks.

In other words, qualitative research and study of narratives not only make Barrio residents visible in politics; but they transform concepts of political participation. In this particular context, social capital is mobilized as a political resource to strengthen civic involvement. Nevertheless, resistance to gentrification by Barrio women encounters obstacles. In fact,

however dense the struggle of Barrio women is, obstacles affect the capacity for change. First, women need to establish bridging social capital, i.e. forms of vertical networks with other organizations, to reinforce the outcomes of collective action. Second, women need to explore different ways to frame the public agenda. As a participant to DURO meeting pointed out: *"Imagine how powerful we can be if we unite with residents and unions and connect with workers, en unirse todos (all united)"*.

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[i] Forbes Magazine, May 21, 2002.

[ii] "High levels of segregation for blacks in the City and increasing segregation rates for Latinos metro-wide suggest that much remains to be done to insure that these populations have equal access to all communities", in Harvard Civil Rights Project (2002), p.2.

[iii] Unión del Barrio, which is composed, Comité de Mujeres Patricia Marin, Somos Raza, La Verdad Publications and Chicano Mexicano Prison Project. http://uniondelbarrio.org; and the Raza Rights Coalition http://www.anarchistfreethink.org/raza/main.html. Unión del Barrio is the only organization ideologically linked to the Chicano movement but born in the eighties that includes grass-roots mobilization activities.

[iv] On the history of Chicano Park, the literature is spread and mostly non academic, except: DELGADO, Kevin: "A Turning Point: The Conception and Realization of Chicano Park", in *The Journal of San Diego History*, winter 1998, vol.44, n°1. ; ROSEN, Martin ; FISHER, James: "Chicano Park and the Chicano Park Murals: Barrio Logan, City of San Diego, California", in *The Public Historian*, fall 2001, vol.23, n°4, pp.91-112. ; COCKROFT, Eva: "The Story of Chicano Park ", in *Aztlan,* International Center of Chicano Studies Research, vol.15, n°1, spring 1984, pp.79-103.

[v] City of San Diego (2002), p.10.

[vi] Hughes, Joe : "Detectives blame 'little punks' in recent spate of deadly attacks", *San Diego Union Tribune*, January 4, 2003.

[vii] Sánchez, Leonel : "Mural gets new life as communities revitalize", *San Diego Union Tribune*, November 16 , 2002.

[viii] An ethnic neighborhood is a "set of contiguous tracts, which must contain at least one tract where a group is represented as 40% or more of the residents and whose other tracts each have a level of ethnic concentration among residents of at least 35%'". LOGAN 2002

[ix] Thirty years after the *Fair Housing Act*, almost 3,000 census tracts reported extremely high poverty rates, meaning 8,5 million people living in ghettos, barrios, slums or mixed slums. The ghetto is constituted by 40% or over by Black, the slums by non-Hispanic white and the mixed slums does not have any predominant minority. Blacks represent 50%, Latinos 24% and non-Hispanic White 22,50% of this marginalized population. 60% of poor Latinos live in Barrios and 32% in mixed slums.. Even when this increase is linked more to demographic growth than to higher poverty rates, it is still disproportionate regarding the share of Latinos in the total population (8,1% in 1990). JARGOWSKY (1997).

[x] BURNS (et al. 2001), p.4.

[xi] Barrio Logan Photographic Essay, center for Comparative Immigration Studies/Special Projects/ University of California - San Diego, June 2003, http://www.usmex.ucsd.edu/research/photo_essay/index.html

[xii] City of San Diego, "A strategy for Updating the City's General Plan", General Plan, City of Villages, 2002. http://genesis.sannet.gov/infospc/template/mayor/goal3.jsp and See San Diego Redevelopment Agency: http://www.sannet.gov/redevelopment-agency/index.shtml browsed November 24, 2003.

[xiii] "*Tienen que darse cuenta que aquí en una casa, viven dos o tres familias, para alcanzar pagar la renta, que no hay privacidad para nadie, que unos viven en garage de casas, eso y que necesitamos apartamentos para gente de bajos recursos…*"

[xiv] District 8 Elected Official declared in 2002: *" I want to beautify the community and I want people to know that the 8ᵗʰ District is really coming back"* HUARD, Ray: "Candidates in 8th District have common goals", San Diego Union Tribune, February 27, 2002, B-3; see also "The plan is to rebuild San Diego older neighborhoods into walkable villages where homes are close to shops, parks, and public transit", in GEMBROWSKI, Susan: "Activist put renewal on agenda", *San Diego Union Tribune*, April 24, 2002, B-1.

[xv] "Proponents of the 'fortress city' thesis relate the 'militarization of space' to the proliferation of new forms of segregative planning, security, and control to keep out the urban underclass from the gentrified spaces of the affluent", GOTHAM (2001), p.438.

[xvi] The Barrio was founded in the XIX century. See GRISWOLD DEL CASTILLO, Richard : *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890 : a social history*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979 ; CAMARILLO, Albert : *Chicanos in California. A History of Mexican Americans in California*. San Francisco, Boyd and Fraser, 1984

[xvii] *" Todo en San Diego está subiendo de precios, las casas, las rentas, antes pagabas 500$ por dos recámaras, ahora son casí el doble, las renuevas, les echan la migra a la gente, y luego sube la renta un montón… Yo tengo suerte porque compré mi casa hace casí 10 años. Pero la gente ya no alcanza para vivir aquí"*

[xviii] TENBERGE, Yvette: "Ballpark Dream Leaves Residents Homeless", in *La Prensa San Diego*, July 13, 2001; "Renters Crying Foul Ball Over Proposed Ballpark", in *La Prensa San Diego*, July 6, 2001. ; SANCHEZ, Leonel : March to put focus on rising rents, displacement", in *San Diego Union Tribune*, June 30, 2001.

[xix] "Here we are, and we will not move!" ; "Unity is strenght" ; "Unite our community effort".

[xx] "*Land therefore has use value, in a qualitative sense; and its use value as a place of residence or as a neighborhood setting to one group may come into conflict with its commodity value to another group that is more concerned about the speculative profits or investment opportunities*", in STONE & SANDERS (2000), p.9.

[xxi] Interview, Staff District 79, p.1.

[xxii] *" Se sube mucho la renta! y luego no hay casas para gente de bajos recursos (…). No es justo. Ademas aqui es una comunidad muy antigua, es una comunidad latina, para los Latinos, y no esta bien que vengan los Americanos. Por que cada comunidad tiene su cosa, no?".*

[xxiii] "*That issues of crime and basic human need - unemployment, housing, poverty, health care, and the like - figure much more importantly in the political activity of African-Americans and Latinos implies that there is an important link between the origin of participatory disparities and the content of participatory agendas*", in BURNS (et al. 2001), p.306.

[xxiv] *" Uno de los problemas más grandes es tener affordable housing, porque hay muy pocos affordable housing aqui. Yo creo que para que un niño salga bien en la escuela, tiene que salir bien su familia, porque si el niño llega sin comer, y sin casa donde dormir, como es que crees que estudie en la escuela ?".*

[xxv] *" Batallamos largo porque no teníamos un lugar fijo donde reunirnos, la mayoría de la gente perdía las reuniones, porque siempre ibamos cambiando de una casa para otra casa".*

[xxvi] DURO meeting observation, April 4, 2003.

[xxvii] Note: A linguistically isolated household is one in which no member 14 years old and over (1) speaks only English or (2) speaks a non-English language and speaks English 'very well'. In other words, all members 14 years old and over have at least some difficulty with English. U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

[xxviii] "*We are of course concerned with socioeconomic status and the resources for political participation that derive from it. However, we show that aspects of ethnicity itself - in particular, language and patterns of religious affiliation - also confer resources that facilitate political action*", VERBA & LEHMAN (1993), p.458.

[xxix] *" Pero quiero vivir aqui porque es mi Barrio. Si compro una casa, la compro aqui"*

xxx *"Mis deseos ahora… es regresar allá (…), me siento muy identificada por ser todos hispanos allá, (…) Allá, está el Bazar, está el Farmers market, … se siente uno más identificado*".

xxxi BOURDIEU (1988) defines social capital as the aggregate of the actual or potential resources, which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition. DEKKER & USLANER (2001) as followed: *"Social capital is all about the value of social networks, bonding similar people and bridging between diverse people, with norms of reciprocity. Social capital is fundamentally about how people interact with each other"*, p.3.

xxxii "*Las señoras me dicen: vete a estudiar inglés en la escuela en la noche. Tu puedes! Me dicen. Cuando termino el trabajo, a veces unas me llevan para la escuela. Es dificil, yo sola, con mi niño. Ellas me dicen, tu puedes, y yo voy*".

xxxiii "*lo que me gusta es que son muchas mujeres profesionales, y señoras de la comunidad (…) puedo estar tres horas en junta, y no me aburro, porque escucharlas a ellas y a sus diferentes puntos de vista, así es como me entero bien*".