Doing the Everyday Differently:
Women and Politics in a Northeastern Brazilian Town

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

February 2003

ABSTRACT

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In this thesis I explore the gendered nature of community politics in a rural town in Northeast Brazil. Through individual stories, contextualized in local and global power relations I aim to broaden the understanding of the practical experiences of women juggling a participatory democracy and clientelist traditions. The emphasis is on women's experiences of agency and constraints and the implications such experiences have for the politicization of women and the democratization process. Specifically, I explore the experiences of marginal women. I argue that in their rejection of the dominant ideas regarding local community politics and gender norms they challenge the idea that poor women are only concerned with practical needs and material survival.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding for this work was provided by the Fonds pour la Formation de Chercheurs et l'Aide à la Recherche (FCAR), and a Concordia University J.W. McConnell Memorial Graduate Fellowship. However, throughout the preparation, fieldwork and writing of this thesis I was also supported by many wonderful people. I would like to thank my family and friends for their constant interest, encouragement and faith in the project. I would like to thank the Concordia University graduate students in Anthropology freshmen (year 2000) for their intellectual challenges and warm support. I would also like to thank my professors at Concordia University – Homa Hoodfar, Christine Jourdan, Marie-Nathalie LeBlanc, Chantale Collard, and David Howes - for their incredible support. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my thesis supervisor, mentor, and friend, Sally Cole. For her guidance, limitless support and encouragement I owe a great debt of gratitude. Finally, I would like to thank the women of Icapuí. For your friendship, knowledge and effort, thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a feminist analysis of women and community politics[1] in Icapuí, a rural town in the state of Ceará, in Northeast Brazil. It seeks to understand the numerous ways women may experience life and community politics in a setting where daily life and clientelist political practice contradict the official political discourse of popular participation. The overall aim of the thesis is twofold. It seeks to challenge the idea that poor women are only concerned with economic survival and it seeks to illustrate that women **do** seek creative ways both to put food on the table and to live autonomous and fulfilling lives.

In Icapuí, community politics are a highly contested and gendered terrain. In fact, community politics are frequently a challenge for women. They exact time and energy from women without necessarily providing recognition, respect, rights or public decision-making power in exchange.

In exposing the contradictions linked to the values and practices of the local PT, I propose a stronger valorization of the activities and discourses of the so-called "participating" women who adopt the dominant models of the local gendered system of community labor but manipulate them to suit their own needs. I also propose a stronger valorization of the locally labeled marginal women who appear not to participate at all in community politics. I argue that these women who critique the left-wing, socialist,

[1] Broad term including all forms of local political involvement, including participation in formal politics and community activities (sanctioned by the municipal administration or not).

popular democratic and popular participatory discourse and system in Icapuí and "do for themselves" can be more than an individualistic and selfish sign of laziness and indifference as it is so often labeled in Icapuí. I argue that it is also an empowering tactic of resistance for women and a basis for social change.

Those women who do not participate at all in community politics but who live "for themselves" (their words to express what they prioritize in their lives) have, I aargue, developed an indigenous feminist critique of the gendered system of community building and an alternative public identity. Through their very rejection of the system, these women place a critical commentary on it and show a desire to live a more autonomous life. This valorization of the daily lives of those on the margins and their efforts at destabilizing the center, is the focus of the thesis. This concern with economic and material as well as social and cultural well being is what I call grassroots development and in Icapuí, amongst women, it grows in the political space of marginality

CHAPTER 1 – THE SETTING

Brazil[2]

Brazil is a country of continental dimensions, spanning 8,5 million square kilometers. It ranks fifth in size and population with almost 170 million inhabitants, unequally spread over its 26 states and five macro-regions -- which are South, Southeast, Central West, North and Northeast – with most of the population concentrated in the south-central area. It is by far the largest country in South America, covering nearly half the continent and bordering on all South American countries except Ecuador and Chile. It has one of the ten largest economies of the world and is the largest economic power in Latin America[3].

Colonial History[4]

The Portuguese arrived in Brazil in 1500. Initially, development was slow, based upon a feudal system in which favored individuals received title to large blocks of land – setting the stage for future mal-distributions of land and resources in the country. The land was first ruled from Lisbon as a colony, until 1808, when the royal family, having fled from Napoleon's army, established the seat of Portuguese Government in Rio de Janeiro. Brazil became a kingdom until popular pressure led to independence in 1822, making Brazil an Empire with a monarchy until 1889 – one year after the abolition of slavery - when it became a federal republic.

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[2] See maps 1 and 2 on p. 4 and 5.

[3] CIDA 2002; Espinoza 2000; FAO 2001; IBGE 2002; Wagley 1971.

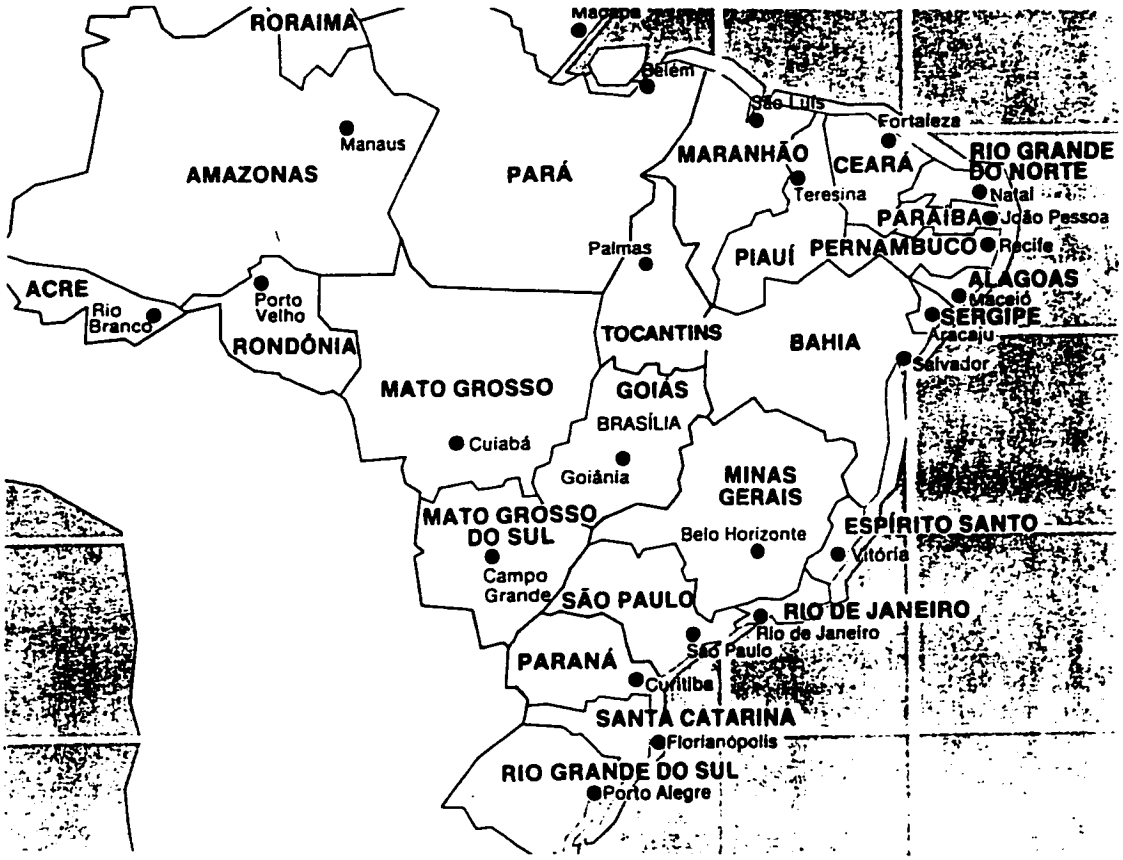
[4] Arraes 1972; De Catro 1966; Fausto 1999; Vioti da Costa 1985.

Map 1 – Map of Brazil

Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
http://www.sfait-maeci.gc.ca/latinamerica/south-en.esp
(June 2002)

Map 2 – Map of Brazil (with its 26 states)

U.S. Immigration
http://immigration-visa.com/maps/brazil-map.html
(june 2002)



Contemporary History[5]

In 1960 the concern of the military and business leaders turned to the pressing problems of social unrest and excessive economic inflation. President Goulart came into power (in 1961) during a time marked by high inflation, economic stagnation, and the increasing influence of radical political elements. The armed forces, alarmed by these developments and Goulart's rapidly growing affiliations with the left, staged a coup on March 31, 1964 and for the next 21 years (until 1985) Brazil was ruled by a succession of military governments. During the most repressive phase of authoritarian rule (1969 to 1973) Brazil experienced its so-called economic miracle – which saw the country's economy prosper while the plight of the poor worsened dramatically. Brazil's miraculous economic growth of the 1960s and 1970s, however, did not last long and soon the effects of rising inflation, high energy costs, and increasing loan payments could be felt.

Civilian government was restored in 1985 and in 1989 Brazil completed its transition to a popularly elected government when Fernando Collor de Mello was elected with 53% of the vote after a close electoral race with Luis Ignacio de Souza (known as Lula) representing the left-wing *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT - Workers' Party), in the first direct presidential election in over 20 years. In 1992, a major corruption scandal led to the impeachment and ultimate resignation of President Collor. In 1994, sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso was elected President with 54% of the vote and then re-elected for a second 4-year term in 1998.

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[5] Arraes 1972; de Catro 1966; Espinoza 2000; Fausto 1999; Sadet and Silverstein 1991; Wagley 1971.

Economy[6]

Brazil's varied economic system appears to be in a continuously evolving state and is best described using a cyclical approach. The first cycle's focus was on the dyewood pau brasil. Then, in the late 16th century the second cycle emerged with the cultivation of sugar. This major economic cycle was based on plantations in the Northeast and led to the importation of millions of slaves from Africa. A gold and diamond rush in the state of Minas Gerais in the late 1600's shifted the economy away from sugar cultivation and led to the opening up of the interior for settlement. By the 18th century the gold mines had become depleted and there was a brief period of standstill, interrupted by the rubber cycle, before Brazil entered its most notable economic cycle: the production of coffee, which proceeded to dominate the economy from the mid-1800's to about the mid-1900's.

In reaction to this background of economic fluctuation, Brazilian governments of the late 20th century have decided to place emphasis on programs designed to diversify the nation's production. Today, composition of GDP (gross domestic product) by sector is 8-14% for agriculture[7], 34-36% for industry[8] and the rest for services (IBGE[9]).

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[6] Espinoza 2000; Fausto 1999; Sadet and Silverstein 1991; *Terravista* 2002.

[7] Brazil is endowed with vast agricultural resources employing close to one quarter of the labor force and accounting for about 35% of the country's exports. It is the largest producer of sugarcane and coffee and a net exporter of cocoa, soybeans, orange juice, tobacco, forest products and other tropical fruits and nuts. It also produces corn, rice, wheat, cotton and livestock (consisting of 40% of agricultural production).

[8] The industrial sector is now the most advanced in Latin America, due to increased investments in new equipment and technology. The industries range from foods and beverages, steel, petrochemicals, vehicles, autoparts, and electronics, machinery and textiles, footwear, cement and lumber. Brazil has large reserves of iron, aluminum, and manganese, as well as deposits of nickel, tin, copper, lead, and petroleum .

[9] *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

Social and Economic Inequalities[10]

Although it is among the ten wealthiest countries in the world, Brazil is a nation of disparities with some of the most pronounced socio-economic inequalities in the world. Income is so highly concentrated that 53% of the GDP goes to the richest 10% of the population. In fact, despite the dramatic increases in the Brazilian GDP since the late 1970s, poverty has not diminished and the majority of Brazilians live in poverty and fail to earn even a minimum monthly wage (150 *reais* or 83$ US in 2000). The 1999 Development Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) indicates that 26 million Brazilians subsist without basic health, education, sanitation, or other essential services. The most conservative estimates show that 24 million Brazilians - i.e., 17.4% of the population - were living below the poverty line in 1990. Other sources, such as the "Map of Hunger" (Food and Agriculture Organization/FAO 2001; IPEA[11], and Peliano 1993) estimate that 22% (or 32 million) of the year 2000 population are poor, while other estimates place the poverty rate as high as 43.6% of the population.

Although the government claims that the proportion of poor has decreased with the introduction of the *Real* Plan (a federal financial plan introduced in 1994 and designed to strengthen the Brazilian currency – the *real* - and eliminate inflation), the IPEA, argues that economic growth has not led to a reduction of poverty rates. The IPEA states that poverty has increased since the *Real* Plan, especially in the sprawling and

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[10] Arraes 1972; de Castro 1966; Julião 1972; Pereira 1997; Sadet and Silverstein 1991; Wagley 1971; Scheper-Hughes 1992.

[11] *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* – the Institute of Applied Economic Research - an organ of the Planning Ministry.

violent urban shantytowns, noting more single mothers as heads of households and more children living without access to health, education and adequate sanitation.

The Different Faces of Poverty

Unlike many developing countries, with huge rural populations, life in Brazil is heavily urbanized. The big and small cities cluster 80% of the country's total population, with 38% of them living below the poverty line. Only 60% of the urban population in Brazil have adequate sanitation infrastructure and the percentage of urban poor is on the rise as more rural poor flock to the cities. Increasing violence, drug problems, alcoholism, juvenile prostitution, hunger, and elevated morbidity due to chronic and infectious diseases and the insufficiency of available medical services plague the swelling slums and the situation is even more precarious in the rural areas where 66% of the population lives below the poverty line with little or no access to basic services such as health or education. The result is that, despite the fact that three fourths of the population live in cities, half of the poor are rural residents (Espinoza 2000).

According to official public records, access to education has drastically improved and 95.5% of children 7 to 14 attend compulsory schooling mandated by the state and the adult population illiteracy rate has dropped from 34% in 1970 to 18% at the end of the 1990s (IBGE)[12]. There are still, however, 15.2 million illiterates and 30 million functionally illiterate in Brazil. Similarly, although infant malnutrition is on the decrease it is still high, having dropped from 15.7% in 1989 to 10.5% in 1993, and remains higher

[12] Although Espinoza (2000) and the IPEA state that 30% of the population 15 years and older are illiterate.

still in rural areas, at around 16.3%. Water and sewer distribution, although expanding and pointing to possible improvements in the overall health conditions of children, are still not accessible to all people – as evidenced by the child mortality rates which have fallen from 116/1000 in 1960 but remain high at 35/1000 in 1999 (IBGE).

Although comprising 45% of the country's total population, the Afro-Brazilian population represents 62% of the poor, suffering from inequality in the form of inequality of income, access to education, health care, life expectancy, living and working conditions and access to basic social services (Fernandes 1971; Skidmore 1993; Winnant 1994). Gender is also an important factor in the expression of poverty and low quality of life in Brazil (IPEA). Women, much like the black population in Brazil, especially when of color (Damasceno 1999) represent a disproportionate number of the poor, and suffer from inequality. Female-headed households with children are increasing (reaching 16.7% of households in 1999 - IBGE) and pressures on family income are pushing more and more women into poorly paid jobs. An important indicator of women's status in society is their level of participation in paid employment – both in quantity and quality of the jobs held. What we find is that Brazil is undergoing a feminization of poverty (Lewis 2002; Gonzalez 2002), with women underrepresented in the formal labor force, most commonly employed as domestic servants (over 70% of women in the labor force) and suffering from a dramatic wage gap between the sexes, for equal work. Women earn on average 75 % of men's wages in urban areas in the southern states and only 63.5 % of men's wages in the rural Northeast (Lewis 2002). Another indicator of women's low status in Brazil is the increase in violence against women – especially domestic violence

and sexual abuse - in part fuelled by the practice of sexual tourism, particularly in the coastal northeastern states. Additionally, as part of the economic crisis related to economic liberalization and dramatic neo-liberal[13] cuts in public spending, women are increasingly working as community organizers and leaders, attempting to secure and deliver services that were once public (Elson 1991; Elson 1992; Gélinas 1998; Lind 1992; Messkoub 1992; Moser 1993; Naples 1998; Pearson 1997; Safa 1995).

To all these social and economic problems in Brazil we can add the ineffectiveness of land reform policies (Arraes 1972; de Castro 1966; Forman 1975; Julião 1972), the vast power and influence that the rural oligarchies continue to hold in the Brazilian government, the increasing dependence on foreign capital and the liberalization of commercial and trade policies. The latter have dramatically increased Brazil's trade deficit and vulnerability to international financial crises, while restricting the power of national political and economic institutions, and imposing draconian social spending cuts that continue to worsen the plight of the poor and disadvantaged.

The Northeast[14]

Northeast[15] Brazil is comprised of 9 states. According to the 2000 census (IBGE), it has a population of 47,693,253 inhabitants and represents 28% of the nation. Its economy is primarily agricultural and the landless majority work primarily on large-scale

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[13] Defined as "the process of a growing reliance on the market for organizing social and economic activities" (Phillips 1998: xvi).

[14] See map 3 on p.12.

[15] Arraes 1972; de Castro 1966; Forman 1972; Julião 1972; Pereira 1997; Scheper-Hughes 1992.

Map 3 – Map of Northeast Brazil

Prefeitura de Icapuí (Icapuí city hall)
(August 2000)

plantations owned by a few elite (Scheper-Hughes 1992). The area is semi-arid and lacks well-distributed rainfall (rain falls from February to April).

The region constitutes the single largest regional concentration of rural poor in Latin America. More than half of all Brazilians are living in poverty, and almost two-thirds of the country's rural poor live in the Northeast, despite the fact that the region comprises only 30% of the Brazilian population (IPEA). Health and social indicators attest to the poor quality of life in the Northeast, compared to the rest of Brazil with higher rates of infant mortality (representing half the deaths in Brazil: Scheper-Hughes 1992), illiteracy and poverty. Conservative explanations blame the cyclical and "naturally" occurring droughts for the high level of poverty (de Melo Branco 2000). The more progressive explanation is that the local and national oligarchy maintain landlessness, cheap manual labor and poverty by securing votes in exchange for empty promises of drought relief or the distribution of individual favors in times of dire need, instead of sustainable irrigation projects that would protect those susceptible to drought. This lethal political game is otherwise known as the *industria da seca* or industry of the drought (de Melo Branco 2000).

Problema resolvido é voto perdido[16] is a common expression, indicating the popular belief that many of the social, economic and ecological disasters experienced by Northeasterners are problems that could be solved with political good will. Instead, the belief firmly anchored in the minds of many is that the rich benefit from and in fact prefer

[16] "Problem resolved is a lost vote".

that Northeasterners remain poor and dependent on politicians and the elite for favors in exchange for votes and paternalistic emergency drought measures.

Ceará[17]

Ceará[18] (CE), is one of the most northern of the 26 states that make up Brazil. It is bordered in the North by the Atlantic Ocean, in the East by the state of Rio Grande do Norte, in the South by the state of Pernambuco and in the West by the state of Piauí. Located just south of the equator, its climate is tropical, with average temperatures throughout the year of 25-28 degrees Celsius. It spans an area of 148, 016 km2, with 573 km of coastline, corresponding to 2% of the area of Brazil and 9.6% of the area of the Northeast. It has a population of roughly 7 million inhabitants, with 5 million of those living in urban areas. It is divided into 184 municipalities and the capital is the coastal city of Fortaleza, with a population of roughly 2 million inhabitants.

Ceará is well known for its beautiful beaches and scenery, for its food, music, dancing, poetry, literature, history, and craftwork, including pottery, ceramics, leather work, textiles, hammock-making and especially lace-making and embroidery – activities typically undertaken by women[19]. The state GDP is made up of agriculture (6.3%), industry (38.1%) and services (55.6%). The main agricultural products in the region in order of importance are cashew nuts, coconuts, sugar cane, beans, cotton, corn, bananas, oranges, and manioc. Livestock raising is important, as is fishing, particularly with

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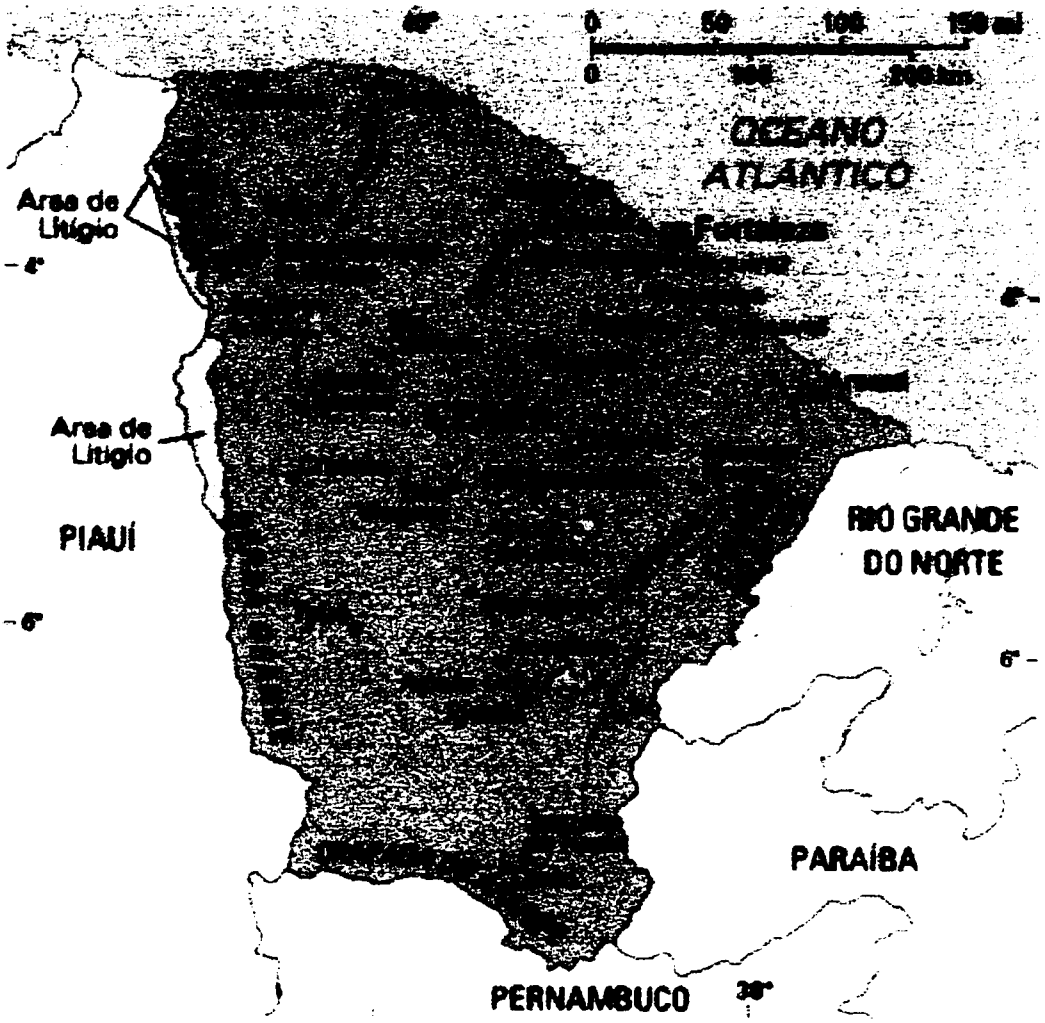
[17] See map 4 on p.15.

[18] Nylen 1997; *Ceará Made by Hand* 1998, *Ceará Terra-da-Luz* 1996; *Economia do Ceará 2001.*

[19] *Ceará Made by Hand* 1998, *Ceará Terra-da-Luz* 1996.

Map 4 – Map of Ceará

Prefeitura de Icapuí (Icapuí city hall)
(August 2000)



regards to lobster and langoustines (for export to Japan and the United States). The area's main industries are petrochemical, chemical, metallurgic, mechanical, textiles, shoes, food and cement. Mining consists of iron, mineral water, limestone, clay, magnesium, granite, petrol, natural gas and sea salt. In 1998, the state exported the equivalent of 354,996 million $US. The principal exports were cashew butter (35%), shoes (18.5%), cloth (12.1%), and lobster (9.1%). The state imported the equivalent of 651,524 million $US consisting principally of cotton (20.3%), petrol and its derivatives (17.8%), flour (15.6%) and corn (4.3%) (IBGE).

Health, social and economic data indicate that numerous important advances have taken place, despite the endemic poverty. Infant mortality rates, illiteracy and the percentage of the population receiving less than one monthly salary have decreased while the rates of school attendance for children aged 7 to 14, the rate of households with running water, electricity, and garbage collection have increased.

Icapuí[20]

Icapuí[21] is a small rural fishing town of 16,051 inhabitants, spread out over 34 neighborhoods[22] and 64 km of coastline. It is located on the eastern corner of the state of

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[20] See map 5 on p.17 and photos 1 and 2 on p.18.

[21] *Revista de Icapuí* 1999; *Conheça Icapuí*; Ribeiro Torres 1999; Prefeitura de Icapuí (16 anos...) 1999.

[22] Locally referred to as *comunidades* or communities. In Icapuí there is no distinction between neighborhood, the residents of the town, and identity-based groups. All are seen as extensions of the family and are associated to family, safety, security, love, affection, well-being, cooperation, the common-good, equality, union, popular participation, citizenship, and democracy, and are largely the sphere and responsibility of women. To be seen in some way as against the community in Icapuí is to be seen as anti-family and anti-democracy (espousing dubious values).

Map 5 – Map of Icapuí

Prefeitura de Icapuí (Icapuí city hall)
(August 2000)

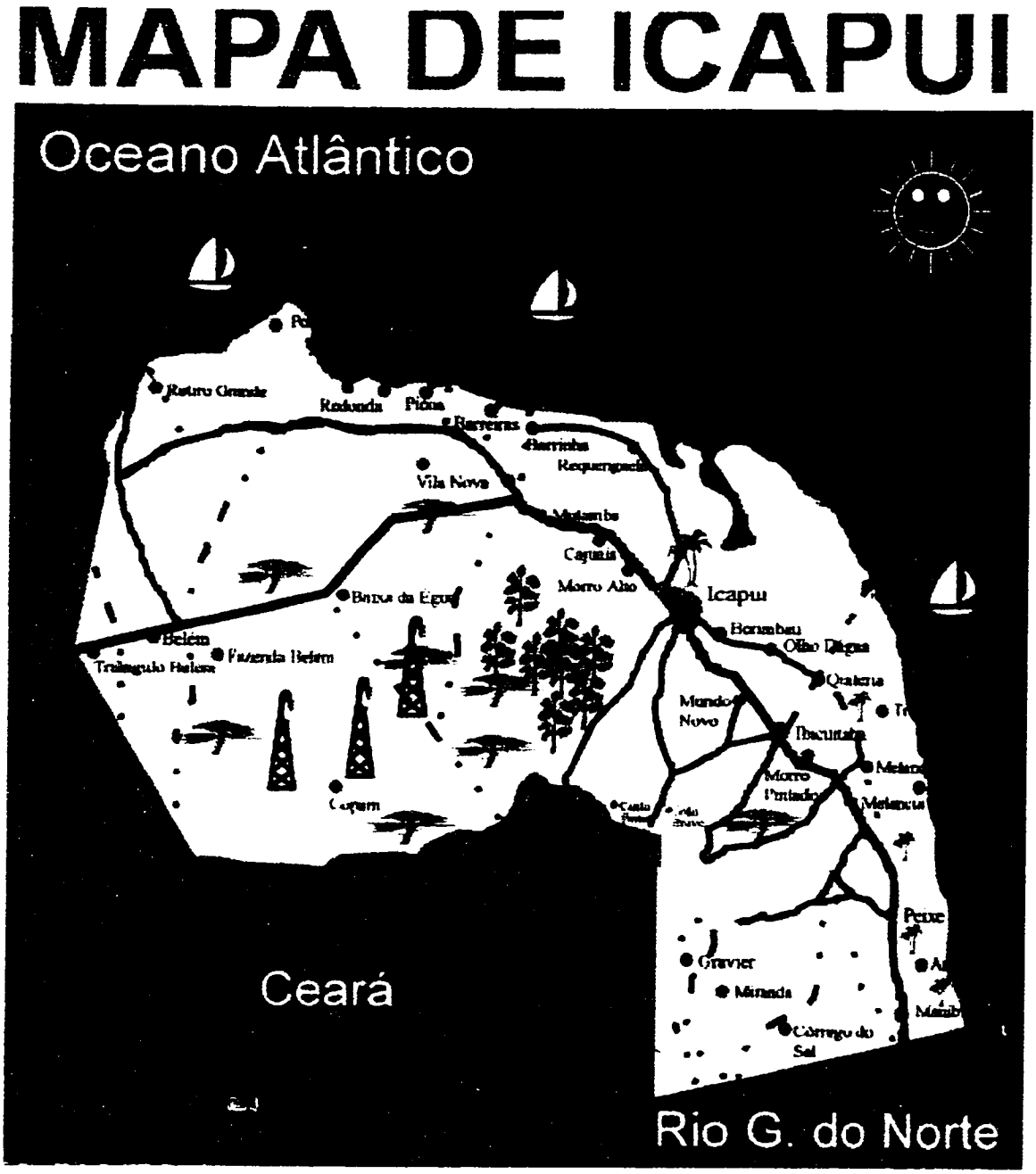


Photo 1 – View of Icapuí as one arrives from the East

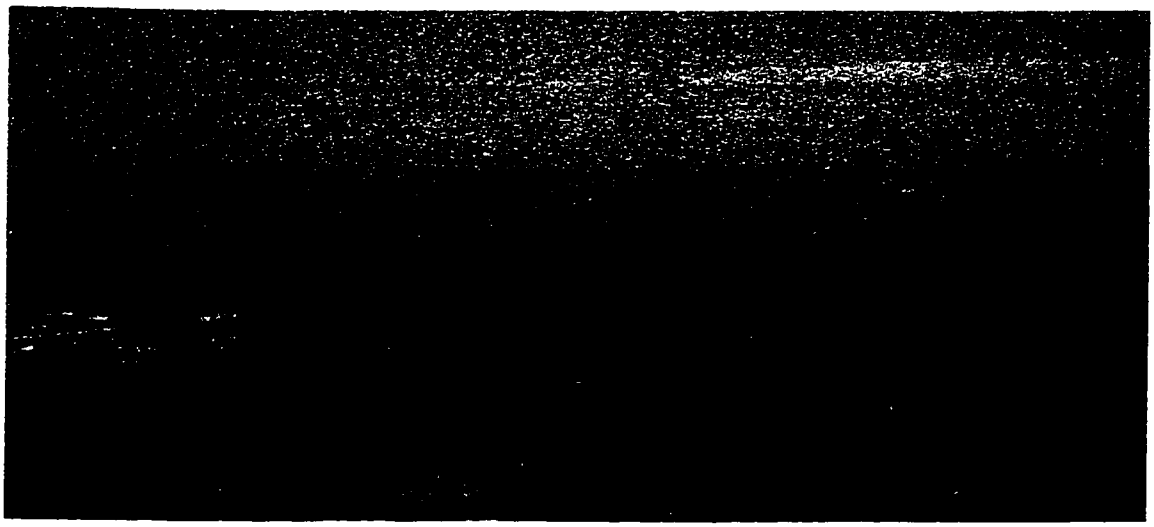
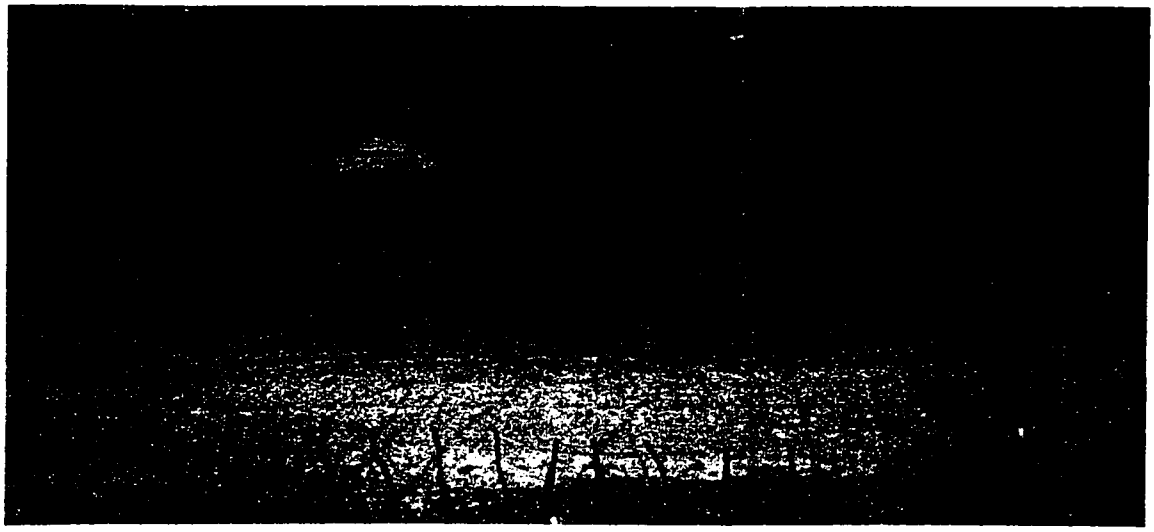


Photo 2 – Typical home in rural Icapuí (70% of residents live in rural areas)



neighborhoods[23] and 64 km of coastline. It is located on the eastern corner of the state of Ceará, 180 km from the capital of Fortaleza. Most of the economy revolves around lobster fishing, with over 40% of the residents living directly or indirectly from fishing and the town being the third largest producer in the country. Residents also catch fish, clams, crabs and shrimp. The area also has the potential of becoming the largest producer of petrol in Ceará, with some extraction already taking place both on land and offshore and generating income for the town.

Outside of fishing (lobster, fish, shrimp, crabs and clams), shrimp farming, and net mending, some residents work in salt extraction, in the municipal government[24], work in or run small shops, restaurants, and inns (there are over 267 such commercial establishments - IBGE) or factories (lobster, fish and shrimp packing, ice making, coconut shredding, garment making, hammock making – that shut down for months at a time, and a variety of fruit and nut processing factories that rarely stay in operation for more than a few months or never get off the ground). Others build boats, homes or furniture, work in agriculture (cashew nut, coconut, manioc, corn and beans), produce handicrafts (women, generally in their 30s and up – about 16% of female labor), gather seaweed (sort, dry and sell and also transform - into foodstuffs or cosmetics), work in

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[23] Locally referred to as *comunidades* or communities. In Icapuí there is no distinction between neighborhood, the residents of the town, and identity-based groups. All are seen as extensions of the family and are associated to family, safety, security, love, affection, well-being, cooperation, the common-good, equality, union, popular participation, citizenship, and democracy, and are largely the sphere and responsibility of women. To be seen in some way as against the community in Icapuí is to be seen as anti-family and anti-democracy (espousing dubious values).

[24] Made up of the following secretariats: Administration and Finances; Health; Community Action; Tourism, Development and the Environment; Education and Culture; Public Works – each headed by a Secretary who is hand-picked by the *prefeito* (mayor) to lead a team of project planners and implementors.

tourism or are unemployed. 83% of households are classified as low-income and 17% are headed by single women (IBGE). Unemployment is endemic and will likely get worse as more than half of the population is under age 19 and not yet on the job market[25].

Although unemployment is increasing, so are the activities that generate work and earnings in the daily life of the local population. Popular belief is that poverty and social inequalities in Icapuí will decrease with the diversification of the local economy and the cessation of the economic dependence on the lobster industry – hard-hit by the dramatic decrease in lobster stocks[26]. The town is attempting to make use of various government and non-government organizations in its efforts to diversify its economy: modernize fishing, revitalize craft production, develop tourism, re-evaluate and revalue agriculture and cattle farming, and encourage mini-industries of transformation -- through the ORGAPE training and micro-credit loaning program – *Organização de Apoio aos Pequenos Empreendedores* - the Organization for the Support of Small Entrepreneurs – which receives its funding from UNICEF through the *Programa de Gestão Urbana*[27], the *Banco do Nordeste*, the *Banco do Brasil*, the federal government, the Ford Foundation, JICA (the Japanese International Cooperation Agency) and other NGOs.

In 2000, 71 % of the population lived in rural areas, spread out in 34 communities (IBGE). Icapuí had one of the lowest illiteracy and infant mortality rates in the Northeast,

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[25] See photos 3-10 on p.21-24.

[26] Due to unsustainable fishing practices: over-fishing, fishing reproducing females (photo 4 on p.19)...

[27] The UN Urban Management Program – supporting participatory administrations, the reduction of urban poverty and the improvement or urban environmental planning.

Photo 3 – Typical lobster boat

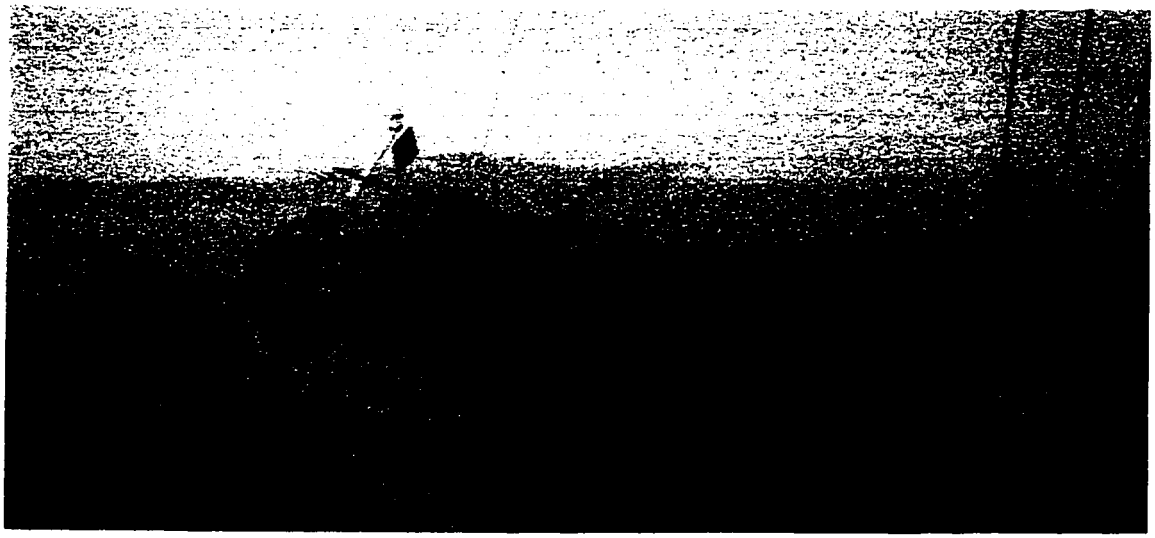

Photo 4 – Portion of lobster catch (1/3) caught by a crew of 4 gone 10 days at sea

Photo 5 – Walking back to Requenguela beach from clam picking during low tide

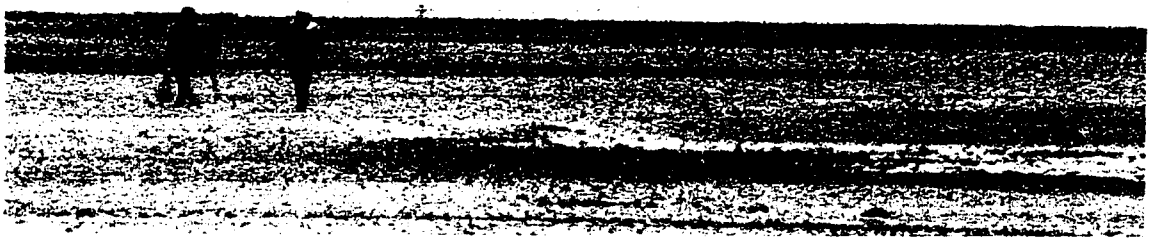

Photo 6 – Men and boys catching fish, crabs and shrimp in salt-water fishing stream

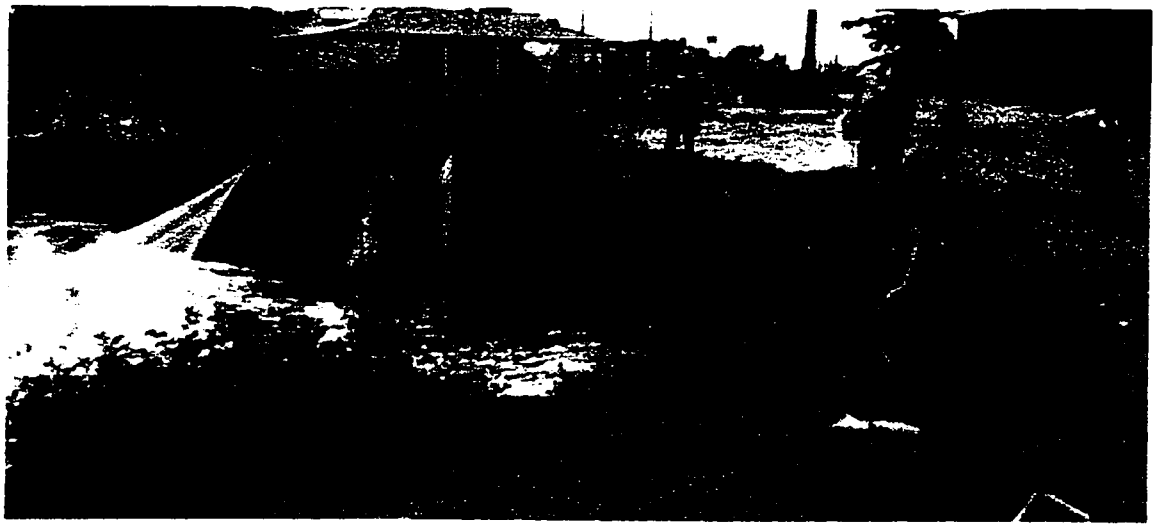

Photo 7 – Picking *capim* (seaweed) at Requenguela beach

Photo 8 – Walt-water flooded land (for salt extraction) and salt mounds

Photo 9 – Men mending lobster nets (and drinking *cachaça*) in my backyard

Photo 10 – Women making labyrinth lace

with literacy rates hovering around the 80% marker and the infant mortality rate down to 12 per thousand, as compared to 37.5 per thousand for Brazil and 60.4 per thousand for the area of the Northeast. Roughly 90% of the homes have electricity and 70% to 85% of the urban areas have running water - depending on whether the sources are local (*Revista de Icapuí* 1999) or federal (IBGE).

The culture and politics of Icapuí are colored by two key events in history: (1) the struggle for political separation in 1984 – what is locally called "emancipation" - from neighboring Aracati[28] (a city of 61,000 inhabitants in 2000), and (2) the subsequent establishment of a PT administration in the *prefeitura*. According to local versions of history, Icapuí was long ignored, neglected and exploited (particularly at election time when empty promises were given in exchange for votes) during the time it was a part of Aracati - sometime after it was initially settled by the Dutch who were expelled from Recife in the early 17th century (Fausto 1999).

Aracati is one of the oldest towns in Ceará and claims a part of its territory (now belonging to emancipated Icapuí) as the area where the Spanish navigator Vincente Yanez Pinzon first set foot in Brazil, on the 2nd of February 1500, 2 months before Pedro Alvares Cabral (the official discoverer) was said to have discovered Brazil when he landed in Porto Seguro, Bahia. The first fort was erected in 1603 and a few years later the area began to be settled for habitation. Aracati was founded as a municipality in 1747, and became a city in 1842. Its economy is based on a mix of craft-production, tourism

[28] Aracati Online 2001; Aracati Net 2001; *Economia do Ceará* 2001.

and shrimp farming. Agriculture (namely cashew nuts, melons, coconuts, manioc, beans, tomatoes, bananas, corn, cotton, sugar cane, acerola, and mangos), cattle breeding, and industry (mineral extraction, civil construction, public utility, transformation – including mineral production, metallurgy, mechanics, wood-making, leather working, chemicals, perfume making, garment making, textile making, foodstuffs, and manufacturing of drinks) are also very important.

Politicians in Aracati were emphatically against Icapuí's emancipation for the economic and political losses it would represent. They resorted to all measures to prevent it from happening, including a never-before-seen level of construction and public works, erecting 8 "schools" (buildings with no materials or people to work in them, however - seen as more evidence of the humiliation and neglect suffered by Icapuí) and shifting the center of Aracati from the city of Aracati proper to the strongly anti-emancipation neighborhood (and pro-Aracati oligarchy) of Ibicuitaba in Icapuí (Airton 1998). These politicians were, effectively, quite dependent on Icapuí for municipal taxes and its small petrol revenue as well as dependent on Icapuí for political support – typically rushing into the area during election time in search of votes, showering individuals with gifts or erecting the structure of a school or a health post (that after the election would sit empty, with no materials or people to work in them). They did not want to lose the leverage Icapuí provided them.

The Brazilian student movement (through various local student associations) had been gaining strength and momentum since the end of the 1970s, turning into an

important actor in the process of democratization, the combat against the military dictatorship and local oligarchic powers, and the struggle for freedom, justice and social equality. In Icapuí, as in the rest of Brazil, student militants had become important political actors (Nylen 1997; Airton 1998). In the early 1980s a small group of local university students (all sons of Icapuí's few wealthy, conservative and right-leaning families – for at that time and still mostly to this day only the very rich leave to go to university), informed by the growing Brazilian student movement, joined by the members of local CEBs[29] (established in the mid-1970s) by the progressive local priest – *Padre* Diomedes de Carvalho), and upset with the dismal state of the area (no education or health services, electricity or running water) and the constant neglect, organized a pro-independence campaign, seeking emancipation. They fought against strong resistance from Aracati's ruling oligarchy and organized a plebiscite vote on January 22nd, 1984, that established Icapuí as an independent political entity. One of these students, José Airton Félix Cirilo Silva (known as Zé Airton), ran for mayor as a candidate for the leftist national party PMDB (*Partido do Movimento Democratico do Brasil* – Brazilian Democratic Movement Party) and won. In 1986 he took office and became Icapuí's first *prefeito* (mayor). In 1988 he left the PMDB and aligned with the PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – the Workers' Party) – the ruling party in Icapuí ever since.

[29] *Communidades Eclesiais de Base* – Catholic Base Communities – religious groups under Vatican II and liberation theology, using a progressive reading of the Bible to develop popular *conscientização* and local popular mobilization for social change: Arraes 1972; Burdick 1993; Droogers 1993; Rostas and Droogers 1993; Hewitt 1990; Mainwaring 1986; Rabelo 1993; Stewart-Gambino 1989; Vink 1985.

Education

Believing in the importance of working on projects with a chance of showing positive results before the next elections, Zé Airton's administration decided to prioritize education - spending 38% of the municipal budget on education, or 8% more than the minimum required by federal law at that time and including in the budget financing for free student transportation and attractive wages for the teachers (Nylen 1997; Airton 1998). Impressive results followed as student enrollment increased from 700 to over 3,000 in 1996 – up 200% from 1986, marking Icapuí as a municipality with 99% of its school-age children (7 to 14 years of age) attending school. The number of professors and school buildings increased (from 37 to 115 and 9 to 31 respectively) as illiteracy rates dropped from 70% before 1984 to 19% in 2000 according to Icapuí statistics (while the IBGE states it is 30%), compared to 30% in Ceará. In 1991, Icapuí received international recognition through an award from UNICEF for its 100% school attendance rate for 7 to 14 year olds and in 1996, it received, once again, international recognition, this time from the Ford Foundation and the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, for universalizing education.

Health

In 1989, Zé Airton's successor, Dedé Texeira, turned the focus to public health. Within 4 years the number of doctors increased from 1 to 7 and the number of health posts from 3 to 7. Today 100% of the population is served by 5 doctors, 6 nurses, 12 nurses aides, 40 health workers, a hospital with 10 beds, a new obstetrics center, a medical laboratory, and an ambulance (Ribeira Torres 1999). Dramatic results have been noted, such as a drastic drop in infant mortality rates and maternal morbidity.

During Zé Airton's second mandate (he was elected in 1992), Icapuí became one of the first municipalities in Ceará (in 1994), to pioneer the Family Health Program (*Programa de Saúde da Familia* - PSF) – a program guaranteeing full health coverage and access to the entire population. This public health program, which emphasizes the psychological and social aspects of health, a holistic approach to health and an inclusive and participatory process in the delivery of health services, has since become very popular throughout Brazil. As part of the program health-care workers regularly visit all districts of the municipality, making scheduled house calls, taking blood pressure readings, measuring sugar levels, giving pre-natal exams and support, as well as advice on contraception and workshops on nutrition, childhood diseases, and sanitation.

Prizes

In 1991, Icapuí won the *Criança, Paz e Educação*[30] prize from UNICEF for having all children in school. In 1994, it won the *100% de cobertura vacinal*[31] award from the Ministry of Health of Ceará. In 1996, it won the Getúlio Vargas Foundation award for its efforts at universalizing schooling. In 1999, it was awarded with a prize from the JICA (Japanese International Cooperation Agency) for its success in implementing strategies for humanizing health and in particular pregnancy and childbirth. In 2000 it was awarded with the *Município Aprovado*[32] award for having prioritized children's welfare and for having prioritized their politicization by including them in the *Orçamento Participativo* (Participatory Budget), through a program called *Dia Feliz* or

[30] Child, Peace and Education award.
[31] 100% vaccine coverage.
[32] UNICEF Aproved Municipality Award.

Happy Day (*Prefeitura de Icapuí – Dia Feliz* 1997). Also in 2000, Icapuí won the *Gestão Escolar*[33] award from the Ministry of Health of Ceará for the excellent quality of 2 of its schools and the Health Policy award from CONASEMS[34] for its 100% vaccination rate. These prizes have led to Icapuí's international recognition as a functioning democracy, in addition to some funding, principally for pilote projects with (research) interests in health and education.

Dedé

The mayor in 2000 was the *petista*[35] Dedé[36] -- in his 4th and final mandate as permitted by law. Throughout his tenure he has publicly stated his commitment to the two main themes of the PT - (1) the inversion of priorities (ending the practice of clientelism that benefits elites and insisting that the needs of the poor take priority) and (2) popular participation (providing people with decision-making power, especially in fiscal matters). He has been awarded 8 times with "The Best Mayor of Ceará award" and won the "One of Best Mayors of the 1990s" prize in the year 2000.

Democracy and Popular Participation

After education and health services were firmly established in Icapuí, Zé Airton turned the focus to grassroots community participation, by setting up the *Ação Comunitaria* or AC (Secretariat of Community Action) in 1993 (Nylen 1997; Airton

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[33] Good management of schools.

[34] *Conselho Nacional dos Secretários Municipais de Saúde*: National Council of Municipal Health Secretaries.

[35] *Petistas* are supporters of the PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*).

[36] It is custom in Brazil to refer to politicians by their first name.

1998). This secretariat would be run by social workers, community psychologists and community mobilizers, and stimulate and assist the organization of autonomous *associações de moradores* (neighborhood associations), independent from both the political parties and the administration. The goal in elaborating such a system was to put into practice the PT rhetoric on the important role of popular organizing in guaranteeing people a better quality of life and a more democratic society. The AC's aim has been to facilitate community action (popular participation), encourage people to think critically about the conditions in which they live, promote active citizen involvement in the management of their lives, and empower them to place demands on the *prefeitura.*

According to the two mayors Icapuí has ever known, a democratic and popular government requires going beyond improving and universalizing public services and changing the political culture of clientelistic relations between government and governed. It requires efforts to decentralize the administration, to expose government decision-making to public scrutiny (locally called *transparencia* or transparency), to stimulate popular participation in all aspects of governance and create a participatory democracy[37]. This led Dedé to implement in 1997, for the first time in the Northeast, a system of managing public funds that encourages the population to participate collectively towards the formation of the budget through the collective definition of priorities – the *Orçamento Participativo*, OP (Participatory Budget[38]).

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[37] Defined as when the people have decision-making power and when their priorities guide local government.

[38] The actual budget is painted on a wall dowtown for all to see – see photo 11 on p.32.

Photo 11 – *Orçamento Participativo* (Participatory Budget) wall downtown

***Orçamento Participativo* and Popular Participation**

Following the PT experience in Porto Alegre, the OP in Icapuí was designed to increase the sense of social inclusion of formerly subordinate classes (Neaera Abers). This was to occur through the process of publicly and collectively managing public funds and defining the municipal actions and priorities for the following year. In addition, participants were supposed to begin seeing themselves as agents, not as people requesting gifts or favors for which they must do something in exchange.

The OP is praised for providing municipalities and residents with the financial means to find solutions to the severe local social and economic problems - which are, inadequate access to drinking water and sanitation, precarious roads, malnutrition, alarming rates of diabetes and hypertension, difficult access to health and education in the isolated rural neighborhoods, endemic unemployment. It is argued that as a result of this collective public action of deciding on the municipal budget, the people are transformed into empowered agents of development and discover the power of collective mobilization and problem-solving and their own political potential to make decisions affecting their lives. The result can be a transformation of traditional attitudes towards governance which was formerly understood as a vote in exchange for a favor and a strengthening of a sense of the power of people to achieve goals through mobilization.

The official goal of this decentralized decision-making process is to make public actions democratic and transparent, and increase credibility between government and citizen, ideally unleashing even more potential for positive social change at the local

level. In this view, popular participation is seen as a strategy of collective democratic action needed for full participation of all social classes or groups, especially the poor, and as a vehicle for breaking free from the idea that socio-political hierarchies are natural and inescapable. It theoretically enables citizens to understand that traditional practices of vote buying and threats render invisible the gains not only handed to them by the administration but the result of their own hard work. Participating in the struggle to realize these gains increases the likelihood that citizens will interpret them not as just another set of clientelist favors from a paternalist political candidate in exchange for their votes, but as evidence of their empowerment. This makes the more long-term, less tangible communal gains of improved public services more likely to win out at election time against the more immediate individual favors. In this way the lessons of participation can contribute to the breaking down of the traditional culture of paternalism.

Although claiming to be a democratic and popular administration seeking to provide equal access to quality public services and change the political culture of paternalistic (clientelist) relations between the government and the governed by actively promoting popular participation in processes of governance, Icapuí's reality is much more nuanced. It resembles a living, thinking, breathing negotiation between a rhetoric of popular democracy and a tradition of clientelism, with clientelist practices frequently embracing the rhetoric. Icapuí does demonstrate an uncommon dedication to public services but the gradual change of the residents' values and the efforts to politicize the participants remain questionable. While the PT promotes a style of governance resting on the principles of popular participation, citizen autonomy, self-organization and

conscientização[39] – a style of governance that rejects the traditional reliance of the people on elite actors to defend their interests and that insists the people be allowed and assisted in the development of their own political voices - practice tends to fall far from the ideal in Icapuí. Frequently citizens emphasize their rights without any attention to responsibilities. The result is that the people demand public services from both the administration and elite actors without participating in either securing or protecting them.

Structure of the *Prefeitura* (City Hall/ Municipal Government)

Icapuí's *prefeitura* is formed of several secretariats that are constantly changing in names and numbers but revolve around administration, community action, health and sanitation, education and culture, tourism and sports, development and environment, communication, finance, and public services and works. Each secretariat is headed by a Secretary who is appointed by the mayor and because the PT wins every election, the composition of the administration rarely changes and the same individuals are simply shuffled from one secretariat to another. Frequently instead of being principally concerned with the quality of the governance and the social services offered, their primary interests reside in the advancement of their political careers and personal wealth.

Elections

The Secretaries and municipal employees in Icapuí, as a general rule, are *petista*. Their job security is contingent on the PT winning at election time and their political

[39] "Mechanism through which [people] learn about the problems affecting their lives, develop a critical stand toward reality. Become aware of their own potential to deal with the problems and attempt to achieve solutions to them" (Neaera Abers 2000: 44).

allegiance being noticed. Every 4 years, on the national day of municipal elections, Brazilians all over the country are told[40] to vote for their mayor (*prefeito*), vice-mayor (*vice-prefeito*) and town councilors (*vereadores*). The period of my fieldwork (June-November, 2000) coincided with the municipal elections and as a result I was able to perceive certain cultural and political practices that exist in daily life in Icapuí but that might be less easily detectable in a less politically charged time, especially if one is not actively looking for the signs of their existence. These practices were essentially clientelistic, such as give-aways to sway political favor, intimidation and vote buying.

Women in Icapuí

Social development and progressive politics have increased women's participation in Icapuí. In fact, women are the largest presence in community organizing (involved in providing and receiving public services, popular education) and in the low-ranking/poorly paid municipal administration jobs (representing 241 of the 340 public workers in 1998). Although there has never been a *prefeita* (woman mayor) and never more than two women on the 11-seat town council (or *câmara*) at one time, women are without a doubt incorporated into community political activities[41]. They have participated in and have even been organizing community politics for decades – first beginning under the leadership of the progressive liberationist Church in the 1970s.

Maria - a projects advisor for the AC - stated during an interview that

[40] It is an obligation to vote in Brazil and there is a fine for abstaining.

[41] The political involvement of women. Informal popular involvement in community issues - with no direct decision-making power and (generally) no pay. Common-good and public services–oriented, and linked to daily living (health, education, popular participation, popular education, political canvassing).

"Women, mothers in Icapuí are very *trabalhadora* (hard working), *batalhadora* (fighters) – *de luta* (struggling). In fact, it is mostly women who participate here in community activities. Women are more interested in community than men because they manage the families. When the men go to sea, their wives do everything and have to deal with all the concerns alone – the health and education of their children, the quality of their food and water and the safety of the roads. The men tend not to think about such things".

And according to another AC employee, Rita:

"Women and especially women without education, are more socially conscious, know more what needs doing and how, are more aware than the *vereadores* who vote on budget things with all their social science backgrounds because life socializes them and makes them concerned for the community. They get a social education and become *de luta* through living as women and awareness about the home, the family, children, health, education, the community".

Because the idea of community[42] is central to Icapuí's political and ideological rhetoric and women are central to community it is apparent that the popular participation discourse and its focus on community rests heavily on the presence of women. In fact, "good" women (as opposed to bad, "sick", selfish women) exhibit the behaviors and lifestyle of "good" community participants and "good", caring, hard-working, struggling, generous and giving "mothers" to both their family and the community at large.

In Icapuí, the fact that women are such hard workers (working harder than men – as both men and women recognize) and do so much community work (volunteer in health, education, popular education, political campaigning) is perceived to be based on their roles as naturally altruistic family providers. As such, their work does not limit itself to the home but involves work in community organizations. However, working for the community, although considered socially important, is seen as only an extension of women's reproductive work at home and not the kind of work one gets paid for.

[42] Defined as identity-based groups (*petistas*, the poor), neighborhoods, residents of Icapuí.

In this thesis I describe political practice in Icapuí and argue that the local PT is inclusive in so far as it welcomes and in fact needs women to be involved in its popular participation activities, such as the ADM and the OP. The women however, are frequently incorporated into **top-down** "grassroots"[43] activities, lacking authority and decision-making power, and are rarely appointed to any higher-ranking position other than community participant or delegate in the OP. In fact, although the *prefeitura* and most residents argue that women in Icapuí **gain** from the identity *de luta* (struggling), *trabalhadora* (hard-working) and *guerrera* (fighters, warriors), by developing a new sense of citizenship and seeing their work publicly recognized, it would appear that the elaboration of the "good woman" model more serves the purpose of creating the appearance of a participatory democracy that helps to secure continuous funding and recognition for Icapuí's administration. In many respects the ideology of popular participation is a way for the administration to harness free female community labor.

Even though women are far more involved in community politics that, in theory, influence formal politics, the political leaders with few exceptions are men and they tend to be informed by male interests such as job creation projects for men while possessing, little interest in securing goods and services for women such as public daycares, ultrasound machines or running water. Not only are the mayor, vice-mayor, and 9 of the 11 *vereadores* who sit on the *câmara* all men, but most OP delegates at the higher levels

[43] In quotes because grassroots imply a movement from the base, from the people and in Icapuí activities, groups and forums that are locally called "grassroots" are imposed by the municipal administration.

of decision-making (the regional delegates[44] - of which there are 2 for each of the 5 regions of Icapuí – elected by the neighborhood delegates) are men. My findings indicate that although 70% of the OP participants are women, and the delegates at the neighborhood level are split equally between men and women, only 30% of the regional delegates are women. This means that the only formal process of political participation where women are invited to participate begins with a 70% female participation rate (an extremely conservative figure that could go as high as 85%) and reaches its end with 70% of the highest-level representatives being men. Lia explains the low rates of female delegates, blaming women's lack of organization:

> "Women's progress in politics is restricted by the lack of organizing and collective identity. Women lack *conscientização*. Until today – despite all that has been done, they are not organized. What we need here are groups of women focused on political issues and interested in discussing the social roles of women and issues related to gender but so far the women have not made the efforts to make this a reality and I don't think that it will do much good for the *prefeitura* to put into place **for** the women, such a system. The women have to work for it themselves in order to respect it and really use it – otherwise it will not be a thing of the women but it will be a thing of the *prefeitura*".

This quote is particularly interesting given the fact that no other activity, policy or group in Icapuí is described as needing such organization. All have been implemented as top-down "grassroots" projects and systems the administration puts into place **for** the people, with education and training and the expectation that they will one day manage them independently (making the town a success). Why then should policies regarding women's needs or the elaboration of women's groups require a particular struggle and independent implementation on the part of the women for them to be realized – especially considering that women are already busy tending to their families, the community and otherwise making the whole participatory democracy system work?

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[44] Those elected by the people during community meetings – those who actually decide on what priorities the town council will vote on for approval in the upcoming municipal budget.

Fátima, like many of the women I spoke to at the *prefeitura* claims the problem is not only lack of organization but also lack of self-esteem – a rather contradictory statement when compared to public descriptions of women as *guerrera* (warrior-like), *de luta* (struggling) and *trabalhadora* (hard working). If women really are so hard working and the labels really are so empowering why then are the women so lacking in self-esteem? In this thesis I thus describe how these labels also constrain women and how they have become a prescription for the behavior against which women are measured.

A fact the administration refuses to examine is that in Icapuí, most participants of the OP and the other open and democratic social forums (such as neighborhood associations and health groups) develop the rhetoric of popular participation but continue to fulfill needs through clientelist means. They insist on their rights as citizens and demand public services and personal favors without participating to make them a reality. These are the "good" women of Icapuí. In contrast, the marginalized women of Icapuí (its lesbian single mother group), those labeled as *doente* (sick), *doida* (crazy, wild), *sem vergonha* (without shame[45]) and anti-family and anti-community (through their refusal to allow the traditionally constraining roles of housewife and mother dictate their identity), actually put into practice the popular participation rhetoric. In so doing, I argue, the marginal women who define themselves as and are defined as apolitical, are not only **political** but are at the **center** of the grassroots activities of Icapuí - because they engage

[45] Term used with great frequency to insult or attempt to control or devalue the lifestyles and activities of marginalized women (those lesbian single mothers who refuse to participate in community politics). It is an appropriation of an old gender ideal opposing female honor and shame (See Cole 1991; Brandes 1987) for a new context - although it is also used by mainstream society to qualify inappropriate behavior on the part of men or women more generally.

in an autonomous, bottom-up internal critique of local politics. As the upcoming stories of women in popular politics or community politics will illustrate, a purely discursive commitment to the destruction of paternalistic social relations is not enough for the construction of a new participatory, inclusive and empowering political culture of governance.

DONA MARGUERITE[46]

"Who is speaking now is Marguerite from Praia Linda[47], Icapuí. I would like to speak a bit about Icapuí – its history and emancipation. It was in 1982 - there was Zé Airton and he was a *vereador* candidate for Aracati. So together with the Church Movement – because back then we would get the things we needed through the Church – we made a big effort and Zé Airton was elected. Once elected, he asked us to get together and form an *Associação dos Moradores*, an ADM [Neighborhood Association] and we did all that he asked. I was even the president for a while near the beginning... They elected me because I am a woman who cares about the community, a woman *de luta*, *batalhadora* who knows how to fight for things, a woman who is not afraid to speak her mind! It was so much work though! It's completely exhausting trying to *lutar* for the people - because it takes time and energy and community things are not jobs... People need jobs. They don't want to help the community for free... One woman at the *prefeitura* once told me that she had done volunteer work for the community her whole life and was glad to finally have a job and get paid!

So, like I was saying, we formed the ADM, built a small school inside my house and marched forward towards the plebiscite because of Zé Airton. Everybody was together in that struggle and the plebiscite won[48]. We thought that it was a good development for Icapuí because we had nothing here! So when we found out that we'd won and had emancipated Icapuí we were all congratulating each other because we knew that we would soon have our own *prefeito* [mayor]

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[46] All informants's identities have been disguised by using fictive personal names and names of community of residence and also by merging numerous like-minded people into one unidentifiable informant "type". Only the name of the town and its most public figures – its mayors – have not been disguised.

[47] Fictive neighborhood name used for anonymity purposes.

[48] In fact, the plebicite won with 59% of the votes (José Airton Félix Cirilo Silva 1998: 27).

and that the *prefeito* would be Zé Airton – and that that was the right road. He was like a star that came in our path to light the way. He said that no one should worry and that building a real school would be one of the very first things he does after he wins the elections. And really, when he took leadership in 1985, he built our school and still today we have it and that's how things started here – *sempre lutando* [always struggling], *se devolvendo* [growing].

Because I was born and raised here and saw all the changes since our emancipation, today I think that everything is *brilhante* [wonderful]. In 1982 all this was *poucozinho* [small] but today we have health, health posts, and schools, schools of the best quality. But our youth of today find all this very little because many were born with all these things and they never knew our struggle, all our work. They think it all came easy and it didn't! We had to work hard, walking around door to door, talking to people, talking at meetings, and trying to convince them that emancipation was the way of the future for us. You see, some could see that things would get better! They were sure of it! For them it was a reality that one day this place could be our city, our municipality and that everything would be better for the people here - because electricity and treated and piped water would come! I could see plain as day that things with Zé Airton would get better and that we would stop being the little municipality of Aracati that is forgotten in the dark. I knew it... Others didn't believe Zé Airton... They said that he wasn't going to do what he said he'd do – that this place could never be a city. They thought that emancipation was a bad idea. They thought that to leave this place to Aracati would be better – all dark, with no lights, no electricity, no schools, with nothing except that useless health post we had... a health post built to win votes during an *época das politicas* [an election] with no nurses, no doctors, no equipment! So, there was no point keeping it open! As if a building by itself makes a health post! Winning things that

way doesn't work...not when the person making promises is not at all interested in keeping them and only says them in order to fool the people and win votes... Now with Zé Airton things were different and with Dedé too – when they say they will give you something, they really do. When you ask for a job for your son or nephew they find him a job but in Aracati times you couldn't count on any politician to really give you anything – they always found a way of taking it back!

And Dedé is not a bad *prefeito*... I mean he is not destroying and is always following the path Zé Airton – the creator of the emancipation movement[49] – put us on. Of course there are things Dedé does that are wrong but there are many things that are wrong that he doesn't even know about, that he didn't do! And, when we go to him to complain about something, he gets things done! For example, a road like this one. When we complain to Dedé, "My son, nobody can pass by here anymore – cars can't pass here anymore. The sand has taken over the road. Can you fix this problem for me?" Well the next day they are already passing by with the machine that pushes the sand off the road and people in the neighborhood are thanking me and thanking Dedé.

No matter how great though, all *prefeituras* steal and all *prefeitos* inside the *prefeituras* steal! Zé Airton, you think he did not steal? You think? He stole! *So vivia robando* [he stole all the time]! Wasn't he the *prefeito*? Wasn't he in charge of everything? So, of course he was stealing! Sometimes he wouldn't come to meetings because he had been in on the stealing that we wanted to discuss. He was *com vergonha* [ashamed] because he had been stealing and everyone knew... Everyone knew but after all the hard work the PT has done here you can't say the PT does stuff

[49] In fact, although Zé Airton led the campaign that brought emancipation to Icapuí, the founder of the emancipation movement was Dr. Orlando (in 1957) - the opposition candidate in the 2000 elections.

like that! What will happen? My! Terrible things! Maybe the PT would not manage the *prefeitura* and then we'd be really lost!

This is part of why women participate more in community things than men, because here in community things the women have much more presence. Some say that it's because the men fish and are always away at sea but even when there was not this lobster fishing and there was more agriculture and more rain, the men did not participate much. I think it's because women like peace more than men, like it when things are done right. They like community. They are more courageous, more patient, more humble, pray more, are more into honest work and sharing and helping and politics is all about lying and cheating. Community work is already more honest. Men are more into stealing and things. With men anything goes and they have this very aggressive side and want all the power. I think that women are not like that, except some and they are *doente* [sick] and *doida* [wild] and *sem vergonha* [without shame] – not normal...

Some people say that women don't work as hard as men but I think that women work much harder than men do. More and more women work outside of the house these days too because their husbands do not earn enough money to support the family and yet they still do all of the work in the home and most of the community work too! You should have seen during the fight for emancipation – it was almost only women too – walking around, doing all the convincing, trying to get everyone to believe that Icapuí could be a city all of its own and that it could improve and grow and offer us more. Someone who works at the *prefeitura* once told me that it was the women who emancipated Icapuí!

And have you noticed that who is out there canvassing, doing politics these days is mostly women? There are men but there are way more women! They do most of the work! And the *prefeitura* complains that fewer women participate these days – but sometimes I wonder if the *prefeitura* realizes how hard it is for us women. Some have young families and jobs and no time for the community. It's hard for women to participate and get involved! Just look at how few women run for *vereadora*. And, we don't even support them... It would be nice to have more women in the *câmara* but elections are complicated! You want so many people to win and you can only vote for one person. Some say that it is easy – whoever helps you out the most when you need it, who pays for medicines, food, clothes, fishing nets, boat repairs, and house materials deserves to be rewarded with lots of votes but then you have a brother, a cousin, a nephew that is a candidate and you don't know which way to go. It gives you a headache all this! I find this the most horrible part of our politics here – the having to choose between family members and friends, because you can't choose them all!

Here it is more the family than the political ideas that matter because it is not all equal in that *câmara*! People say that nobody knows why some projects get done and others don't but that's a lie because everybody knows that those that are closer to the *prefeito*, are more privileged, with a better chance of getting their projects to pass and advancing their neighborhood. So, everyone wants a family member in there pushing for their neighborhood. And for those of is who aren't important enough and educated enough to be in the *câmara* and understand all those politics we have our own role to play in the community. We can go to our *prefeito* and say "*Meu filho* [my son], this cannot be. You have to fix it. Tell me you will do me this favor and make it right" and he does - most of the time. And, when you can't count on Dedé, you can find someone else".

Highlight of Narrative

This narrative highlights three basic elements of my analysis of women and community politics. The first element of analysis this narrative illustrates is the local importance of the PT, the massive social and economic improvements that Icapuí has known since its emancipation, and how the people did not dream up emancipation on their own but followed a local leader – Zé Airton. The second element is the local importance of the "good" woman identity – as evidenced through the self-labeling with terms like *de luta*, *trabalhadora*, *batalhadora*, and *guerrera*, and the description of women who behave differently as *doente*, *doida*, and *sem vergonha*. In fact, from this narrative it becomes clear that although women do most of the community work, many women find it tiring and somewhat unrewarding to struggle always without pay for the public good. The third element of analysis that comes out of this narrative is the local tenacity of clientelism and the relative acceptability of vote-buying and corruption. Although it may be deemed wrong to steal and lie, all *prefeituras* are seen as conducting themselves that way and critiquing the PT is seen as only bringing about potential future hardship.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

I argue that in Icapuí, the local PT has gendered politics to such an extent that to be seen as respectable in the community, women **must** "participate" – if only in very limited ways and sporadically. In rejecting the hegemonic rhetoric of popular participation, the marginalized women of Icapuí I argue are rejecting more than a political discourse but are also striking at the core of the local gender system and creating new models of identity for women. They are not only fighting for survival or practical gender needs but are also fighting for strategic, gender conscious needs (Moser 1993).

The following literature review will explore the scholarly literature on the topic of women's political involvement in a setting where popular participation and clientelism meet. I focus on four themes in the existing literature: (1) patron-client relations and da Matta's syncretism, (2) New Social Movements in Latin America, ADMs and the PT, (3) gender and development, gender needs, and gender and revolutions, and (4) the importance of everyday life as the starting point for cultural analysis. Through this review, the main schools of thought and paradigm shifts will be identified and through this thesis some of the oversights will be redressed.

CLIENTELISM
The Structure of Power

Local politicians have historically played an important role in Brazil. During the 19th century, local political life was dominated by "*coroneis*" (colonels), rural oligarchs, who wielded power through patron-client relations. The clientelist networks of today emerged around these "*coroneis*" who remained in control by purchasing votes (by

arranging employment, loaning money, securing health services, influencing judges, controlling the police, and controlling the legislation of land rights) and handing these votes over to state politicians in exchange for access to public employment for their friends and relatives, investments for their towns, and other state resources.

By the late 1960s there was a growing awareness that patron-client relations were not disappearing despite modernization and economic development. In fact, with urbanization and modernization, clientelism in Brazil has been adapted to new conditions. In contemporary social thought it is now becoming essential to abandon the understanding of clientelism as a traditional, limited, dyadic relationship and instead come to see it as a combination of complex social, economic and political networks and in fact, the major mode of regular institutional relations in certain parts of the world, including certain parts of Brazil (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984).

According to Clapham, clientelism is a "relationship of exchange between unequals" based on exchanges of different types of resources, a sense of unconditionality and credit, and an element of interpersonal obligation, with ambivalence (as these relationships are not fully legal, are often opposed to official laws and are not permanent). In clientelism "an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influences and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron" (Clapham 1982: 4). Through clientelism actors of different social categories may secure favors and access resources.

The client may obtain, for example, help getting a pension, a loan, or medical treatment. The patron may secure support or manual labor.

For clientelist relationships to work, however, critical resources must be controlled by one particular group within a society. It is in the absence of any system by which resources are allocated and exchanged according to accepted universal rules that private and personalistic criteria develop and flourish. According to Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984) and Scheper-Hughes (1992), because widening the access to resources strains clientelistic relations, patrons strive to maintain control over avenues of information and flow of resources often with the cooperation of clients interested in perpetuating their access to resources.

It is thus because both clients and patrons stand to gain from the relationship that both are interested in maintaining the integrity of the patron's resources, and the integrity of the system. According to Clapham (1982), Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984), and Scheper-Hughes (1992), the sense of mutual obligation inherent in the patron-client bonds serves to ally members of different classes in vertical relations and increase factional divisions between members of the same class, undermining horizontal group organization by denying the idea of inter-class conflict and same-class (and same gender) solidarity. In fact, more than being faulted for perpetuating economic inequalities in Brazil, Cammack (1982) argues, clientelism is most greatly faulted for hindering the emergence of ideological and class-based politics and discouraging the broad-based participation of neighborhood residents.

Because these negotiations are founded in personalistic negotiations with those who are most powerful, rather than in protest, and because services are not demanded but are politely requested and come at a price, the potential threat of popular mobilization and protest is greatly reduced in clientelist settings. In fact, clientelist systems give incentives to those willing to engage in personal relationships and willing to accept the rules of exchange rather than to those who mobilize collectively to pressure the state. People come to see benefits as individual gifts rather than rights (Neaera Abers 2000). As such, a good patron is frequently defined as a good "friend", a kind, noble, just, generous, strong and charismatic benefactor for the client and the client's entire family.

According to Scheper-Hughes (1992), the "bad boss" is not even a threat to the system. In fact, she argues that the bad boss serves as a safe internal critique, the scapegoat of the system, because the very presence of an individual guilty of violating the trust between patron and client reinforces the notion that such trust generally exists. Her argument is that the good boss conceals the "contradictions inherent in the perverse relations of power and dominance" and in fact, rescues not only the client but also the entire system (Scheper-Hughes: 126). As we will see in Icapuí, good politicians are seen as those who are good patrons and give out good favors and gifts, not those who critique the system of vote buying.

What is interesting about a clientelist analysis is that it points out not only social and economic inequalities, as a class analysis would but it also shows how the different classes can manipulate and control one another (Medard 1982). Clientelism is a

relationship of mutual dependence, that both helps and hinders the various players and that, above all, perpetuates the social, cultural, economic and political system.

SYNCRETISM AND THE BORDERLAND BETWEEN DICHOTOMIES

The Space Between Two Opposites: Encompassing Dichotomies

The persistence of clientelist patterns of exercising political power or the rise of new forms of clientelism in Brazil is important as it suggests we call into question the conventional separation between the "public" (male sphere) and the "private" (female sphere) (Rosaldo 1974) and other Western-based dichotomies that do not necessarily hold true in Brazil. Roberto da Matta is one of the best-known Brazilian anthropologist and is most known for his opposition to such dichotomies. He argues against opposing a "traditional" and a "modern" (i.e. Westernized) Brazil and instead proposes that Brazil "Brazilianizes" Western concepts, such as democracy, by adopting individualistic relations and maintaining at the same time what he calls personalistic relations.

Da Matta made use of Dumont's (1980) two key dimensions for comparing values, social structures and patterns of social relations across societies, namely the hierarchy/equality and the holism/individualism dichotomies and applied them in creative ways to Brazil. Dumont intended the dichotomies to point to the fundamental and dichotomous organizing structures of societies. He adopted the term "hierarchy" to describe societies, such as India, in which social positions are ascribed at birth, or limited by one's family position and "equality" to describe societies, such as the U.S. in which hierarchy is attained by virtue of a fair competition between equals. For Dumont, "holism" is the organizing principle of a society in which all occupy a different position

in the whole and people's identity is rooted in their association with a particular position in society; and "individualism" describes societies in which members are equal "individuals" in the face of social structures.

In a holistic type of society, otherwise known as personalistic, members are not "individuals" but are "persons" dominated by the whole and living an ascribed social role. In contrast, in individualist societies, identity is rooted in one's own personal life and choices as an individual and social positions are achieved as the product of a competition. According to da Matta's (1991) analysis, Brazil is neither personalistic nor individualistic, nor egalitarian nor hierarchical and instead uses all these types of social relations. In fact, da Matta claims that Dumont's distinctions can be applied simultaneously throughout Brazilian society, countering the belief that Brazil is split between a traditional, hierarchical, personalistic, lower-class, rural culture and a modern, egalitarian, individualistic, progressive urban elite culture. In fact he takes the conventional relation of "encompassment" Dumont used to denote the way one social group or idea includes its opposite at a higher level and changes it **from** traditional elements of Brazil giving way before modernity **to** the non-modern aspect of Brazilian culture encompassing its more modern alternative. The "do you know who you are talking to?" form of social interaction (da Matta 1991) is a perfect illustration of this. In this scenario, a modern individualistic social encounter (such as between a speeding motorist and a police officer) is turned into a personalistic one (with the driver establishing his position of authority and connections to get around the universal structures of society and the police officer being made to apologize or risk getting fired).

In order to back up his statement that Brazil is neither modern nor traditional but both, da Matta developed an analysis of intermediary terms or symbols that dramatize the Brazilian situation. In all social spheres he emphasizes ambiguity and mediation. He sees Catholicism as populated by a pre-Christian spirit world, sharp injustices of the authoritarian and hierarchical system as mediated with the institutions of patron/client, racial prejudice as muted by celebration of mulatto women, and gender inequality as mediated by the power women exercise through their family obligations (da Matta 1995).

"House", "Street" and "Other World", is the most well-known of da Matta's studies of mediation, or mixing of hierarchy and egalitarianism, and holism and individualism. He argues that these concepts are symbols of a moral universe, with "House" (conventionally thought of as the domain of women) representing the hierarchical and personalistic moral world and "Street" (as the male domain) representing the egalitarian and individualistic world. In his work, he claims that in Brazil "House" and "Street" interact as in the "Do you know who you are talking to?" form of social interaction with the home world brought into that of the Street. He insists that Brazilian society is defined by that space where both moral spaces come together.

Through this analysis, da Matta is attempting to show how personalism is a resource that people can use to get around the official rules of the hierarchical society and may be the way to pave roads, acquire medicines, run grocery stores and elect politicians. With a dynamic approach such as this one, da Matta sees corruption and political instability not just as products of a colonial legacy or neocolonial economics but as

products of the practices, values, and institutions that are reproduced in the informal institutions of everyday life, such as clientelism.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS, NSMs, AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACIES

Clientelist or Combative?

Two types of neighborhood associations exist in Brazil (Neaera Abers 2000): clientelist and combative. Clientelist organizing involves personalistic exchanges between people of unequal status and is characterized by: little participation on the part of the residents; vertical relationships between leaders and followers rather than horizontal relationships among members or organizations; co-optation by the state; and, mobilization of political support in exchange for petty resources. Although in most cases such associations usually have little participation by residents beyond a select initial clique and the association's president's main activity is frequently to round up the votes at election time for local bosses and their parties (Neaera Abers 2000), they claim to "represent" the neighborhood. Such organizations reinforce a hierarchical, unmobilized and divided civil society and a relationship with the state that is based in gift giving, promises and favors rather than on rights. Such neighborhood associations have long played a central role in mobilizing political support for clientelist politicians in Brazil.

Combative organizing, in contrast, is founded on a conception of equal rights and citizenship, involves broad-based citizen mobilizing geared toward pressuring the state to provide benefits without compromise, and is usually initiated by, but not limited to, protest. Such associations rely on broad-based horizontal networks of civic action and

promote egalitarianism and solidarity. While very few clientelist associations have the mobilizing power for or the ideological interest in protest, combative movements, in contrast, may occasionally engage in clientelist "favor exchange" but that happens in isolated circumstances and is usually the subject of much criticism.

Clientelist neighborhood associations began to appear in Brazilian cities in the 1940s. During the military dictatorship that began in 1964, most forms of collective demand-making were repressed and activism declined substantially. After 1974 however, when the regime increased its efforts to mobilize electoral support at the local level, neighborhood activists gained confidence. Many of these new neighborhood associations distinguished themselves from clientelist ones by mobilizing large numbers of neighborhood residents, engaging in mass protest rather than clientelist negotiations and by making alliances with other associations. Scholars began to see these booming neighborhood associations as a new type of emancipatory movement with the potential to bring widespread change (Escobar and Alvarez 1992).

By the 1980s, Latin America was at the beginning of its most important crisis (Fausto 1999; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Sadet and Silverstein 1991). In 1982, Mexico could not meet its debt payment obligations, which prompted the "debt crisis", resulting in repeated attempts at economic stability and adjustments with austerity measures, rapidly declining living conditions, industrial decline in the wake of adoption of strong neo-liberal and free market economic policies, even negative growth rate in some countries, and social and political consequences that were quickly taking on huge

importance such as increasing social exclusion and violence. The reaction of the people surprised the world. Instead of being overwhelmed by tasks of daily survival, weakened by exclusion and exploitation, and engaged in revolts of popular rage and frustrations, they were taking part in various forms of resistance and collective struggle.

In the early 1980s many of these collective forms of protest came to be known as NSMs or "new social movements" by such researchers as Slater (1985), and Laclau (1985). They were believed to lead to new popular interests, to practice new ways of doing politics, and to embody the possibility of creating a new hegemony by the masses (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Escobar 1992). Unlike the co-opted associations of the past, the new movements and associations were seen as focusing on protest and seeking to achieve their demands without patronage. In contrast to the closed, personal and hierarchical character of clientelist organizations, the new neighborhood movements were seen as promoting a culture of solidarity, egalitarianism and participation.

According to Escobar and Alvarez (1992), the old movements were narrowly ideological, political and oriented to state power while the new social movements were just as likely to be cultural as political, preoccupied with identity and winning material concessions. In fact, a central feature of their novelty was their more open and pluralistic form of democracy, their collective and participatory values and practices and ever-widening range of sites of social struggle (Slater 1985). According to Evers, in "*Identity: the Hidden Side of New Social movements in Latin America*" (1985), the transformatory

potential within new social movements is not political, but socio-cultural – about penetrating the microstructure of society and restructuring patterns of everyday life.

New social movements are thus defined in economic, social, political and cultural terms and do not restrict themselves to traditional political activities. In fact, according to Escobar and Alvarez, they challenge our ways of understanding political life and its relations to culture and economy. They argue that social movements are the product of complex social processes in which, within structural constraints, social actors produce meanings, make decisions and form collective identities. They argue that the poor and marginal indeed have strategies and agendas and that researchers should be attempting to convey the range of tactics and political organization they develop through collective action in their struggles even if they don't lead to huge structural changes.

According to Escobar and Alvarez the three dimensions of change most commonly attributed to social movements in contemporary Latin America run along the axes: **identity, strategy, and democracy**. The first dimension is their role in forming or reconstituting collective **identities**. This engenders the need to explore the process of continuity and change in Latin American social, cultural and political struggles with a focus on the old in the new and the new in the old and the innovations stemming from their merging. The second dimension is their role in innovating social practices and political **strategies** in pursuit of socio-economic, cultural and political change. The third dimension is the actual or potential contributions of NSMs to alternative visions of development and to the **democratization** of political institutions and social relations.

Popular movements are thus an important mechanism of representation of the poor majority of the Brazilian population. They can be an important channel for righting the gross social inequalities in Brazilian society. They can also be an important channel of popular participation, a "space" in which poor people learn to assert themselves and develop new conceptions of authority, legitimacy, and justice.

REVIEWING NSMs

Bursting the Bubble

Social scientists initially gave highly optimistic assessments of social movements, grassroots use of cultural expression and neighborhood associations and their actual or potential contributions to radical social change (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). In the second half of the 1980s, however, according to Stepan (1989) and Mainwaring (1986), there was a decline in democratization movements because there was no longer a common enemy (the military regime) unifying and invigorating oppositional movements, because there was a certain public disillusionment with democracy in the face of the durability of traditional political forms, because the state seemed to have little to offer to the poor in this period of intense economic crisis, and because of activism burnout, a normal occurrence after intense mobilization and after basic demands have been met.

Many scholars began to challenge the earlier vision of NSMs as great instruments of human emancipation. Researchers realized that outsiders such as doctors, lawyers, architects, NGOs, leftist militants, liberationist priests, and political parties had played a crucial role in popular education, organizing and technical assistance. The NSMs, thus, could not be "spontaneous" and "autonomous". Many of these scholars found that the

movements were preoccupied with localized and immediate goals and not with a desire to change society. In fact, soon the movements' objectives came to be seen as limited, their impact restricted, and their life cycle short, ending as soon as demands were fulfilled. Although the analysis of the NSMs started off focusing on solidarity and autonomy, in a few short years scholars were focusing on the alienation, self-interest and dependence on the state associated with traditional, clientelist relationships.

Recent work has sought a more balanced approach – developing a more realistic conception of the role of the movements. Their authors are beginning to view the NSMs as combining forms of protest and resistance with other forms of action that closely resemble the clientelist legacy (Boschi 1987; Telles 1987; Alvarez and Escobar 1992). Anthropologist Cardoso (1983), qualifies NSMs as representing the space between (1) struggling for rights as citizens and (2) seeking to improve the material conditions of life, resulting in a contradictory set of strategies, where an ideology of democracy, egalitarianism and rights co-exists with a variety of strategies for obtaining neighborhood benefits (protest, negotiation, clientelism).

It is, in fact, because of this complexity that we should be vigilant about making use of political reductionisms and not dismiss, for example, some forms of collective action because of their limited impact. Researchers have tended to focus on NSMs confrontations with the political system and their impact on state policies and have largely neglected their less visible effects and forms at the level of culture and daily life.

According to Garcia (1992):

> "the political significance of these groups [NSMs] does not rest in their size (they are not large), their degree of social homogeneity (they are heterogeneous, albeit less so than the political-ideological groups), their permanence (they are unstable), their degree of organizational structuration or their representation (relatively low), nor even their clarity about who the adversary is (at certain times, they confront the state; at others, they ally with it, depending on the problem). Rather, the significance of these groups stems from the fact that their themes and values generate new political facts that are nationally or internationally relevant, independent from traditional actors" (García: 159).

Although the new actors are often small, as opposed to the bigger, more clearly visible and more traditional groups such as "workers" and "peasants" they are political actors and should not be mistaken as insignificant (Calderón, Piscitelli, and Reyna 1992). My argument that the everyday behavior of the marginalized women of Icapuí is a form of political protest, follows this theoretical understanding of NSMs.

Critics of NSM theory insist that the NSMs are not new. They argue that the newness is in the minds of the researchers and insist that because theorists never noticed the heterogeneity and multiplicity of social movements before does not mean that they had not previously existed. According to Alvarez and Escobar in their conclusion to *The Making of Social Movements* (1992), this newness should not prompt us to uncritically view collective struggles and social movements as the leap to human emancipation. They argue that researchers need to acquire a new appreciation of the "politics of the possible" (1992: 325) and instead of focusing solely on radical transformations of large structures of domination, should focus on the multiple acts of doing politics in one's life and its effects on the power relations of daily life. They present a more open definition of politics than one requiring direct confrontation with authority. Politics, according to them, "permeate all social relations" (Alvarez and Escobar 1992: 325) and the smaller

transformations in power relations in daily life are where we should begin our studies. It is with this in mind that I put forward the study of marginalized women in Icapuí and argue that in their daily lives they engage in political activities and daily social movements that chip away at the hegemonies in which they live.

CHIPPING AWAY AT HEGEMONIES

Doing the Everyday Differently

Evers (1985) suggests that chipping away at hegemonies is necessarily a process plagued by conflict. He argues that NSMs are not about enhancing the potential of the political left but are instead about ordinary people extracting social life from the grips of politics and making politics a constant element in social life. Because, in his view everyday practices and beliefs are the foundation of all social structures, doing the everyday differently - by taking part in grassroots community building and popular politics or refusing to do so as the marginal women of Icapuí do - has significant consequences for the power relations between individuals and the social structure as a whole.

If it is indeed the millions of small everyday acts of unreflected obedience to the existing order that create, reproduce and reinforce social structures then doing the everyday differently takes on particular importance. No structure of social domination for instance could survive without reinforcement in daily life and because these elements of power operate subconsciously on people, even a few, weak instances of a deviant social practice signify potential danger insofar as they tend to put into question the existing hegemony.

These small-scale counter-cultures may prove to have a bigger impact than other formal political organizations because of their locations in everyday life and practice. In this thesis I argue that this is the case with regards to the marginalized women in Icapuí and the threat they pose to the power structure in refusing to partake in popular participation and in insisting on living their daily lives in different, creative and subversive ways.

In situations such as these, Kleymeyer's views (1994) regarding the importance of culture in successful grassroots development become significant as they can be extrapolated to include counter-culture's daily influence in bringing about social change. Kleymeyer's argument is that culture and a strong cultural identity is the best foundation for broad-based development at the grassroots level. He understands cultural expression as a major means of generating "cultural energy", a force that motivates people to confront problems, identify solutions and participate in carrying them out.

Underlying this approach is the belief that bottom-up development (or grassroots) involves a more holistic concept of well-being, that is not just economic and material but that is social and cultural as well, involving the building of collective self-confidence and self-respect and leading to both intangible (increased group pride and improved skills in community leadership, for example) and tangible (increases in agricultural production or manufacturing goods and infrastructure improvements) sustainable results. Cultural expression can thus impact on development, by (1) strengthening group identity, social organization and community (developing and maintaining a strong shared identity and

inspiring people to single out common problems and collectively seek appropriate solutions); by (2) counteracting the negative stereotypes people may have internalized while projecting alternative, more positive images; and (3) by serving as teaching and consciousness raising tools. The point I seek to make is that cultural expression is potentially empowering and life-altering but this power depends in part on people retaining proprietorship over the forms and contents of their cultural expression and control over how it evolves. If this process is not bottom-up, cultural expression can easily become a tool of manipulation and control by dominant social groups seeking to serve their own interests.

In the case of Icapuí, I will argue that the local PT has in many instances appropriated cultural expression as a tool of hegemony building, especially with regards to women and their involvement in community politics. I describe that the "good mother" identity - designating those women who "participate" in the administrations "grassroots" organizations, who are good mothers to their families and their communities (always giving of their time and energy and always struggling for the common good, not struggling for women or for changes in gender norms) - is rooted in a certain value system and culture that the PT is reinforcing. This system not only valorizes women in traditional gender roles but labels those women who resist such a model (the lesbians and the women who like to drink), bad, *doida* or *doente* and characterizes their marginality as dangerously contagious. Although the "participating", "good mothers" in some ways control and reinforce the "good woman" identity[50], this label greatly serves the interests

[50] Because it provides them with (1) public valorization and (2) personal empowerment.

of the dominant classes, as it divides women and their potential power, getting them to criticize and marginalize one another if they step outside of the limited acceptable way of being a woman.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE REGIME, THE UNIONS AND THE PT Strengthening Traditional Elites Or Empowering The People?

Among the structural changes in Brazilian society that influenced the emergence of new social movements were: (1) the advent of liberation theology, (2) the growth of unionism and (3) the development of the PT. All are closely tied to the transformations Brazil underwent during the period of military rule (1964-1985) during which time the country's economy expanded rapidly, a high degree of industrialization took place, social inequalities worsened, and widespread poverty increased dramatically (Sadet and Silverstein 1991; Fausto 1999).

In the early 1970s, with the regime having banned and repressed almost all forms of independent political activity and the economy still booming, the regime had succeeded in quieting opposition to its rule and even unions were tightly controlled, limiting themselves to paternalistic handouts and services. The only real political organizing that took place during that time was under the umbrella of the Brazilian Catholic Church. Initially, the Church had backed the coup and dominant classes - dictating to people how to vote and extracting favors from politicians in exchange for religious sanction – but by the late 1960s it began to openly criticize the regime's repression, violations of human rights and economic policies (Mainwaring 1986; Burdick 1993; Alvarez 1990b; Sadet and Silverstein 1991; Neaera Abers 2000; de Kadt 1970;

Rabelo 1993; Rostas and Droogers 1993; Stewart-Gambino 1989; Vink 1985), eventually becoming, through the adoption of liberation theology, the most progressive national Church in the world.

Liberation theology grew out of a desire to look in the Bible for inspiration that would privilege the Church's relationship with the poor and involved a reading of the Bible based on Marxist dependency theory - promoting self-valorization, democracy (not the authority of the priest), and self-governing. Priests preached that conscious Catholics view sins as more than emanating from an individual but as placed in the context of larger social sins of inequality and class oppression and encouraged the poor to participate in the community and see peace on earth as emanating from human agency. Through liberation theology, the poor were prompted to rise out of their poverty, fatalism, apathy and fear and struggle together around their rights, reject charity and work for social change through neighborhood organizations, labor unions and political parties.

Catholic radicals based their teachings on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and the concept of *conscientização* – the process enabling the oppressed to identify the socio-economic and political realities that shape their lives and that are the source of their oppression (Forman 1975). The underlying rationale of the teachings was that ideologies mystify reality, obscure relations of power and domination, and prevent people from seeing their position in the world. Education was seen as the means to stimulate critical attitudes towards the world.

In the mid 1970s as the authoritarian regime recognized that the political opening was coming, and as liberation theology grew, people on the left began to debate the possibility of the formation of a new popular party. Many believed an autonomous workers' party with a strong grassroots base was critical for the transformation of political institutions (Keck 1992).

By 1981 the regime was losing control of both the economy and the political opening, as inflation soared to 97%. In 1982 the GNP plunged by over 4%, inflation climbed by 239%, and Brazil was recording negative growth for the first time. Economic problems created political opposition to the regime, and the MDB (*Movimento Democrático do Brasil* – Brazilian Democratic Movement), an opposition party created by the regime to replace the outlawed parties, began to achieve some political success. Other anti-regime activities began to grow again as well, such as the student movement, but it was the intensification of the industrialization process on the periphery of São Paulo, the strengthening of the working class – supported by the Roman Catholic Church – and the refusal of the MDB to support the automobile metalworkers strikes that transformed the nature of the political opposition and led to the formation of the PT (Sadet and Silverstein 1991).

In 1979 a law allowing the creation of new political parties was passed as part of the regime's policy of controlled "political opening" or *abertura*. By 1979, although still not a legal political entity, the PT had activists on the street distributing literature outlining their program. In 1980, the PT was unofficially created and in 1982 the PT

achieved official recognition stating that its goals would be to eliminate clientelism, direct government priorities towards the needs of the poor, and empower neighborhood based civic groups and other members of the "hitherto excluded" (Neaera Abers 2000). The party, like the NSMs and CEBs, saw political organization as part of daily struggles and saw small forms of grassroots power as roads to the construction of a democratic socialism where workers could finally exercise the power (Sadet and Silverstein 1991).

According to Neaera Abers, participatory policies can either take an instrumental approach, involving citizens in order to achieve policy goals, or they can take the empowerment approach, involving citizens in order to increase their control over the state and improve their decision-making control over issues affecting their lives. These two approaches differ, she argues, according to who is invited to participate, the tasks the participants are engaged in, and the decision-making power they have. "Instrumentalists" nominate representatives, seek participants to execute policies they had little influence in formulating, and remain unconcerned with making participatory spaces as open as possible because they see those spaces as designed to provide information to the government and reduce the costs of implementation. "Empowerists", in contrast, want participation to increase the control that most citizens, especially members of disadvantaged groups, can have over government decisions, and while being aware of the potential impracticality and coerciveness of requiring total participation, they call upon participants to define policy objectives.

According to Neaera Abers, direct democratic forums resulting from empowering participatory policies are spaces where traditionally excluded groups can gain access to the government and make decisions affecting their lives that would normally be made by their representatives or that would normally limit themselves to pre-designed programs (the case in Icapuí). She argues that they increase the control citizens have over government and contribute to the political development of individuals, through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and organizing capabilities and adds that they foster social consciousness and political community as they encourage traditionally excluded people to stand outside of their narrow understanding of their own self-interests and explore a perspective that takes collective needs and interests into account as well.

Although left-wing parties such as the PT have developed public forums and programs designed to promote greater citizen control over all aspects of government decision-making, these projects have faced obstacles, leading to mixed results with regards to the empowerment of the poor. All too often power holders (1) refuse to cede genuine decision-making control to citizens and where they do, (2) civic groups representing the poor are often insufficiently organized to seize the opportunity or are (3) easily co-opted by elite interest groups and corrupt politicians who limit issues to those identified by policymakers as safe. This demobilizes independent community organizations and their leaders, creates an illusion of public legitimacy and popular support, and otherwise uses inclusion as a way of controlling "troublemakers", diverting them into pseudo-conflicts that are less threatening, rather than engaging them in effective struggle (Coit 1978; Neaera Abers 2000), and giving them power.

One of the objectives of this thesis is to show that although the PT in Icapuí did promote policies that directly benefited social groups that were not strong enough on their own to pressure the administration to do so, it did so while seeking to maintain control over them and local government in the city. The key mechanisms of this social control were the perpetuation of clientelism and the idealization of the "good woman" identity. Knowing this, the way marginal women in Icapuí speak of conventional women's involvement in government approved community organizations - as a waste of time, a *baba da mente* (mind babysitter), a way of controlling women, capitalizing on their reluctance to (1) bite the hand that feeds them or (2) critique the system that they at times benefit from and a way of making them too busy to have fun and enjoy life - is revealed as a powerful rejection and public critique of local PT politics and policies and strategies of neutralizing public challenges to their hegemony.

HEGEMONIC DEMOCRACY: PRACTICE AND RHETORIC

Resisting Co-option And Contesting Government Control

According to Neaera Abers, broadening participation in contexts where a small elite has traditionally controlled the government requires developing a policy that harms the powerful and benefits the powerless. This could imply that for participatory policies genuinely to empower the excluded, they should resist co-option, contest government control and not be initiated from above but should result from bottom-up demands by social movements that have organized without the interference of government. From this perspective, however, there is no room for state-initiated participatory policy since the state necessarily represents elites. This conclusion implies that where civic organizations are not strong enough to force new governing patterns, traditional modes of decision-

making are destined to prevail and government actors can play no role in helping civic organizations gain power. I argue that it is possible to promote empowerment from above but that in the case of Icapuí the most defying empowerment taking place amongst women occurs outside of government projects and in the daily counter-culture of marginalized women. What is particularly interesting in Icapuí's case is that the women who partake in community politics from the margins do so inspired and educated by the local PT's rhetoric of popular democracy, popular participation, and transparency.

WOMEN AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION
Happy Marriage Or Call For Divorce?

Burdick (1993), de Kadt (1970), Forman (1975) and Stewart-Gambino (1989) agree that liberation theology tends to focus too narrowly on oppressions of class defined in economic terms and shies away from critiquing its own hierarchy and oppression based on sex and race. There is a disconnection between the practical and the theoretical aspects of liberation theology. The members embrace the liberationist discourse but interpret it according to a traditional model of charity that reinforced the traditional structures of power. According to Burdick (1993), the radical Church is elitist and is neither meeting the people's needs nor understanding their strategies, even more so when it comes to gender needs. Women are swallowed into the class battle and chastised if informed by gender concerns and the struggle for greater equality between the genders and are encouraged to maintain traditional gender roles.

In her 1990 article "*Women's Participation in the Brazilian "People's Church": A Critical Appraisal*", Alvarez, describes how the traditional Catholic Church has long

been condemned by feminist theologians and activists as sacralizing male domination and how the liberationist Church only pays lip service to the idea of empowering women, heightening their consciousness as citizens and treating them as equal partners with men in the quest for liberation. She asks: "has the apparent shift in the Church discourse been accompanied by changes in the Church's sexist institutional practices? Has women's participation in Latin American Church-linked groups contributed to their liberation as women?" (Alvarez 1990b: 382). Her answer is no. Women, she suggests, have been differentially incorporated into the grassroots organizations of the People's Church, their roles being mere extensions of their roles in the family – thus reinforcing unequal gender power relations at the community level.

Advocates of liberation theology, she argues, share many of the Vatican's views on women, adopting "a largely unmodified orthodox Marxist understanding of the "woman question" (Alvarez 1990b: 387). In fact, according to her, most liberation theologians interested in the woman question at all view it from the Marxist tradition, seeing women as oppressed by capitalist power relations and see as divisive the contemporary Brazilian feminist notion that family – characterized by unequal gender power relations – oppresses women. The local PT in Icapuí has also embraced this view, to the point of wrapping up women's entire identity into a model privileging good mothers – women who take care not only of their children but who also mother the entire community by volunteering their time and energy in the municipal government's community projects, programs and meetings.

In this context, issues such as morality, sexuality, contraception, daycare, divorce, violence, abortion are viewed as secondary to the issues of food, water, housing, employment and infrastructure. The progressive Catholic Church's message that women should participate as equals in CEBs and in the life of the Church, thus coexists with the old message that women's responsibilities, concerns and interests lie in motherhood and issues relating to the family – work that seriously prevents women from participating as equals in community life because they are too busy caring for their families and taking care of their households. Although liberation theology is about breaking the silence and lending legitimacy to voices previously silent, many social scientists, such as Scheper-Hughes, critique its failure "to respond to the useless suffering" of women –a social group "abandoned by the rhetoric of empowerment" (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 528).

Alvarez insists that the Church refuses to address the need for women's empowerment as women. The evidence for this is that despite making up over 80% of the CEB members, women are seldom found in positions of authority, and instead are usually engaged in tasks that replicate the sexual division of political labor. In "*Politicizing Gender and Engendering Democracy*" (1989), Alvarez argues that historical data reveals that the incorporation of women and women's issues into Latin American politics has most often reinforced existing patterns of gender-based inequality by relegating women and their gender-related political issues to a subordinate or secondary position within both male-dominant political institutions and political discourses. In fact, Alvarez argues that women's political claims and women's movement organizations have most frequently been coopted, instrumentalized, or manipulated by political elites and the

political structures of governments in ways which serve the needs of those who dominate – even when women have achieved limited gains through their increased participation in politics. She concludes that democratic, authoritarian, and even socialist regimes all have given little attention to gender-based political claims.

The scholarly literature on the gender politics of socialist governments reveals that revolutionary governments tend to see the importance of improving the position of women only in the first period of social and economic transformation and only in terms of helping to accomplish the following three goals. Extend the base of the government's political support. Increase the size or quality of the active labor force. Help harness the family more securely to the process of social reproduction (Heng 1997; Stoltz Chinchilla 1992).

Molyneux, in her article "*Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, State and Revolution in Nicaragua*" (1985), asks what happens when women surrender their specific interests in the universal struggle for a different society. At what point, she wonders, are their interests rehabilitated, legitimized and responded to by the revolutionary forces or the new state? Are they ever adequately re-established and has socialism failed to fulfill its promise to emancipate women, as gender inequality still persists and women's workload is often increased?

In her analysis, the promised equality through revolution is replaced in the post-revolutionary period by the status quo with men in the positions of power as an all-male

new leadership returns to being unconcerned with women's interests. Women's sacrifices in the struggle for a better society eventually go un-rewarded by those whom they helped to bring to power and they end up no further along in the realization of their own goals even though they may now in some cases be earning a higher income and may appear to be more financially independent. Heng (1997) views the manipulation of women's issues as originally an ideological and political resource that in time becomes a socioeconomic resource as well, as to traditional roles of housewife and mother are added those of full time wage worker, political activist, and community worker. Women, Molyneux argues could be considered worse off in that they are working even harder and with less recognition than they did under earlier regimes.

Most of the work on governments' and political parties's influence on civic groups in Latin America, however, has focused on cooption, clientelism, corruption and authoritarianism (all perpetuating inequality and exclusion) and has emphasized the capacity of the powerful to control and co-opt groups that threaten their dominance. I suggest that a different path is possible. Although these works do portray an accurate description of political life in most of Brazil they do not provide insight into avenues for changing it and in fact leave the impression that tradition is so firmly anchored in social structures and individual lives that change is impossible. Studying unusual experiences or a rare exception to these processes can be beneficial for a better understanding of the more usual conditions and can reveal how it might be possible to change them. It might help us forge tentative guidelines for engaging in what Alvarez and Escobar call "the politics of the possible" (1992: 325).

I argue that local governments can promote the formation of civic groups over which they then do not necessarily have full control, groups that can eventually bring changes in policies of the governments and political parties themselves. I argue that the marginal women in Icapuí are examples of this – having at once refused to participate but having at the same time absorbed some of the discourse of *conscientização*, and popular democracy, through political rallies and the personal experience of marginalization.

WOMEN'S WORK AND NEEDS

The Efficiency Approach and SAPs

Safa (1995), Alvarez and Escobar (1992) argue that we must move away from those pervasive interpretations of women in Third World countries that see them as passive, preoccupied with practical needs, and victims of oppression. They assert that we must move away from the women-as-victims model and recognize instead women's strategies for resistance and empowerment through social movements.

While traditionally women have been seen as exclusively performing reproductive work while men perform productive work, this dichotomous model has more recently been discarded as erroneous and as leading to misunderstandings with regards to women's status and power as well as subordination and the value of their contribution to society. Women have been identified, by Moser (1993), as performing three kinds of work (mostly unpaid or underpaid): reproductive work, productive work and community management work.

Reproductive work, also known as "daily reproduction", "physical reproduction" or "human reproduction" (Moser 1993: 29) stems from women's biological power to carry and give birth to life (which explains why it is frequently seen as "natural" work that is somehow also not "real work"). It includes childbearing and rearing and domestic tasks undertaken by women, required for the maintenance and reproduction of the labor force (husband, elders, and working children) and the future workforce (infants and school-going children), as well as the care of the young, the sick, and the old. Most reproductive work also involves productive work (which explains why women's productive work is frequently not seen as "real work") - work done for payment in cash or kind, including both market production and subsistence/home production (which produces use-values under non-wage relations: Barrett 1980). In contrast to men, who have community leadership roles in which they organize at the formal political level, generally within the framework of national politics, women primarily undertake activities at the community level (which is, once again, not viewed as "real work") as a natural extension of their reproductive role, performing community managing work, and getting involved in the provision and maintenance of often scarce items of collective consumption such as water, health care, and education. According to Moser, it is important to give recognition and visibility to community managing work as an activity in its own right, especially in the current economic climate where community-level problems, due to huge social spending cuts, are increasingly being socialized and resolved through self-help and community solutions that depend on women's work of allocating, provisioning and managing items of collective consumption.

Because men and women have different positions within the household and different relationships to household resources they not only play different and changing roles in society but also have different needs. According to Moser, we can divide women's gender interests into **practical** gender needs and **strategic** gender needs.

According to Moser (1993), and Molyneux (1985) gender interests are interests that have developed by virtue of a person's social positioning through local gender norms. Strategic gender needs are derived from an analysis of women's subordination to men in their society and from formulations of alternative, more satisfactory arrangements to those which exist. They relate to gender divisions of labor, power and control and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their bodies. Meeting these strategic needs helps women to achieve greater social equality as this challenges women's subordinate position. Strategic gender needs are often identified as "feminist" and as reflecting the level of consciousness required to struggle effectively for positive change.

Practical gender needs are needs identified within people's socially accepted roles in society. They arise from concrete conditions of women's positioning within the division of labor, are a response to an immediate perceived necessity, and relate to women's struggles, for example, in water provision, health care and employment. They do not challenge the prevailing forms of subordination even though they arise directly out of them and in fact are often faulted with preserving and reinforcing the gender division

of labor, making it even more difficult for women themselves to recognize and formulate their strategic gender needs.

According to Moser, the process by which dominant patterns of gender-based inequality are reproduced or reinforced occurs not only at the local level but occurs also at the global level, through the implementation of development schemes. The following brief discussion of the various approaches to women in the history of development illustrates her point.

According to Moser, in the Welfare Approach, introduced in the 1950s and 1960s, women's reproductive role was recognized and development policies sought to meet the practical needs of women through top-down handouts of food aid, measures against malnutrition and family planning. It is non-challenging to gender conventions and widely popular. The Equity Approach (the most threatening to the status quo and the most unpopular with governments), in contrast, interprets women as active participants in development and recognizes women's triple roles in production, reproduction and community management. The equity approach seeks to meet women's strategic gender needs through direct state intervention, giving political and economic autonomy to women and reducing inequality with men. The Anti-Poverty Approach (recognizing the productive role of women and seeking to meet their practical gender needs) is very popular with NGOs and, according to Moser, is a more "toned down" version of the equity approach, with women's poverty seen as the problem of underdevelopment, not of subordination. Its purpose is to ensure that poor women increase their productivity

usually through small-scale income-generating projects. The Empowerment Approach is the most recent approach and the one articulated by Third World women themselves. Its purpose is to empower women through greater self-reliance. It recognizes women's triple roles and seeks to meet strategic gender needs indirectly through bottom-up mobilization around practical gender needs. It is potentially challenging and unpopular except with Third World women's NGOs and their supporters. The Efficiency Approach - the dominant approach since the 1980s debt crisis - seeks to increase development's efficiency and effectiveness and meet practical gender needs through women's economic contribution and sees women primarily in terms of their capacity to compensate for declining social services by extending their working day.

In Moser's analysis, what she calls the "development industry" realized that women were essential to the success of the total development effort but this, she argues, did not necessarily mean that development improved conditions for women. This shift towards efficiency coincided with a marked deterioration in the world economy, occurring from the mid-1970s onwards, particularly in Latin America and Africa where the problems of recession were compounded by falling export prices and the mounting burden of debt (Moser 1993; Pearson 1997; Messkoub 1992). To alleviate this situation, economic stabilization and adjustment policies, designed by Western institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) have been implemented by an increasing number of national governments.

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), a key element of the efficiency approach, are characterized by three main elements: (1) income reduction; (2) increases in prices of necessary purchases (mainly food); and (3) severe cuts in social spending (Messkoub 1992; Moser 1993; Gélinas 1998; Safa 1995). However, despite increasing the vulnerability of the poor (Messkoub 1992), the IMF and the WB continue to view SAPs as a purely economic issue, ignoring their social costs in human suffering and ignoring the fact that those who suffer the most under SAPs are women and children.

According to Pearson (1997), the social programs governments under SAPs seek to eliminate are seen as cushioned by the elasticity of women's labor – their limitless ability to increase food production and decrease consumption. In addition, Pearson argues that reduced spending on social services has specific and direct effects on women as it is primarily women who are the teachers, health care workers and public sector employees who lose their jobs or face severe cutbacks. SAPs thus make women's management of households increasingly difficult by placing greater demands on their time and labor while cutting income, increasing the cost of food, and cutting social services. When a gendered analysis of living under SAPs is done, it becomes apparent that they often simply imply a shifting of costs from the paid to the unpaid economy, particularly with the use of women's unpaid labor.

According to Pearson (1997), SAPs are based on a conceptualization of the economy that ignores any analysis of gender and conceals heavy male bias with regards to the unpaid domestic work necessary for reproducing and maintaining human resources.

She argues that SAPs are plagued by male bias in three main ways: (1) in the belief that the processes carried out by women in such unpaid activities as caring for children, gathering fuel, processing food, preparing meals and nursing the sick will continue regardless of the way in which resources are reallocated; (2) in the way they ignore that the time women have to invest in export crops takes time away from subsistence crop farming and the maintaining of a healthy, well-fed family; and (3) in the assumption that all individuals living in poverty are affected by poverty, WB and IMF policies in the same way. In reality, women and children suffer the most because the only way SAPs are successful is if women's work days become longer and harder.

Highly "participatory" NGO programs most frequently emphasize women's increasing economic participation and assume that women will always provide the necessary (unpaid) labor. This, argues Moser, has had negative implications for women as community and household managers and with increased efficiency and productivity remaining the main objectives of SAPs, it is no coincidence that efficiency is the policy approach towards women which is currently gaining popularity amongst international aid agencies and national governments alike. As a top-down approach, without gendered participatory planning procedures, the efficiency approach only meets practical gender needs at the cost of longer working hours and increased unpaid work for women. In most cases this approach fails to reach any strategic gender needs and results in a serious reduction in the practical gender needs met.

THE SCHOLARLY PRIVILEGING OF STRATEGIC NEEDS
Western Bias and the Failure to Recognize Women's Subversive Practices

According to Escobar, in *Encountering Development* (1995), struggles to fulfill practical gender needs have served as a catalyst for social change as women begin to participate in new forms of social activities and take on leadership roles, participating in neighborhood associations and encountering the opportunity to meet other women, discuss their needs, and develop communal strategies to overcome their hardships. Moser (1993), however argues that although practical gender needs can provide the basis for female solidarity they also can divide women.

The isolation women can experience through the privatization of women's work in the domestic sphere and their huge work loads often has made it difficult for them to organize or to sustain organization and develop a collective consciousness (Whitehead 1984). Constraints such as these mean that women generally do not move beyond articulating the need to meet practical gender needs. Mobilizing around practical gender needs, Moser argues, does not challenge the nature of their gender subordination and in fact reinforces the existing division of labor. Only when women seek to address strategic gender needs and enter in public politics, she suggests, will their interventions become transformative.

Barrig's (1989) study on women's popular organizations in Lima, Peru, also shows that women's mobilizing does not necessarily challenge the existing sexual division of labor and is often designed so that it reinforces gender stereotypes. Consequently, she argues, it excludes women from participating more in the public,

political sphere. According to Stoltz Chinchilla (1992), women's growing participation in protest and social change movements during the 1980s often originated in an attempt to fulfill, rather than subvert the traditional gender division of labor. She argues, however, that the central question is how to link practical interests derived from the existing gender division of labor and strategic (feminist) interests derived from the critique of the existing gender hierarchy: how to politicize practical gender interests so that they bring about a change in the situation of the subordination of women. The experiences women gain in the process of fighting for practical gender interests, she suggests, often creates fertile ground for further subverting the power structure down the line.

PRACTICAL NEEDS VERSUS STRATEGIC NEEDS: A FALSE DIVIDE?

Recognizing Women's Political Spaces

Safa (1995) critiques Moser's dichotomizing of practical and strategic needs and argues that women need not reject their domestic roles in their challenges to power arrangements. She suggests that women use them for strength and legitimacy in their demands on the state, thus redefining the meaning associated with domesticity to include participation and struggle and not obedience and passivity. She suggests that unlike North American women who seek gender-neutral participation in the public sphere, Latin American women see their roles as wives and mothers as legitimizing their sense of injustice and outrage. In protesting their inability to carry out their roles, they translate private nurturance into collective public protest and this challenges the traditional isolation of women in the so-called "private sphere".

In her contribution to *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America* (1992), Lind argues that:

> "As poor women base their politics on their reproductive roles, they challenge the meaning of ascribed gender roles as well as the implications these roles have in the reproduction of society. They are not only struggling for access to resources, they are also challenging dominant representations of gender and incorporating this into their politics" (Lind 1992: 144).

She discusses how "poor women have been at the forefront of struggles to gain increased access to infrastructural services, such as water, electricity, housing, and social services" and describes how "through collective struggle, women have revealed and challenged unequal power relations as they are manifested in the everyday sphere..." (Lind 1992: 134).

Lind contends that women's popular organizations cross many false divisions set up in the Western tradition between "private" and "public". She argues that with the collectivization of reproductive work at the neighborhood level, women become politicized on issues pertaining to gender identity and subjectivity. This, she argues, influences their political strategies and shapes their visions of a more just society.

It is from this perspective that Lind's approach critiques Moser's (1993) - for her dichotomization of "practical" and "strategic" needs and her view that women's struggles to fulfill practical gender needs are apolitical. She exposes Moser's assumptions that "practical needs" do not challenge the social order and insists that poor women do challenge the social order, negotiate power, construct collective identities, develop critical perspectives on the world in which they live and challenge dominant gender representations, often through collective organizing around "practical needs". In fact, she

contends that Moser's dichotomy maintains false barriers in our thinking about political and economic strategies of survival and resistance. She argues that practical gender needs can powerfully shape women's agency and resistance. Safa and Stoltz Chinchilla support this position and insist that as a result of participation in social movements and collectivizing and politicizing practical gender needs, women are building new collective identities and greater consciousness of gender subordination. Women, they argue, begin carving out a political space within which they can choose their own leaders, criteria for membership and political agendas. They begin creating safe spaces where they can discover their identities, give mutual support, build trust, explore forbidden topics and invent new forms of political struggle or definitions of what it means to "do politics" or "be a woman". Practical gender interests and strategic interests, they argue are not so mutually exclusive.

DOING THE EVERYDAY DIFFERENTLY
A New Political Sphere?

> "Everyday life involves a collective act of creation, a collective signification, a culture. It is out of this reservoir of meanings (that is, a "tradition") that people actually give shape to their struggle." (Escobar 1992: 71).

This relationship between the practice of everyday life, collective action and politics and its impact on the construction, perpetuation and transformation of power structures in society is not yet well understood. For this reason, researchers may still wonder whether cultural resistance in daily life amounts to anything politically, whether it can foster more "visible" forms of protest, and how they should study "oppositional" or "alternative" meanings produced at the micro level of daily life by subordinate groups.

According to Escobar (1992), the centrality of daily life for social movements is difficult to perceive. According to Melucci (1988), daily practices are the evidence for the human ability for cultural innovation and the daily production of alternate meanings.

> "Contemporary collective action assumes the form of networks submerged in everyday life... What nourishes [collective action] is the daily production of alternative frameworks of meaning... This is because conflict takes place principally on symbolic grounds, by challenging and upsetting the dominant codes... The mere existence of a symbolic challenge is in itself a method of unmasking the dominant codes, a different way of perceiving and naming the world" (Melucci 1988: 248).

According to Jelin (1990), in instances of women's movements arising out of daily life, women are giving new meaning to politics and identity and their activities should not be seen as any less important or any more limited than formal political organizing or struggles around strategic needs. From this perspective collective struggle around practical gender needs begins to represent a challenge to authority as it is manifested in the everyday. After all, according to Escobar (1992: 75) it is "in the terrain of everyday life that the interests of the dominant culture are negotiated and contested".

"To live differently, to assert one's difference, is to practice cultural innovation and to engage in some sort of political practice" argues Escobar (1992). This challenge to authority, as this thesis shows, realizes itself through the transformation and politicization of identity, through the power of daily actions, and interpersonal and familial relationships, and through the popular production of tactics (or weapons of the weak: Scott 1985) in the realm of everyday.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to understand the complex processes of negotiation between the well-developed rhetoric of participatory democracy and the ingrained tradition of clientelism that women in PT-run Icapuí experience on a daily basis.

In a 1997 article entitled *"Reconstructing the Workers' Party (PT): Lessons from North-Eastern Brazil"* (1997), on intra-party conflict and the formation of a coherent party platform, the political scientist Nylen discusses the achievements of the PT in Icapuí in mobilizing the residents and improving health and education. Based on these findings, politics and community activism in Icapuí seemed to differ widely enough from the norm that the likelihood of unearthing interesting findings with regards to women's participation and agency in politics and grassroots community building seemed very high. Once in the Brazilian Northeast, I discovered that Icapuí was the only PT administration in the Northeast around which there was widespread consensus that participatory policy had been successful at mobilizing people and giving people real deliberative power in education, health and the creation of the municipal budget.

Preliminary research in the context of informal interviews, indicated to me that people in Fortaleza and Morro Branco, the 2 other cities in Ceará in which I spent time, spoke of Icapuí as an example of a successful experimental utopia where the people made decisions with their democratic, representative, transparent, participatory administration and were reaping the benefits in terms of access to education, health and a developing infrastructure and economy. I wanted to see what kind of mobilizing was going on among

the women, what their daily life looked like, and how local grassroots initiatives worked in conjunction with a leftist workers' party that itself created and implemented, "grassroots", "participatory" policies. What I found kept me in the field for 6 months, grappling with women's experiences of negotiating, in their own daily discourses, activities and community mobilizing not only the traditional clientelistic tradition but the newer participatory rhetoric of the PT.

In order to carry out this project a research methodology, combining different qualitative research techniques and occasional quantitative data collecting was employed. The three most important research methods I used were participant observation (Fordham 1993; Horowitz 1996), extensive, in-depth, one on one interviews (Levy and Hollan 1998) and life histories - with my neighbors, government personnel, community politics participants, local activists, and other key informants.

Approach

In conducting this research I have adopted a feminist methodology according to Del Alba Acevedo's definition in her article *"Feminist Inroads in the Study of Women's Work and Development"* (1995). My methodology was inspired by three important elements. First, women's needs, interests and experiences were recognized as legitimate sources of social analysis. Second, research **for** women was recognized as committed to the improvement and empowerment of women's lives as opposed to research **about** women. Third, my subjects were understood not only as parts of a social whole but also as individuals with particular values, emotions and feelings.

In keeping with these tenets of feminist research, the conceptualization of my research question came from women's lives. The methodology strove to be democratic and dialogical, emphasizing multivocality, dialogue, intersubjectivity, and narrative. It sought to contextualize, politicize, and historicize women's lives while problematizing the self/other relationship (Abu Lughod 1990), exhibiting robust reflexivity (Harding 1996), and stressing my responsibility and accountability as a researcher. My intentions were for my research on women's popular political participation to demystify historical and contemporary forms of community organizing. I sought, as well, to chart the development of, and collaborate with, local feminisms (Bridgman, Cole, Howard-Bobiwash 1999) - no matter how marginal.

Participant Observation

Participant observation emphasizes everyday interactions and observations, requiring that the observer live in the community and take part in the daily activities and events in the lives of the people being studied (Kathleen and Billie Dewalt and Wayland 1998). Essentially, because enculturation takes place at the same time as we partake in the routinized and mundane tasks in people's daily lives, tacit understanding of a different culture is being developed through participant observation. This method provides two main advantages to research: it provides the anthropologist with tacit understanding that informs and enhances both (1) the quality of the data collecting, and (2) the quality of the subsequent interpretation of data collected. It is thus both a data collection and an analytical tool.

As I gradually got to know people I developed a more realistic idea of what my role as a participant observer would be. Put simply, it involved me becoming part of the town as I gained a feeling for its social patterns and it gave me a great deal of information about daily life. On a daily basis, I participated in the activities and talk of the residents, in particular the women of the town, wherever they spent time: in my rented home, at the homes of my friends and neighbors, at the town hall and its numerous offices, at the beach, in bars, at grocery stores in the street, in schools, at the town gymnasium, while we did laundry, while we cooked, cleaned, fed the pigs and chicken, tended to the land, to gardens, picked vegetables and fruits, bought groceries, played with babies, cared for the young, the old, the sick, sat around, chatted, joked, gossiped, listened to music, played cards, fished, ate, drank, biked, swam, watched TV, organized or attended community meetings, parties and political rallies. I collected historical data about specific people, bits of gossip I heard, information about the daily and weekly routine, economic data and data about how people felt about the events which occurred in their lives. My aim was to get an understanding of social life generally and a much deeper understanding of aspects of life which seemed to be of particular significance for my central research questions. As a result, during the first few weeks I was simultaneously acquiring a picture of the village and the aspects of village life which were of most interest for the theoretical issues I wished to study.

During this time, I worked on getting people used to seeing me around and jotting things down, from names of places and things to names of people and what they did and said. I was very conscious of the importance of "how I got started". I knew that how I

launched my research, who introduced me, who I knew and spoke to, who knew me and who I got associated with would have many implications for my future research in the town. As a result of this, I tried to make myself as neutral as possible, neither too into women's nor into men's lives, neither too into drinking nor too against it, neither too interested in women or men, neither spending too much time alone (single) nor too present at the municipal *forró*[51] dance parties (which frequently led to coupling off). I began by simply getting to know my neighbors and finding a place for myself in the town.

As I sorted myself out and gradually tried to understand the community, members of the community were themselves studying me, my activities and the role I was beginning to occupy. This early research period introduced issues which I would continue to deal with throughout my fieldwork. These are the problems of factions and reputation management, common in areas where personalistic relationships dominate over individualistic ones (da Matta 1991).

Factionalism, Reputation Management, Marginalization and Field Methods

All societies have various political factions and issues over which people become divided and for the anthropologist they can pose a serious problem. To be perceived as being aligned with one faction may mean alienating other factions and losing the data that may potentially be gained from other groups. Neutrality is generally not a long-term possibility as those professing neutrality are often mistrusted.

[51] Style of music and dance that is extremely popular in the Northeast.

In Icapuí, life was smooth on the surface, however, underneath there were major tensions. I wrestled with the practical problems raised by collecting data from all factions while at the same time trying to maintain good relations with all sides. Although I was not aware of it at the time the issue of factional alignment occurred not over political parties and whether or not I would be a support the PT but occurred the moment I befriended most of the lesbians in town. What concerned people was whether I was a respectable woman.

I had been conscious that participant observation would involve me becoming a part of the lives of the people I was studying but although people seemed interested in me I found I was a completely extraneous person. The town functioned without me, people were busy working for most of the day and I had no place anywhere, except with my immediate neighbors – who rarely left the neighborhood. Within a few days, however, I had come into contact with a group of people who regularly traveled between Icapuí's different neighborhoods. Much to my relief they were women and I thought I would not run the risk of neighborhood gossip concerning me and a group of young men – something that I was very much preoccupied with in the beginning due to all the attention and sexual advances I was receiving from single and attached young men alike.

***Cachaça* Drinking and The Culture of Dropping By**

Within no time, it became fairly common for these women to just let themselves in. They wanted to drink and my home seemed to be considered an ideal place for this illicit female activity.

It was quickly noted, in one of my first visits, that I had a bottle of *cachaça* (distilled sugar cane – 39% alcohol content) on my eating table. It was subsequently opened and sampled, pure and by the cupful in the secrecy of the back of the house, far from the eyes and ears of the street and the constant passers by, playing children, drinking men at the little bar across the street and the old neighborhood women who spent the larger part of the day monitoring the comings and goings in the area and gossiping. Soon enough women I'd never before seen would simply drop by - under all kinds of strange pretenses (looking for friends, wanting a cup of water...) – frequently letting themselves in. They almost without exception ended up in the back of my little house, drinking shots (of *cachaça*), telling me in tones of complicity as I watched and listened, that it was best to keep "our sessions" under wraps as many of the neighbors were "ignorant" and had "big mouths".

> "For you it doesn't much matter but for us it is "*feio*" (looks bad). It is best to drink away from the big eyes and mouths in the street!" And they'd laugh.

Although this type of behaviour was clearly subversive it was not quite the idea of subversion I had had in mind upon starting my fieldwork. Images of women meeting on a regular basis to discuss problems affecting their lives and the possible ways to solve them began to crumble and disintegrate like the dry sandy scenery around me. I began to truly doubt the feasibility of my research project.

These women appeared to me initially as interesting people but not as particularly insightful informants on my research on women and grassroots community development, despite being a group consisting exclusively of women. These women ran their lives to

the beat of a different drummer and as far as my research was concerned, I thought, they would remain examples of interesting, quirky, off beat non-participants. And, despite much evidence pointing to the marginal women as a powerful social group capable of bringing about positive social change, endowed with a heightened political awareness and a critical understanding of the status quo, personally brewed *conscientização* and a tendency to live according to the maxims of Freire, I continued to see them as the majority of the town saw them – as powerless marginals who only knew how to have a good time and as they advertised themselves: as proud, independent, non-participants who did not care to waste their time in administration-sanctioned community activities.

Problems With Snowball Sampling

Initially, I had felt sure that by spending time with the illicit drinkers and meeting their friends, I would come into contact with some of the women involved in community building and thus be able to advance in my research. However, instead of helping me to locate future informants, this passive snowball research method put me in contact with self-declared and proud "non-participants" who did not "not know anything about politics and community" and who found meetings were "a boring waste of time".

Not only was I not meeting women who participated in community politics but most of the women I had met were heavy drinking single lesbian mothers, intrigued by the fact that I was 25 years old, single, childless and living alone far from home – all, to varying degrees, local markers of being a lesbian. My disdain for make-up, fashionable clothing and footwear and my ability to ride a bike, swim, enjoy a smoke and a drink also

helped me to stand out apart from the local norms of heterosexual female behavior. No matter how much I tried to allude to my heterosexual nature they flirted and alluded to other kinds of relationships that were *mais gostoso* (better). I wondered how long I could handle what was beginning to feel like sexual coercion until it came to my attention that my frequent socializing with these women was negatively affecting my reputation in the broader community.

To spend time with them, I quickly found out, however, was leading to rumors about me, jeopardizing my reputation. To spend time with lesbians, unbeknownst to me, was tantamount to a public declaration of my own lesbianism (regardless of declarations to the contrary) and this was much to the detriment of my reputation, for if male homosexuality is relatively well-tolerated in Icapuí one should not for one moment assume that female homosexuality is as well. In fact, in Icapuí, lesbians are considered to be far more deviant than homosexual men. They are considered to be loose drunks who run around recklessly with no sense of propriety or respect for themselves or others (notably the all important sense of responsibility and respect for "community"). They are seen as truly "*doente*" (sick) by many, if not most of the people of the town and even though they may be superficially tolerated, they are the topic of negative neighborhood gossip and general badmouthing and seen as social pariahs who can harm your reputation in the community if you befriend them or act too friendly with them.

Problems Fitting In

I initially thought that as a *pesquizadora de fora* (foreign researcher), a marginal member of the community, I could spend time with anyone and not get into social trouble, that I would not be treated as a sexual object, like the local women. Much like Horowitz describes her initial experience among the Chicano of Chicago in her article "*Getting In*" (1989) I had been under the false impression that my lack of care with my appearance, would allow me to play down my sexual identity. I had also been under the false impression that my efforts not to spend too much time alone with men and not to dance with them at the many parties and dances I attended would eventually keep them, their sexual advances, and their wives and girlfriends' anger, at bay. I soon discovered, however, that no matter what I did, sex and sexuality were getting me into trouble. At first the conflicts came under the guise of anger from the wives and girlfriends of the neighborhood men who showered me with attention. Later it came from the gossip and social persecution from the respectable "good" women of the community, who saw me distancing myself from the men and increasing ties to the lesbian women as signs of my pathological sexual orientation and "disease". As a result, no matter what I did, I seemed to be in trouble with the neighborhood women and this fact was affecting my ability to get my research off the ground.

As an unmarried female anthropologist in my mid-20s, by which time Icapuienses considered I should have been married, I found relations both with young men and lesbian women could have powerful negative social repercussions. I often found that even talking with them in public contexts would result in rumors suggesting that I was a

lesbian or was really seeking to steal someone's spouse. I was able to entertain the fallacy of living out a genderless and sexless identity only until the women outraged by the attention I was getting and the young men, insulted at my lack of response to their sexual advances, started to make this impossible for me by labeling me a *doente*.

Marginalization

The fact that I had ended up in a lesbian group was not entirely accidental and not entirely based on the fact that local marginals seek out new marginals (foreigners). I had been hoping to meet women who seemed to be autonomous with regards to their lives and consequently with regards to gender relations and gender identity. These lesbian women lived lives quite different from the heterosexual, married or unmarried mothers who are the norm in Icapuí. They went out, A LOT, even if they were mothers and in all-women groups. They drank, smoked, partied, fished and hung out at the beach and in bars late at night. They also criticized the way things worked in the town, which led me to believe that their thinking may have pushed them into new forms of community grassroots activities. In the end I was right but it would take me much more time and understanding of normative community politics before I would come to recognize the important counter-hegemonic community activities these women engaged in as a part of their everyday lives.

Respectable Women

A respectable woman was a feminine, hard working woman who volunteered for the community, a "good woman", a "good mother", to her children and her home as well

as to her community, and a constant giver of her time and energies for others and for community organizing. Those who did not fit this mold were *deste jeito* (that way), *ruim* (good for nothing), *feia* (ugly, inappropriate), *doente* (sick), *doida* (crazy, wild), *sem vergonha* (without shame) as well as selfish and against democracy and community. Which kind of woman I was was terribly important to the people of Icapuí and would influence their ability to safely (without danger to their reputation) spend time with me or not. This was very revealing not only of the way community politics were gendered in Icapuí but it also explained the local tenacity of clientelism. Because community politics were an obstacle to the development of a broad-based, indigenous and publicly accepted feminist consciousness through which women could fulfill their needs, they were in a sense responsible for women's choice to fulfill their needs through clientelism.

Once I realized that my friendships with social marginals and my refusal to settle squarely in the camp of the "respectables" was causing a lot of tension I decided that I would have to negotiate the conflict between wanting to be viewed as "respectable" while maintaining friendships with social outcasts. I would have to negotiate the conflict between wanting to be accepted by the marginals as at least sympathetic to their counter-hegemonic tendencies while continuing to pursue the possibility of conducting research among those who stigmatized and ostracized them.

In order to finally begin meeting politically active women, and in response to my own increasing social marginalization, I decided to move out of my (initially closed) circle of informants, leave my neighborhood and venture more and more into town. This

did not happen without some objections on the part of my new friends. Many accused me of abandoning them and paying heed to what mal-intentioned people said about them. Although it did pain me to distance myself temporarily from the women who had become friends and reliable informants, my research needs were making it essential that I branch out my network of friends and acquaintances.

With time (and a short romance proving my heterosexuality) I was able to develop a resilient, less easily questionable reputation as a respectable woman and could reinsert myself into the marginal community. Eventually, no group was too marginal for me and I could go to local bars and hang out with the young men and play pool, just as I could go night fishing with lesbians, without suffering negative repercussions.

Sexuality in the Field

For the two weeks or so that rumors concerning my sexual orientation had flown around and before I had got wind of them I had noticed that people were suddenly much less interested in getting to know me whereas before they had all been curious about me and eager to talk. Through frequent contact with the marginalized women of Icapuí I had turned into a social pariah and by the same logic that had me labeled a lesbian, anyone seeking me out or wanting to talk to me had to be one too and would thus be added to the list of deviant women (and immoral mothers). As the pressures increased to take a locally defined membership role, I found myself unable to negotiate an identity that would allow me to continue as a genderless, sexless researcher. I was going to be labeled a lesbian if I did not make my heterosexuality more apparent.

As a researcher, I had felt that a romantic relationship in the field would be problematic in terms of power and ethics. The local men and women with whom I was working, however, did not share my belief. They regarded romantic liaisons as more acceptable and less problematic than I did. They could not understand my celibacy and worried about my ability to "win" a man. The women in particular were constantly talking about a great and good-looking son, nephew, brother or cousin. People **wanted** me to *namorar* locally (i.e. take a local boyfriend) and the fact that I discouraged any sexual or romantic interests put me at odds with the desires of the local people and put into question my sexual orientation and my very reputation. In my case, celibacy posed a very great problem.

Sometime later, villagers told me that they had been relieved to see me drinking and getting into social trouble (over my persistent contact with the marginalized women for instance), like an ordinary person - without immunity to gossip, without special rights and special powers. They told me that they had been pleased that I had found someone that I fancied, even if the relationship hadn't worked out. In the end, I was told that my behavior had assured the women of two things that were of great importance to them: (1) that I was indeed heterosexual (hence a suitable choice as a friend) and (2) that I was indeed very much like them. Later some women friends explained to me that they had felt closer to me after I had allowed "Zé" to court me. They claimed to have felt able to talk to me more openly, claimed to have felt freer to give me advice, to joke around comfortably and generally to treat me like one of them. They reported feeling as though I had ceased to be some pretentious, possibly lesbian foreigner with an unparalleled sense

of morality when it came to faithfulness, chastity or sex - one that made them uneasy and one that made them feel inferior to me.

My short-lived courtship had the miraculous effect of clearing up the many questions that had been making it very difficult for the people to develop an identity for me. From that moment on people ceased wondering whether or not I was a threat - either socially, as a man stealer or a lesbian, or politically, as a paid political informant, there to check people's voting intentions and political allegiances. In fact, the very reason the relationship was never pursued seriously – because it could not develop into something more meaningful – put to rest people's fears and doubts. The fact that I was not a lesbian but was also not interested in short-term affairs pleased the women and helped me gain their acceptance.

My relationship with "Zé" was thus deemed not only appropriate by the community but possibly even necessary for my increased acceptance. Not only did the rumors about my sexual orientation and deviance cease but the deferent behavior from my women friends also came to a halt. Up until that point, although in many respects treated like a local I was in many other ways often treated like an upper-class foreigner who always required a certain quality of food and drink and a chair to sit on.

This deference, which in essence exaggerated my "otherness", continued up until my relationship with "Zé" – which provided people with the opportunity to see me interact with a man in terms of local man/woman relationships and it forever altered my

status in the town, for the better, even reducing unwanted sexual advances from both persistent young men and a few persistent gay women. I had been wrong to think that distancing myself from the local men and making myself genderless and sexless would solve the problem.

Conclusion of Participant Observation

In the end, despite the numerous social pressures to conform to certain gender-based rules, and after much neighborhood gossip about me I was finally able to develop a reputation as a respectable woman. The incessant visits and invasions of my personal space became less frequent and I was finally able to feel at ease in my home. Allowances for some of my inappropriate behavior were made because I was a foreigner, was used to a different life, was there to do research and had proved that I was not only **not** interested in stealing anyone's man but found it quite reprehensible to want to do so in the first place. I was also finally able to come into contact with women involved in community politics and move forward with my research and escape the marginalization that comes with being associated with a group of people who the dominant majority labeled deviant, *doente*, *doida*. The people came to accept that my spending time with lesbians did not make me a lesbian and that I had a research obligation not to judge anyone and to make friends with all the people, as much as possible. The lesbians came to accept that I could have other friends and not be rejecting them and the other women came to accept that they could be friends with me without suffering negative social repercussions and jeopardizing their reputation.

Participant observation consisted of me both seeking answers to specific questions and allowing participants to bring up those issues that they thought were the most important. Thanks to this interest in in-depth analysis of daily life, talk, and activities, informal conversing, general hanging out and gossiping, I was able to come to a more realistic understanding of life in Icapuí. I came to understand that to view Icapuí as an example of a functioning participatory grassroots community democracy would not do justice to the existing realities. In fact, it was through participant observation that I was able to see this was an image the administration had gone to great pains to create and sustain, inside and outside the town, one that obscured and even denied the existence and very real daily consequences of clientelism and one that denied that the PT itself had become, in a sense, Icapuí's new aristocratic family. It was this discovery that led me to view local female popular participation as varied and multi-leveled and not only existing within the administration-sanctioned organizations but existing also outside them. I also came to understand that groups independent of the town administration, such as the lesbian single mothers group or my poor and politically uninvolved neighbors could represent forms of popular participation. And, because their activities, thoughts, feelings and understandings are not controlled by the administration but emerge from first-hand experiences and conscientization and involve a certain element of feminist thinking, I came to believe that they were likely to have more positive social impacts than traditional forms of popular participation.

The participant observation I conducted was rich and allowed me to see a side of women's lives I would not have been able to see had I immediately plunged into the

world of community politics and popular participation. The women could see that I was eager to understand and even experience as much as possible of their way of life and they began to make the gestures that made this possible. Soon I had the advantage of working with not only women who did participate in community politics but also of observing the subversive elements of the discourses and activities of those that **did not**. The women who had been seeking me out since the very beginning, with whom I had some of my best times, whom I had regarded, I declare sheepishly today, as apolitical fun-loving flounderers, were the very women I had been seeking all along. It had required working through the layers of community politics before I could understand that marginals and social outcasts were important actors in Icapuí's community politics.

Library /Public Documents /Surveys

Although participant observation in women's everyday lives was my main method of data collection I also sought to gain information from the public library, the downtown square area, its shops and the municipal administration. I sought to meet a wide variety of municipal employees, ranging from the radio program director to the Secretariat of Community Action and her entire team of workers in the ADM (neighborhood association) and OP (participatory budget) systems. This provided me with the opportunity to meet new people, especially women officially active in community politics. It also helped me to better understand the meaning of the dominant socio-political rhetoric on the town's history and the ideal of "participatory democracy".

While I had good relations with the residents I found certain high-ranking members of the municipal administration antagonistic and reluctant to give me time or materials. Although I was always careful to emphasize the positive social changes the PT government had made, my status as neither patron nor client (but a client with patron-like powers) and the way I made these positions appear fluid, upset them. As a result, many of these high-ranking administration workers viewed me with suspicion and only changed their behavior towards me when they thought it could gain them some political leverage – such as when they sought to have me speak favorably on their behalf during political rallies and this only began to happen once they could see that I had acquired a certain status in the community and was well-known and well-liked.

Part of my data collection came from public documents on the administration in Icapuí, its policy, local politics and history. The documents I read in Icapuí itself were produced by the local administration, by the PT, by nearby universities, by the UN, by non-governmental organizations and by a few residents, and high school children. They provided me with an official story and the political context that explains the importance of the gendered nature of community building in Icapuí and the importance of separating women into good community builders or selfish deviants.

I also attempted to conduct a household survey[52], to corroborate my participant observation findings and verify some of the declarations in certain public documents – such as the supposed low rates of women workers and women with jobs, which my

[52] See Survey - Appendix 1, p. 233.

findings indicate is actually quite high, or the average household salary and means of providing sustenance to households. I thought a household survey would allow me to introduce myself to many people in Icapuí and thought it might be useful in indicating to me potential informants who were participating or had participated in community politics and what life trajectories leading them there may have been. I was, unfortunately, most unsuccessful at this type of data collecting. For a variety of reasons, survey work intimidated most of the local participants and had the unforeseen effect of actually curtailing the amount of information people shared with me.

Surveys intimidated most of the local participants. I noticed that as soon as I had a paper with questions, people got nervous. I also noticed that as soon as I asked direct questions about households, family, income, land, or politics, people were suspicious and reluctant to talk. In addition, those who consented to answering generic questions that did not seem to be tied to past conversations that we had had tended to be extremely formal in their answers. They would answer my questions in the most narrow way, never volunteering any extra information as they often did when I was conducting short informal interviews, in-depth interviews or life histories. In fact, the time it took for the people to reach the level of friendship, intimacy and trust, sufficient to put them at ease in the face of such questions made it nearly impossible for me to conduct such work. In addition, I faced direct resistance and challenging – such as when people told me that there was no need to collect such information because it had already been collected and was sitting at town hall, or such as when I would be mistaken for or accused of being a political informant for the mayor running for re-election and would be telling him

personally what people thought and said[53]. People were intimidated by a questionnaire and were far more likely to share the information I was seeking in informal conversations one on one or in groups during participant observation.

I first attempted the survey in my immediate neighborhood, early in my stay, when, in hindsight I can argue that people did not know me well enough to feel comfortable answering my questions. The typical response at that time was shock and puzzlement that what they could say would be useful for my research. They typically answered: "I don't know" or "Don't ask me - I don't know anything about any of this" or "Ask someone else or you will fail your schoolwork", in either a shy or standoffish kind of way and they would try not to answer. I attempted the survey method again a little later once I felt that people would be more receptive to me and my questions, with my neighbors, with participants in the budget process and community health projects, as well as with those women who seemed not to participate in any community activity but, by then the town was in the middle of the municipal election campaign and people viewed me suspiciously, anxious and nervous, wondering about my political affiliations, worried about what answers they should give and who would hear what they say. The last time I

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[53] Election time is the time when community politics play second fiddle to official politics and many meetings do not take place as the leaders and group mobilizers are otherwise engaged in campaigning along with most of the would be participants and all the political rallies, parties and dances and parades take up all of everyone's available time. Although it might seem like an ideal time to show just how much the administration valued popular participation and fostered its organizing, encouraged dialogue between people and the administration, and promoted critical thinking with regards to government, none of this occurred. In fact, meetings were cancelled and not rescheduled until after the elections, thus minimizing many of the people's opportunities to get together, think critically and put grassroots pressure on the various running candidates. Election time is seen as the time during which community politics go on hold and patron-client relations and vote-buying take center-stage. It is a time of individual favor buying and heightened suspicions and it is seen as such by both the people and the politicians.

used the survey questionnaire, was at the end of the official federal Brazilian census and people by this point were even suspicious about the census workers and their political affiliations. Most at this stage would reluctantly agree to go through with the questioning but limited themselves to giving me vague and ambiguous answers.

In brief, survey sampling proved to be nearly impossible. Despite the fact that Icapuienses were most hospitable, friendly and generous, they were quite guarded when it came to information about land, money, jobs, household management, political views and opinions on the municipal administration – at least during this heated political time. I later found out that the town residents considered that the information I needed was found at the town hall and with the politicians and administration employees. People thus expected me to be out and about asking questions downtown and to them a household survey seemed like a duplication of administration work and a waste of time in addition to being particularly suspicious in the highly charged political time which was the duration of my fieldwork. As soon as I attempted to ask formal questions many saw me as a government representative and became very suspicious.

With time I came to get the information I had been seeking through the survey but the answers came in informal settings at the most unlikely times, when I had no notebook, no list of questions, and none of my multiple choice responses. Information came my way through informal conversations either one on one or in groups, or in in-depth interviews and life histories. In the end, I could ask anything in informal ways of

the people who came to be my friends and informants but many until the very end refused or evaded surveys and interviews. After a few failed attempts, I gave up on surveys.

Meetings, Rallies, In-Depth Interviews and Life Histories

Getting a random ride to town one day introduced me to the president of one of the neighborhood associations. This led me to meet women involved in community politics, which resulted in my gaining access to neighborhood association. Later, contacts at the AC got me participating in the annual OP project. I attended 63 community meetings, 21 political campaign meetings, and helped the AC with its job of inviting community residents to the OP meetings in exchange for guaranteed rides **to** the meeting. I also attended numerous neighborhood association meetings, community health meetings and workshops as well as theater group meetings and presentations. At these meetings I was able to observe the processes of negotiation and discussion as they evolved and see the interaction between community participants and administration officials.

I carried out dozens of more informal conversations with participants and government officials, especially when walking door to door inviting the residents of each neighborhood to their OP meetings. These open-ended unstructured interviews were guided by 3 principle interests: (1) developing a biography including their personal and work history; (2) discussing their political participation and their political analysis; (3) and identifying their perceptions of community problems along with their visions for the future. Through these interviews I was able to come to a more complex understanding of the various and diverging points of view on women's contribution to community politics.

I interviewed 25 current and former government officials, including the mayor and vice-mayor, and a number of town council members. I sought to interview several key informants from as many municipal departments as possible and all the main actors in the department that specifically coordinated community health projects and budget activities. I interviewed at length 15 budget participants and community activists, 2 of whom were also government officials.

The majority of the formal interviews took place in the morning, either at an informant's place of work or at home after breakfast and before preparing lunch or in the afternoon, following the after-lunch nap. A number of informants were interviewed multiple times, becoming regular contacts and friends with whom I spoke often about women, community building and mobilizing, popular participation, grassroots initiatives and PT administration policies and initiatives.

I wondered whether the women's involvement, or lack thereof, in community affairs or what I am calling community politics before and during the fight for emancipation, would affect their present involvement in community politics. This made a certain age comparison important and caused me to explore different generations of women. I explored the lives of 5 older women, 3 of whom had partaken in the fight for emancipation and 2 of whom had not. These informants ranged from their late 50s to early 70s while the rest of my informants ranged from their 20s to their 40s.

I conducted 8 life histories because I wanted to be able to understand women's lives in their changing social, political and economic contexts (Brettell 1997; Cole 1991) and study their motivations for their involvement or non-involvement in administration-sanctioned community activities. Two were elderly women who had participated in the fight for emancipation and the liberation theology activities. Four were in their 30s and 40s and half of those worked for the administration and the other half did not. The last 2 were in their 20s, with one working in the town administration and the other not.

By conducting life histories I found I was able to explore and illustrate the role of the family in political socialization, the role of the PT in providing avenues for women to serve the community, and the contrasts between political analyses and political practice. By examining childhood socialization, the local CEBs history and the local political context, along with women's experience of gender, community work, political participation, employment and significant social relations, I could come into contact with narratives that give the "context in which to explore the development of political consciousness" (Mohanty 1991: 37). This would provide me with the opportunity to explore the conflicts and tensions in community work, political actions and family responsibilities, not to mention changes in political analysis and practice over time. With such an approach I intended to reveal the complexity of women's involvement and motivations for engaging in community work and illustrate that the personal is political, especially in a place where motherwork involves the entire community.

CHAPTER 4 – GOOD MOTHERS, COMMUNITY WORK AND RESPECTABLE PARTICIPATION

Local Politics

It was during the political campaigning and frequent political rallies that I became intimately familiar with the political process in Icapuí. It was not as rosy as I had allowed myself to believe. And, although it was informed with the political rhetoric of a leftist government, it practiced a mix of PT practice and patron/client traditions. Huge free parties with live bands and, at times, free *cachaça* paraded around as political rallies.

Loud, entertaining and street moving *carros de som*[54] shock people from their hammocks with their incessant playing of popular culture songs altered for political ends. They assembled children in a heartbeat – cheering, dancing, hopping up and down – and everybody learned by heart the lyrical political propaganda (songs, jingles and slogans) of the politicians and parties that promoted the candidacy of one or another in glorious ways and spread empty promises of job creation.

Almost nobody spoke about the more serious candidates who actually attempted to give political speeches and disseminate their political views because people did not speak about candidates much. Instead, they sang their songs or flaunted their generosity with material goods and past favors or promises for future assistance, consisting mostly of home building and renovating materials and of jobs at the *prefeitura*.

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[54] Cars and trucks armed with loudspeakers – see Political Jingles/Songs – Appendix 2, p. 239 and photo 12 and 13 on p.114.

Photo 12 – *Camiao de som* (sound truck) on main road during a PT political rally

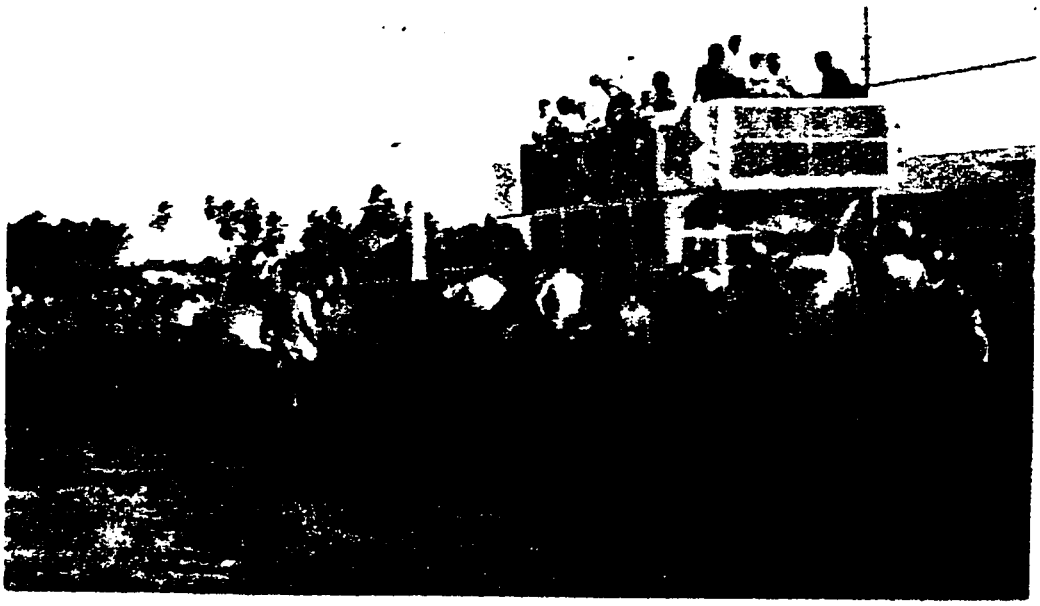

Photo 13 – Sign of rampant political postering: private residence painted by PT

It came to my attention that many, if not most, municipal employees were not receiving their salaries during this time. Salaries were being withheld to fund the power holding party's (the PT) political campaign - which included radio ads, music jingles and reworked popular songs, tee-shirts, baseball caps, bandanas, id cases, key chains, posters, the cars and drivers for the numerous *carros de som*, the audio equipment for the political rallies, the lighting and decorations, the bands, the flyers, the vote buying. This was discussed informally, secretly, fleetingly, noncommittally, unpassionately, with in fact total resignation because if the PT stopped funding its campaigns and buying votes it might actually lose the elections and "then where would we all be?" (*prefeitura* worker about her job and the general condition of the poor in Icapuí). *Participação popular* was important because it helped the people grow and take responsibility for their rights and needs but it was not to develop into full-fledged participation because that would make vote buying, threats, paybacks and wallet fattening much harder to do and would threaten the system of domination in Icapuí.

Some politicians were passionate about putting an end to the clientelistic traditions of the town. Most of these did not win at the elections. Those who received the most votes were without much exception those with the most resources to sway people's favor, including those who (occasionally) discussed the need to eliminate clientelism. Those who had not participated in vote buying because their views of politics did not favor such activities and maybe more importantly for lack of financial backing from the party, ended up losing and professing to "play the game next time" to at least increase their "chances of getting in" – "because", as they explained, "the people want to be given

things, want to exchange their votes for things and if the PT does not do it then the opposition will".

Political Rallies: PT and Opposition

I arrived at the downtown *praça* (square) at the scheduled time or by Icapuí time a good hour before anybody else. There was hardly anyone there. The stage and the stands of food and drink outside were still being set up. There were banners everywhere. The banners bore the names of all the politicians running for mayor, vice-mayor and the 11-seat town council, along with slogans such as "Your friend of yesterday and today", "The power of your vote", "With women's strength and *luta*", or "Because together we are strong".

There was a much stronger male, than female presence in official politics in Icapuí. Only 10 women were running for a seat on the town-council versus 31 men[55] and virtually the only ones to ever speak at these political rallies were men. Once the stands outside had started to sell their barbecued cow hearts on kabob sticks, candy and beer, the *praça* began to fill with men, women and children and the air with music. Despite the dearth of female politicians there was in fact an equal number of men and women present. There were also, surprisingly, many youth and even children running around laughing, playing, begging their mothers for *guaraná* (kind of soft drink) or popcorn, playing in the sand outside... The people were very excited and very happy to be there. They cheered, yelled, sang, clapped, ate, smoked, and drank. They listened to their

[55] Only one woman got in the *câmara* and 4 of the 10 were in the 10 least voted candidates.

politicians, cheered for their favorite candidate while eating, smoking and drinking beer. It felt like a party and it was one, because in Icapuí political rallies and parties are synonymous (*festa*).

These parties were like a cultural open house as far as I was concerned and provided me with much information in terms of social norms and behaviors. Who was where, with whom and what they were doing could be as important as who was not there and where they could be instead. These gatherings, at least the political component to them, were useful for assessing people's political allegiance. A PT supporter was not likely to be found at the political speeches of the opposition and the opposite was also true but anyone went to the political *festa*, no matter who was hosting them.

PT supporters largely saw any opposition as having been against the emancipation and as currently being a force against democracy, the empowerment of the people, and the improvements in health care and education. This was, incidentally, the argument the PT put forward during their "*Pra Frente Icapuí*" ("Onward, Icapuí") campaign – with discourses that (1) praised the PT for being responsible for every improvement in the area and (2) equated all *petistas* with the defense of equality, fraternity, justice and the struggle against poverty. This discursive tactic led *petistas* to believe that without the PT none of these changes would have occurred. As a result, it led them to see those supporting the opposition (the *Partido Popular Socialista* – PPS or Popular Socialist Party) as against all that they represented and fought for. The discourse elaborated by the PT emphasized a political unity between it and the poor with statements such as "we have

struggled and won so much together", "with popular participation the people and the PT have become one", "we know the suffering of neglect and exploitation and have fought it head on together and won", "we lived together in oppression and then together built a better Icapuí that will one day be the Icapuí of our dreams", "brothers, sisters, we **are** Icapuí", "mothers of the community, remember how things used to be and don't stop the struggle, don't abandon the fight - community is worth fighting for".

This kind of political rhetoric served to validate the people's faith in the PT. All of its meetings were surprisingly un-self-critical for a party supposedly representing the people but then again it fit nicely with the way the party was run and talked about by its supporters and politicians in general. The *petistas* would come away from these meetings proud of their achievements, prepared to face new obstacles and convinced of their choice to support the PT.

I would later realize that although many PT supporters supported the PT for ideological reasons because they were *petistas* and upheld the view that the working classes needed to be represented in politics and have their needs attended to, many *petistas* were afraid to fall into bad standing with the ruling party (the PT) and lose their jobs or somehow cause the job loss of someone in their family. Fear, threats and intimidation were a subdiscourse to the support for the PT, even though few would acknowledge it directly or admit to it. In practical daily conversations about survival, poverty, endemic unemployment, it would come out that not supporting the PT could be

tantamount to economic suicide and that there was no real choice to chose the opposition because Dedé punished lack of loyalty with job losses.

For this reason, local politics were extremely important. With one loss, all the PT supporters with jobs paid for with public funds, including people working at the secretariats of Health, Education, Community Action, Finance, and Tourism and Development would be out of work. This could include of course anyone working in the health posts and in the hospital. This included the sanitation personnel, the schoolbus drivers, the *prefeitura* car and van drivers and only didn't touch the school teachers – "thankfully", some told me in confidence. All in all hundreds of people were employed either directly or indirectly by the *prefeitura* and many of them stood to lose their posts if the PT lost.

Supporters of the opposition candidate, Dr. Orlando, who for the sake of clear understanding of history, was also part of the emancipation movement and also claimed an interest in popular participation and democracy, saw the PT as an inefficient party that was allowing the town to stagnate. Dr. Orlando put together a discourse declaring his candidacy "the hope for the future of Icapuí". "Only with Dr. Orlando will Icapuí grow" was the theme song for his "*Novo Icapuí*" (New [and improved] Icapuí) campaign.

Dr. Orlando was targeting all those who could be feeling left behind by the PT: poor, unemployed, underpaid, living in substandard housing, not having personally benefited from the PT, having had an argument or some ongoing family feud with Dedé's

family or the PT in general, or having not supported the emancipation and maintaining relations with an old oligarchy in Aracati. He spoke to some of the tired and frustrated fishermen, struck with poverty from the decrease in fish and lobster stocks. He spoke to some of the unemployed and underpaid laborers. He promised vast improvements in health and education. He declared health, education, employment and infrastructure had stagnated under PT leadership and complacency. He stated that local schools, health posts, roads and the hospital were "ok" for a small rural municipality with no intentions of growing or developing further but could have developed already much more if the PT had not been lining its members' pocketbooks with public funds. The people would hear that the PT was corrupt and *acomodado*[56] and that to support it was to be fooled by the lies and treachery of the party. Dr. Orlando expressed his sympathy vis-à-vis the workers' inability to reap rewards for their efforts and claimed himself to be their reward.

Dr. Orlando called for an end to Icapuí being managed like "an arena of personal power by the PT" (popular comment at his rallies). He spoke about the *favelização* (growing slums) of Icapuí, its growing poverty, its increasing disparity between the haves and the have nots. He argued for more social programs and housing projects. He declared his commitment to get more funding from the state and make this place worthy of the people in it. He complained about the migration of Icapuí's youth to Fortaleza and insisted that with proper leadership with the "*Pai de Icapuí*[57]" their youth could secure good futures locally and no longer need to move to Fortaleza.

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[56] Passive, complaisant.

[57] People called him the *Pai* or "Father" of Icapuí, for his longstanding participation in politics in the town, stemming from long before even the fight for emancipation.

Most of the opposition supporters believed that the PT was *acomodado* (complacent), corrupt, and had simply been in power too long. These people tended to believe that the town was stagnating due to bad management. The majority of them had either been against the emancipation or were feeling excluded from the distribution of the wealth of the town, mostly with regards to employment. Because of their political views they also tended to be overlooked for jobs at the *prefeitura* or in schools and at the various health posts. Everybody knew for instance that you could get a job for supporting Dedé and lose it for supporting the other side. This practice of rewarding PT allegiance with jobs made opposition supporters especially resentful and even more convinced that the way the town worked was corrupt and unfairly biased towards supporters of the PT. This did not, however, prevent them from seeking to exchange their political affiliation to the opposition for a job.

In many respects the elections were a time to save one's own source of livelihood, to save oneself. Tensions ran high. Families were expected to vote the same way – a difficult task seeing as most of the residents were in some way or another almost all related. This task proved even more difficult when it came to voting for a town councilor as some people found many members of their family running at the same time. Who to vote for in these cases became a delicate problem. If there were a brother, a cousin, an uncle and a good friend, blood closeness would take over as the deciding factor, and not political abilities. Despite Brazilian federal government ads encouraging people to vote consciously, people voted either for family members or for people to whom they owed past favors, usually related to having been financially rescued with money, building

materials, medicines or a job, indicating a form of patron-client relationship. This applied to a certain extent even to low ranking municipal administration employees, capable of speaking the popular participation rhetoric. They would say it is important to vote for the best candidate and vote consciously and explain the way they operated as follows:

> "I chose *Fulano*[58] because he is the best candidate. He has a good heart. He has helped me out so much and paid for so many things for me when I needed them and couldn't afford them myself. He deserves to win... Voting for him is the least I can do."

or

> "And after I thanked him again for saving my life and after I asked him again 'how can I pay you back?' he said 'just vote for me – give me your political support and we're even' and I thought 'he really is the nicest, most generous, best candidate. I'll vote for him for sure!"

As such, it was hard to find someone who went to the political rallies only to have fun. Almost everyone was self-interested when it came to who they supported and public shows of support were important in the struggle to get certain favors from politicians. Even the seemingly apolitical (unable to explain their vote and uninterested in politics) had a lot to lose or gain from the elections and felt the need to participate in some way or another, either by canvassing, volunteering or attending the rallies, parades and parties.

Lights Out

We had already heard about the accomplishments of the local PT, the courage and *luta* of the people and the greatness of emancipation. José Pimentel, the PT state deputy was present, as was the present mayor and the town's first ever mayor, a local superhero, Zé Airton. These politicians were spoken of in saintly terms as individuals and as the town's heroes. There was not one woman in the bunch.

Abundant tee-shirt giveaways had already taken place. Pamphlets and stickers littered the ground. Hats, bandanas, key chains and id card holders had been given away, as well as some *cachaça* - even to youngsters[59] and some food. Fireworks were being set off every now and again and a well-known band from Fortaleza was scheduled to play. People held up banners and waved huge red and white PT flags as they ate, drank and danced in areas where space permitted such movement. Amid the constant coming and going of motorcycles, the loud music and the smell of food of all kind, stood hundreds of excited Icapuiense, talking, laughing, eating, drinking, flirting, and ready for a party. All were anxiously awaiting the arrival of the upcoming band.

> "Oh, Catarina, Dedé gave such a good speech about the emancipation, our *luta*, popular participation, and the importance of consulting the people in the management of the town. It was beautiful! And soon the band comes on".

Suddenly the lights around us flickered and went out. They came back after a few seconds, only to go out again, leaving us all standing in quiet darkness. The music had stopped. The PA system had died. The candidate at the microphone had suddenly gone quiet. The entire packed *praça* was eerily quiet. It seemed that everyone was holding their breath, waiting for the lights to go back on. After all there was no reason for a power outage. There had been no great winds and most of all, no rain for weeks. It took a few seconds before the hum of people's chatter started and the young guys ran to their vehicles, mostly motorcycles, and turned on their headlights. It was quite a sight as the darkened *praça* slowly became dimly lit from all sides.

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[58] Generic male name ("so and so") – with Fulana as the generic female name.

[59] In order to sway them in their political affiliations and guarantee their future support at voting age (16).

People started to honk their horns and flash their lights. It seemed that no one knew exactly what to do or where to go. The word sabotage started to quickly make its way through the crowd.

"Sabotage! How *sem vergonha* to ruin our party!
"Always the same stories!
"Done on purpose! The band was about to come on and suddenly the lights go out!

After a few minutes of dark confusion, the faint sound of music began to be made out in the distance, coming from the main road. Once it became clear that the sound was emanating from the PT *camião de som* making its way into the *praça* all lit up and blasting Dedé's campaign theme song, people started to cheer and yell and whistle and clap and jump up and down. The arrival of the Dedé's huge political rally PT truck, with it's sides all lit up with the symbols of the PT (stars) was a magical sight. Within ten minutes the *praça* had gone from being overwhelmed with bright lights, loud music and loud speeches to silence and darkness, and back to bright lights and loud music. And even though this time it all emanated only from one source, the truck entered the scene as a heroic savior, paralleling the discourse of the PT on its achievements and putting into concrete practical terms the rhetoric of "constant struggle for the poor, for the forgotten, for the badly treated". It would have been only slightly more moving if an angel had appeared from the heavens during a mass.

The *camião de som* saved the night – providing lights, sound and a podium for the candidates to speak from and speak they did. Sabotage was used as political leverage.

"This was an act of sabotage – designed to rob you of the party we planned for you. We cannot let the people be treated like this! The PT seeks equality and justice, food, water, housing, education, health, jobs and a good future for our youth and **knows** that it is popular participation and not intimidation that helps people and leads to community improvements... We will meet again and sing and dance – we will - but until then, know in your heart, that this has been a great celebration, a time where we got together and spoke and exchanged ideas and were not taken down by the petty actions of an opposition without scruples! This was a real PT party, a party for the people, with the people and we are so glad to have been able to share it with you – the force of this town and its future!

People cheered, honked their horns, flickered their headlights, clapped, yelled, and whistled, for joy, for pride, and in anger at having lost a good party but Dr. Orlando would soon be having a band come to town and they could all go to that instead.

Highlights of Narrative

The first of two important points this narrative illustrates is the effort of local politicians to sway voters' political allegiance with public parties (that occasionally fall prey to acts of sabotage) - and how much this resembles more direct vote-buying and threats. The second is the effort of local politicians to construct a community link to the voters – either by sympathizing with and valorizing the *luta* and its gains (as Dedé did) or by self-identifying as the "father" of Icapuí (as Dr. Orlando did), back to save the town from the rampant corruption and complacency of its present administration.

NEGINHA

"Catarina! *Tudo bom*? I was so glad we got a ride home last night [from the political rally]. And the band we missed! I had been looking forward to it all week long! People say it was the opposition you know but it's really only fair – the PT's done tons of things like that before! Every election it's like this with dirty tricks. Dedé lies and cheats like the others! It says here [picking up a PT/Dedé political pamphlet] that Dedé has provided a daycare and paved a bunch of roads in neighborhoods that are still waiting for these works and services. He is writing down promises as projects his administration has accomplished so that it looks like he gets many things done for the community! And, do you really think that all that comes in and all that is spent gets put on that wall over there downtown[60]? You can't possibly think that! Some of it goes on the wall but a lot of it doesn't because it has been spent elsewhere, on other things, on some fat salaries, on special bonuses we never hear about... But there is not much sense complaining. The PT is the best we can hope to have. Dedé is a good man and he's done good things for the town and the people. He got me this job...

But listen, do you think you could let me have 20 *reais*? I would get it back to you as soon as possible. I've been feeling such *vergonha* at the *mercado*... I hate buying *fiado* [on credit], hate it... Hate all those things that you don't see... Hidden things that you still do not know that go on here... Like where do you think all the money for the rallies [political rallies] and bands and *cachaça*, food, flyers, tee-shirts, and caps comes from? Where do you think the PT gets the money to fund this campaign? From us! From our salaries! I haven't received a salary in over 3

[60] Known as the PT Wall of Transparency where all the revenue and expenses of the town are made public for all to see.

months and I just can't make things work anymore! And with this new law of fiscal responsibility[61], Dedé could go to jail if his budget is not balanced by the end of the year...

Sure I love the PT but there are things that go on that shouldn't, that make Dedé not such a good leader, not such a good *petista*... Everyone knows but no one can say anything. Well, I complain about not getting my salary but nothing else... You can't criticize Dedé and the PT for this... The PT is afraid to lose this election and so to not lose we need to have big rallies with big bands... and this is expensive... But I WOULD like to go back to getting a salary and paying cash at the *mercado* [grocery store] and not worrying... I can hardly wait for things to get back to normal! As soon as the election is over -- and hopefully Dedé will win, right?-- things will get back to normal. After all there won't be stuff to spend our salaries on anymore! ...

The way things look here are not the way they really are. A lot of good things have been accomplished here but a lot of bad things still go on. Things like who gets a job and how long they have it for and how much they get paid. No one can talk about it but everyone knows that it's not done fairly! Dedé's friends make big salaries! Some of them make 2000 *reais* a month and do nothing! Many people are on payroll and never show up for work!

But Catarina, it's really not so bad. I mean, Dedé got me this job when I really needed it. He really came through for me. And, even though many people here sell their votes for material goods, many others are like me and do not... I vote *de coração* [vote honestly – consciously], I

[61] Newly adopted law of fiscal responsibility, implemented in the year 2000: an important development in the socio-political and economic reality of the country, requiring administrators and politicians at all 3 levels of government to be fiscally responsible or run the risk of jail terms.

don't sell my vote and I support Dedé because he is a good leader and is a *petista* and will get things done for us. And my *vereador*, you know who it is. He will do a fantastic job at the *câmara* if he gets in. He is kind and generous and helpful and thinks of others – things a good vereador should do. He paid for all the medical exams when I was sick 2 years ago and then all the expensive drugs I had to take. He is wonderful!

But, listen... About the money... Could lend me the 20 *reais*? I'll get it back to you as fast as I can. Really. And things will work out in the end... You have to take the bad with the good – even though sometimes I think that maybe I should just drink more and start fishing[62]..."

Highlights of Narrative

In this narrative there are four basic elements that merit particular attention. The first is the local expectation and resignation in the face of lying, stealing and sabotage in politics, whether by the PT or the opposition. The second element is the local justification for the scope and acceptability of this corruption: the fact that the PT is thought to be the best that can be hoped for and the potential favors to be gained, mainly jobs. The third element is the wide-spread culture of vote-buying, affecting even employees of the *prefeitura* who claim to have a critical awareness of the life around them. The last element is the mention of "perhaps drinking and fishing". This is a direct reference to the attrractive lifestyle of the marginalized lesbian single mothers of Icapuí who put food on the table while permitting themselves to both have fun **and** be critical of the world.

[62] Reference to the marginalized women – who do not engage in formal politics or formal community work.

ROBERTO and the Neighborhood Associations

One day, as I walked along the main road, headed for downtown a motorcycle pulled up beside me and someone called out: "*Quer uma carona*?[63]

The ride to town took less than 5 minutes making the conversation short but by no means unimportant. The encounter proved to be a giant stepping stone for me and my research. Roberto, the fellow who offered me the ride, was the president of the ADM (Neighborhood Association) of a neighborhood in the *Serra*[64], a group that is almost exclusively made up of women who engage in a variety of community activities. He invited me to their next meeting and he offered to come and pick me up saying it was *ruim* (unpleasant) to have to get up there alone at night.

As we drove along the main road headed for the meeting we were stared at left, right and center by all the people we past. There was shock and amusement. Roberto honked at everyone we passed. Then we hit the more abandoned, soft sand roads. They were treacherous. It was hard to steer properly and easy to get stuck because it had not rained in weeks and the motorcycle just sank into the sand. Roberto worked furiously to keep the motorbike going and not lose control. We finally made it to a little bar in the hills - a bit frazzled but in one piece where we quickly got into a political discussion about the problems of politics in Brazil, the Northeast and Icapuí in particular. He was the first Brazilian and by no means the last to explicitly mention the "industry of the

[63] Do you want a ride?

[64] A neighborhood of roughly 300 households or 1,000 people. Translates as "the hills".

drought" and the commonness of exploiting the poor's suffering in times of elections – buying a vote in exchange for small personal favors or empty promises.

> "It is hard to improve things here in this place with the industry of the drought and all the other problems we face. You see, the politicians in the Northeast, they take advantage of the lack of resources and the calamities that hit us - the droughts - and buy people's votes and do it with very little effort, very little money. They buy them for very basic things, like groceries, medicines, house materials. The end of the drought would be the end of vote buying in the Northeast, the end of our hypocritical politics and would change the face of national politics. Thankfully Icapuí is different, is better than other places but don't be fooled. And remember, for all these corrupt politicians, *problema resolvido é voto perdido*, you know?"

This got us on the topic of the upcoming municipal elections. Roberto was going to be running for town council and his platform would be local job creation through cooperative movements. He explained that his campaign would discuss the importance of hard work and community in the struggle to improve the local economy and create income for the poor without alienating or exploiting them.

"The worst thing in the world is a father without work, without the means to support his family. From there everything breaks down. The family falls into poverty, the men drink and get violent, hit their wives and the children drop out of school. Everyone suffers, all of society suffers when a father has no work. Some people are lazy and don't deserve help and assistance. They take everything for granted. They drink, they do drugs. Others are different. They work hard. They deserve the jobs, the help, the assistance, like the people in the *Serra*. The people who participate in the ADM in the *Serra*, they want the job creating projects and will work hard to develop and sustain them. And the women – they make up at least 90% of the participants – they have such a lot of the fighting spirit in them – more than most men! The participation from the women in the

Serra is the richest stuff I've ever seen. All of them are *de luta* and *trabalhadora*. They are the leaders of the *Serra*.

They struggle so much and are so creative, so determined to survive. They do lace and embroidery but they also collect seaweed and make soaps, shampoos, salad, jelly and noodles and they also use the coconut for oils and things. And because they can see how I am, how I fight for the people, for the poor, they want me to be a *vereador* and get this town out of its unemployment misery – because that is the misery of this town right now – work. It used to be health and education but the problems with people not finding work, with fathers with no jobs – that is our biggest problem now...a problem the women of the *Serra* can help us fix. With their fighting spirit we can do almost anything!"

Next, we headed to the ADM meeting. The ride through the *Serra* was beautiful. The moon was nearly full and lighting up the sandy roads and bumping off the coconut landscape like a painting. The meeting took place on the front porch of a woman in the final days of her pregnancy and not much able to get around the sand and cobblestone roads of the hills to get to the meeting. "So the meeting came to her" declared Roberto, much to the pleasure of the 20 women and the 1 man present.

Roberto: "Let's talk about what our neighborhood association is all about and why it is important.

Woman 1 (30s): "It is important because through it we can get the things we need.

Roberto: Is that it? The association is only for getting things? That's it?
Woman 2 (40s): "No! It's about popular participation!

Roberto: "What does that mean?

Woman 2 (40s): "It's like this. When people get together and go to meetings, when women *de luta* like us get together we participate in making our neighborhoods better and this is called popular participation because it comes from the people.

Roberto: "Yes but why is popular participation important?

Woman 1 (30s): "It's because it is the people fighting for things.

"Yes" said Roberto excited. "And how are the people fighting – all alone?

Woman 3 (40s): "No! As a community because a community is like a family, is stronger and had more of a chance of getting things done than people all alone fighting for themselves. Fighting by yourself is not good. Fighting as a community, for the community – that is good and that is what we should do! That's why things our lives are easier today.

Woman 4 (50s): Yes, because life used to be hard here. With my parents we used to sell coconuts, we'd sell the oil, and sold cotton too. Then there was all the domestic work and the clothes making and the *labirinto*. Girls would start young – by age 6-7 they were already learning how and some were already very good at it.

Woman 5 (57 yrs): In the past, we had no lights, no gas, no water in the house, we had to go get water down below from wells and carry it up to the *Serra* on our heads. It would be a big pot of water on the head and a small child on the side and up we'd go, up those steep paths up the *Serra*. Now we have stoves, gas stoves and running water and oh, we have electricity, we have lights. We, the women, used to do needlework whenever we could and help in the fields, planting, weeding, harvesting. We did not work as domestics – thank god! But life was hard and we would suffer out in the sun collecting *capim* along the beach and with pregnancies and childbirths.

Woman 6 (50 yrs): I used to sew and sell the clothes I made until things began to change and improve – my eyes are no good anymore because of all those years spent staring at a little needle and thread.

Woman 4: "My mother supported us all, her 7 children on *labirinto*" said one woman present, with pride in her voice.

Woman 1: "And my mother used to make all our clothes by hand" said another.

Woman 7 (50s): In some ways life is easier here but I others it is harder because now most people buy everything, they don't plant their own food and grow their own cotton and make their own clothes and so need more money to survive and at the same time there is no work and so no money. I used to work the fields back when it was profitable to do so and there was enough rain. My 6 sons all worked in the fields, on cotton, for sale. I did *labirinto* and would sell my hard work until the

prices started to drop and drop and drop at the markets. The prices at the market are so low now it is not worth all the trouble – I mean you need material and needles and threads and all that time – some women still do it but they do it mostly because they like it and like getting together in groups and don't want to stop. Those of us who did it because it helped pay for things have stopped because it is not worth all the time anymore.

Woman 9 (50): well – the big problem here is that there is no work – there is no rain, the land is dry, the crops fail, there is no fish, lobster stocks are down and the cost of living keeps rising. We don't have the money to buy food and pay the bills.

Woman 10 (55 yrs): I have been here 14 years and know from experience that the association is good, is good to go to, to be a part of, because it is good to hear the opinions of others and share things – from the past, the present and the future. Going outside at 3 am to get water for a sick child – is a thing of the past. Days and days alone in quiet working on *labirinto*, is too, a thing of the past. But husbands without fixed jobs – carpenters, teachers, house builders all at home drinking this problem is new. Maybe we can fix it somehow by finding them jobs?

Man (55): "It is our right to work and we need to demand that our rights be respected and that we be able to do our jobs as fathers and husbands and take care of our families and the conditions must be acceptable too!

"Yes", added Roberto. "The saddest thing here is when a father cannot work to feed his family. Here the main problem is lack of jobs – it is tied into everything else – all our other social problems have to do with this one problem – drugs, drinking, running around, laziness, corruption, gossiping, lack of ambition, men beating their wives and children – all have to do with the fact that men don't have jobs and are depressed. The young people grow up knowing that they will not find work here and older people are tired of looking for work and so many are sick from this problem! We need jobs, factories, industry – the whole country needs, but we, here, especially need, or we will not survive and all our young people will move out and away to the big impersonal Fortaleza and Icapuí will dry up and die. After all the struggles to make this place better it will die from lack of work!

The women roll their eyes and exchange knowing looks and concealed smiles. This neighborhood meeting composed entirely of women, save one man, is all about men being desperate to feed their families and all about the jobs that men need.

Woman 3: "The most important thing for us, for our survival is jobs, projects and investments and it is clear that Roberto will fight for us – get us jobs – better our neighborhood - our lives. And our role as *mulheres de luta*, *mulheres trabalhadora*,

de guerra in this is to be united behind him and support him as he fights for us. It will be like a second emancipation. The first time we stood behind Zé Airton and were freed from Aracati and now we need to be freed from the lack of jobs and must stand behind Roberto who will fight and win for us! If we work hard together this way and support one another in our struggle over these shared objectives then things will improve! They will!

Roberto: I will fulfill the responsibilities of the *vereador* and fill that role – with honor – and I will do it right. I will help, I will work, I will fight to create jobs here and improve the lives of the people here. We will all live better and feel better because we will live the improvements and will know that WE were the ones to make our lives better... Thanks to all of you and your support, patience, and help, today I am running against those who used to be in power here when all this was wasted space and all of us were treated worse than farm animals. We support Dedé and the PT and PT friendly parties. We will work things out and the victory will be ours and Dedé will win, will continue to represent us and take care of us: the people and the poor and we will build our dreams right here.

The women by this time have grown impatient. Most have divided into little groups of 2s and 3s – talking, not even in a whisper, about a party scheduled for that night downtown, how they planned on getting there, and how long they might stay.

Roberto: Yes, there is a party downtown so we must not keep the meeting dragging on too late! So, in closing, let's remember our focus: jobs are the survival of our families, our neighborhoods, our community, our way of life and there is nothing worse than a father without work. So the point of this meeting is to try to find a solution to this problem of no jobs, so that fathers can do their jobs, so that families may survive and thrive in this here place - our Icapuí that we have already fought for so hard. Vote for me and change for the better!"

The women begin to stand up and clap, following Roberto as he speeds through the "Our Father". And, after a few quick hugs and the token acknowledgment of women's important contribution to popular participation[65] everyone runs off and all we can hear is the sound of motorcycles zooming down the *Serra* towards downtown.

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[65] "Although it is too bad there are so few men, know that without the effort, fight and struggle from you, our *mães da comunidade* [or community mothers], we would not be where we are today. The children of today will thank you tomorrow".

Highlight of Narrative

This narrative highlights four important points that merit particular attention. First, it is important to take note of the **exclusive focus on male employment** in an all female gathering (save for one man). Second, it is important to take note of the desire to **use women's free labor** to create jobs **for men**. The third is the fact that the one focusing on these things is also **using the meeting as a political campaign launch**. The fourth is the **women's lack of focus on the meeting** and all its male-centered projects and their directed focus towards the party taking place that night. The conclusion is that meetings are important to go to but nothing much happens **in** them, save political campaigning and vote gathering. They can even be rushed somewhat when there is a political rally or a party. They are, however, useful long term - in the construction of a respectable public identity, making the requesting of individual favors possible.

RITA/Candidate for *Câmara*

"Yes I am very interested in the community. I always have been. I've always participated and stood by the *petista* belief that popular participation is the heart of a healthy society. Here, though, it can get a little frustrating because there is so much TALK about popular participation and very little action. I can see that we need to work harder at making the people stronger, more independent of the administration, more empowered because right now they are very dependent on the administration – and let themselves be led around. We need to empower women to feel not like recipients of assistance and favors but as active subjects, protagonists of their own life. We need to encourage them to come to more meetings and participate more and fight for their rights and live out their community obligations as mothers together - as a community and as leaders.

The church used to be the motivation for people and then when the administration came in, community duties (health, education) went to the administration and people stopped taking part as much and now we are trying to get them involved again but it isn't working – the base is dead!. This is why forming community leaders is so important and that's what I want to do in the *câmara* - I want to change the way the town works and the way projects get approved.

Politics here are too personal here, too much about favors and personal relations! The politicians need to start fighting for the people but the poor have to be able to make demands and insist they be taken seriously. They need education and community leadership. This is the way to making Icapuí a real participatory democracy and not just one on paper. This is what I'll do in the *câmara*."

Highlight of Narrative

In this narrative three ideas merit highlighting. The first is how with emancipation and the development of a political system catering to the needs of the people, grassroots activism previously undertaken in cooperation with the Church disappeared. The second is the local importance of popular participation and how it often is used as a discourse to control and not empower and free the people, the community workers (mainly women). The third is a critique of the extreme personalism of local politics and the potential power of rupturing with clientelism forming local leaders represents.

After the Elections[66]

"So, yes I wanted to get in the *câmara*. Thing is I didn't even come close - all because I didn't want my campaign to be about vote buying. I thought that buying votes was the old way of doing politics and that it was more like keeping the people prisoner of their poverty and dependent on handouts. I thought that with a solid political platform, seeking women's support, showing how I would work hard to serve them, that I'd get in but I now see that the people wanted to be bought. They wanted money, tiles, sand, medication and I only gave talk about how I'd change things...

I'm glad I did it though and went all the way but also wish I'd pulled out before the end and spared myself the public humiliation. I wish the people had been more honest with me and just told me they had sold their vote elsewhere. I'm mad that the same people get in again and again and that they have no political platform to stand on but have all the support [from PT leaders] and the money to back them. And then you have people like me who fight for the people and the people give their support to someone that solves one immediate need on the spot, robbing others of what they need in the process - because using public money to buy votes does that! And, if the administration did its job and really worked at improving people's lives and bringing in work and not stealing from the cooperatives and loans from the World Bank then people wouldn't be so easy to buy and maybe we could begin to work on real political platforms and real objectives!

Next time I'll certainly buy votes. If I can't even make it though the door, how will I ever have a chance to change things? Even with great ideas and a good track record of working for the community you will only get in if you play by the same old rules...even if you are a *petista*."

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[66] A PT victory, with Dedé gaining 62% of the votes and the PT dominating the câmara with 6 direct PT

Highlight of Narrative

In this narrative we explore the disappointment of a political candidate who refused to buy votes and through this disappointment come to a more in-depth understanding of the local tenacity of clientelism. We see Rita's confusion, sadness and anger when faced with the realization that her objective of freeing the people from their dependence on handouts was not wanted. We follow her journey from being against vote-buying to vowing to buy votes the next time round – at the very least to get in formal politics – and have a chance to change things.

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seats and another 4 from the coligação (only one câmara seat went to the opposition – the PPS).

ROBERTO

"I thought I'd get many more votes. I really thought I had a chance what with so many men unemployed and looking for jobs... I thought that the *mulheres de luta* of the *Serra* would support this job creation effort I was proposing... I didn't want to buy anyone's votes. I wanted to help them to understand that together we can come up with small projects that create local jobs and income. I wanted to help them to understand that there is a solution to the problem and that it is cooperation and hard work together but they wanted sand and tiles and bricks and *cachaça*. They wanted me to give them things. They wanted to exchange their vote for stuff and this is what I am against. I am against exploiting the people like that and using their need for THINGS to get political support. That is not real political support. That is real corruption and that is not what I am about. But I got so few votes. It was an embarrassment. I would not have continued on if I had known. I'd have pulled out of the race ages ago and saved the money and time and energy. But then again I learned a lot. I learned that if you play by rules different from your beliefs it is much easier to get in and getting in is the most important part. If you are not in then you cannot make any positive changes. You cannot have an impact. You can just sit there on the sidelines complaining, saying how you'd do things differently but that, that helps nobody."

Highlight of Narrative

This narrative highlights the extent to which the culture of clientelism and vote-buying is endemic in Icapuí. It is so powerful that is usually ends up swallowing the politicians with different ideals. Desperate to be elected, these will resort to vote-buying when material and financial resources permit.

LIA

"The work at the AC is social service work, the kind of work I've been doing for over 15 years. But today I don't like it much - not like I used to... It's because real social service is hard to practice! The most advanced of the branches and the one I want to practice is the one that seeks to change the social structure of subordination, people's dependency, the dependency of the most needy and empower people - understand? – But most of the field of social service continues to reinforce the system, giving people to help them instead of helping them to help themselves!

Here you don't see much begging in the traditional sense, in the streets and all but there are many people that go to beg for things at the *prefeitura* though! You can see the lineup there! Our social service more often than not works by hand outs and it shouldn't because when you give things to someone what have you really changed in the situation that person lives? Giving doesn't empower the people at all. By giving you are allowing, helping that person to be more and more *acomodada*! Sure it is nice to get things for free, right? But then you can from someone one week and then the next week from someone else and never do for yourself. You end up stopped/*parada* (as a person).

And many *prefeituras* employ social service workers to do this very work they shouldn't do -- give things away to the population! When people come to "get" things, the mayor or anyone else around says "Go over there to the social service worker – Lia". But I don't want to "give"! [Laugh!] "Go and see the social service worker and she'll give you your medication" – "Go and see the social service worker and she'll get you on the list for a new house" – " Go and see the social service worker and she'll do all the paper work for your old age pension" and so it goes and

I hate it! People come to the *prefeitura* to see if they can't "get" stuff... They all think that the social service worker is there to GIVE!...And they keep coming back! People expect stuff – all the time but especially at this time, before elections. It gets crazy here! And I am expected to drain the public resources handing out individual favors, handing out medicines for preventable diseases, filling forms for young illiterates when we have adult literacy classes! This is not what I wanted to do. I did not want to make the people dependent on me... There have been so many changes here but so much of it, especially recently has been given to the people...

And when I arrived here in the last year of the first administration we used to discuss these things much more. We'd discuss the process of politicizing people, developing their consciousness of things. We gave such priority to popular participation and community organizing and citizen empowerment...But today I don't see anymore of this, no! I think that our Mayor has my vision - he only doesn't have...drive, ambition, energy... No. He is into the discussion but in practice he does not give it any priority. It's because he is *acomodado*! It's because he is lazy. He doesn't like meetings. He has the vision of the importance of popular participation but he himself doesn't like to participate and rarely comes to meetings.

It is mostly women who work for the community, who participate in community affairs. Icapuí's women are *de luta*! They like to meet and get together and are interested in community. They are the ones that fight. They care more. They are more patient than men and more *batalhadora* because they are mothers. But they are there for concrete things, for survival like water, food, health, and jobs... It's not for social change, not for political growth. They don't see the ADMs, the OP, the AC as ways of changing the social structure. I wish they did but they use ADMs as

ways of making demands on the *prefeitura* and getting things, the things they need or the things they would like... I think that women in Icapui still have not discovered their value, their self-worth. And the men – the men are not interested in that kind of thing much. They might want to be on the town council, be a head of a secretariat or the president of a neighborhood association but they don't want to just participate as a simple community member with no extra power... And they are lazy! Even those without jobs don't feel that they need to help the community. They feel that the women will do all the work for them and they're right – the women do all the community work!

Popular participation is not really changing people's vision – especially not women's. That's why there is a need for women's groups, an organization that pushes that work – a movement of women for women that works on developing women's sense of value, so that women give value to their work and see themselves as valuable human beings! But I don't know if creating a secretary...INSIDE the *prefeitura* would be a good thing though... I think that it should be more independent – an independent women's movement with the women themselves pressing for change... Because...practice has shown that when you create an order in the *prefeitura* – the thing ends up getting institutionalized and it ends up being a thing of the *prefeitura* and not a thing of the people – like with our emancipation movement. What happened here was that the local leaders were the ones pushing for the emancipation and the people had not yet really come to that conclusion and then they did of course and they partook in the fight but did they really get it? Because after the win most stopped fighting... They fought and won and then left everything to the *prefeitura*! It's the same thing I think with the women, understand? The women need to organize themselves independently of the *prefeitura*. They need to be strong from their own

work, their own thinking, organizing, understand? They need to put pressure on the *prefeitura* and not the other way around!

Sometimes I wonder if having the PT around doesn't make the women *acomodadas*. If the women had to fight more, but really had to fight their administration, maybe they would place demands and would have more *conscientization*..."

Highlight of Narrative

In this narrative three elements need highlighting. The first element is the local critique of the *prefeitura*, with accusations that the *prefeitura* has reduced its discussions on popular participation and instead reinforces the system of domination, by keeping people dependent on handouts. The second is a stress on the fact that it is women who do most of the community work and that they do so solely for material well-being and not for social change. The third element is the mention of the need for women to increase their self-esteem and quality of life through women's groups. It is suggested that these women's groups be completely independent from the *prefeitura*, in origin, design, development and implementation. The argument presented by this *prefeitura* employee is that if the *prefeitura* were involved is the formation of such groups the women would not benefit and would not participate. The conclusion put forward by this critical *prefeitura* employee is that the *prefeitura* makes women complacent while what women need is to get back into the struggle and collectivelly demand social change.

CHAPTER 5 – THE *MENINAS*: CRITICAL VOICES FROM THE MARGINS

"There is a time for departure, even when there is no certain place to go."
(Lord Byron, quoted in Boal 1990: 121)

The Political Value of Icapuí's Marginalized Women

It wasn't until the election frenzy petered out and my neighbors began to recover from their PT victory hangovers (and the endless days of post-election PT celebrations with industrial quantities of *cachaça* at every front porch) that I began to soberly recover from the spell of the PT political rhetoric and realize just how top-down Icapuí's "grassroots" development and popular democracy really was. Community meetings had not resumed to the frequency at which I had been told they usually occurred. In fact, very few neighborhoods were having meetings at all. Furthermore, the "participating" women's shifts between (1) the PT rhetoric of popular participation/grassroots development and (2) their clientelist practices were not only evidence of women's agency and ability to appropriate the system of domination to suit their own needs. These shifts also seemed to contribute to the system of domination. What I had erroneously taken as a local participatory democracy that encouraged and facilitated grassroots movements and community mobilizing, and distributed resources fairly, according to a **socialist** ideology, was in fact a very corrupt local government, deeply ingrained in vote buying and clientelism even if, supposedly, "for the good of the people"[67].

It wasn't until I'd been made aware of the widespread practice of vote buying and threats and had come to see most local "grassroots" community building as co-opted or

[67] Common for politicians and administrators to justify clientelism by saying "If we don't buy votes, the opposition will win and then where will the poor be?"

corrupted top-down initiatives that I re-assessed the political significance of the group of marginal women. I decided to examine how non-participating women felt about popular participation and the PT. This brought me from a world of organized meetings and frequent clientelist exchanges to informal activities such as clam picking, shrimp and crab catching, night fishing, extensive drinking sessions, and intriguing and subversive (to the dominant ideal of the always giving, altruistic "community mother") conversations about women's "rights" and "needs". This talk came not from the PT's rhetoric of securing the rights and needs of the poor but came from their own lives, their own frustrations, their own sufferings and let downs, their own understanding and appropriation of the PT popular participation/popular democracy discourse. These marginalized women, the ones considered by all (including me) to be **absent** from community politics – were the ones I found to be **creating** new ways of doing politics.

Through socializing with these women[68], learning how to mix drinks, play cards, play drinking games, play the local variety of pool, pick clams, catch crabs, eat fish heads, cut down coconuts and open them, fashion sticks for crab catching, make beach fires in record time with limited combustibles, and mend damaged fishing nets, I began the process of understanding how they viewed local politics and grassroots projects.

[68] See photos 14-19 on p.147-149.

Photo 14 – A *menina* at the beach at low tide for clam picking

Photo 15 – Brooming the wet sea bottom to reveal the clams under the surface

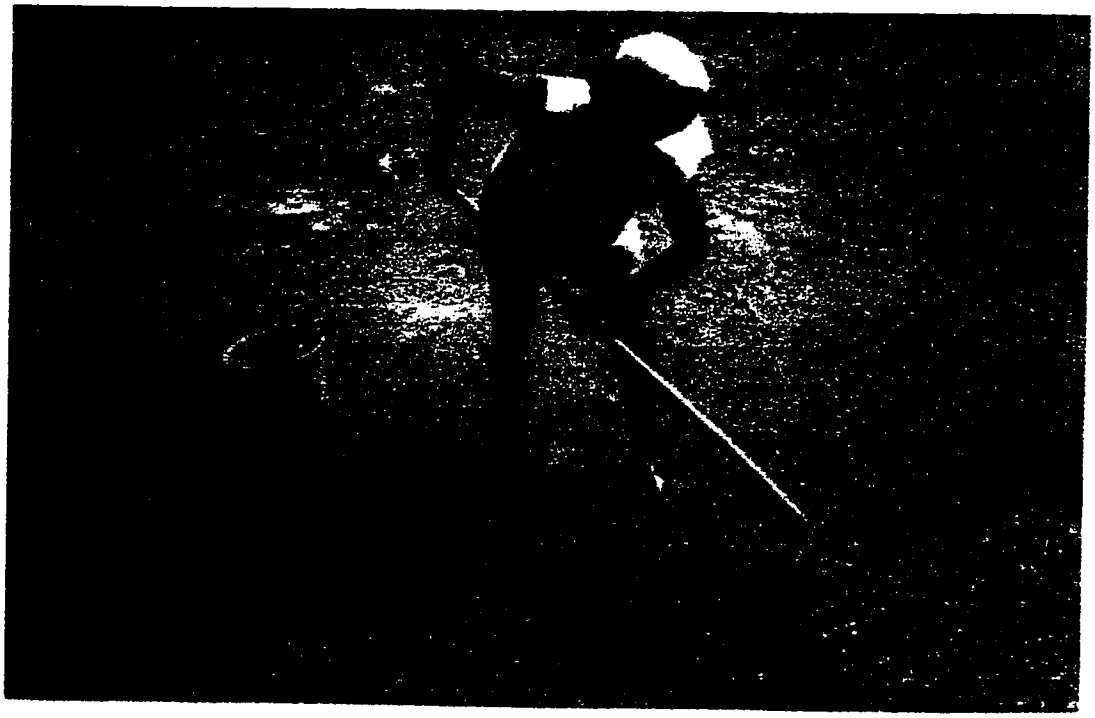

Photo 16 – Picking the uncovered clams

Photo 17 – Taking the cooked clams out of their shells in preparation for a meal

Photo 18 – A *menina* gathering her fishing net at the salt-water stream

Photo 19 – A *menina* mending a fishing net

BEATRIZ

On a hot and sunny afternoon in August a woman sits on a bench in her backyard under a ripening mango tree. Her skin is dark with tan, her body is lean and hard from hard physical work. As her flip-flop sandal falls to the sandy ground below, her 40 year old sun-baked smoker's face wrinkles into the expression of disgust, revealing yellow-stained smoker's teeth. She gives one of her frequent smoker's coughs and begins to speak about the state of things in the rural fishing town of Icapuí – a town she moved back to a year ago, after more than 20 years in the big city of São Paulo.

"It's not that he does nothing – it's just that that *prefeito* could have done much more. Before all this was mud, the street here [main road] was mud. He put in this road here – brought these jobs...There in Icapuí there wasn't this, this hospital and today there is one. There in Mutamba there wasn't this health post, now there are many posts and all, but I think he could have done much more! I find all this very little! This here should be a lot more developed and I blame him for this! I think that it's wrong the people here... to leave one person, one person in charge for so many years! Why not bring in different people? Maybe there would be changes!

Every election he wins... he wins, he wins, he wins! And why does he win? Because he is in charge of the jobs! If I have a son that works at the *prefeitura*... well I will be afraid... I will vote for Dedé for sure. I won't vote for *Fulano*, no, because if *Fulano* wins my son will lose his job – so it involves the whole family, you see? This is why he is always winning - because of this fear that people have... and he also [lowering voice]... they say that he also threatens – that he goes to people's houses – that he threatens... because a son, a daughter, a person in that family is

working there or anything else... [raising voice] He threatens saying that they have to, that they have an obligation to vote for him! [lowering] If they vote for the opposing party and not him and he wins, well that person and family loses the job... [Loud] He threatens just like that, yes! Many people there in Icapuí say so... Imagine! If he gives you a job, he feels he can do that – threaten... - He GIVES you a job but you, you WORK! You earn your money! He hasn't gone and given you a present! You get up early every day, go to work and everything! Now, if you work there in the *prefeitura* he will throw you out in the street if he finds out that you didn't vote for him! He does just what he wants because he can! Isn't he the *prefeito*! Isn't he the "*manda chuva*" [commander of the rain]! Isn't he the little "*coronelzinho*" [military colonel] of this place! Isn't it him! Isn't it him that controls everything! Isn't he the God here!...
This *prefeitura* has got things in it that you could never imagine! Many awful bad things go on! Things that shouldn't exist and they go on in there! ...Bad things like stealing and things like that...that take from us...instead of offering a better life for the people here!...

And the people here know but it's like I told you, they keep quiet!...They are satisfied with the way things are...satisfied with so very little!... They're *parada*..., *besta* [dumb]. They conform to anything. If they get a handful of *farinha* [dried big grained manioc flour] they are satisfied. It shouldn't be like that!

Our mayor thinks that these *medicozinhos* [little doctors – pejoratively] over there and those *enfermerinhas* [little nurses] over there are good enough – as if we were his *cachorinhos* [little dogs] and that it will do for us - that it's enough for us – as if that is all that we need! Many don't have jobs – many young guys are into drugs and alcohol – but whose fault is it? Is it their fault?!

Isn't it more the place?! A place that doesn't offer jobs and where young guys have nothing to do except get excited in groups, with heads that aren't working right because they drink all the time and *cachaça* is the only thing they can afford! What if there were jobs? Our *prefeito* could bring industries over here and jobs! But why hasn't he done so? Because he is too busy putting the money in his wallet! He takes our public money! He steals and gives a *pouquino* (a wee bit) to the people – treating us like *cachorinhos*! It's all about throwing away little bits and pieces...He throws some corn and all come running to his feet! It's terrible!

But maybe it's not him that is to blame but the people themselves... that continue to vote for him...Those people should get together and open their thinking – give a chance to someone new! You can go and come back in 3 years and you won't see any new industry here! You will see the same things that you left!... This place needs changing!... If there were changes here...it would put an end to the *povinho* [poor in thought] that we have here, with their *cabecinhas* [little heads – stunted thinking] that they have – people with closed minds, people that are *parada*.

I see things very differently from the people here...It's the time... I spent many years far from this place... My thinking is different.... *Dá para entender esse lugar?* [can you understand a place like this?] No matter how hard you try you will not understand – there is no way because first the people here are full of preconceptions and won't accept this and this and this and this and have rules about how you should behave and where you should go and with whom but they accept a mayor that steals, threatens, lies, and helps only his friends, like this one! No matter how hard you try you cannot understand this place!"

...When she's done she laughs, a defiant laugh, a "I'm stuck in it but at least I won't shut up about it" kind of laugh; a "they know all that the *prefeito* does and they're after me?" kind of incredulous laugh. It's wet and gurgly because of all of her smoking.

"I have to go and make lunch. Antonio [her husband] is waiting..."

She hurries a bit as she enters her house. Her world quickly loses all sense of order when she is late in doing one of her "womanly" duties and today she is late in making lunch. Rumors might fly about what a terrible wife and mother she is and her family might take the opportunity to criticize her general behavior and lifestyle – as they had when she first returned from São Paulo. In order to avoid this scenario she juggles the contradictory aspects of her life. She juggles going out, parties, and drinking with cooking, cleaning, laundry and tending to husband, sons and her mother - who is sensitive to neighborhood gossip and nervosa[69]. She is one of the few heterosexual women to socialize with the town's single lesbian mothers and throw conventions regarding women's behavior to the wind and go out, party, drink, fish, hang out on the beach and otherwise "*vive na rua*"[70].

This negotiation is not at all an uncommon activity in Icapuí. In fact, women in this small rural fishing town have been negotiating rather contradictory identities and aspects of their lives for generations. Women have historically supplemented their

[69] Suffering from weak nerves.

[70] Live out in the Street world (da Matta:1991).

husbands incomes in Icapuí, either through traditional crafts such as lace-making or embroidery or more recently through seaweed collecting and paid employment, either at the *prefeitura*, a factory or a local shop. They have often been the main if not the only bread-winners, bringing in regular income for daily living, as drinking is a favorite pastime for most men and eats up many wages. Furthermore, there is a public discourse on the *mulher batalhadora, mulher de luta* that clearly identifies and valorizes women for their struggle and hard work. So, although some men like to say that women do nothing, many will tell you in confidence that women work a lot harder than men.

Despite being subordinate to men in many ways, especially through their responsibilities towards the community, women are, however, also very often in charge. They have a large influence on the way the community functions and frequently manipulate the system to get what they need and want. For example, they partake in numerous municipal government projects that focus on popular participatory democracy while engaging in clientelistic relations to ensure the survival of their families. They will claim that the mayor is wonderful while they discuss the recent local corruption scandal involving embezzlement of public municipal funds and the buying of votes. They will profess to vote consciously for the best candidate but then explain that it is hard to choose between family members and people who have helped treat their sick children or pay for housing materials... They will discuss the marvels of popular democracy following a personal telephone call to the mayor to fix a problem in the road or get a son a job...

In the local political terrain men are the official leaders and women frequently feel out of place and intimidated. To combat this, women frequently maintain their patron-client ties and contradictorily also their own resourcefulness and independence in their struggles for survival. In fact, everyday informal power for women in Icapuí is about negotiating this fine line between clientelism and grassroots activism. It is about resisting the local power structures that are designed to maximize women's free community labor and keep them too busy to critique them, transform them or otherwise live in a way not in accordance with the "ideal woman" type. It is about strategically restructuring the power structures in ways that may benefit them and their families. In fact, it is women's drive to resist local power structures that in many cases strengthens the clientelism that has traditionally subordinated the weaker, more marginal members of society. It is women's resistance to official politics and its male-centredness that often leads them back to their patron-and-client relations for daily survival.

Other women, however, reject this negotiation altogether as well as their roles as community mother. Instead, they seek to advance their own personal interests and emancipation as women, pushing the boundaries of acceptable female behavior and showing that gender roles are culturally constructed, are flexible and are adhered to not through any biological imperative but through social conventions that can be changed.

My argument is that it is the marginalized women of Icapuí who perform central grassroots activities and pose the biggest threat to the power structure by baring it for all to see. Through these women's rejection of the popular participation, popular democracy

rhetoric, the gendered aspect of community building becomes apparent and the appropriation of free female labor is exposed. If marginalized women are marginal it is because they reject the label of good woman, good mother in the home and the community, giver of time and energy and expose this "ideal woman" identity as an exploitative cultural construction.

The fact that the marginal women who did not participate in administration-sanctioned community activities might represent palpable threats to the political status quo of the town and impact greatly on the town in their own way, at the level of every day life - **what I call community politics** - only became clear once the constraining reality of community participation for women was fully explored. It was, in fact, only with time that I came to see that Icapuí's popular participation and struggle for equality for all was in fact an illusion in many respects and was not only not interested in giving women decision-making powers but **was** very interested in maintaining a "good" woman identity related to women contributing free labor to their communities. Marginalized women were not upset at being excluded but were instead denouncing the activities as limited and limiting. They insisted that they were not in the least bit interested in participating in the realm of administration-sanctioned community activities. These women were instead developing their own rules, their own ways of life. They were constructing and partaking in real grassroots community change through personally experienced community politics.

Of course, through my time with these women I was able to note that it was remarkably easier for a woman to be labeled marginal than a man. An alcoholic man for instance, was not seen as deviant or marginal, nor was a man who cheated on his wife. If anything this behavior was seen as typical male behavior. It is the norm. In fact, this behaviour was almost a public declaration of manliness and social protection against the mildly marginalizing label "homosexual". A man who drank and ran around was a real man in Icapuí. Homosexual men, spouse batterers, the psychotic and even the criminal having spent time in jail were only seen as mildly marginal and were generally not talked about any more than anyone else and not in specifically more negative terms.

Neighborhood talk about marginalized women, however, was a different story. Some were alcoholics; most were lesbians. All were to a certain extent free-thinkers who felt constrained by the limits imposed on female behavior and the local reality that made it easy to be labeled deviant. Not only did they nearly all drink, smoke and play cards, socialize at the beach, party and go to bars but they also hung out late at night and even fished, a typical male activity. They also fished at night -- an activity deemed completely unwomanly, not only because it took place in the sea, a dangerous place, but because it took place at night. Fear of being alone in darkness was the most common fear in Icapuí, especially, but not exclusively, amongst women[71]. Night fishing, coupled with lesbianism was seen as the most deviant activities for women and women who practiced any of these activities were seen as truly *doente* (sick).

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[71] This fear was so common that it extended everywhere. For example, the first few times there were power outages people were simply incredulous at my bravery, demonstated by setting up flashlights and candles all alone in my little house. I would catch people peering in, incredulous or watchng me from their open windows, in awe.

Understanding these marginal women's lives allowed me to develop a more complete understanding of community politics as they can be lived in Icapuí and of the limitations of government-sponsored community activities when it comes to developing critical social and political awareness and a feminist consciousness, and when it comes to perpetuating clientelism.

The marginalized women of Icapuí spoke of equality and rights as things they needed and deserved in order to live more fulfilling personal lives. They stressed individuality but they were also extremely supportive of one another – unlike the "participating" women who gossiped and competed against one another in the race to reach patrons or powerful friends first. Even the poorer marginalized women, greatly concerned with putting food on the table for their children – and most had at least one child while some has as many as 6 – were still concerned with the quality of their life in terms of rights to equality, freedom, and choice in how they were going to live their lives. With time I recognized how these women spoke of Icapuí's popular participation activities as ways of keeping people too busy to live their lives and do the things they wanted. Many challenged that administration-sanctioned community activities were like a "baby-sitter for the mind" or a brainwasher as it kept people from thinking on their own and questioning the status quo and social rules. These activities, they argued, kept prejudices running rampant, kept poor people poor **and** ignorant and were "no fun at all!"

Although there were a few subversive individuals within the OP and ADM systems, in the different Secretaries, and running for town councilor, it was not in the OP,

the ADM or even the AC that *conscientização* was occurring or community building was taking place. The place where the most critical thinking was taking place was on the margins. The subversive marginalized women were the rare women who helped each other out and were the ones most interested in changing social norms, especially gender roles which would have serious consequences for community building and local politics. They were the most critical of the status quo and of the prejudices in the community. They banded together and discussed critically the problems facing the town, and particularly the problems women in the town faced. They supported one another, fought for equality between men and women and between women and women – struggling to break down the barriers that placed them on the margins and that labeled them deviant and *doente*. I came to see these women as Icapuí's grassroots community builders. They were the ones building new, more democratic social relations and identities.

Analyzing marginal women requires deconstructing the ideal woman of Icapuí. Refusing to "mother" the community comes to represent a palpable threat to the status quo and reveals how women's involvement in community building is manipulated by the local oligarchy – the PT – and the different groups of women themselves. **Not** participating is a political stance, is a form of resistance to dominant models and ideals and a desire for something else.

Instead of living up to the ideal of "good woman", "good mother", "*mulher de luta*", "*mulher trabalhadora*", "*mulher de guerra*", over a swig of *cachaça* and between drags on a cigarette, standing in shoulder high water in the ocean at night with a 20 foot

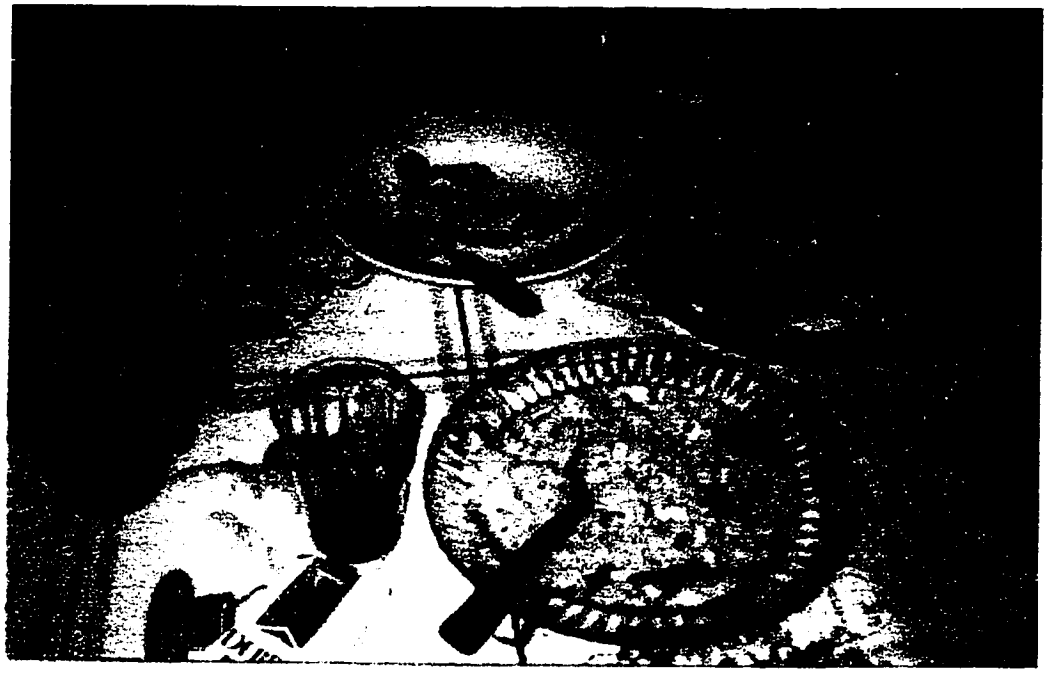
long fishing net in one hand the marginal women will talk about how they hate politics, hate all the politicians[72], hate the waste of time meetings that lead nowhere and the endless repetitious and empty political rhetoric that numbs the brain and the desire to have fun. "No", they will tell you, between swigs, as they struggle to keep their balance in the growing waves, "we are lazy". And they will burst out laughing. But by the end of the night they had not only had a pleasant night of fun, they were also bringing fish, shrimp and crab home to their families for the next night's meal[73].

[72] And see them all as "flour from the same bag" – all equally corrupt.

[73] See photos 20 and 21 on p.161.

Photo 20 – A *menina* and me – after night fishing

Photo 21 – The kitchen table after a night fishing expedition (with cachaça, cola, cigarettes, shrimp, fish, crabs, beans, farinha…)



The *Meninas*[74]

It was early morning. The road had fallen silent again: no more zooming motorcycles and cars, no more calling roosters, barking dogs, squeaking bicycles, yelling parents, laughing children. Seven am classes had begun[75]. Many children were at school. Those with morning jobs were at work. The sun shone brightly on this yellow sandy place and it was beginning to get hot. The women had finished sweeping their houses and porches and had watered and evenly raked their sandy front and backyards. It was still too early to start lunch. Laundry was more of an afternoon activity. Now was the time to sit around on front walkways watching the traffic pass by and chatting in small groups. This was the time of day when visits usually began. Beatriz was my most frequent visitor. She kept coming - always it seemed, with someone different, to chat and to smuggle secret shots of *cachaça* from the back of my house. She arrived at my door, clapped her hands 3 times, and called out "*Oi de casa!*"[76]. She joined me in the living room. She was in a bad mood.

> "I'd stay at the beach every day all day if my mother let me but she gets upset. She says people talk and that it's not proper, not right for a woman to be out in the street like that all the time. And, it's the same with most of the other *meninas*. Their mothers and families get mad at them because they like to go out and have a nice time. My mother doesn't understand me, never did either. She doesn't understand what I like and how important it is for me to have conversations with people and learn new things and spend time with my friends and make new friends and have a good time. She never wanted me to pick *capim* [seaweed]. She wanted me to make *labirinto* [lace]. She wanted me to stay home while I just wanted to be out in the sun, at the beach, talking with people!

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[74] Translates as "girls" and is the appelation the lesbian single mothers (or marginalized women of Icapuí) use to refer to one another – evoking their reclaimed girl-like freedom from womanly burdens and responsibilities (approximating a female Peter Pan).

[75] Children attend 4 hours of school a day and are either registered for morning classes (7-11), afternoon classes (1-5) or evening classes (6-10).

[76] Translating literally as "Hello, of the house" and the typical call when someone drops by.

Just then Lucilene popped her head into one of the living room windows.

"I thought I heard your voice, Beatriz! *Tudo bom, menina*? What are you doing here? How about a get together at my beach house tomorrow?

"Sure, Lucilene. I'll be there! A nice beach party! And, a fishing expedition too, I hope?

"Of course! Come and be lazy with the *meninas*! We'll probably start off at Nené's bar and start a good round of neighborhood gossip before moving to my house, ok?

"I can't believe this place! I don't care what people say about me but it would be nice if they didn't gossip so much! Men can do what they want and women have to live by all these stupid rules – why? It's hard but I won't let them rule my life! We should be able to spend the whole day at Nené's and not suffer from any gossip. We don't do anything bad there! Hanging out with the *meninas*, drinking, playing pool, picking clams, catching crabs, fishing – is the only good thing about this place!

Lucilene laughed: "So meet us at Nené's tomorrow and let's be lazy!"

And with that she left.

At the Beach

The group of women at Nené's bar were merrily eating and drinking when Beatriz arrived. Nené was constantly being called upon to bring more *baião de dois* (rice and bean dish), *caldo* (broth), fried shrimp, *cachaça*, cola or cigarettes. It was customary in Icapuí to nibble and share small dishes while drinking. It delayed the effects of the alcohol and permitted people to drink more and to stretch out their good times.

"Is that all you're going to drink Beatriz! You *sem vergonha*! Here drink more!

Romantic music was playing loudly. After, a few games of pool, on rickety old, scratched up, slanted tables with defective holes the *meninas* moved to Lucilene's house to continue the party. Hammocks were hung up under her *alpendre*[77] and stools were placed all over the place, one of them serving as the table for the *cachaça* and cola. All the commotion and excitement woke up Magna, who has been sleeping in one of the hammocks slung inside the house. She was wearing the same old dirty looking, tattered and faded long shorts and baggy tee-shirt. Her hair was standing straight up, bed-head style and her general appearance and posture were striking. Generally people tended to their appearance in Icapuí: their hair, their clothes, their hands and nails. Even men had frequent manicures. The rearview mirrors of parked motorcycles were used as vanities by men and women alike – for popping pimples, shaving, applying lipstick and checking hair. Magna's appearance was jarring: her eyes were puffy, not quite open yet and her face had the reddened, smooshed and wrinkled look of someone who had slept with their face pressed hard against their hammock. She stood beside the group, rubbing her eyes,

[77] Traditional covered porch for travelers to rest from the sun or rain or sleep for the night.

her mouth, her head, her crotch – like an unselfconscious child. Someone mentioned she could do with a drink. She beamed a huge nearly toothless grin at the group, grabbed a stool and a glass and joined the party, to everyone's pleasure.

Just then a short, small boned, wiry little black woman with short straight black hair, and dark came towards the group with a small sack of fish slung over her shoulder mumbling about someone being "*sem vergonha*". She was visibly furious. She hardly acknowledged anyone and instead ran into the little house.

She came out with a washing basin full of water, pulled an axe out of her bag and proceeded to clean the fish she'd caught.

> Lucilene: "You caught all that Bete! Great! So why are you so upset? Eh? I have a knife inside. Use the knife – it's better! Bete? You mad at me why? What did I do?
>
> Bete: "I'm not mad at you. No. But I don't want your knife. I'll do just fine with my own stuff thank you very much. This axe will do. It couldn't help me to catch the clams I wanted but it can help me clean my fish, now can't it! I'm so mad at Rogerio! Imagine that *sem vergonha*! Locking up his house with my clam bucket and broom inside! A whole day wasted, Lucilene! We could have had the best little *farofinha de buzios*[78] and I could have sold the rest but the *sem vergonha* isn't there and I can't get at my stuff! I tried to get in and looked for the key all over the place but couldn't find it! You can't catch clams with an axe! That *sem vergonha*!
>
> Beatriz: "Calm down, Bete. Calm down.
>
> Bete: "I AM calm. I'm very calm. I'm not getting all heated up, no. I'm cleaning my fish with my axe and that's it!
>
> Lucilene: "Here, Bete. Have a shot of *cachaça*.
>
> Bete: "About time you offered! Laugh! I could so do with a shot of that sweet stuff warming my insides – awaking my body - and it will taste so good with this fish once they're all fried up!

---

[78] Clam mixed with grainy manioc flour – a local delicacy.

Their talk resembled Beatriz's. Although not quite as candid, they spoke about what they liked and disliked, what they wanted in life and the things that bothered them. They complained about the close-minded residents of the town, their judging nature and lack of spirit and good will. They were not at all interested in politics: "Nothing but liars and thieves! And they do nothing for the people so why should we bother ourselves to participate and waste our time in all their little programs?!".

I tried to convince them that some of the programs might be good but with joyful pessimism they would inform me of the fallacies of my thinking.

> Beatriz: "You'll see. You'll see, that politics here is like politics all over Brazil, all over the world: lying and cheating and stealing by the big men with power and money to start with. It's about factories that never open, projects that cost millions and never get finished and the buying and selling of votes. It's a big waste of time! It's all talk, about the people being in charge and having a say. Liars and thieves they all are. You're better off keeping far away from it all!"
>
> Lucilene: "Life is for having a good time – as long as you don't hurt anybody! We laugh, we cry, we get *apaixonada* (taken by passion) - like anybody else. We have good times and bad times. We work and we play. We play a lot – because it is good for the spirit, for the body too. Some people don't understand that but that's their problem! We are not going to change because of what some other people think. I can only speak for myself here but I know that I am not *parada* in the way I live my life. I love my life and choices I have made. So many here DO politics but are *parada*, *acomodada*, and let their lives be wasted on politics and community and rules and fears of gossip".

And so, over hanging out, mixing drinks, playing cards, playing drinking games, playing pool, picking clams, catching crabs, eating fish heads, cutting down coconuts and opening them, fashioning sticks for crab catching, making beach fires in record time with

limited combustibles, these women critiqued the status quo and the roles they were expected to play.

Bete: "I don't think much of politics! A big waste of time! Going to all those meetings, acting just so, always doing what you're told until you don't even have a mind of your own anymore, not one independent thought! I don't need a *baba* [babysitter] for my mind – no thank you! And I don't have time for that non-sense! I prefer to work – catch clams and crabs and shrimp and fish and drink and cook some and sell the rest and have a good time with *as meninas* [the girls]! Who wants to go to meetings when you can live this well and spend time with people as wonderful as we have here!! Politics are no fun at all! No fun at all! [laugh] What I tell those who go to these stupid meetings is: "Drink some more. Eat something. We have fried shrimp and some soup. Smoke. Laugh with us a while. Enjoy life! Don't go to anymore meetings, for the love of God!" [Laugh]

Lucilene: "But Dedé wouldn't like talk like that now would he?

Bete: "Who cares about Dedé and all his stupid rules! What has he done for me? Dedé! I work all the time – cleaning houses here and there and fishing and selling those clams I collect! How about a job? You have a job, Lucilene. So do you Daniele and you too Zenaide and you Maria and you Paulinha. Only Fátima doesn't work but I have a house full of kids and she doesn't! And have you seen my house? Have you seen it? Can I afford a nice place like Dedé has? Can I? No, I can't and no I won't go to his meetings! No! I'd rather have fun and drink and catch some fish for me and my family – instead of waste my time in all his meetings! I'd be poorer still for all the wasted fishing and I'd be dead inside…

Lucilene: "It was only a joke, Bete. Calm down. Me too I'd rather play than go to meetings… Politics…only help some people – mostly those with fat wallets… They are tiring too… People always wanting you to do this or that and go here or there and not do this or that and not drink and not smoke and not go to bars and not go to the beach and not fish and just stay at home and only go out to go to meetings or to buy groceries and to be afraid when people gossip about you. You have to learn to just not care anymore – as long as you live your life well and do good and don't hurt anybody and have respect for yourself… Politics… Politics are boring and lead to nothing and don't make people act any better that's for sure! So many bad things, immoral things and mean things that lack respect are done in the name of politics in this place! Better to keep away! Politics are…not for me… I don't know about the rest of you. I can only speak for myself, right? But I prefer to live my life the way I live it than to be the way other people tell me to be.

Beatriz: I agree. Meetings are a waste of time and people are fake. They lie and steal and cheat and talk. Dedé wants us to go – sure – but he knows that we won't. We do our jobs and do them right. We don't have to do anything more and don't

want to. We also don't have time. Meetings are for those people who don't know how to think on their own. How can those women know about all the things that go on and still go to those stupid meetings!

Bete: "This is why we keep away from politics. It's just leads to lying and stealing and gossiping and divisions and confusion! I don't know politics! I don't understand them! I also don't want to! My life is good as it is – just the way it is and I don't want to have to start wasting my time here and there and doing this and that and not having the time to hang with my gang – the most important thing in my life! It's important to be respected, to be appreciated, to have affection, to have love, to have passion, to have *cachaça*, to have fish and to have good music – to laugh and cry, love and be hurt and keep going.
And, if you get into things of the community and politics you don't have time for anything else! You can't do anything else either! You can't have any fun. You can't do this. You can't do that. I'd rather catch fish! I'd like a job but until then I'd rather catch fish. Are we going to go fishing later?

Night Fishing

"Vamos brincar[79]! We have 2 litres [of cachaça] and we're going fishing tonight!"

"*Solta*! (let it go) – Bete hollered to Lucilene.

It was nearly impossible to hear a word above the loud sounds of the armpit high and fast swelling tide around the *meninas* – nor could anyone read lips in the almost moon free darkness.

Bete stood in the rising cool waters – the cigarettes in a plastic bag wrapped around the shoulder strap of the *uru*[80] she was wearing and a *celular*[81] mixed half and half tightly sealed in her shorts pocket.

"Now we wait for the *carapicu*[82] to get caught – so let's open up that *celular* you have and have ourselves a cigarettes.

"Careful not to get them wet, Lucilene. The tide is coming in fast tonight. Let's have a shot first.

Once they'd lit their cigarettes, closed up the *celular* and wrapped up the cigarettes Bete announced they'd waited long enough and yelled to Lucilene who was somewhere close by in the darkness with the rest of the group that it was time to start grabbing the fish. First Bete found the net by locating the small buoy attached to each

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[79] Let's play/hang out.

[80] A tight-weaved shoulder basket with a tight opening needing to be pried open to insert the fish.

[81] Half-liter plastic bottle of cachaça (distilled sugar cane – 39%) mixed with cola – getting its name from its small, conveniently portable size – fitting into a pocket like a cellular phone.

[82] Type of fish.

end. Then, she started the process of walking the length of the net looking for a twinkle, a sparkle, any spot of light or darkness in the net and would put the fish in her *uru*.

> Bete: This is a good *pescaria* [fishing expedition]! This tide is full of fish!
>
> Lucilene: "Bete! Bete! How about some *cachaça* or have you drunk it all?
>
> "Lucilene! What a thing to say! There's plenty left. Here let's have some...
>
> "...That's all you have left? Good thing we have a lot of fish and the tide is getting full of *baratas*[83] because without cachaça there is no *pescaria*!

And Lucilene downed a big swig, passing the bottle on to the rest of the group. The *celular* was emptied in no time at all – calling an end to the fishing expedition and leading Bete to methodically gather her net

> Bete: "It doesn't matter how late it is or how tired I am or how many litres I've drunk – I know how to treat a net!
>
> "Yes, but you don't know how to mend one!
>
> "That's true. Only you in the whole gang knows how to mend nets. I don't know how you do it – I don't have patience!... Come on, now! Let's clean these fish and open up another litre [of *cachaça*]. Come on! I'm getting cold.

Dressed in shorts and tee-shirts and sneakers – so as not to cut their feet on the oysters or slip in the mud or lose their flip flops in the water as they walked due to the resistance of the water – they noisily (squish, squish, squish) made their way soaking wet to Lucilene's beach house to change their clothes, warm up, get the fish in the pan and start a new liter of *cachaça*.

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[83] "Sea cockroaches" – type of crustacean that pokes with its fine, pointy beak.

When they got in they turned on some lights and some music. Bete started to clean the fish while the rest of the group started on the new liter of *cachaça*. The smell of frying *carapicu* soon began to fill the air – as a heated discussion about the merits of fighting over a love interest took hold of the group.

Marta: "It's fine to not care about what people think – up to a certain extent. After all you still want people to respect you don't you? Fighting over a woman... You shouldn't fight over a woman or over anybody. It looks bad. It's *sem vergonha*".

Lucilene: "It's all about self-respect. If you want people to respect you, you have to respect yourself and getting all heated up over some silly thing is not worth it. Afterwards everyone will talk and about all of us - because you lost your temper!

Fátima: "I'm tired of always acting how people want me to!

Lucilene: "But you don't! You're here right now! This place is changing but it's not like you can do what you want when you want.

Marta: "And maybe you shouldn't be able to either... Some rules are important..."

Lucilene: "Some rules are so good to break though", added Lucilene. "I don't know but it's a problem I've always had. Like how a secret love is so much more delicious or something stolen, like a chicken. Forbidden things taste better.

Bete: "I'm like that too. Forbidden things are better. You will risk what you already have sometimes just to have something that you aren't supposed to have. I know that well. It's like this *cachaça* here. Would it taste as good as it does if we were supposed to drink so much of it? No! It's because drinking so much of it is not really allowed that it's so good. Not going to meetings even sometimes is good because we have fun and fish instead of course but also because it's just plain fun to NOT go when so many people want you to... So let the big mouths talk about that ugly fight you were a part of – they talk no matter what happens! They're *parada*. They're jealous of us because we think for ourselves and do all those things that they want to do. I'm not ashamed of the way I live my life and I won't hide. Life can be hard, the *luta* can be long, and the rewards small but we need to keep drinking and fishing and laughing together. If not, the struggle is not worth it.

"Listen, Fátima, maybe if you went to a few "meetings" it would be ok!" (Laugh)

And, with that, Bete as always, diffused the tension and the evening got back on track.

CHAPTER 6 – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Decolonizing Feminism and Writing Lives

This thesis is concerned with writing lives and telling stories about particular people's experiences in space and time or what Abu Lughod calls ethnographies of the particular (1991). As a feminist I am, like Cameron and Dickin, the editors of Great Dames, "interested in examining what has been described as the dailyness of women's lives" (1992: 6) and as a feminist researcher I find the neglect of the "the greatness of ordinary women's lives" (1992: 4) appalling - not only because of what it represents in terms of the value we are willing or not willing to attribute to ordinary women but more specifically because of the loss of knowledge about women's lives and their everyday strategic responses to systems of domination (Lopez 1997).

Furthermore, if it is indeed through the specifics of people's lives, through the subjective experiences of gendered living that patterns of social organizing, domination and resistance are uncovered and future trends discerned, then such research is not only valuable in terms of the ideological work of valuing women but is valuable in terms of its general contributions to social understanding. It fills important historical, cultural, and economic omissions brought into existence because of the persistent neglect of the contributions that women bring to general social life. This knowledge, I argue, is invaluable in the understanding of the historical and contemporary forms of local movements for social change, as well as local and international policy-making and development initiatives.

My purpose in presenting women's stories is to access women's subjective experiences and present women as social actors who within constraints (Lopez 1993) construct their own lives, and "make" culture – understood as continually created and recreated by people through their social interaction. The stories of Icapuí's marginalized women presented here challenge the literature on social movements in Latin America. They show that women who reject gender ideals and refuse to work within the parameters established by a left-wing socialist worker's party are key political actors in the local community because along with class, gender is the most important internal differentiator in Icapuí's power struggles.

According to Cole:

> "Life histories both allow and require us to hear women themselves interpret their experiences and construct their identities"... [and] "remind us that women have their own agendas, that women's consciousness is rooted in their subjective experiences of the material and cultural conditions of their lives, and that women's interpretation and subjective expression of those experiences may not be easily accommodated by – may, indeed, contradict – macro or general theories that seek to explain gender relations and women's roles in society" (Cole 1991: 41).

This thesis seeks to integrate the voices and experiences of ordinary women into a discussion of community politics. The subjective experiences of the women themselves take precedence over the analysis of external and global processes of change and "bring tangled theoretical concepts to life" (Bridgman, Cole and Bobiwash 1999: 2). I wanted the relationship between the social construction of gender and women's involvement, role and contribution to community grassroots activities and local community politics to make itself apparent through the voices and experiences of the women themselves.

Culture, Power, and Hegemony

My research is an attempt to investigate women's experiences of popular or community-based political participation in the context of the local gendered political system. It intends to demystify the idea that women are passive beings in the face of inequality and proposes that marginality is a source of both constraints and creativity (Tsing 1993: 18).

The theoretical discussion of my findings in Icapuí is rooted in feminist theory and methodology and problematizes the relations of culture, gender, class and power. The theoretical concepts that guide this analysis, therefore, include the notions of power, hegemony, agency, resistance, and marginality and how they interact in women's everyday lives and in community building in Icapuí.

I take my definition of power from Wolf. In *Envisioning Power* (1999), Wolf theorizes culture as fluid and dynamic, constructed through historical processes, and above all, relational – embodying sets of relations, including internal differentiation. He proposes that all cultural systems incorporate diversity and that any appearance of coherence in culture stems from hegemonies.

The concept of hegemony, in turn, enables understanding how class domination rests less on coercion than on being spread into social and cultural arrangements in daily life. It can be defined as the process by which the ideas and ideology of those in power assume legitimacy and are reinforced (Wolf 1999). It is the ideological struggle that

involves an effort to control the cultural terms in which the world is ordered and, within it, power legitimized (Comaroff 1991). It establishes moral, political and intellectual leadership in social life by diffusing a worldview and equating it with the interests of society. It can be defined as a dominant system of lived meanings, signs, values, relations and distinctions, images, epistemologies and practices, which shape experienced reality and are rarely contested directly. According to Comaroff:

> "This is why power has so often been seen to lie in what it silences, what it prevents people from thinking and saying, what it puts beyond the limit of the rational and the credible" (1991: 23-24)

Hegemony is thus power under a continual process of contestation, a hybrid of coercion and consensus where dominant classes merge their interests with broad cultural ideas and aims (Ang 1995; Wolf 1999; Scheper-Hughes 1992). According to Ang, hegemony is "exerted not through brute force but through soft persuasions, seductions and incorporations" (1999: 140). In this view, exerting too much force reflects the fragility and in essence weakness of the dominant group - its inability to create consensus and legitimize its force. The challenge in hegemony and the roots to its legitimacy thus lies in making force look as though it were coming from the consent of the people. This legitimacy in Icapuí, is attained through popular education[84] and the dissemination of the image of popular participation – which makes the PT not only hard to critique but inhibits people from perceiving the PT as part of what is dominating them.

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[84] If the struggle for hegemony is the struggle for the consciousness of the proletariat and requires demystifying dominant beliefs, elaborating new ideas and values and otherwise developing a counter-hegemony with political action, then to bring about a new hegemonic order or reverse one through revolution, one needs to reverse the hegemonic position of those that dominate and change popular beliefs. Throughout history, most revolutionary movements and classes as they prepare to take power have been proceeded by critiques, by the diffusion of a new culture, new ideas at the level of the popular masses.

However, although hegemony establishes power one must keep in mind that "nothing is ever anchored to fixed and stable meanings and all relations are uncertain and contestable, realized through the balance of competing forces" (Comaroff 1991: 207). Those on the margins who are not favored by the power structure or the hegemonic order often create counter-hegemonies that have important consequences.

Power, Resistance, and Power of the Weak

Individuals and practices are neither completely free nor completely socially determined. They can reproduce or transform the very structures that shape them. And, because individuals create society as they are created by it and have agency as they live with the constraints of the system of domination (Lopez 1992), the concepts of power and hegemony only begin to form a useful theoretical framework for the understanding of women's involvement in and non-involvement in grassroots community politics in Icapuí when used with the concepts of agency and resistance.

Basing herself on Foucault's concept of power (as everywhere, in everything but existing in a plurality of forms and, more importantly, resisted in a plurality of ways as well) and his famous axiom "where there is power there is resistance" (Foucault 1978: 95-96), Abu Lughod developed her own theory of power and resistance and the axiom "where there is resistance, there is power" (1990: 314). In her approach she qualifies resistance as strategic responses to particular experiences of power and insightfully proposes we use resistance as a tool to diagnose and bring to light power relations and structures.

In such an approach, everyday practices and beliefs come to represent the moral and political values of society, represent the foundations of all social structures and the place where not only forms of power and domination and its mechanisms of oppression emerge and exert their influences but also the place where consciousness raising, subversion, critiques of power structures and the roots of social change are manifested (Abu Lughod 1990; Boal 1990). As such the best place to study shifting sites of interest and power would be daily life, the microlevel of life - where women may be dominated but not powerless, where they produce alternative meanings and resist dominant ones, where they create empowering alternatives to hegemonic patriarchal orders, where in daily social relations and in unlikely ways, they forge themselves a social space.

Public/Private, House/Street and Women's Community Work

Traditionally, labor, politics and mothering have been analyzed separately, leading to the division between the domestic and the public spheres and women's association with the domestic sphere. In fact, they constitute linked spheres in women's social lives and can only be understood properly when analyzed in relation to one another. This has led to a posited universal confinement of women to the domestic sphere (Ortner 1974; Moore 1988; Rosaldo 1974). In this binary opposition women's main sphere of activity is within familial relations and men's is in the political and the public domain of social life (Moore 1988).

In Icapuí, this false opposition between public and private has led to the construction of two stereotypes of women community organizers. On the one hand there

is the caring, devoted, emotional, soft, passive, feminine, motherly, volunteer, offering services based on the traditional values of home and family. On the other hand, there is the uncaring, selfish, aggressive, manly, unfeminine, possibly homosexual, anti-family, radical activist in the public sphere. The caring, motherly women are diminished by local men for being ineffective, for bringing about only short-term, small-scale changes through collaboration with the government. They are, however, also symbolically rewarded for this because caring for those less fortunate is seen as appropriately feminine and motherly. This gains them public sympathy. Those women who seek to bring about policy changes, fight social inequalities and broad issues and act in the public sphere as paid workers in confrontation with the government are diminished and ridiculed for having male qualities and seeking to act in the public sphere. Their quest to change public policies is seen as unfeminine, self-interested action. As a result, their femininity is denied. As we have seen, in Icapuí they are accused of being anti-community and are labeled *doente* and *doida*.

These stereotypes have weakened the recognition of and the potential effects of women's community work. They pit women against one another and encourage gossip and community policing. Out of fear of being associated with the "other" type of woman, women begin even to police themselves, dividing women even further and rendering them even less effective at bringing about positive social change. According to Sachs, these kinds of binary divisions are like

> "steamrollers of the mind; they level a multiform world, completely flattening anything which does not fit".
>
> (Sachs 1992: 9)

To resist this binary, reductionist thinking, according to Callahan (1997), is to resist patriarchal epistemologies and begin to create another understanding of the world. This is why those who resist are marginalized as deviant.

Such stereotyping makes women's community work invisible and simply an extension of their work as mothers. In Icapuí, women's roles within the family spill out into the community – even if mostly only as support and not frequently as leaders. They are the core of the local participatory democracy and the backbone for all the prizes and successful requests for international development aid.

In da Matta's (1991) analysis of *casa/rua* (House/Street), "House" is characterized by personalistic and hierarchical relations and is "female" while "Street" is characterized by more individualistic and egalitarian relations and is "male". Because according to da Matta's analysis elements and ways of functioning from one are always being merged and negotiated into the other *casa/rua* is a pertinent model for understanding women's roles and experiences in Icapuí.

In Icapuí, when women are in the street, the street becomes an extension of the house with personalistic, hierarchical and gender constraints. This is an example of the house impacting on the street. However, in other cases the street impacts on the house such as for example when women use street ideas (such as popular participation) and justify getting goods and services through clientelism.

Women are in a certain sense publicly powerful and able to make democratically informed requests and have them realized by clientelist means when they are associated to the private sphere. They are however, also burdened with work in the domestic sphere and by the low-paid or free community work they provide their communities. Those women who identify with the public sphere of men – such as women politicians (who are rarely supported by political parties or even other women[85]) and the marginalized - generally lose that power in their rejection of the burdens that come along with it, especially the burden of being a community "mother".

Transferring health and social services to communities in the name of community control, empowerment and popular participation places high demands on women. It is part of an approach to development and democracy building that is imbued with gender assumptions, that sees women's community work as natural and un-political. This has the effect of strengthening the informal institutions and day-to-day life work that reproduces the clientelism of the local social structure.

Because locally, women's community work is seen as natural and un-political, the uncritical way the development and democracy-building policy-makers of Icapuí have absorbed women into its structure has ended up replicating and even strengthening the local gender divisions. In fact, in justifying gender divisions through a democratic political rhetoric emphasizing the importance of "good, participating, community

[85] All the women running for town councilor won few votes – except for one who was the most voted of all town councilor candidates. She also, it appears, had the most financial support to buy votes.

mothers", they have made these gender divisions nearly impossible to critique without appearing somehow anti-community or anti-democracy and popular participation.

Although the model of the "mother" fighting for her community seems progressive and appears to challenge false separations between productive and reproductive work, between politics and families, by recognizing women's important contributions outside the home, it is full of contradictions and conflicts. Recognizing that women's motherwork is not limited only to the private sphere of the family, does not necessarily liberate women from the confines of a sexist gender system. This is the case especially if being a good mother implies that community work is a necessary part of mothering and requires that women adopt a specific definition of community politics and specific behaviors -- that lead to increases in their labor and effort while they continue to lack decision-making powers.

Those who resist this existing division of labor are seen as ignoring their duties and are seen as preoccupied with anti-community, anti-political concerns. As a result, many women choose not to fight it head on but rather, to use the system to gain what the system prevents them from having: their own needs met. They may draw on their traditional good woman identity to justify actions that disrupt the system but they do so "for the children" because it is after all, their identities as mothers and community caretakers that shape their motivations for community work. And, because they cannot claim a right to participate in community work for their own sake without being labeled selfish and sick, their militancy is masked enough to perpetuate it. It is quite clear that

most women still feel they need the protection of the discriminatory gender system in order to break its rules.

Unlike the participating women of Icapuí who through their negotiations of popular participation and clientelism reinforce the dichotomy between public and private, house and street, the marginal women reject these dichotomies completely. They challenge traditional notions of gender and mothering in their refusal to participate and although they don't describe themselves as feminist their efforts coincide with those found elsewhere in explicitly feminist struggles (Feree and Martin 1995; King 1988)

Simple acts of defiance can pose very real threats to the status quo. Those women who pose the biggest threat to the gendered construction of community building espoused by the local PT are those who enter the public world of men – the street, the beach, the sea – and seek to live in it according to the individualistic and egalitarian principles of the local PT rhetoric. Creating an alternative female community in the street (on the margins) free from the constraints of gender poses an exact and unnamed threat to the social order – by exposing it. Because of this threat, we can speak (1) of marginality as resistance and (2) of identifying as marginal as a political act.

Identity

In line with the view that identity politics have the potential to recreate the political by expanding and diversifying what counts as political, the politicization of the stereotyped good mother identity is one of the major ways women in Icapuí negotiate the

local power structure. Their subversion comes not from conspiring against the system but in the art of working at finding the inevitable cracks and contradictions in the hegemonic discourses and institutional practices and using them to their own advantage.

However, despite the empowering potential of politicizing the "good mother" identity, identity-based politics can also pose threats to counter-hegemonic struggles. According to Edelman (2002), identity-based politics can become little more than the basis for lucrative exploitation. Claims of difference that **could** fortify demands for new rights can also imply **abdication** of rights and lead to further domination. The process of promoting a place in society for women that is not based on inherent rights but is based on their innate capacity to make things better[86] in fact, limits women's rights and increases their responsibilities (Di Leonardo 1998).

Although the marginal women of Icapuí base their critique of the system of domination on their identity as non-*parada*, free thinking "real 'good'" women, able to fulfill both family needs and their own needs as individual women, their definition of good women doesn't limit any of their rights or impose any new responsibilities. The "participating" women's politicized identity of "good" mother to the community, however, is both the source of their power and the source of their domination.

[86] Based on notions of women's supposed superior female morality and nurturing capabilities (Di Leonardo 1998).

Woman-Centered Life

Daily life in Icapuí is in many respects woman-centered. Women form the majority of the public servants. They participate in all the community activities (making up 80% of the participants) and some of the formal ones (running as *vereadora* or heading secretariats – of Education, Health, or Community Action). They run the households and even if only behind closed doors, they manage the accounts of most businesses. It is they who do the canvassing, who go to the neighborhood meetings, the education and public health meetings and the participatory budget meetings. It is they who push for social services and infrastructure and put pressure on politicians when some urgent work is in need of doing. This fact is corroborated by the frequent use of the labels *de luta*, *guerrera*, *trabalhadora*, used to refer to women.

It deserves mentioning that although these labels may seem empowering and may seem to reflect women's valuable contributions to their families and communities, their use is far more complex and contradictory. At times they express women's agency – because women do work hard and do struggle hard for their communities. At other times they express their subordinate position in Icapuí society – because women are frequently coerced into (1) working for the community or resigning themselves to the negative labeling and gossip that ensues, and (2) strengthening the illusion that Icapuí is a functioning participatory democracy worthy of international and national prizes and aid.

In their roles as "good" women, women's labor for the community is appropriated by the administration. While men fill most of the paid public decision-making positions,

from mayor to town councilor, head of municipal secretariat and decision-making OP delegate, women perform the time-intensive volunteer work of "mothering" the community and have little time or incentive to promote their own needs. Women's altruistic community work has brought in financial resources for the town through international aid awarded on the basis of the town's success as a popular democracy – success resting squarely on women's participation in "grassroots" community building forums, such as the OP and ADMs. But, not only do women not receive any payment for their efforts it is felt that they shouldn't -- because as "good" women", good mothers they work for the greater good of the community. Their energies are thus channeled into fulfilling others' needs. If they make demands outside this system or seek to address strategic gender interests directly, they face the labels lazy, individualistic, dividing the class movement, ungrateful, *doente*, *doida*, and *sem vergonha.*

Once I reconsidered my view of the marginalized, non-participating women of the town, I began to recognize them as active, political agents deconstructing in their daily lives the gendered political system and its accepted roles for women. My focus on "participating" women also began to shift away from viewing them exclusively as victims of a system that "exploits" their labor and encourages clientelism. I came to understand how they were coerced into "participating" in order to preserve their reputation as "good". But these women too manipulated the system to their own ends at times, especially through their strategic use of clientelism.

Only, once I began to understand the central role of "participation" and clientelism for the "participating" women did I come to understand the political role the marginalized women of Icapuí played and see how their rejection of a social movement discourse informed by ideas of democracy and popular participation could be an expression of agency. Once it became clear to me how politically subversive the marginalized women of Icapuí were, in their rejection of the "good community mother" role, I began to recognize the political force and scope of this identity, how it is expressed and repressed, by whom and why. It reveals, I argue, the pressures to participate in community politics and women's fears of being labeled anti-community, individualistic, or deviant (*doente*, *doida* or *sem vergonha*), and the local importance of clientelism for "good, participating community mothers" in Icapuí.

Community Mothers and Clientelism

In Icapuí, the local PT administration is, for all intents and purposes, the local oligarchy, regularly doling out jobs, special medical treatments and public works projects such as road paving, irrigation, school building, in exchange for political allegiance. Most residents are aware that they have little real influence over political decision-making and feel that a promise, even unfulfilled is better than nothing. In fact, it is not even usually in the interest of a local candidate to resolve a neighborhood's problem[87]. Doing so will break the bond of obligation that is based on hope (Neaera Abers 2000), and reduce the influence the candidate may enjoy.

[87] Problema resolvido é voto perdiddo: problem solved is vote lost.

In the case of Icapuí, for instance, the main opposition to the PT, Dr. Orlando, lost because he lived out of town and had not been maintaining his clientelist links, his personalistic links, his role and power position in the town. He was hoping that the fact that in the past he had been instrumental in the emancipation of Icapuí, mixed with some vote-buying, would be enough to muster sufficient political support for a win. However, he had not been regularly distributing favors and access to public resources and in one political campaign could not build up the necessary network of people with obligations towards him. Although he may have been a rich and powerful individual, as a person his status and position were not sufficient for him to win.

In Icapuí, after close to 15 years of PT administration and numerous popular participation organizations and forums with a highly developed rhetoric of democracy, transparency and participation, popular mobilization is co-opted and polite requests for favors parade as popular democratic "demands" for rights - and are realized usually through the requesting of a favor or with the help of a powerful friend.

Despite PT claims that they are an anti-clientelistic party, clientelism plays a very important role in the context of local politics in Icapuí. However, clientelism in Icapuí is not always illustrative of dominant groups exploiting less powerful groups. In fact, I argue that the uses people make of clientelism are broad and, in Icapuí's case, empowering to "participating" women.

In Icapuí, the popular participation rhetoric of the PT prevents residents from challenging the administration when they think their demands are not being met properly. Even employees of the administration and members of the Ação Comunitaria do not complain openly when they are not receiving their salaries because public money is financing the PT campaign and being spent on tee-shirts, hats, photocopies, political jingles, "*festas*" with food, booze and big imported bands. The situation is even worse for ordinary women, however. Their participation in administration-sanctioned community activities and groups is seen locally as their voice. Any organizing outside these official contexts for political participation is highly critiqued through gossip. It is seen as their own failure to fulfill the "good women" role. It is seen as an attack on community and the very party that protects them (the poor) - the PT.

Although based in the understanding of women as inherently good community caretakers, the PT in Icapuí organizes women's popular political participation primarily around issues of class and seeks to limit women from developing a collective identity based on gender. The PT in Icapuí **bases** women's popular political participation in their role as mothers but **organizes** women's popular political participation and develops their consciousness exclusively around issues of class. As such, women develop their identities as "*petistas*" and "the poor" – united in a class battle - but not as women seeking to fulfill specific gender needs such as access to daycare or employment. Although the good woman identity could be used as a vehicle through which women explore their identities as women and develop a gendered consciousness of local community politics, this does not occur. If women united as women they might no longer provide all the necessary

community work. They might no longer illustrate the success of the local administration in forming a participatory democracy. And, they might begin to place legitimate demands on the administration.

Instead, women are constantly reminded that they are "good women" but that above all they are "more than simply **women**" (a distinction frequently used to "divide the poor" the administration says) but are *petistas* and need to unite for the larger class cause – the PT socialist dream. As a result of this, in order to fulfill their specific needs as women, such as a job for a family member or medical care for a sick child, women often by-pass the system of popular participation and frequently, the only other available system of needs satisfaction is clientelism[88]. This is how women come to resort to patron/client ties. This is also how women see a way of fulfilling personal needs and come into power in Icapuí. As a result it is often the very persistence, the determination of the women, that maintains and strengthens local clientelism in Icapuí.

In the contradictory reality of a socialist rhetoric rooted in clientelism, clientelism may be expected to reward dependence, passivity, silence and self-interest. However, in Icapuí, it provides women with the means with which to fulfill their needs – in which case they are neither passive, silent nor dependent. In fact, it is precisely the local PT discourse on popular participation, democracy and the importance of addressing the needs of the poor that has made "participating" women more acutely aware of their rights and needs and this has helped them to develop their sense of entitlement with regards to

[88] As patron/client relations are institutionalizes in Brazilian society (da Matta 1991).

having these rights and needs respected. It is therefore this discourse, which, despite criticizing clientelism, is used by "participating" women to justify their involvement in clientelist relations of exchange. Furthermore, in addition to informing their use of clientelism from the local democratic discourse of the town, "participating" women also inform their use of clientelism from their gender needs and their altruistic political participation as "good community mothers". As such, "participating" women's clientelist activities are publicly colored with the democratic discourse of the town and the struggles of "good community mothers", making their involvement in clientelism extremely difficult for the administration to criticize. Because women's sense of entitlement and right to certain material goods and services – which they seek to have fulfilled through clientelist means - is informed by the democratic discourse of the town, clientelism is made a useful and unregulated tool for women against domination.

With such a framework in place, "participating" women begin to appear as political beings in their struggles as housewives and mothers living in the borderlands between popular participation and clientelism. They begin to appear, like the marginalized women, as resisting a system of domination that seeks to constrain them with the "good woman" identity, working for the community but rather than reject the label, their self-interest in perpetuating their status within the system prompts them to **use** and **co-opt** the label to their own advantage. They use their position as "good" "women fighting for the community to justify and legitimize actions and beliefs that do not conform to political norms (which are also gender norms in Icapuí).

The Contradictions of Resistance

Claiming that life is messy and does not fit into neat categories Ang argues that people who resist dominant systems often **support** the traditional system of dominance **while** they subvert and resist it. She argues that they protect (in part) what dominates them because it is often the institutional base for their often-successful resistance and subversion of the system. According to Ang,

> "Those excluded from hegemony and institutional power create a meaningful and livable world for themselves using the very stuff offered them by the dominant culture as raw material and appropriate it in ways that suit their own interests" (Ang 1995: 139).

Ang's astute findings regarding the tendency of resistance to support the system of domination is echoed in Icapuí. There, "participating" women embrace popular participation and the PT discourse of popular democracy **along with** the local corruption, clientelism, appropriation of women's labor and prohibitions, and restrictions on women's behavior. They do so because these elements and this system not only secure them a privileged spot as "good women" and "good mothers[89]" but it also secures them the tools with which to resist and subvert elements of the system that they refuse to accept.

I argue that in Icapuí women frequently cooperate with or reject the system of domination according to when it suits them best to do so. Furthermore, I argue that their intentions are not necessarily obvious. For example, embracing the "good" woman identity and allowing female labor to be appropriated and used to secure further international aid that does little to fulfill women's strategic needs could be evidence of

cooperation, if not co-optation. However, it can also be evidence of agency and resistance when women proclaim that it is **because** they are "good women" (and good mothers to their children and families and the community at large) that they can and should do or say something that places them at odds with the system of domination. Partaking in clientelist relations of exchange to secure needs or occasionally speaking out in a meeting (or behaving in a way that does not coincide broadly with the "good, participating", altruistic community mother ideal) is legitimate if it can be justified in terms of their role as "good, participating" mothers, fighting by any means for their children and community.

This ambiguity between cooperating and resisting domination is corroborated by Kearney's work (1996) on the contradictions of resistance. He argues that in order to better understand the complex and multidimensional identities of class members and agents of resistance, researchers should explore the contradictions, the ways in which resistance becomes integral to the reproduction of class difference, the way resistance reinforces already essentialized categories.

This view of resistance allows us to understand how "participating" women will protect the very "good" woman identity that they resist when they express behavior contrary to the system of domination – such as when they **insist** on clientelism for the accomplishment of certain public tasks or private needs and justify it in relation to their community obligations as mothers, or such as when they refuse to be quiet, cooperative, passive "participants" and actually make demands at the participatory forums. In the case

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[89] Illustrates that those who are advantaged seek to maintain, legitimize and justify the system.

of the marginalized women, the "good woman" identity that seeks to stifle them, curb their freedom, independence and leisure time and label them *doente*, *sem vegonha*, and *doida* is frequently the very identity they use to subvert the system and defend their actions and beliefs[90]. It is **because** they are good women (hard-working, hard-playing, independent, free-thinking individuals endowed with self-respect **and** ability to be good mothers to their children) - and not "*parada*" women like the rest, they argue - fulfilling domestic needs **and** personal needs, that they go out in public and drink, smoke, play cards, and fish at night – like superwomen[91].

Interestingly, even when there is a desire on the part of PT politicians for promoting citizen involvement, decision-making and empowerment, as opposed to vote-buying, threatening and otherwise intimidating citizens into certain political allegiance and behavior, most "participating" women still insist that clientelist relations be maintained. Many of these women insist on being bought and owing votes and favors to powerful patrons in exchange for social, economic and political security because the climate in which they live - claiming to be gender neutral - is not at all interested in securing and improving their rights and quality of life. Clientelism is a security the women do not want to abandon, especially in a place that sees their needs as coming in last after all the other members of society (Scheper-Hughes 1992). How else will

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[90] Illustrates that those who can beefit seek to perpetuate the system.

[91] In contrast to the ways they are described by the larger community (lazy, deviant, self-indulgent, wild), the marginal women speak of themselves as even more busy than "participating: women – as not only do they work hard but they also play hard. Interestingly, in an effort to show how their identity does not revolve around the "good woman" identity but revolves around them living non-"parada" (passive) they frequently joke that they are lazy and iddle.

they fulfill their needs? Furthermore, in exchange for their "participation" in community affairs, the women essentially demand certain goods and services – that they require to secure their participation. In fact, many women may threaten to put their political allegiance elsewhere (i.e. with the opposition) unless their needs – identified as linked to their role as "good community mothers" and "participating" women in the local popular democracy – are fulfilled according to the traditional rules of the game (clientelism).

In Icapuí, women "participating" in the local popular democracy see their patron/client ties as securing their needs and rights where popular participation may be a big waste of time (that only aids the administration in appearing like a participatory democracy). Why wait for even distribution of public resources when the administration squanders, wastes, mismanages, steals and embezzles? The best way to get things done is to turn to a patron and exercise some pressure – legitimized through the "good", struggling, *guerrera* women ideal.

In *Death Without Weeping* (1992), Scheper-Hughes utilizes the notion of tactics to describe those who temporarily escape the domination inherent in patron/client relations and do not challenge the definition of the political economic situation they live in. She argues that they are not resisting domination with consciously organized and prepared strategic actions and a clear-sighted vision of the situation and knowledge of the enemy but are engaging in tactics or defenses or weapons of the weak (Scott 1985). Scheper-Hughes argues that working traditional clientelism to one's advantage and making alliances with the strong and powerful is not resisting. Although recognizing her

efforts not to romanticize acts of subversion that do not lead to broad decision-making power gains, I argue that we need to broaden our definition of resistance to include small acts of subversion and the interlacings of resistance, submission, opposition and complicity (Ang 1995), at the risk of failing to recognize the power (however limited) such subversive acts represent. In the case of Icapuí clientelism is at times resistance because the women inform their clientelism in and hide it behind a democratic discourse in a conscious effort to subvert and, to a certain extent, destabilize the system. As such, I propose that the agency of "participating" women is hidden behind the myth that making use of patron/client ties means being powerless and **not** resisting a system of domination. What better way to guard their resistance?

According to de Melo Branco (2000) "it is important to acknowledge women's attempts to deal with problems posed by the reality of their life circumstances, even if the measures in which they engage may not be sufficient to solve the...problem" (44). It is important to avoid insisting that attempts to win a match without necessarily altering the descriminatory structure of the game (and identities of the players) is not resistance (Kearny 1996). The "participating" women of Icapuí understand how politics work in their town and have their own ways of expressing *conscientização* and exhibiting agency: through rejecting popular participation practice and seeking clientelism in the satisfaction of certain needs. Understanding "refusal to participate" as marginal women's political practice and resistance requires that anthropologists be less preoccupied with "resistance" as a theoretical concept and more attentive to local women's desires and techniques to maximize their quality of life. This requires also paying attention to discourse.

Discourse Analysis

Official discourses are useful for assessing the degree of rupture or continuity of a political party with past political practices and the ideologies they represent. In the case of Icapuí, an analysis of the local PT's political discourse is useful for understanding how discourse is used in the exercise of power, as a strategy for maintaining it, justifying requests for citizen cooperation and limits on the free expression of ideas and critiques, as well as for measuring its contradictions and oppositions.

In political discourse, the speaker holds a privileged position made powerful by the linguistic choices made (Forget 2000). These choices color the relationship the speaker has with the public. Although **what** is said, especially in relations to what is **done** is important (such as unmet promises), **how** things are said can be as important if not more so, for all it can reveal in terms of power relations. Through discourse the local PT in Icapuí defines the exercise of power, how it sees itself and others and how it wants the public to understand the social structure. Speech, therefore, can represent power and authority and for this reason it is frequently guarded under dictatorial regimes.

Under such regimes, political opponents are silenced, excluded from the discursive sphere and only those political agents sharing the government's discourse and not contesting it may hold a discursive position. Such discourses are monologic, ignore all dissenting views, and deny the opposition the powerful status of interlocutor.

Authoritarianism in political discourses rarely comes from the imperative, from orders and threats. It is rarely explicit. Usually the discourses are based in ideas of national security, union of government and people, the government as savior and the polarization of citizens into either (1) good citizens cooperating with the government for the common good or (2) individuals against the people.

The PT has been using its "efforts to build a participatory democracy" to win international development aid, reducing the notion to more of a catchphrase in many ways and a sign of loyalty. Local political speeches are thick with the language of revolutionary populism and loaded with themes of national unity, modernization and development – like dictatorship discourses.

The emphasis in such dictatorial discourses is on the **we**, the Nation, the people, the collective struggle, the shared interests and the duty to protect the Nation and rally behind the regime's interests – which are, incidentally, those of the people. The consequences of such political discourses is the marginalization of those against the regime. These local discourses demonize political opponents as enemies, threats to emancipation, democracy and community. These people or groups are frequently used as the primary justification for the mission and its primary threat – frequently designated by the terms related to the semantic domains of (1) religion (bad, evil, against the common good), (2) war (enemy), or (3) disease (crazy, contagious, a parasite, a cancer), and frequently include the notions of disorder, anarchy, irrationality and chaos (Forget 2000).

Forget's framework for understanding the political discourse of dictatorships is useful for revealing hidden dimensions to political practice in Icapuí – where a solidarity with the poor (informed from development rhetoric) transcends local cultures, identities, obligations and sources of authority. To be about global solidarity with the poor makes the PT in Icapuí, hard to criticize, especially for the poor, the underclass, the underdog – anyone who stands a chance to win something in allying with them, including the "participating" women.

For most of the residents of Icapuí, critiquing an administration that claims to already "prioritize the needs of the poor and be a challenge from below, to the hegemony of a nation favoring the elite" (PT discourse), is unthinkable. It would result in the loss of all the small and not-so-small gains acquired during the delicate juggling act between participatory democracy/grassroots community development and clientelism.

However, the party that claims to be "of the poor", "for the people", is in the case of Icapuí, not for women. In fact, it maintains the gendered system of politics in Icapuí that appropriates female labor and constrains their behavior. Outside of Icapuí, the PT may be marginalized and fighting broad elite interests but inside Icapuí, the PT is the dominant discourse. It presents itself, however, as marginalized and victimized and refuses to see that it could also be exclusionary. Furthermore, not only does it silence the most marginalized by claiming to be the in the position of "marginal" (from a social, economic and political perspective), it also labels them as sick individuals whose "illness" and "deviance" groups them rather than politics.

In choosing to identify as a struggling party dominated by the same political right that keeps the poor in Brazil, the PT in Icapuí identifies itself as marginal and calls upon the poor to unite in the class battle against poverty. This leads the PT to have an ambiguous relationship with those who have not chosen marginalization as a political platform for mobilizing the masses, but have had it thrust upon them – namely the marginalized women. Furthermore, the PT's emphasis on class and the importance of women's work in community building hinders women's likelihood of uniting as women. Knowing that they will not only lose their position as the good struggling mothers of the community but will gain, through gossip, the reputation of being divisive, lazy, deviant, sick and wild prevents many women from engaging in system-changing practices or in overt resistance to the system of domination – a system made strong, ironically, through its self-identification as marginal.

This hegemonic sense of community, constructed by the local PT, rests on issues of class and denies gender inequalities. It devalues women's efforts to mobilize as women, likening women's political unity to a division, a factioning of the poor in the superior movement for class equality. This supposed "participatory democracy" in the end divides and conquers by disseminating hegemonic claims of local equality and unity. As these claims are readily perceived as emerging from the good intentions of the administration it becomes difficult to critique their source. Claiming that the administration is perpetuating a culture that denies women their individuality by overstressing community needs is thus made impossible and runs women the risk of being labeled individualistic, unconcerned with community and family, and deviant.

Every hegemony, however, breeds its counter-hegemony and once a second speaker (the opposition) hits the political scene as an interlocutor, the local political dynamics are forever changed and the dominant position finally shaken.

When the opposition is recognized as a participant in the political discourse and the politically exclusive monologue becomes a dialogue, the regime is put in danger because slowly the discourse of the opposition will begin to force the regime to consider an opposing point of view and eventually change its practice -- or risk losing its authority and legitimacy. A public acknowledgment that the opposition has finally reached the position of interlocutor, can affect the political scene, possesses some political weight and legitimacy, and can no longer be ignored or silenced through censorship represents a huge loss of power for the government.

In Icapuí, although the PT recognizes in the PPS (Dr. Orlando) a political opponent, these two political parties are indistinguishable when compared to the opposition the marginalized women of Icapuí represent. The democratic principle of recognizing other discourses and allowing them to co-exist is considered a fact by the local PT – evidenced by the presence of the political opposition. However, this creates the semblance of a false democratic political environment, because the critique of the marginalized women, the only real critique locally, is still not even considered. Furthermore, although their political discourse consists in denouncing the clientelist participatory democracy of the town, they are not considered as interlocutors. This is because the dominant definition of politics rests on the notion of participation. They are

considered non-participants and as such don't have a political view and are considered able to have one only once they begin to participate in administration-sanctioned community activities – which will position them as allies of the dominant PT discourse and not its opponents.

Because the dominant political discourse privileges participation and the marginalized women of Icapuí DO NOT participate, they in some ways figure in the political discourse in indirect ways as those who do not participate and they figure in the street discourse as *doida*, *sem vergonha*, and *doente* women who do not follow the dominant discourse. For this reason, they remain on the margins of local politics and official community building. Until they are recognized as interlocutors their political impact is limited and the reign of popular participation will continue in Icapuí.

Development Paradigm as "Shared 'Air' " (Cunningham 2000)

Early in my stay, I noticed that the people of Icapuí's administration and the women, in the exercise of their political identities as "good", "participating" women made use of a rhetoric that I had until then seen as purely academic. It was striking to be in this small, rural, Northeast town of 16,000 inhabitants and witness the people's comfort, ease and familiarity with the concept of research and international development, grassroots community building and popular democracy. We shared the same categories of analysis and this same "air" (Cunningham 2000) dominated the social structure. How did this come to be? What were the various ways it was locally appropriated and manipulated, why and by whom?

I quickly realized that the symbolic vocabulary regarding democracy and development was linked to the presence of the development industry in the town. Through the PT's efforts at democratizing health and education with participatory forums, Icapuí won the reputation among international development agencies of being a participatory democracy. It was granted prizes and development money for its efforts and the development industry had become one of its primary industries and undoubtedly the principle foundation of its communal identity. This led to the intriguing scenario whereby the local PT, in its attempts to maintain and strengthen its reputation as a participatory democracy, reinforced local patron/client relations and perpetuated the traditional division of labor based on gender that coerces women into "participating" by playing on their desires to fulfill their needs as "good" women - mothers to family and community.

In a strategic maneuver to secure its reputation as a popular democracy, the local administration reinforces popular participation as the central activity making women "good" or "*doente*". Not to "participate" is to jeopardize one's reputation as a good woman and risk being labeled individualistic, selfish, divisive of the class battle that the PT might win and deviant. This inhibits the formation of solidarity between women and keeps them locked in a popular participation/popular democracy rhetoric and clientelist practice where to fulfill their needs as good women they frequently have to manipulate clientelist relations and compete with other women for individual favors and patronage.

This became more and more clear to me as I investigated what this discourse meant to the different social groups in the town and discovered how concepts that I

thought of as analytical tools – such as "conscientization", "democracy", "popular participation", "popular education", "empowerment" – were, in the context, local symbolic resources. My understanding became more complete as I recognized which groups in Icapuí had adopted the rhetoric. I found that I shared a vocabulary not with those who were working towards the elimination of clientelism but with those who rewarded docile participants (*parado* according to the marginal women), those buying and selling votes.

Those without my vocabulary, in contrast, were those who did NOT participate. They were those who in fact rejected the entire political discourse of the town: the *meninas* (girls), the marginalized women of the town. Furthermore, although they refused to participate in community politics they were acting and living out in their "deviant" daily lives the very ideology at the root of all the local political discourse. They had appropriated the principles of the discourse (empowerment, mutual aid) or discovered them through their lives (in their experiences of marginalization) and applied them in concrete ways to their everyday existence – by valuing their community, self-esteem, and independence. Their lives pointed to the importance of understanding the workings of a hegemonic discourse on popular participation, participatory democracy, "good women", grassroots development and marginal (deviant) women, how this hegemony is formed and maintained in the face of such obvious contradictions, and how it is resisted.

Their lives also pointed to the importance of understanding the local impact of the international development industry because development does not only reflect a structural

reality (a set of cultural, political and economic processes and relationships that occur to people) but also a symbolic process of identity construction. As such, development and democracy building can be seen in terms of the colliding of structure and agency, of political economy and cultural imagination, and as a result, as a process that locates individuals within specific fields of power and resources and incites them to construct identities and realities.

Basing myself on Cunningham's (2000) work on globalization and transnational identities I argue that social actors appropriate distinctive kinds of development imagery and rhetoric to fill needs and interests and that in the process they form new identities. If this is the case and Icapuí's development and democracy rhetoric are locally constructing new social identities (new ways of imagining the community to the outside world) and new elites, then important questions beg asking. How are different social groups redefining themselves as agents of popular democracy and development – with what resources and in what historical conditions and contexts?

Professionalization

Three factors have altered conditions under which struggles for justice unfold in Latin America and they have led to a restructured terrain for waging battles – one that privileges some and marginalizes others. They are: (1) the distinct political environment and history (in Icapuí's case, the ongoing process of democratization and community building stemming from the military dictatorship in Brazil and the locally fought emancipation), (2) the preferences of international donors (gender-sensitive and

democratic policies in an environment focusing on productivity, efficiency, specialized knowledge and budget cuts), and (3) country-specific priorities and preferences.

In the past, for instance, dictatorships or state repression and government indifference to hardships of poverty and neo-liberalist policies made opposition movements the favored recipients of international humanitarian aid. The aid was geared toward supporting the survival struggles of the poor and organizing with them against the system of domination. With the return of civilian rule and democracy, however, governments were required to demonstrate sensitivity to democracy-building and gender for aid and there was a loss of links to the "base", a loss of the popular education and empowerment agenda as the focus went to more policy-oriented objectives (Alvarez 1998).

Today, many governments advocate more democratic and gender-sensitive discourses. More than only at the level of rhetoric, the *prefeitura* of Icapuí, has embraced some version of "democracy" and "gender equity" promotion and adopted an impressive number of policies, programs and plans aimed at building democracy and improving the status of women. This is due to changes in the 1990s in local and global politics and pressure from international donors, development policies and SAPs on Latin American States and municipalities. As a result, however, the founding of such policies appears to have been motivated often by very pragmatic, opportunistic considerations – such as the fact that international aid requires evidence of government sensitivity to democracy and women's role in development. Furthermore, increasing demands for specialized, policy-

relevant, expert-informed policies, programs and services, focusing on democracy and gender have resulted in a reorientation of the activities of activists – towards "professionalism", "impact", and "results" and away from the "base" (Alvarez 1998).

As a result, it is not misleading to assert that in many cases, donor **demand** is driving project **supply** - paralyzing contestatory, process-oriented grassroots activists focusing on popular education, mobilization and empowerment of the "base", and favoring efficient, technically skilled and policy-relevant organizations with professional know-how to rubber-stamp government policies aimed at "results". This has caused many municipal administration, such as the PT in Icapuí, to **turn to "experts"** on democracy and gender or **turn themselves into experts**, in order to secure the right changes or appearance of changes that will result in international aid. The focus becomes the evaluation and execution of government policies, not consciousness-raising, popular education and strategies aimed at transforming power relations in culture and daily life and being critical could result in lost contracts and grants leading to an increasing tendency to self-censorship – beyond even what donors expect (Alverez 1998).

In a context such as this, the professionalized individuals or groups with policy experience become the privileged interlocutors with donors because choice of who to finance is based on who has the appearance of having the best technical and professional capabilities deemed necessary for project execution or planning. In Icapuí, there is much to be said about the loss of a critical and activist edge in the fight for democracy,

development and equality as the overall concern is to please and impress international donors.

This analysis of the participatory democracy rhetoric and how women have been included based on their gender roles as community mothers indicates how the new local, male, left elite were able to promote the town and their progressive development work as worthy of development aid. It also shows how the local PT has been able to protect itself from criticism. By focusing on the party's opposition position at the federal level as a party that promotes the interests of the poor and the marginal, the PT fuels the belief that it is constantly being attacked by the powerful political right and could not possibly be oppressive to anyone. In Icapuí, however, the PT is **not** dominated. In fact, it is the local dominant force, putting into place and reinforcing dominant hegemonies, especially with regards to women's appropriate behavior and community work.

Because there are many different social groups with different needs and agendas in Icapuí different and contradictory senses of global social-political space as well as new and different sets of skills for maneuvering within them have been developed. This has caused people to reconstitute their social identities in relationship to where they derive their value. For the administration and the local elite this has meant reconstituting their identity as the fathers of popular participation and the protectors of democracy. For the "participating" women this has meant reconstituting their identities in relationship to the "good" woman identity, as good community mothers. For the non-participating women who insist on living their lives unconstrained by local gendered politics that exploit their

labor and limit their rights, this has meant reconstituting their identities as a rejection of the "good", "participating" woman ideal that faults them for being individualistic, selfish, divisive and *doente* and that rewards women for being "*parada*". They fault the "participating" women with being *parada* – a critical commentary on their own *conscientização* and actual involvement and personal growth.

Tension, however, imbues these new identities that have emerged in the context of the development industry. At one level, the administration and its elites experience the tension between their rhetoric of popular participation and their clientelist and corrupt practices. At another level, the "participating" women experience the tension between seeking to hold on to the "good" woman label while actually seeking to fulfill some of its goals. This contradiction stems from the fact that stepping **outside** of the boundaries of popular participation, as established by the administration, is made acceptable when stemming from a desire (and biological need) to fill the roles of the good, participating community mother. Third, the non-participating, marginal women experience the tension between rejecting the "good" woman model and actually being good women – seeking to fulfill their needs as well as the needs of their families in a place that demonizes them and renders them and their families subject to gossip. For the marginal women, embracing laziness, even only in joke, as a rejection of the "*trabalhadora*" label, serves to distinguish them from the "participating" women, excuses them from "participating", and gives them a space of their own as it belittles their suffering and hard work. My research findings indicate that most of those who partake in the political rhetoric on community

building and popular participation in Icapuí do not practice it and those who reject the rhetoric are the ones who have inserted it into their daily lives and live by it.

Marginality

As a result of marginal women's rejection of the "good" woman identity and sensing that women living their daily lives differently creates instability in the system and is threatening, local politicians have labeled these women lazy, bad, "*mulheres-homem*" (male-like women), who are violent, sick and threatening the community, democracy, and development. This has led to factionalism between the "good women" and the marginal women and points to the complex system of gender relations and norms of behavior embedded in the local political reality and its relationship to the global development industry.

This animosity between the groups of women where I had been expecting alliance and support, is one of the elements that prompted me to further explore the meaning of the "marginal women" and the roles they play in the town. It also led me to understand women's role better, more precisely, different women or groups of women's roles in local PT goals of securing financial aid.

Marginalization is the process by which, through shifts in position, any given group or set of ideas can be ignored, trivialized, rendered invisible and unheard, perceived as inconsequential, de-authorized, "other" or threatening, while another group or set of ideas is valorized. It depends on dialogue, as people's distinctions are forged in

dialogue and not in isolation or through hegemonies imposed from above. The nonconforming practices through which marginal women voice their challenges to gender conventions can be especially telling of the interconnections among gender and political marginality (Tsing 1993: 209). They reveal how marginal and non-marginal experiences co-exist and depend on one another. As Fergusson writes:

> "When we say marginal, we must always ask, marginal to what? But this question is difficult to answer. The place from which power is exercised is often a hidden place. When we try to pin in down, the center always seems to be somewhere else. Yet we know that this phantom center, elusive as it is, exerts a real, undeniable power over the whole social framework of our culture, and over the ways that we think about it... It defines the tacit standards from which specific others can then be declared to deviate, and while that myth is perpetuated by those whose interests it serves, it can also be internalized by those who are oppressed by it... As historically marginalized groups insist on their own identity, the deeper, structural invisibility of the so-called center becomes harder to sustain. The power of the center depends on a relatively unchallenged authority. If that authority breaks down, then there remains no point relative to which others can be defined as marginal. The perceived threat lies partly in the very process of becoming visible" (1990: 9-10).

My interest in the marginalized women of Icapuí is rooted in a desire to examine the ideologies and institutions that create marginal status and shape marginals' attempts to be heard. My goal is to show the places where the boundaries of the system of domination are stretched and the system is made vulnerable.

According to Tsing, however:

> "Such marginalization is hard to describe because it finds little precedence in anthropological accounts. Generally, studies of the cultural construction of gender focus on coherence of local knowledge rather than on regional dialogue and cross talk. Furthermore in assessing local knowledge, anthropologists emphasize the said rather than the unsaid of dominant community discourses. Yet a central challenge for feminist anthropologists is to position the cultural statements of their informants politically. This involves paying attention to competing gender formulations variously situated in relation to local groups and hierarchies (1993: 119).

As evidence of how an analysis of marginality can lead to an analysis of the contradictions of the system of domination and its vulnerabilities I offer my analysis of gender-differentiated responses to peripheral political status in Icapuí and its obvious centrality to understanding the distinctive debates of Icapuí culture.

The *Doença* of Resistance

Like the impoverished rural migrants of Scheper Hughes's *Death Without Weeping* (1992), the marginal women of Icapuí "are seen as a kind of modern-day plague, an unruly cancerous growth, an infectious epidemic inflicted on the once healthy and sound social body of the community. And plagues require aggressive intervention: social sanitation" (Scheper Hughes 1992: 94). The threat is described in medical terms, as something you catch, as a disease, as something against nature, as the anti-thesis to a good mother.

The marginalized women of Icapuí are declared dangerous and women are afraid of them and of "catching" their ways or at least their reputation. The exemplary women are those who gossip about and otherwise police the marginal women and thus reinforce the dominant gendered system by exaggerating their activities and excesses – recounting how drunk *Fulana* was (when she was really less tipsy than the person telling the story) or how many women's fights there had been at the bar (there had been an exceptional one – usually there are none). The policing powers of gossip demonize the marginal women's activities and lifestyle and inhibit non-marginal women from joining their ranks.

In a framework such as this, the rest of society does not have to police these dangerous women – women dominated by hegemonic ideology and traditional views of women's behavior do the policing and can be criticized for gossiping in the process. As such, even as they do what is expected of them – try to make all women good women, mothers and participating women – they are faulted for women's chatter and gossip – which prevents their successful exercise as "good" women from becoming too powerful.

Some women use this poorly viewed, yet incredibly powerful network, to their advantage and use it to propagate new ideas about women's behavior. Frequently, late at night, when the children are in bed and the men are inside watching TV or out drinking with friends, some women form small intimate chat groups. Occasionally the topic of conversation is sex. Some women make allusions to sexual frustrations and unhappy marriages. Others will express their curiosity vis-à-vis the town's lesbians and wonder what they do and why. Others still will insist that the town's lesbians are the direct result of the poor quality of males around and will suggest that lesbians might simply be good women who have suffered too much. A rare few will venture to suggest that maybe lesbians are good but just different. This private talk is evidence of the growing crossing-over between the two groups of women and evidence of the fact that the "participating" women and the marginal women do not represent two mutually exclusive opposites but live on a continuum that is fluid and contradictory – with, however, most of the players currently falling in one of the two extreme camps - but for how long? This research suggests a growing convergence and sympathy among differently situated women (even if presently silent or invisible in the community, except late at night)

Marginalizing the women who refuse to adopt the ideal woman identity is a form of power to suppress narratives of resistance (an attempt to silence those who resist) – a way of managing their resistance and controlling their critique of the world. It also frees society of any duty to attend to the demands or needs of the marginalized women. Because their lifestyle is a threat to the social order but being sick individualizes a social problem. The language of disease and contagion blinds people to the nature of their situation and prevents them from analyzing it and realizing that they are not living natural lives (good mothers to all) but living a socially constructed life that they have the option of rejecting. However, this very attempt to silence the marginal women's resistance exposes the values the "good" woman identity dramatizes and why it is used.

The marginal women of Icapuí, as they are not included in local views of a balanced, functioning social order, and are in fact viewed as the divisive, lazy, selfish, sick and deviant threat to community (because they reject the good woman, good community mother, good "participating" woman role) have nothing to lose in critiquing the system and everything to gain in changing it. As such, I argue, they are in the best position to critique the status quo and bring about social change – something I am arguing they are slowly going about doing in their daily lives and in their persistent recognition of the importance of fulfilling their own needs and living their own lives – free of the constraints of the "good" woman identity and informed by the democratic notion of a participatory democracy.

In their daily lives, the marginalized women deconstruct not only the "good" woman identity but also the local popular democracy and show how the local construction of community is gendered. They show how community in Icapuí is not built on popular participation but on the backs of women who are coerced or convinced through hegemony into "participating" – in order to achieve and maintain their status/reputation as "good" women.

Marginality as Resistance

Marginality is more than a site of deprivation - "it is the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (hooks 1990: 341). Drinking, fishing, hanging out, is about the courage to question standards of male privilege or gender norms that exploit women's time and labor. Although refraining from claiming marginality to be pure I AM arguing that these "margins have been both sites of repression and sites of resistance" and that marginality is a "central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives". It is a marginality that one does not wish "to lose, to give up, or surrender as part of moving into the center" but is instead a "site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (hooks 1990: 341).

Living marginally is an ambivalent form of resistance to women's exclusion and is a political act challenging the system of domination. The marginal women of Icapuí self-consciously offered a perspective from within the intersections of a number of

dangerous and creative boundary zones: the boundary between public and private, house and street, good and bad, political and apolitical, *parada* and politically aware. Even their most playful moods – drinking and fishing - showed deep engagements with the dilemmas of power. They could be eccentric, playful and seem crazy but were politically and ideologically and ideationally dangerous for the status quo: striking at powerful vulnerabilities in the structure of authority.

Marginal women provide critical comment on the role the other women play. They help make the other women more self-conscious of the lives they live and the choices they choose to make. As a result, the "participating" women come to see their life not as natural but as full of choices and as a reflection of the choices they have thus far made or not allowed themselves to make. The marginal women do not create public leadership roles. However, as subjects of knowledgeable experience, as free thinkers who do for themselves and reject the role they are supposed to play they do serve as role models and examples of other ways of being for the other women in the town. They poke fun at the gendered system of community in Icapuí and show that it is not unavoidable.

Through participating and marginal women's lives we come to see how local community work – which is locally interpreted as an extension of housework - is a representation of official gender ideals. We see, however, that this code is not an accurate representation of the actual lived experience of gender, especially among the marginal women of Icapuí.

The marginal women do not regard one another in terms of their roles in human reproduction or their social roles as wives (because not all were lesbian), mothers (most were) and community builders (*mulheres de luta*). However, all will argue that they are or were good parents. The marginal women value industriousness, thriftiness, physical strength, intelligence, cooperation, mutual support, and self-respect. For example, they do not use the expression *sem vergonha*![92] as a comment on someone's rapacious sexuality and dubious morality but as a comment on someone's lack of respect for herself or fear of what mainstream society may say or think of her because she is not conforming to standard gender norms or behavior. They respect one another's capacities to manage a household or business without a man, as well as the ability to laugh, have fun, party, *namorar* and **do things** for oneself – as opposed to always doing for others. Having fun and not being an ideal type of woman is central to the marginal woman identity. In embracing the identity of lazy, fun-loving and free, these women not only reject the "ideal woman" identity that dominates the town but also serve to weaken its hegemonic power, by presenting an alternative to it, one that highlights its controlling character. Publicizing other ways of being shows that the "ideal woman" model is one of many options for women and not a natural given, inescapably related to their sex.

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[92] "Sem vergonha" means "shameful" and is used with great frequency to refer to insult or attempt to control or devalue the lifestyles and activities of marginal women – although it is also used by mainstream society to judge male or female behavior more generally. The marginal women use the term to refer to shameful behavior such as that exhibited by men who treat their families badly or are unfaithful. They will rarely use the term when discussing female behavior and when they do, other than the rare cases of fighting or **extremely excessive drinking** (which makes them all look bad) in their community, they reserve the term to shame one of their own into assuming her identity as marginal (and probably gay) and being proud of it. Being afraid of something because it is convention (night fishing for instance or public drinking) is *sem vergonha* behavior that devalues the group and it is not tolerated.

Icapuí's marginalized women represent a united group of women pushing the boundaries of the possible for women and in their daily lives, their daily resistance to restrictive ideals of womanhood, chip away at the gender hegemony present in Icapuí. As such, their activities, their lives, their drunken conversations and refusals to participate and instead party hidden in their kitchens or backyards or in full view are not only acts of resistance but acts of grassroots community building that provide women living in a constraining gendered political reality with different options for living their lives. In doing for themselves, the marginal women are doing for all of the women of Icapuí.

In the case of the PT in Icapuí, the heart of popular democracy and class struggle is anchored in femininity, in women's *luta* (struggle) and traditional gender roles, a fact that questions the credibility of the PT in its quest for equality. Although locally women's identities have been in great part anchored in their roles as mothers and family providers, and appealing to this identity would make sense for a party seeking to win votes, one must keep in mind that the PT has always claimed to be a different kind of party, one not so much concerned with politics and being elected but one concerned with empowering the poor, the downtrodden, the marginal and oppressed social classes, one concerned with changing the social structure and privileging those traditionally excluded from politics and conventional social life - including women. A party such as this one should be leery of exploiting and politicizing motherhood and should certainly not be identified as having had a strong role to play in the creation, distribution and perpetuation of an ideal woman identity – a strategy not at all amenable to the emancipatory and empowerment goals of the party in general.

CONCLUSION

This research is a contribution to knowledge on gender and grassroots community building. It is an attempt to historicize, politicize and publicize women's involvement in grassroots community building and by extension women's agency in popular movements for social change. The case study is a rural town where in stark contrast to its clientelist traditions, popular participation is the official rhetoric of the municipal administration. The central questions emanating from this research have been: (1) how is popular participation experienced, negotiated and constructed by the women of Icapuí?; (2) what is the role of gender norms in this situation and from what do they stem?; (3) what are women's responses to this situation?

In Icapuí there are no consciously formed women's groups that publicly state a desire to change the descriminatory gender system. Furthermore, my work overall points to the important role that limiting the local development of a feminist consciousness has had in strengthening clientelism. Are there no women's groups or local feminist consciousness because the women feel a need for neither? This is what the administration implies when it says that women would gain from organizing only if they did it independently of the *prefeitura*. Would more "participation" lead women to develop a stronger sense of self and personal empowerment as the administration argues or would it only further divide women and distance them from a feminist consciousness as I have shown the limiting role of community mother has had on women in the community? Can an environment that vilifies women seeking to fulfill personal needs and that encourages women to struggle only for community needs be seen as anything other than stifling to

the development of a feminist consciousness? Is it not ironic, particularly under a PT administration, that the actions that lead to further divisions amongst women are encouraged while the behaviors of a united and supportive community of women is portrayed as deviant and sick?

The PT, it seemed had gendered politics to such an extent that to be seen as respectable in the community women had to "participate" – if only in very limited ways and sporadically. Membership in the "participating" women's category requires, of women, complicity in the discourse on community needs and women's important roles as providers of the community. However, these same women engage in divisive clientelist relations, compete for favors, sell their votes, live largely in the home, play the altruistic role of vessel of virtue and kindness and appear always giving as they look down on the marginal women and reinforce the gendered system of domination. The marginal women of the town, who rejected the imposition of the "good" woman identity, because they were a threat to the administration, became portrayed as contagiously deviant and sick, a threat to the proper functioning community and to the "participating" women and their good virtue. In reality, while their talk frequently revolved around the importance of the individual and individual rights over the community and community rights (otherwise experienced as obligations and responsibilities), their relations with each other in the community they had created was modeled on the egalitarian principles that fostered a supportive community environment – unlike the "participating" women who gossiped and competed against one another.

This thesis proposes that women's involvement in community politics and, more precisely, their refusal to partake in formal community activities, can result in new sites of interests and power that may serve as the basis for new gender identities that produce indigenous critiques of the local power structure, and may serve as future catalysts to social change. I have explored how gender conventions shape women's understanding of and involvement in community grassroots building and the challenges marginal women pose to this hegemony. My research has linked women's experiences of formal popular political participation (consisting of those activities condoned by the administration) to the local PT administration and indicated how participating within the acceptable parameters of female behavior affects the quality of popular participation. Furthermore, in this research I have investigated how it is women who group together outside of these formally accepted settings who provide new models for women's lives. In so doing, they deconstruct the social structures favoring clientelism and develop a grassroots feminist critical consciousness.

This research has not only been about women. Hopefully I have shown that by paying attention to women's roles and positions in society, we can more clearly understand society as a whole and the constraining nature of Icapuí's participatory democracy, the tenacity of clientelism and how the local PT has come to represent to some extent the new local oligarchy.

This case study on gender politics in Icapuí contributes more generally to our understanding of historical and contemporary forms of social organization and resistance.

I situate women's experiences of producing alternative meanings, resisting dominant ones, partaking in grassroots community building of all kinds, and creating empowering alternatives to hegemonic and patriarchal orders, as part of the larger systems of local and global power relations (Abu Lughod 1991). These larger contexts of structural power (Wolf 1999) regularly ignore women's needs and utilize women's labor. Perhaps the marginal women of Icapuí - having realized the extent to which the system depends on them and having decided to revoke their participation - can serve as a model for other women in Icapuí and elsewhere in the world - suffering from lack of space and voice in social movements with little interest in women's strategic needs.

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APPENDIX – 1 – SURVEY

SECTION 1

1. Name
2. Age or date of birth
3. Occupation/current work: tasks, time they take in a day and salary
4. Do you do *artesanato* – what age started, kind and do what with
5. Do you work in the yard or fields – with animals or plants – age started, do what
6. Do you pick *capim* – age started, do what with it
7. Do you fish and how, with whom, age started
8. Do you mend fishing nets, age started (for family or wages)
9. Place of birth (and where grew up)
10. Actual place of residence
11. Last year completed at school Can read?_____ Can write?_____
12. Number of brothers and sisters
13. First work experience – age and activity – is work divided by sex
14. Age started contributing to parents' household and what, with whom, enjoyed it?
15. Age started working outside of home – doing what
16. Age started earning money – doing what, why, money went where (for family or self)
17. Did you feel acknowledged for contributing
18. Marital status and age married and divorced or separated
19. Lived where while married – same place as today
20. Occupation of spouse – tasks, time they take in day and salary, who decides how salary is spent
21. If farmer – plants what and does what with it (eat or sell), is landowner
22. If fisherman – what, on what kind of boat (owner?), where, with whom, for sale?
23. Last year completed at school for spouse Can read?_____ Can write?_____
24. How many children
25. How many children female and their ages _____ and male_____
26. Who goes to school
27. Do any help with household or parents' work or work outside the home – do what?
28. How many people live in your house today, who are they in relation to you (children, parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, friends...), and what do they do
29. What was the largest number of people living in your home
30. What was your job or responsibility, what did your day look like
31. Who goes to bed the latest
32. What kind of house do you live in – brick, mud and wood, tiled roof, coconut leaf thatching, beaten earth, cement floor, tiles?
33. Do you own it (who – husband, wife)
34. How many rooms?
35. Do you have a bathroom____,with closed or empty septic tank_____
36. Do you have running water
37. Do you have electricity
38. Do you have a radio____, a TV_____, a fridge_____, a phone_____

39. How does your household get by
40. Where does the food come from
41. Where does the money come from – you and spouse, parents, children, pension and mostly from fishing, *artesanato*, animals, agriculture?
42. Do you feel poor: yes, no, a bit, a lot and why
43. What monthly bills does your household have
44. How do they get paid, by whom, with what money
45. Do you like where you live
46. What would you improve if you could
47. Do you like your life
48. What would you improve
49. Where in Brazil is life the best and why
50. Where in the world is life the best and why
51. Are you satisfied with your life here
52. Is there a future for your children here
53. What have you done today since waking
54. Will tomorrow be any different
55. What do you normally do on the week end

SECTION 2

1. What do you think about the role of the government in regards to fighting poverty and drought and unemployment
2. Is anyone in your family unemployed – who, how many
3. Do problems such as poverty, the drought and unemployment affect men and women equally? Who is most affected and why
4. Who has a harder life
5. Has life changed since emancipation – how
6. Has it changed a lot for women - how
7. Who manages the household finances, decisions
8. Does it make a difference for a woman to have access to an income – why
9. Are there equal opportunities for women and men to earn money – explain
10. In/outside of home do men and women have equal access to land, jobs, freedom
11. Should a woman work outside the home
12. Do you have an income
13. Who takes care of it and decides how it will be spent
14. Did your life change after you started to earn money
15. Do men and women lead very different lives, have different jobs, roles, needs – still?
16. If so, how
17. Are there problems that affect only men
18. Are there problems that affect only women
19. What is a typical dream for women
20. What is a typical dream for men
21. What is a typical life for a woman
22. What is a typical life for a man

23. What is a typical day for women
24. What is a typical day for men
25. What are the stereotypes associated with women
26. What are the stereotypes associated with men
27. Do you fit these stereotypes
28. Why do fewer women drink and smoke and "hang out"
29. Are men's and women's roles in society different
30. If so are their needs different too
31. What problem hurts men more
32. What problem hurts women more
33. Are tasks, responsibilities, duties and freedoms equally distributed between men and women – explain
34. What does *mulher de luta, guerrera, trabalhadora* mean
35. How do these words make you feel
36. How do they make men feel
37. How do they make women feel
38. Do you ever feel pressured to do or not to do certain things
39. Does gossip affect you
40. Who does gossip affect
41. What of value do men do
42. What of value do women do
43. What bad things do men do
44. What bad things do women do
45. Do men and women value men's work
46. Do men and women value women's work

SECTION 3

1. What is clientelism
2. What are its impacts
3. Is it good or bad – why
4. Has the local PT contributed to eliminating clientelism – how and why
5. What is popular participation - is it important and why
6. Who is invited to participate – why
7. What gets done
8. Who is supposed to benefit – which people, how and why
9. Who has benefited – why and how
10. Do individuals benefit or is it the community that benefits – explain
11. What are the main obstacles in popular participation – list them
12. Does the local PT force people to participate or make some feel bad for not participating – which people
13. What do people gain with popular participation
14. Do people keep mobilizing once they satisfy their needs – should they - explain
15. How are the ways of being involved in popular participation – what activities, where
16. Do these ways exist here in Icapuí, in your neighborhood

17. What are they
18. Who has decision-making power here – the people or the PT – why - explain
19. Do you participate – why or why not
20. Who participates most and why
21. Who should participate more and why
22. Is it true that more women than men participate - why
23. If you do participate how did you start, in what, why (wanted to or felt obliged), with whom, what did/do you do, how did you feel and how do you feel now
24. Did it have an affect on your life – how
25. If you don't participate, did you used to, in what, why or why not
26. Do/did some of your family members participate - whom
27. Do you know anyone who does or has participated - whom
28. Does participating DO something
29. Has it done anything so far
30. What would you like done for the community
31. For you
32. For women
33. Have you benefited at all yet
34. Is it easy to participate
35. Why do people participate
36. Why do people NOT participate
37. Should people participate more – what incentives do they need
38. Before the PT came to Icapuí and before emancipation, was there popular participation or something that looked like it - what
39. Are politics and community affairs the same thing involving the same people
40. Do people participate more or less in community affairs since emancipation - explain
41. Do people participate more or less in politics since emancipation - explain
42. Did people, men or women or men and women together do community things – whom, what
43. Are politics important
44. Do men and women participate equally – should they
45. Are men and women interested in the same things in politics – explain
46. What is the most important thing to improve on in Icapuí - do men and women agree and will both benefit
47. What are the solutions and who is trying to fight the problem – is it working
48. What is the biggest problem in need of improving for women
49. For men
50. For youth
51. For elderly
52. Who is fighting to solve these problems
53. Has health improved
54. Has education improved
55. Has infrastructure improved (roads, electricity, water)
56. Has the economic situation improved
57. What is the ADM and who controls it
58. Who goes to the meetings and why

59. Is the ADM used to collect votes
60. What is the OP and what does it do
61. Who goes and why
62. Is it true that women participate more than men - why
63. Was emancipation good – why
64. Who emancipated Icapuí
65. If like improved here did it improve because of the PT or the people or both – explain
66. When was life best here - explain
67. When was health best here - explain
68. When was education best here - explain
69. When did people eat best here – explain
70. When was the quality of life best here – explain
71. What is missing today
72. Who is happiest here – men, women, old, young
73. Who is the most miserable here
74. What do you think about lobster fishing
75. Does your family fish lobster
76. Do you think this is good
77. What do you think about agriculture
78. Is it possible to survive doing agriculture
79. What is the best job to have in Icapuí
80. If you could have any job in Icapuí what would it be
81. What is your biggest dream
82. What is your biggest fear
83. Do you have a future here
84. Do your children have a future here
85. Should young people leave
86. Where should they go
87. Has the PT been good to all equally
88. Why are there fewer women in the *câmara*
89. Is this good
90. Why has there not been a *prefeita*
91. Is this good
92. How would it be with a *prefeita*
93. Do women do politics differently
94. Should there be more women leaders – why
95. Do women lead differently than men
96. Do men and women have equal access to political life
97. Has PT been good to all equally – men and women, young and old
98. Is the PT good – how – why
99. Is there corruption here – explain, examples
100. Are women corrupt too
101. Do you know what the IMF and WB are
102. What do you think of them0
103. What does the PT think of them
104. What do you think of the PT

105. Should the people critique the PT
106. Is all government for the rich
107. What is a bad government
108. What is a good government
109. What is the PT in Icapuí like
110. Who is your political party and why

APPENDIX 2 -- POLITICAL JINGLES/SONGS

I SUPPORTING THE PT

1. Dearest Icapuienses this is the way to march forward
   Vote from your heart and elect Dedé
   Brother Edilson is the vice of the people
   Vote from your heart and elect Dedé

   Going forward Icapuí with Dedé once again
   He has done all that we've dreamed so far
   With him we have won happiness
   Keep marching forward with Dedé and don't stop

2. I will support the one who fights for us all
   I will support and try to gain more
   Education, health and popular participation
   Making our lives much better
   This honest man of work and word and honor
   Making things better for us all
   I'll support Dedé and make sure he wins

3. This little town is very small
   But with great victories like a country
   Could it be
   That is the country of my dreams
   The place where we learn
   And are always happy
   Could it be that we are different
   Yes, it is good to be different
   The time has arrived for us to be happy

4. Dedé Texeira where are you at
   I'm here to give you all my support

5. Dial 13, dial 13
   Olé, olé, olé
   Dial 13, dial 13
   To win, to win, to win

6. Dedé Texeira, Dedé Texeira
   Olé, olé, olé
   Dedé Texeira, Dedé Texeira
   To win, to win, to win

7. I want to hear, I want to hear, I want to hear
   Dedé Texeira

8. Dedé, Dedé, Dedé
   It is you the people want

9. And who is it the people want
   It's Dedé, Dedé, Dedé

10. I'm (we're) Dedé Texeira
    With lots of pride, with lots of love

11. Come, give me your hand
    Icapuí is inside of my heart
    Come, give me your hand
    Icapuí is inside of my heart

    Together we are walking
    Together we will make a change
    Vote from your heart
    In this election
    Vote form your heart
    It is strong, our union

12. This is our country
    This is our flag [PT flag]
    And it is with love for our country
    That we will vote for Dedé Texeira
    And it is with love for our country
    That we will vote for Dedé Texeira

    We wanted more happiness
    To enjoy the beauty given from above
    It was hard to have hope without fire [no food]
    But the people kept fighting for their flag [to gain for the poor]

It was hard to have hope without fire
But the people kept fighting for their flag

The countryside is rich and abundantly yellow
The cliffs are a beautiful pink
If the light over us keeps radiating
We will gain all it is that we wish
If the white of peace keeps radiating around us
Our callused hands would not have worked in vain

We wan to embrace the land
Towards the land we feel our deepest passion
Because if you plant a seed with affection
It will soon start feeding the nation
Because if you plant a seed with affection
It will soon start feeding the nation

Today no one more in hungry
Progress has made the people happy
And new agrarian reforms are on their way
Showing the people have a say

II SUPPORTING THE PPS

1. Icapuí is soon going to improve
   Because Dr. Orlando is the most popular candidate
   Dr. Orlando is a serious and hard working man
   Vote for Dr .Orlando and be a winner

   Dr. Orlando was there at the beginning
   Vote 23 and you will make him win
   If he's elected he will do what he says
   And there will be jobs and salaries for all the poor
   There'll be better health, better housing and better education
   And there will be jobs and salaries for all the poor

   We want a new future that works here and that is not imported
   It needs to rely on the local and not our neighbors
   We needs jobs and salaries for all the poor
   With Dr. Orlando let's go to the *prefeitura*

   Oh, Dr. Orlando, it's only with you, that Icapuí will grow

2. Dr. Orlando is
   Dr. Orlando is
   23, 23, 23, 23

3. Dial 23, dial 23
   Olé, olé, olé
   Dial 23, dial 23
   To win, to win, to win

4. Dr. Orlando where are you at
   I'm here to give you all my support

5. Dr. Orlando, Dr. Orlando
   Olé, olé, olé
   Dr. Orlando, Dr. Orlando
   To win, to win, to win

6. I want to hear, I want to hear, I want to hear
   Dr. Orlando

7. Dr. Orlando, Dr. Orlando
   It is you the people want

8. And who is it the people want
   It's Dr. Orlando, Dr. Orlando

9. I'm (we're) Dr. Orlando
   With lots of pride, with lots of love

GLOSSARY

acomodado	-	-	-	complacant/passive/accepting
alpendre	-	-	-	covered front porch typical of NE
...ão	-	-	-	suffix expressing large size or importance
baba	-	-	-	babysitter
baba da mente	-	-	-	babysitter of mind/brainwasher
baião de dois	-	-	-	"dance for two": rice cooked with beans
barata	-	-	-	cockroach
barata do mar	-	-	-	small fish (5-10cm) with pointy beak
batalhadora	-	-	-	struggling/fighting/hard-working (type)
besta	-	-	-	pretentious/an embecile
brilhante	-	-	-	shinny/bright
brincar	-	-	-	play/hang out (for children and adults)
buzios	-	-	-	clams
cabeça	-	-	-	head/to be smart,wise,quick
cabecinha	-	-	-	"little head":pejorative: dumb, naive
cachaça/pinga	-	-	-	distilled sugar cane (39%)
cachoro	-	-	-	dog
cachorinho	-	-	-	"little dogs" - pejorative: stupid, dependent
caldo	-	-	-	broth
calma	-	-	-	calm down
câmara	-	-	-	town council
camião de son	-	-	-	"sound truck" (truck with loudspeakers)
capim	-	-	-	seaweed
carapicu	-	-	-	small (5-10cm long), tasty and popular fish
carros de som	-	-	-	"sound cars" (cars with loudspeakers)
celular	-	-	-	half-litre plastic bottle of cachaça/cell phone
cobertura vacinal	-	-	-	vaccine rate
com vergonha	-	-	-	with shame
conscientização	-	-	-	consciousness, awareness raisingentization
coração	-	-	-	heart
coronel/coroneis	-	-	-	"colonels"/high-ranking people
coronelzinho	-	-	-	"little colonel" : pejorative (power tripper)
criança	-	-	-	child
democracia	-	-	-	democracy
deste jeito	-	-	-	"of this kind" – pejorative
(se) devolvendo	-	-	-	developing
doente	-	-	-	sick
doida	-	-	-	crazy/wild/violent/impassioned/sex-crazed
é/e	-	-	-	verb "to be" conjugated: "is"/ and
educação	-	-	-	education
emancipação	-	-	-	emancipation
enfermeira	-	-	-	nurse
enfermezinhas	-	-	-	"little nurses": giving low quality care
farinha	-	-	-	manioc flour (put over food) – stomach filler

farofa	-	-	-	farinha mixed WITH food
farofinha	-	-	-	"small farofa": to express love for farofa
favelização	-	-	-	increasing decline in quality of life (slums)
feliz	-	-	-	happy
feliz cidade	-	-	-	happy city (way local PT refers to Icapuí)
feio	-	-	-	ugly/inappropriate/unbecoming
fiado	-	-	-	on tab (credit)
fora	-	-	-	outside/foreign
forró	-	-	-	outdoor party/fast dance/accordeon music
Fulano/a	-	-	-	generic name
gestão escolar	-	-	-	school administration
gostoso	-	-	-	good/tasty
guaraná	-	-	-	soda made from Amazonian guaraná fruit
guerrera	-	-	-	warrior/hard-fighting
Igreja	-	-	-	(C)church
industria da seca	-	-	-	industry of drought
...inho	-	-	-	diminutive suffix (positive or negative)
jeito	-	-	-	style/knack/way out of a jam
labirinto	-	-	-	labyrinth lace/embroidery
luta	-	-	-	fight/struggle
(de) luta	-	-	-	fighting/struggling
luz	-	-	-	light
mãe	-	-	-	mother
mais	-	-	-	more
manda	-	-	-	to lead
manda-chuva	-	-	-	controller of rain (big boss)
mas	-	-	-	but
médico	-	-	-	medical doctor
médicozinho	-	-	-	"little doctor": giving low quality care
menina	-	-	-	girl (young, free, without husband/children)
menina	-	-	-	way marginalized women call one another
mente	-	-	-	mind
mesmo	-	-	-	same
mercado	-	-	-	grocery store/market
meu	-	-	-	my (for male nouns)
meu filho	-	-	-	"my son": to son/youth or to show closeness
moradores	-	-	-	inhabitants/residents
mulher	-	-	-	woman
mulher de luta	-	-	-	fighting woman (fighting spirit)
mulher trabalhadora	-	-	-	hard-working woman
município	-	-	-	municipality
município aprovado	-	-	-	approved municipality (by UN)
namorar	-	-	-	to have a romance
nervoso/a	-	-	-	"nervous"/with bad nerves (ailment)
novo	-	-	-	new
trabalhadora	-	-	-	hard-working

tudo	-	-	-	all
pai	-	-	-	father
parado/a	-	-	-	"stopped"/complaisant/passive
participação popular	-	-	-	popular participation (citizen involvement)
paz	-	-	-	peace
pescaria	-	-	-	fishing expedition
pesquizadora	-	-	-	researcher (woman)
petista	-	-	-	supporter of PT (Workers' Party)
povinho	-	-	-	"little people"/dear: affectionate diminutive
praça	-	-	-	square
pra frente	-	-	-	"forward" (keep going): PT campaign theme
prefeito/s	-	-	-	prefect/mayor/woman mayor
prefeitura	-	-	-	town or city hall/municipal government
problema resolvido é voto perdido			-	"problem solved is a vote lost"
poucozinho	-	-	-	a very small bit (diminutive)
real/reais	-	-	-	Brazilian currency – worth $0.7 CN in 2000
rede	-	-	-	net (fishing), web, hammock
ruim	-	-	-	bad/poor quality/rotten
saúde	-	-	-	health
seca	-	-	-	drought
(S)serra	-	-	-	mountains/hills/ name of some communities
sem vergonha	-	-	-	without shame/badly behaved
sertão	-	-	-	remote, dry interior of Notheast Brazil
so vivia robando	-	-	-	stole all the time
tudo bom/bem -	-	-	-	"all good?"/how are you/what's up
uru	-	-	-	woven reed shoulder bag for fish/crabs
vamos	-	-	-	let's go
vamos brincar	-	-	-	let's play
vereador/a	-	-	-	town councilor/woman councilor
vive na rua	-	-	-	live in the public world of Street

ACRONYMS

AC	- Ação Comunitaria : Secretary of Community Action
ADM	- Associação de Moradores : Neighborhood Association
CEBs	- Comunidades Eclesiais de Base : Catholic Base Communities
CONASEMS	- Conselho Nacional dos Secretários Municipais de Saúde : National Council of Municipal Health Secretaries
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
GU	- Gestão Urbana : Urban Administration : United Nations program
IBGE	- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estática : Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
IMF	- International Monetary Fund
IPEA	- Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada : Institute for Applied Economic Research
JICA	- Japanese International Cooperation Agency
NGO	- Non Governmental Organization
ORGAPE	- Organização de Apoio aos Pequenos Empreendimentos : Organization for the Support of Small Borrowers
OP	- Orçamento Participativo : participatory budget
PCdoB	- Partido Comunista do Brasil : Brazilian Communist Party
PMDB	- Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro : Brazilian Democratic Movement Party
PPS	- Partido Popular Socialista :Popular Socialist Party
PSB	- Partido Socialista Brasileiro : Brazilian Socialist Party
PSDB	- Partido da Social Democracia Brasileiro : Brazilian Social Democratic Party
PSF	- Programa de Saúde da Familia : Family Health Program
PT	- Partido dos Trabalhadores : Workers' Party
SAPs	- Structural Adjustment Programs
UN	- United Nations
WB	- World Bank