ENTREPRENEURIAL URBAN GOVERNANCE AND PRACTICES OF POWER: RENEGOTIATING THE HISTORIC CENTER AND ITS PLAZA IN MEXICO CITY

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines socio-spatial exclusion in Mexico City’s Historic Center. Specifically, how new power structures are struggled over and negotiated in people’s everyday lives. This work centers on a recently implemented entrepreneurial policy in Mexico City called the Programa de Rescate (The Rescue Program). The prime objective of the policy is to revitalize and beautify the streets, buildings and central plaza of the city’s Historic Center. Although this policy seeks an improvement in the quality of life for the local population, it excludes particular forms of social interaction that are central to the well-being of a large sector of the population, particularly street vendors and artisans who rely on public spaces for their daily survival. Much of the existing literature that focuses on socio-spatial exclusion in an entrepreneurial context has emphasized new structures of power and problems posed to excluded groups. However, I argue that despite the constraints placed upon different groups of affected citizens, excluded groups develop survival strategies that enable them to maintain a livelihood and in some cases empower them to thrive. Further, I question conventional thinking that views the state as monolithic and necessarily constraining to marginalized groups and
certain (formal and informal) businesses. Rather, I show that state practices are shaped by
different social groups, including those sectors of society who are typically viewed as
excluded and disempowered. Through a historical analysis of the Mexican state, I show
that excluded groups have managed to tap into the state and thus exert influence over the
shape and workings of state policies. By analyzing a particular type of public space in the
Latin American context – the plaza – my research asks if these spaces have been
reconstituted physically or symbolically and if so, how. I critically synthesize Latin
American literatures on the plaza and entrepreneurial urban governance; I connect this
synthesis with the European and US literature on entrepreneurial urban governance and
shed light on processes that this literature has overlooked; and I recast entrepreneurial
urban governance by focusing on the role of agency and the multiple ways in which
power is practiced both among and between different social groups in everyday life,
including state officials, residents, shop owners, and street vendors.

My research methods were qualitative. I triangulated information gathered from
archival work, open ended and semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. I
interviewed members of policy circles, street vendors, artisans, residents, and local shop
owners. Further, I used participant observation in demonstrations, protests, marches,
rallies and public meetings with different groups of affected citizens.
Dedicated to my mother, Yolanda Niell, my father, Jose Crossa and my brothers Nicolas, Aldo, Luciano, and Mateo for their love and unconditional support throughout this entire process.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is the materialization of a long and arduous process which could have never been completed without the help, emotional support, advice, and guidance of many people. I would like to begin by thanking my advisor, Nancy Ettlinger. She played an essential role during my graduate career. Her knowledge, encouragement, patience, time, guidance, and comments are the backbone of this work. I could not have asked for a better advisor. Thank you Nancy for making this process as humane as possible and for encouraging me to excel.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Laura Podalsky and Mei-Po Kwan, for their time, advice, and their overall kindness throughout these years. A special thanks to Kevin Cox, Larry Brown, Eugene McCann, and Paul Robbins for their excellent courses, their advice, and help throughout the different stages of the PhD process. Thanks to Olga Medvedkov who encouraged me to pursue my graduate studies.

I must thank the Department of Geography, The Ohio State University Office of International Affairs, the Alumni Grant for Graduate Research and Scholarship, the Mershon Center and the Tinker Foundation for the generous funding the provided for this research.
My fieldwork was made possible by the help and encouragement of many people. Lina Gryj housed me during fourteen months in Mexico City; the fieldwork would have been very difficult without her love and support. I would like to thank Catherine Paquette for spending numerous hours helping me to better understand the complexities of the Historic Center; and for her willingness to share valuable information. *Te agradezco infinitamente tu ayuda!* I would also like to thank the department of Urban Development at *El Colegio de México*, especially Clara Salazar and Jose Luis Lezama for giving me the opportunity to participate in a unique experience as part of the *Proyecto Corredores*. Much of the information gathered for this manuscript was made possible by the opportunities presented during that research project. Thank you also to Jerome Monnet for reading my proposal and for his valuable intellectual insights.

I would also like to thank the journalist Arturo Paramo for sharing his ‘on-the-ground’ knowledge of street vendors in Mexico City. A special thanks to Victor Cisneros, Rebeca Taifeld, and the many other shop owners who voluntarily spent hours sharing their experiences with me about the *Programa*. And of course to the many street vendors in the Historic Center who welcomed me in their every day life without asking for anything, just understanding.

Of course, to my wonderful friends who constantly reminded me that there is a life beyond the PhD: Lara Mancuso, Lina Gryj, Cynthia Barrera, Cecilia Vilchis, Irene Alvarez, Martha de Alba, Marie Leger, Charo Peludo, Delphine Ancien, Rohit Negi, Rini Sumartojo, Rusmir Niksic, Miguel Hindi, Angel Gutierrez, Fernando Bosco.
Finally, I would like to thank Alistair Fraser who carefully read and re-read multiple versions and drafts of this manuscript; who, for hours discussed ideas with me; who listened to my complaints and frustrations, and who offered irreplaceable help for seven years. Thank you for being a unique intellectual and emotional partner.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING SOCIO-SPATIAL EXCLUSION IN MEXICO CITY’S HISTORIC CENTER

1.1 HOW THE PROBLEM EMERGED

After having spent the first couple of years of my life in a small city in Uruguay, my family moved to Mexico City (see Figure 1.1), where we were confronted with a very different urban environment. For many years we spent part of our weekends enjoying the city’s historical richness materialized in its buildings, churches, streets, parks, and plazas. Our favorite area soon became the Historic Center (see Figure 1.2) and its central plaza (Zócalo), where we enjoyed the comfortable chaos and multiple activities embodied in this part of the city – crowded with pedestrians, street vendors, artisans, street performance, as well as cars, and taxi-bikes. We reveled in the different sounds and smells, the multiple rhythms of the city. Throughout my teenage years, my friends and I continued visiting the Historic Center, walking, gazing, listening, smelling and eating the wide array of products sold by the various street vendors.
Figure 1.1: Mexico City
Figure 1.2: The Historic Center of Mexico City. Data source: IRD
Years later, as a Master’s student, my visits to the Historic Center and its Zócalo continued as I participated in public protests, rally’s, and demonstrations. It began to dawn on me that the Historic Center and its plaza was much more than just a space located in the center of Mexico City; rather, this was an iconographic space embedded in notions of national identity, in popular protest movements, as well as a central location for hundreds of street vendors who relied on this space for their daily survival. When I arrived in Columbus, Ohio as a PhD student in Geography at OSU, I spent many weekends walking to the downtown area searching for a ‘center’ and a ‘Zócalo’, but never seemed to find one. I was amazed at what seem to be such little street life and street interaction beyond the university campus. Why was there so little movement on the streets and sidewalks? Where were all the people?

The Historic Center and its Zócalo have thus always been an integral part of my life. My fascination towards this particular space continued over the years, reaching its pinnacle in 2001 when the city government together with private investors developed the Programa de Rescate (The Rescue Program), an urban policy, which has as its primary objective the revitalization and beautification of Mexico City’s Historic Center. What became especially interesting about this policy was the particular context – spatial and temporal – in which the policy was developed.

It was a time of significant political change in Mexico. After more than seven decades of a single party hegemony by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the country was undergoing a new wave of ‘democratization’; Vicente Fox of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), a right wing party, was elected president in 2000. Mexico City
was encountering similar changes. Andres Manuel Lopéz Obrador of the left-wing party
*Partido Revolucionario Democratico* (Revolutionary Democratic Party) became Mayor
in 2000. He has raised hopes among many of the poorest people in the city that
democratization will deliver material change; his decision to run for President in 2006
has been popular with many in Mexico City.¹

A further issue of context was the development of a new slogan, ‘*La Ciudad de la
Esperanza*’ (City of Hope), by means of which Mexico City’s authorities intended to cast
the city in a new light, and provide ‘hope’ for the urban population (Enríquez, 2002). The
new slogan emphasized the need for citizens to “see the present as the moment in which
together we [as Mexicans] can successfully confront problems and create a new solid
base for the future of our city. A future founded on health, beauty, and security for all”
(PGDDF, 2001).²

While the *Programa* seeks to enhance the quality of life of specific sectors of the
local population, at the same time it threatens certain forms of social interaction that are
central to the well-being of large sectors of the population – street vendors, artisans, and
local residents. By removing street vendors and artisans from public spaces of the
Historic Center, as well as eliminating traditional poor residential areas and replacing
them with high-income housing, the *Programa* is systematically intended to exclude
large sectors of the population not only from particular places, but also from the social
ties and relationships that they have established with each other within a specific place –

¹ Such popularity, however, is tempered by his decision to implement the *Programa.*

² Translation by author.
i.e. the streets and plaza of the Historic Center – and across space. I am particularly interested in understanding the struggles produced and/or reinforced as a result of the changing character of these public spaces (streets and central plaza) in the context of entrepreneurial urban governance.

Whereas authors interested in urban public spaces allude to the exclusionary character of entrepreneurial strategies and the resulting privatization of public spaces (Christopherson, 1994; Flusty, 1994; Fyfe, 1998; Norris and Armstrong, 1999; Davis, 1992), much of this literature remains inattentive to the multiple dynamics at work in the struggle and negotiation of these changes in the context of everyday life. Underlying these analyzes is an understanding of power as located in individuals or groups – for example, city authorities, or private investors – and exercised over excluded groups – street vendors, panhandlers, homeless. By focusing on the multiple forms of power that coexist in a particular context, I will address the ways in which social practices and interactions in public spaces are struggled over in daily life. Furthermore, and given my interest in the plaza, I also explore the ways in which this specific type of urban public space – which has traditionally functioned as the cultural center of the Latin American city, as a site of civic expression, public resistance and a central meeting point for diverse political interest groups (Monnet, 1995) – is being reconstituted physically or symbolically. By focusing on the ways in which various urban actors negotiate and struggle over the changing meaning and significance of the plaza, one of my central
concerns is to explore whether the *plaza*, as a symbol of the center of a community, has been dismantled and if the concept of community center has been reconstituted physically (in another part of the city) or symbolically (through new forms of social interaction).

### 1.2 **EL SOHO CHILANCO (THE MEXICAN SOHO)**\(^3\)

As many scholars have argued, cities have undergone significant changes in relation to the way they are being managed, organized and governed (Cox, 1995; Judd and Ready, 1986; Kirlin and Marshall, 1988). The nature of this change is characterized by a shift from a managerial form of government to an entrepreneurial form of urban governance (Harvey, 1989b). Under the new form of urban governance, entrepreneurial strategies – developed through public-private partnerships – differ from managerial strategies in that urban governments’ main concern no longer lies in the provision of local public services but rather on creating the necessary conditions for attracting mobile capital (Harvey, 1985a). A prominent feature of the entrepreneurial city has been the attention devoted to transforming the image of the city from a center of production and work (Amin, 1994; Chirstopherson, 1994; Ellin, 1996; Harvey, 1989b) to an attractive place for local and global investment (Chang, 1997; 2000; Cochrane and Jonas, 1999; Ghannam, 1997; Hiller, 2000; Nagel, 2000; Neill, 2001; Olds, 1997; Stewart, 1999; Ward, 1998; Ward, 2000). The re-imagining of the city can be achieved through the implementation of a diverse set of strategies, from the creation of consumer attraction centers – such as malls, sport stadiums, convention centers and cultural spaces – to the reconstruction of the urban landscape.

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\(^3\) *Chilango* is slang for Mexico City, which is also used as an adjective to describe people from Mexico City.
built environment (Boyle, 1999; Crilley, 1993a; 1993b; Harvey, 1985b; Hubbard, 1995; Knox, 1997). What stands out is the need for cities to appear as innovative, exciting, creative and safe places to live, visit, invest, play and consume in (Harvey, 1989b). Underlying these strategies is the notion of cities as a product, to be sold, promoted and marketed as a commodity (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Chang, 1997; Philo and Kearns, 1993; Goodwin, 1993).

Although this literature makes important claims about changes in the management of urban space in the context of a changing global economy, most of the underlying research has been specific to the Western context, particularly Britain and the United States. Mexico City’s Programa is thus an excellent case study for scholars interested in understanding the local variations and specificities of entrepreneurial strategies in ‘non-Western’ cities. The Programa can be interpreted as an attempt to make the city a more important hub in the global economy, part of a continuing effort on behalf of the national government to integrate Mexico and its economy into the global economy. As the director of the institution in charge of the implementation of the Programa indicated:

“...The actions of the Programa obey the basic principle of modernization that guarantees sustainability, respects the conservation of the historical patrimony, favors order and promotes a new economic vitality for the city. The expected results of this intervention are: a renewed vision of urban space, a more solid identity – among the Mexican population – of Mexico’s past, present and future, and a new culture of appropriation and socialization of the Historic Center”. (Director of Fideicomiso del Centro Histórico)

The Programa emerged as a discursive and material practice which formed part of a larger set of concerns regarding the image of Mexico City. Launched in August 2001
by a coalition of Federal and city authorities as well as private investors, including Carlos Slim, the Programa’s primary aim is to alter the physical shape and image of Mexico City’s Historic Center, an area of mixed land uses that includes Paseo de la Reforma’s business district, an extensive network of street markets within the many plazas, popular museums, and various residential buildings. The area is a microcosm of Mexico City’s multiple political and economic challenges: tensions exist between the formal and informal economy; street crime threatens the tourism industry; and traffic, pollution, and dilapidated buildings present challenges to the city to maintain and protect the area’s vitality in the context of significant population loss in the last twenty years (Pareyón, 2002). After the 1985 earthquake, for instance, the Historic Center lost more than one-third of its population: more than 100 thousand people left the area (Fideicomiso, 2002). In light of the area’s economic and symbolic importance and the problems facing it, Mexico City’s political and business leaders wish to present this part of the city as an attractive place in which to live and invest. As Mexico City’s Governor stated “[t]oday, investors…consider Mexico City ‘too risky’ both for their personal safety, as well as for the safety of their capital…If the climate of insecurity continues to prevail…, this will have extreme negative effects in relation to foreign investment” (Flores, 2001). This urge to ‘secure’ the city has been given further impetus by UNESCO’s recent ‘reminder’ of the status of Mexico City’s Historic Center as part of the list of UNESCO’s World

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4 According to the magazine Forbes, Carlos Slim is Latin America’s wealthiest businessman and ranked fourth in the world (Forbes, 2005). His most well-known businesses are TELMEX (former state-owned telephone company); a chain of Sanborns restaurants and stores; Mix-up, a music store; and one of the largest movie theaters in the country.
Heritage Sites; this is not only a major boost to the city’s tourist industry – it also requires that the city ensures the safety of international visitors. The Programa, then, became the city’s response to these challenges.

Costing approximately $450m, the Programa has followed three general phases. The first stage involves the development of a commercial corridor (Zócalo -Reforma) to link the Historic Center’s main Plaza (Zócalo ) to Paseo de la Reforma business district. This phase includes the construction of the largest office and residential tower in Latin America, a hotel operated by a multinational company, a larger and more visible police presence on city streets, and construction of coffee shops, restaurants and bars. A second stage will renovate and beautify Alameda, one of Mexico City’s oldest and largest public parks; but, in order to do so, street vendors in the surrounding streets will be removed. Finally, a third stage will ‘revitalize’ and ultimately repopulate the Historic Center, its Zócalo and its surrounding area; this, too, involves the removal of many thousands of street vendors and residents.

5 The UNESCO declared Mexico City’s Historic Center as a World Heritage Site in 1987. In the last ten years, however, over 30 thousand street vendors have taken over most of its streets. This is said to have caused problems with vehicular traffic, urban planning, urban infrastructure, complaints from neighbors and local commercial businesses, and – according to city authorities – generally preventing the city from turning the area into a tourist attraction (Monge, 2003). The status of Mexico City’s Historic Center as a historical and cultural landmark is said to be threatened, if the city does not directly engage in improving the general conditions of the area (Monge, 2003).

6 The recent hiring of former New York Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani as a main consultant for Mexico City’s future anti-crime policy is indicative of the need for Mexico City’s leading groups to re-legitimize the city’s image through the implementation of policies developed in a Western context.
1.3 UNDERSTANDING THE PROGRAMA

My initial interpretation of the development of the Programa was shaped by a structuralist/Marxist theorization of state-society relations, where capitalist state institutions possess power and are therefore the force of social change. I viewed the Programa through a top-down approach and interpreted the process as the typical gentrification scenario of displacement, exclusion, and disempowerment. It was not until I returned to Mexico City during the summer of 2002 to conduct preliminary fieldwork that I realized that there was much more to the development and implementation of the Programa than what I had initially assumed. It was a complex process that could not be reduced to simple binaries such as state vs. society, winners vs. losers, and included vs. excluded. As my preliminary fieldwork showed, the process was being contested at various levels, both among and between different social groups. I realized that local state institutions, residents, local entrepreneurs, street vendors and non-wage workers were struggling over the nature of the changes brought about by the Programa. As I will elaborate on the ensuing chapters, divisions had developed among local entrepreneurs. Those who have managed to tap into state institutions have been more integrated into the Programa’s decision-making process and have expressed great appreciation for the workings of the state. Similarly, many residents who have lived in the Historic Center all their life and who face displacement or any specific change to their daily life refuse to comply with the workings of the Programa. Some, for instance, have rejected to accept
closing their street to make it a pedestrian street and have formed alliances with local entrepreneurs to struggle against the nature of the changes brought about by this policy. As one resident expressed:

“..over my dead body, because I ain’t selling nothing. But the government… those bastards have found it easy to obtain money by stealing it from the people, and they think they’re going to buy us all… but no way. Some residents have sold their property. Apparently TELMEX already bought 2 buildings right in front of this place, because apparently they paid really good money. But I ain’t selling nothing to these cabrones (bastards)” (Personal communication with long-term resident of the Historic Center, December, 2003)

Struggles had also emerged among the street vendors themselves over who gets to remain in the changing Historic Center, and who would be allowed to maintain a livelihood in the new context created by this policy.

The implementation of the Programa, together with my personal attachments to this particular area of Mexico City, became the catalyst for my academic interest in socio-spatial exclusion, entrepreneurialism, public space, and struggles in everyday life. Much of the academic literature on entrepreneurialism and urban governance in the US, European, and Latin American contexts reveal new forms of socio-spatial exclusion resulting from contemporary shifts in the management and organization of cities. This literature has emphasized image-making strategies typically constructed by coalitions of business elites and local government officials to attract a wide range of inward investment (Harvey, 1989b). Attention has also been given to the resulting forms of exclusion produced by entrepreneurial strategies, arguing that local forms of social-
spatial organization are being dismantled through practices ranging from the privatization of urban public space to the emergence of gated communities (Christopherson, 1994; Flusty, 1994; Fyfe, 1998; Norris and Armstrong, 1999; Zukin, 1995).

Although most of the literature I came across concerning entrepreneurial urban governance was developed from observations of British and U.S cities, Latin American scholars also revealed similar shifts (Aguilera, 2002; Bragos, et. al., 2002; Caldeira, 1999; Carballo, 2002; Kuri, 1998; Safa, 1998). Numerous cases have shown how urban governments and city elites, across Latin America – such as Lima (Borsdorf, 2002; Ludeña, 1997), Sao Paulo (Caldeira, 2000) and Buenos Aires (Schapira, 2001, Svampa, 2001) – are implementing urban redevelopment strategies aimed at transforming the image of the city to attract a range of foreign investment, from manufacturing to tourism. In this context, and as a result of the imposition of neo-liberal policies, Latin American cities are said to be experiencing a new form of both social and spatial fragmentation characterized by the dismantling of local forms of social organizations as well as by the economic and political exclusion of large sectors of the urban population (Svampa, 2001).

Recognizing that processes of socio-spatial segregation – dating back to the colonial period – have historically characterized Latin American cities, it is the scale and scope of this segregation that differs significantly (Barajas and Zamora; 2002). As a result of the crisis of the central State in Latin America (Millan, 2001; Svampa, 2001), local authorities now play an active role in the production of these barrios cerrados, or gated communities (Svampa, 2001), prioritizing private interests over the needs of
society as a whole (Barjas and Zamora, 2002; Noyola, 2002; Svampa, 2001). In the case of Buenos Aires, for example, Svampa (2001) argued that the neo-liberal model implemented in Argentina in the early 1990s – characterized by a decrease of state fiscal power, and a clear prioritization of services to pay off the external debt – generated an overall disintegration of the middle class, leading to a clear demarcation of ‘winners and losers’. The spatial processes produced by these new forms of social fragmentation are highly exclusionary in enclosed spaces, where only certain groups – the ‘winners’ – are allowed access (Svampa, 2001). Latin American cities are thus said to be facing similar processes as those identified in cities like Los Angeles (Davis, 1990; Flusty, 1994), New York (Boyer, 1993), and Glasgow (MacLeod, 2001), characterized by a revanchist form of urban governance (Smith, 1996a).

Despite the important insights offered by this literature regarding the various ways in which cities engage in global competition for investment through the transformations of urban space, there were nonetheless questions regarding the Programa that remained unanswered. For example, how could one explain that a few months after the implementation of the Programa, street vendors were returning to the spaces from which they were originally displaced? How could one explain that particular local entrepreneurs were resisting the changes brought about by this particular entrepreneurial policy? Furthermore, how could one understand the emerging struggles within different state institutions over how to best implement this policy?

One of my central interests regarding the Programa is the role of agency amid changing structures of constraint and how new power structures are being negotiated
among and within groups of affected citizens – a process that is difficult to explore through a structuralist perspective on power relations and urban governance. Underlying conventional analyses of urban governance is an understanding of power as located in individuals or groups – for example, city authorities or private investors – and exercised over excluded groups – street vendors, panhandlers, homeless, residents, and so forth. In this case, state institutions and private investors possess the necessary power to determine how Mexico City’s Historic Center is going to function and how it will look, who is allowed to be part of this new function and image, and who is systematically excluded from these processes. My interest however, lies in exploring the processes through which the changes brought about by the Programa are being negotiated and contested within and among different interest groups for whom the Historic Center assumes a major significance. My concern is with understanding these struggles as practices of power (Foucault, 1984). This implies recognizing that power is practiced in multiple and interrelated ways. I do not discard the idea that power can be exercised over particular groups and individuals. Indeed, it is problematic to ignore how, for example, economic processes are performed unequally, and how that unevenness may generate a number of diverse constraints and opportunities in peoples’ daily lives. My objective is thus to explore the multiplicity of ways in which power is practiced and how space and place are an integral part of these processes. I am interested in understanding the role that the Historic Center and its central plaza – as a material/physical and symbolic space – plays
in these struggles. Hence, while I draw on literature related to entrepreneurial urban governance, my objective is to extend it by drawing from post-structural approaches regarding practices of power in everyday life.

More recent post-structural literature on urban space and governance have addressed this limitation by unraveling the ways in which exclude groups resist and struggle over different forms of socio-spatial exclusion (Bayat, 2000; McCann, 1999; Deutsche, 1996). This literature has been enlightening in that it has acknowledged that despite the increased commodification and purification of certain spaces within cities, space “is always in the process of being shaped, reshaped, and challenged by the spatial practices of various groups and individuals whose identities and actions undermine the homogeneity of contemporary cities” (McCann, 1999: 168). Although there is a recognition, within this literature, that specific ‘disenfranchized groups’ (Katz, 2001) act as agents of change, much of the poststructural urban literature does not empirically ground analyses of agency and empowerment, leaving a theoretically rich yet empirically weak understanding of precisely how, despite structural constraints individuals struggle, survive and in some cases thrive in the context of exclusionary practices. Hence, I believe that although the recognition of agency is certainly important, it is not enough. Acknowledging, for instance, that urban public spaces are always in the process of becoming and are hence always negotiated, performed, lived and contested (Lefebvre, 1991), alone falls short of understanding precisely how individuals become agents and
the processes through which urban public spaces are constructed and reconstructed in peoples everyday life. The question that still remains unanswered is: what do individual agents do in the aftermath of the implementation of these exclusionary practices?

1.4 REIMAGINING THE HISTORIC CENTER THROUGH A GEOGRAPHIC LENS

It may at first seem obvious why and how a study such as this is geographic: after all, I am studying socio-spatial exclusion in a very concrete place, the Historic Center of Mexico City, which is located within a specific geographic region, Latin America. However, because my general standpoint is that of a critical human geographer, I am not only interested in what we might call ‘locational’ issues. Rather, what distinguishes my particular geographic perspective from more mainstream geography is the stress I lay on spatializing practices of power, attention to which is essential, I argue, if socio-spatial exclusion is to be adequately explained.

Underlying my work is a recognition that diverse relationships between spatial processes and social relations combine to produce place and space. It should be noted here, however, that, although space and place are central concepts within the discipline of geography, not all geographers tackle them through the same geographic lens. I view space as mutually embedded with society. In the case of this study, for example, the social exclusion of street vendors is inherently a spatial process. Many street vendors have been excluded from different spheres of social life – for example, education, ‘formal’ job opportunities, economic safety nets provided by formal institutions – and
have thus constructed spaces of relations and interactions – commercial, family networks, social support – in specific places (for instance, streets and plaza of the Historic Center, areas of high pedestrian movement, and commercial activities). By removing street vendors from particular streets – i.e. the spaces and places that they themselves have actively constructed – the Programa is also excluding individuals from the social ties and networks that they have constructed. In this sense, social exclusion results in spatial exclusion which in turn exacerbates socially exclusionary practices. Spatiality refers to the notion that space is both a product of social relations and a central dimension in the constitution of social processes. As Cresswell (1996) argued, “I do not wish to suggest that we simply ‘add geography and stir’; rather I insist that the social and the spatial are so thoroughly imbued with each other’s presence that their analytical separation quickly becomes a misleading exercise” (Creswell, 1996: 11). Space is understood as constituted and constitutive of multiple and complex sets of social relations that are dynamic and ever-changing.

This type of geographic perspective prompts specific questions related to the construction and reconstruction of urban public spaces – in this case the streets and plaza of Mexico City’s Historic Center – and the multiple social practices and interactions underlying it constitution. Latin American plazas have been conceived as ‘community centers’ characterized by multiple practices and interactions among different sectors of the urban population (Low, 1995; 1997; Monnet, 1995). The plaza, then, acts as a site of particular importance, especially to those who depend upon this space for their economic

7 I make reference in this work to the specifically Spanish-American Plaza.
livelihood: street vendors selling all manner of commodities or artisans selling their own work or finding customers for their services. Further, the plaza presents to many inhabitants of the city a place to purchase goods or services at what are often relatively low prices. In all of these ways, the plaza operates as a place where families, neighbors, and political organizations mingle, interact, and also challenge authority (Bosco, 2001). In the case of the spatiality of the plaza, I argue that the struggles produced by the implementation of the Programa are not only a result of the economic importance of the plaza; rather, they are products of the particular cultural and social significance of this form of public space. In this sense, intense struggles have emerged over these exclusionary processes precisely because the plaza represents and functions as a community center. The question that I therefore ask is whether and how this process of reconstitution is being negotiated among the different actors? These sorts of negotiations involve differential power relations because there are competing interests, needs, concerns and normative visions about how this process of change will occur and it is an analysis of this complex interplay that will clarify how the reconstitution of the community center plays out.

I conceptualize the Programa as a set of practices of power involving multiple agents, each with their own understanding of the Historic Center and with an agenda for how that part of the city should look and function. Although one of the objectives of the Programa is the spatial exclusion of certain social groups from the streets, sidewalks and plaza, this process is neither uniform nor continuous across space. For example, not all street vendors and artisans are being removed from these public spaces. The struggles
between street vendors, for example, stem partly from the relationship that has evolved historically between street vending activities and the state (Cross, 1998). Furthermore, the resistance strategies carried out by many groups who are facing displacement are inherently spatial: some return to the spaces and perform their daily activities, others block the surrounding streets, and others relocate in another close-by areas of the Historic Center. Hence, the exclusion of particular social groups is embedded within a highly complex set of power relations not only between different groups, but also among the groups themselves. I draw upon post-structuralist writings on the practices of power to address these concerns. Through a focus of the multiple forms of power that coexist in a Mexico City’s Historic Center and its central plaza, I focus on the ways in which social practices and interactions in public space are struggled over in everyday life.

*Place* – another central concept within geography – also takes a particular connotation throughout my work. Rather than looking at places as temporally fixed and circumscribed locations, with clear boundaries and borders – The Historic Center, as a ten square kilometer area, with 688 blocks, approximately nine thousand estates, populated by a predominantly poor sector of the urban population, and so forth – I understand places as products of social relations that are practiced both within a particular location but also beyond (Massey, 1994; Soja, 1999). A major aspect in the production of place is the juxtaposition and co-existence of many different people, each with their own ‘sense of place’. This produces multiple meanings and, it follows,

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8 Although I am drawing upon post-structuralist writings, I am particularly interested in a subset of post-structuralist literature that has engaged in developing a normative political agenda of social change (Alvarez *et. al.*, 1998; Benhabib, 1996; Fraser, 1992; 1997; Fraser and Nicholson, 1990; Sayer, 1999; Young, 1990; 2000).
tensions. As Cresswell noted, the fact that in most places all sorts of tensions are produced by this co-presence of people – each with their own understandings of ‘their’ places – means that tension and struggles have to be viewed as contributing to the production of place (Cresswell, 2004). Yet in the resolution of these tensions, material and discursive practices that ascribe meanings to places are deployed. For example, what is defined as in or out of place, what is welcome and what is not? Moreover, the sorts of tensions produced by co-presence and the multiple meanings of place they produce must also be viewed as involving power – the power to define, the power to remove, or the power to resist. Including these aspects – on representations of space and place – in theories of socio-spatial exclusion under entrepreneurial urban governance thus becomes useful because it tells us “something about who gets to participate in the construction and dissemination of meanings for places and thus places themselves” (Cresswell, 1996: 60).

As Lefebvre (1991) stressed, places (and spaces) should be theorized as products of three mutually embedded moments: the experienced, perceived, and the imagined\(^9\). In this sense, places are constituted not only by experienced material spatial practices – understood as flows of goods, money, people, and labor, all of which are fundamental processes of economic production – but also through the perceptions and imaginations of different actors who attach different meanings to places. Furthermore, while places are represented and discursively constructed through the perspectives of planners, architects, bureaucrats, and the like, these perceptions are simultaneously being challenged and reshaped by the practices and interactions of different people in their every day lives. For

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\(^9\) I will elaborate more on these three moments in Chapter Four
example, as McCann argued, “[w]hile planners may designate downtown streets to be public, individuals’ perceptions may induce them to use the streets in different ways, feeling out of place in some parts of downtown or unsafe in others” (McCann, 1999: 173). Referring back to the case of Mexico City, interesting questions arise in relation to who gets to be part of this new ‘City of Hope’. When thinking about the beautification of the Historic Center, how is the plaza (re)represented – imagined, perceived and experienced – by different actors? Further, what practices and interactions are constructed as legitimate and therefore ‘in place’ and which social groups or individuals have the power to define these practices?

My perspective is in many ways consistent with Massey’s interrelated notions of a global and a progressive sense of place (Massey, 1993). Although Massey’s theorization of place is in many ways consistent with Lefebvre’s notion of spaces and places as socially produced and as products of multiple social relations, Massey argues that those relations are not produced uniquely in a specific place, but rather cut across space. Hence, places can be understood as articulations of social relations which might be local relations within the place but also relations that stretch beyond it (Massey, 1999). A global sense of place conceptualizes places as open and hybrid and as products of interconnecting flows. Hence, the processes that makes a place within one particular location must be thought of as products of multiple and often contradictory relations that vary across time and space. Places are thus not bounded by one unique and fixed characteristic, but are rather nodes in a network of social relations (Massey, 1993). In the case of Mexico City, for example, the Historic Center and its Zócalo is the largest in
Mexico and Latin America, not only in size, but also in terms of its iconographic importance – in notions of national identity, in popular protest movements, as a central meeting point for Mexico’s diverse political interests and as a central tourist attraction. Although the case of the Programa and the Historic Center might appear to be a very ‘localized’ and bounded process, its significance transcends the local (urban) scale, and ties this particular place to both the national – in the production of Mexican history, as a national commercial, political and religious center, and in notions of national identity – and the global scale, with associated connections to UNESCO, the Worlds Monuments Fund, tourism, global investment, the hiring of Giuliani as the main consultant for Mexico City’s future crime policies, and so on.\(^{10}\) At issue is recognizing how places are constructed by social relations that are internal to places, as well as stretching in from afar and hence link people and places together.

Recognizing that places are products of multiple social relations alone, however, is insufficient to explain the complex processes involved in the production and reproduction of place. Social relations are actively made and are therefore and always imbued with power. Acknowledging that the Historic Center is a product of multiple forms of interaction that cut across a variety of scales – urban, national, and global – still begs the question: how are different people positioned with respect to the movements and flows that produce place and space? As Massey has suggested “politically, what we have to do is recognize also the form of this relationships, their inevitable content of social

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\(^{10}\) Carlos Slim, the most important private investor in the Programa de Rescate was recently awarded a prize from The Worlds Monuments Fund for the “success of the Mexico City’s Rescue Program” (Reforma, 2004).
power, the relations of dominance and subordination which they may entail, or (more potentially) the enabling potential to which they may give rise” (Massey, 1999: 41). Places can be linked or disconnected in diverse ways and the relations that create places are always relations of power.

1.5. ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

I elaborate in the chapters that follow the different dimensions of the geographies of power and ground these theoretical questions in an analysis of Mexico City’s Historic Center and its recent Programa de Rescate. I consider issues of positionality in Chapter Two. I show how my position has affected my empirical interest, theoretical framework, and fieldwork. I discuss the ways in which my position as a researcher led me to focus on socio-spatial exclusion in Mexico City. Reflecting on my personal experiences conducting fieldwork in Mexico City – a familiar yet foreign setting – I discuss the ways in which my own inner-struggles have affected and shaped the struggles that I have studied – both at the empirical level as well as in the theoretical framework I develop. My objective is to show that the situatedness of this particular study within critical human geography cannot be detached from my position as a researcher and my personal histories and changing identities. I discuss these interrelations in a critically reflexive way and in the process I also introduce the theoretical background and literature review for this manuscript in a critically reflexive way.

In Chapter Three, I critically examine the notion of an entrepreneurial city by focusing specifically on the case of Mexico City’s Programa de Rescate and DFiesta
(‘Partying in the DF’

11), two different urban policies that seek to revamp the image of Mexico City. I relate this discussion to broader theoretical debates regarding the relationship between state and society. I question conventional thinking that views the state as monolithic and necessarily constraining to marginalized groups and certain (formal and informal) businesses; rather, I show that sectors of society typically viewed as excluded and disempowered can shape state practices. I show through a historical analysis of the Mexican state that excluded groups have managed to ‘tap into the state’ and thus exert influence over the shape and workings of state policies. My objective in this chapter is to show that the management of urban space is multidimensional and that the state is not monolithic, but rather internally differentiated and often conflicted.

In Chapter Four, I begin the analysis of socio-spatial exclusion by exploring the notion of context. I argue that analyses of socio-spatial exclusion under entrepreneurial forms of urban governance tend to have a limited conception of context. Brought to the center in these analyses are political-economic processes, such as the hypermobility of capital and shifts in dominant governance regimes. However, I argue that place and space are produced and reproduced not only through underlying political and economic structures (as the entrepreneurial literature claims) but also through people’s everyday lives, through the meanings and experiences that people attach to a place. I extend discussions of context by empirically grounding struggle, agency, and power. Analyses of

11 DF stands for Distrito Federal or Federal District. During the 1960s and 1970s, Mexico City had expanded beyond the limits of the DF into the surrounding municipalities of the bordering state of the Estado de México (State of Mexico). According to Ward and Durden (2002: 4), in 1970 the population of the metropolitan area totaled 9.2 million, of whom 20 per cent lived outside the Distrito Federal.
entrepreneurial urban governance often assume that certain individuals or groups – normally, city authorities and private investors – possess power and that this power can be exercised over excluded groups, such as street vendors, panhandlers, or the homeless – in short, the powerless. I argue in this chapter that an important silence pertains to the role of agency. For example, in the midst of entrepreneurial governance, I ask how are new forms of exclusion negotiated between and among different interest groups, or do individuals and groups have nothing to say or nothing to do in these contexts? I argue that one can ask questions about the nature of socio-spatial exclusion in light of entrepreneurial urban practices by recognizing and acknowledging that people contest, struggle, and negotiate over changes in their everyday lives.
CHAPTER 2

SOME ISSUES OF AN ‘OTHER’ STUDYING ‘OTHERS’: NEGOTIATING MULTIPLE ‘SELVES’ IN THE FIELD AND IN ACADEME

2.1 INTRODUCTION

When my family and I left Uruguay in 1976, the country was experiencing the first stages of what became a decade-long dictatorship. My parents’ political inclination – embedded within a Marxist ideology – placed them in a vulnerable position and made their everyday life as activists, students, and parents difficult, and sometimes life-threatening. They were targeted by the military state and unable to maintain a livelihood under the established military regime because of their political views and actions. We left Uruguay and moved to Mexico, one of a few countries that welcomed political refugees from Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s. I was two years old in 1976; hence, I have learned about the conditions of our departure from Uruguay largely through the histories, narratives and memories of my parents. These stories have shaped my life: my thoughts or perceptions; how I carry myself in different contexts; how I associate with others; and, I believe, how
others associate with me. Further, and perhaps most importantly in the context of this dissertation, the conditions under which we left Uruguay laid the foundations for my intellectual development (both in terms of my theoretical perspectives as well as my empirical interest). The task with which I engage in this chapter is to draw from critical moments of my life, some of which I have taken for granted, and connect them with my overall intellectual development.

I refer to this life experience because it is central to the story presented in this manuscript. Further, and expanding on what feminist scholars have argued, one’s positionality affects methods in terms of how and what ‘data’ are collected (England, 1994; McDowell, 1992). As I argue here, one’s positionality also shapes the substance of research. My objective in this chapter is to show how the interrelations between my personal experiences and my shifting intellectual position have shaped the overall research project. I discuss these interrelations in a critically reflexive way and in the process I also introduce the theoretical background and literature review for this manuscript in a critically reflexive way. My empirical interest and theoretical framework have a history – a messy, hybrid history that is still in the process of becoming (Massey, 2005).

2.2 SHIFTING POSITIONS: NEGOTIATING MY INNER-STRUGGLES IN THE FIELD AND IN ACADEME

Positionality implies recognizing the partiality of knowledge based on the ‘makers’ underlying its production (Hartsock, 1987; Rose, 1997). It is to make visible what
positivist epistemologies have rendered invisible: that knowledge is permeated through
the eye of the beholder (Rose, 1997). Thus, “the researchers’ positionality (in
terms of race, nationality, age, gender, social and economic status or sexuality) may
influence the ‘data’ collection and thus the information that becomes coded as
‘knowledge’” (Rose, 1997: 303).

I render myself visible in this manuscript. I present a particular form of
knowledge based on my position as a white, relatively affluent, young woman with a
Marxist-nourished background engaging with post-structural perspectives. I seek to
achieve what England (1994), for example, has argued: that, “we need to locate ourselves
in our work and to reflect on how our location influences the questions we ask, how we
conduct our research, and how we write our research” (England, 1994: 87). This process
is a messy task because my position or ‘location’ is not fixed, uniform, homogeneous or
static; rather, it is fluid, complex, and changing. I therefore introduce the term relational
positionality to refer to a recognition that the self is shaped by mobile and constantly
changing relations and interactions. Hence, the self itself is constantly changing.

Relational thinking has gained more attention in contemporary human geography
(Massey, 1999; Massey and the collective, 1999). Thinking relationally implies exploring
the interconnections that shape people and places. Rather than accepting pre-constituted
identities, relational thinking emphasizes the connections, interrelations, and power
relations through which those identities are constructed (Massey with the collective,
Therefore, it is not just that I am a white, female, student or Güerita\(^{12}\) that makes a difference to my identity; rather, it is how these multiple selves differentially affect and are affected by my relationships and engagements with others who, one might add, are negotiating their multiple identities in their interactions with me. In this sense, I practice the ‘double reflexive gaze’ (Rose, 1997: 309): a reflexivity that engages both inward to the process whereby I negotiate my multiple identities; and outward to the relations between the research topic and myself as the researcher. I do this because, as Farrow et al. (1995) argued, “reflexivity is not just part of our theories through the conceptualization process but also part of the research process” (Farrow, et al., 1995: 100). Thus, “researchers need to ponder their own participation in research – from choosing the topic to presentation of the ‘findings’ – in such a way as to shed light on how we engage in research” (Farrow, et al., 1995: 101). However, within the literature on positionality, there has been limited discussion on how choosing a topic is itself a positionality issue: how the researcher’s perspectives on the topic, both in terms of the theoretical framework and the empirical dimension, might change in the course of the process; and how all of this affects the production of knowledge.

In what follows I begin my analysis of positionality by discussing how my theoretical approach to understanding the Programa changed throughout the course of my Doctoral degree. I discuss this change though a critical reflexive exercise in which I

\(^{12}\) “Güerita” is a common term used in Mexico to refer to anyone who is white (pale-skinned and/or blond).
interweave my personal experiences with my intellectual development to identify the struggles that such interrelation have generated in my understanding of the Programa. In this critical reflexive process, I also critically review certain literatures reflexively.

2.2.1 Being ‘post’ with a Marxist background: Developing a theoretical framework

Having been brought up and educated in a left-wing, Marxist household, I was aware and disturbed by the injustice, inequality, and poverty that I observed on the streets of Mexico City. My parents’ – former communist party members and later political refugees – made sure that their children grew up sensitive to the structural inequalities produced and enhanced by the capitalist system. As a young girl, I remember flipping through some of my parent’s books written on the Sandinista movement, the Cuban revolution, the ’68 student movements, and feeling awed by the photographs of massive mobilizations in public squares. My parents’ ideas of how to go about generating social change were also very much embedded in our everyday life as my brothers and I saw my parents participate in protests, union mobilizations, communist party gatherings, and so forth. The notion of social change that I soon developed throughout the years was very clear: override the dominant structures through strategies of massive mobilization.

My political perspective was further enhanced during my first years as a Masters student at El Colegio de México, Mexico City. The Masters program at El Colegio was strongly oriented towards Marxism.\(^{13}\) I was therefore encouraged to think about social

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\(^{13}\) Contrary to the general transformations that have occurred in Anglo-American human geography, the discipline in Latin America has not undergone similar changes. It remains dominated by an interest in physical processes; embedded within a positivist
inequality, urban segregation, and socio-spatial exclusion through a structuralist/Marxist perspective. Specifically, the Marxist literature that I engaged with drew extensively from dependency and new dependency theory.\textsuperscript{14} Whereas many Anglo American Marxists tend to derive inspiration from French regulation theory, Marxist literature in Latin America today is typically discussed in terms of new dependency theory (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979).\textsuperscript{15} Regulation theory is a political economic theory that explains the changing structure of capitalist economies by focusing more specifically on the rise and fall of the Fordist mode of production.\textsuperscript{16} According to regulation theory, the Fordist era was characterized by a period of mass production and mass consumption, which was made possible through a wide set of governing institutions responsible for collective epistemology dominated by quantitative spatial analysis; and Marxist frameworks. Few geographers are post-structuralists, a label more commonly attached to scholars in anthropology and socio-psychology. A good example is the work of Nestor García Canclini (1989; 1999), a cultural anthropologist working at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in the department of cultural anthropology.

\textsuperscript{14} ‘Classic’ dependency theory, associated with the work of the sociologist André Frank (1967) emerged as an attempt to redefine (under)development from a third world perspective. This perspective has placed particular emphasis on the uneven interconnections and unequal economic exchange between developed and developing nations inherited from a colonial past. ‘New’ dependency theory, related to the writings of scholars like Fernando Cardoso (1979), recognizes the existing heterogeneity within third world nations and seeks to understand underdevelopment not only through external processes (such as, for example, colonialism) but through internal structural inequalities (for instance, class conflict).

\textsuperscript{15} Bob Jessop, a well known sociologist who draws extensively from French regulation theory, discredits dependency theory. For more details see Bob Jessop, (2001) Interview with Bob Jessop, published by the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YN, at http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Jessop-Interview.pdf

\textsuperscript{16} The Fordist mode of production is usually associated with the period between the end of the Second World War and the late 1960s (Amin, 1994).
bargaining, wage determination, and social welfare functions. These institutions were critical for supporting consumption of mass produced industrial products by linking “annual wage increases to the productivity increases being realized from mass-production techniques” (Johnston et. al., 2000: 275). Although regulation theory sought to explain the changing structure of the capitalist system at large, it was empirically grounded on the experiences of advanced industrialized economies, specifically those of western Europe and the United States. The existing institutional arrangements set up to support the consumption of mass-produced goods in the context of the Keynesian welfare state was thus a characteristic of advanced industrialized capitalist economies specifically the United States and the United Kingdom.

In Latin America however, the national institutional arrangement established to allow social reproduction – through, for instance collective bargaining and wage determination – provided economic leverage only to small sectors of the population. Collective bargaining was largely enjoyed by formal unions (usually members of the governing party), agrarian elites, and in certain cases non-elite groups who formed part of the popular sector. The governing institutions that encouraged collective bargaining were far from being ‘collective’, but rather provided space for negotiation only among sectors of the population who supported the political party in power. Hence, in Latin America the social and institutional arrangements which supported the reproduction of the working class through collective consumption did not share the same characteristics as the governing institutions of Fordist period in the advanced capitalist economies.
The existing differences between the evolution of the capitalist mode of production in different contexts – Latin America, the United States, and Britain – helps explain why Marxist scholars from different places derive inspiration from different theoretical perspectives. As Ettlinger suggested “scholars from the first world who write about the first world typically do not invoke or even reference new dependency theory; conversely, the political, economic and social realities in contexts such as Latin America are often intelligible in terms of new dependency theory and, accordingly, there are few if any references to regulation theory” (Ettlinger, 1999: 352n). According to Cardoso, whose work is emblematic of new dependency theory in Latin America, “theoretical schemes concerning the formation of capitalist society in present day developed countries are of little use in understanding the situation in Latin American countries. Not only the historical moments but also the structural conditions of development and society are different” (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979: 172). New dependency theory developed as an intellectual project embedded within Latin American social scientists, and shaped the political ideology of a generation of Latin American leftists in the 1960s and 1970s, a movement of which my parents were very much a part.\textsuperscript{17} Marxist perspectives have not been confined to the academic sphere; rather, they have permeated much of the political, religious and even the artistic arena, in Latin America.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} For a detailed and interesting account of the development and evolution of dependency theory in Latin America, see Berger (1995).

\textsuperscript{18} A good example in the political sphere is Fernando Cardoso, a leftist sociologist who was also president of Brazil between 1995 and 2002. In the artistic and literary sphere, there are authors, such as Eduardo Galeano (1975), who write about the history of Latin
By virtue of my parents’ Marxism, I developed a particular and perhaps limited understanding of agency: that people had an ability to react, but not to act and generate substantive social change. Furthermore, I viewed action as a condition/ability possessed by particular groups of people, specifically, those in the high end of the power structure. I developed a Marxist concept of power that prioritized the economic (class) over any other form of social relations (race, gender, sexuality, and so forth). I believed that power was a resource acquired by those who had control of the means of production. In my mind, the marginalized would continue to be marginalized and injustice would continue to reproduce itself under the capitalist system unless the system was overthrown. To paraphrase Marx, I believed that people make their own history but not under conditions of their own choosing.19

The particular understanding of agency that I developed throughout the years materialized in some of my early research. In seminar papers and in my master’s thesis (Crossa, 1999), I drew from a Marxist-structuralist perspective I explored the relationship between ‘natural’ disasters and urban space to show how, under capitalist social relations, space becomes a fragmented and divided commodity and used as an instrument for the valorization and reproduction of capital. In my opinion at the time, people who were vulnerable to natural disasters were unable to change those conditions and their daily lives.

America from the perspective of dependency theory; *Open Veins of Latin America* is emblematic of this literature.

19 The original phrase written by Marx was “Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself” (Marx, 1852: 23).
Even though the substance of my research changed significantly – from an interest in risk and ‘natural’ disasters to the privatization of urban public space – when I arrived in the United States to start my doctorate degree my Marxist understanding of space and society was packed in my suitcase and remained with me for quite some time. My initial interpretation of the Programa de Rescate was through a Marxist lens. When the policy was launched in 2001, I began developing an interest in issues pertaining to the relationship between urban public spaces and the changing politics of the local state. Much of the literature that I read initially discussed the relationship between the changing global economy and the management of urban space (Cox, 1995; Judd and Ready, 1986). This work argued that, with the declining fiscal power of the nation state (Jessop, 1998), the changing order of economic competition (Ruppert, 2000), and the new hypermobility of capital (Harvey, 1989b), cities were run and governed differently (Graham, 1995; Mayer, 1994). I encountered and was attracted by the literature on new urban politics and ‘entrepreneurial urban governance’ (Cox, 1995; Cox and Mair, 1988; Harvey, 1989b; Kirlin and Marshall, 1988). David Harvey’s writings were particularly important as I continued to explore the transformations of urban space under conditions of capitalist social relations (Harvey, 1973; 1985a; 1989a; 1989b). More specifically, Harvey’s (1989b) article, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: the Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism” shaped my initial research questions and concerns regarding Mexico City’s Programa.
The term entrepreneurial urban governance is commonly used to capture the outward oriented look that urban governments have been forced to take in the last twenty years in a context of a changing global economy. These outward-oriented strategies are typically understood to involve two sets of interrelated processes.

First, urban governments are said to prioritize pro-growth, outward oriented policies aimed at enhancing and fostering local economic development through inward investment (Hubbard and Hall, 1998; Judd and Ready, 1986). Urban governments’ main concern no longer lies in the provision of welfare and services but rather in creating the necessary conditions for attracting mobile capital. Some examples of city authorities engaging in proactive and competitive strategies for urban economic growth include attracting new forms of investment, improving the local embeddedness of firms (Jessop, 1998), and changing the image of a city (Graham, 1995).

Second, many of the outward policies are financed by institutions that go beyond the traditional scope of the public domain. This is what Harvey identified as the shift from government to governance (Harvey, 1989b). What is noticeable about this shift is the increasing role of the private sector in financing and regulating these pro-growth strategies (Ashworth and Voog, 1990). The public-private partnership element became especially intriguing to me in the context of my interest in Mexico City’s Historic Center and the Programa. Although the Programa was not the first attempt made by a city government to revitalize the Historic Center, it was the first time that a major
businessman with the status and reputation of Carlos Slim was involved. Past failed attempts to rescue the Historic Center – never forgotten by numerous interest groups of the Historic Center – placed the current Mayor of Mexico City, Andrés Manuel Lopéz Obrador, and his advisors in a challenging position. To achieve the planned objectives of ‘rescuing’ the Historic Center, Carlos Slim’s involvement was considered critical. As the director of the new government body in charge of implementing the Programa stated:

“…Slim’s participation in the Programa was essential… Slim’s interest in the Historic Center is really not economic, like everyone thinks. He genuinely loves this part of the city…He grew up in the area. By having Slim in the project that would stimulate other entrepreneurs to turn their eyes towards the Historic Center” (Personal Communication, Director of Fideicomiso Centro Histórico, November 2003)  

I initially viewed the Programa using the lens of urban structuralist literature such as has been discussed immediately above. I was intrigued by the parallels between the processes that urban theorists identified taking place in US and European urban politics and the case of Mexico City’s Historic Center. I was captivated by the arguments regarding urban governments’ devotion to transforming the image of the city. I read

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20 The first attempt was initiated during the Mayoral administration of Hank González (1976-1982). A second attempt was led by Ramón Aguirre Velázquez (1982-1988); a third by Manuel Camacho Solís (1988-1993); and a fourth by Oscar Espinosa Villareal. A final attempt was begun by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (1997-1999).

21 In compliance with the Human Subjects Institute Review Board, the names of all individuals that I interviewed or interacted with during my stay in Mexico City have been withheld throughout this study.
extensively on how cities around the world had adopted policies aimed at representing the city as an attractive place for local and global investment, and how these policies were embedded within material and discursive practices.

The discursive element was described as the wide range of practices whereby city authorities frame and legitimize the actual policy (Jessop, 1998; Jessop and Sum, 2000). In the case of Mexico City, urban authorities had recently developed a new city slogan with the objective of representing the city as a good place to live, visit, and ultimately as “an attractive city for investors” (*Programa de Rescate*, 2001). The material element within the urban structuralist literature on image-making strategies was expressed as equally – if not more – important for portraying a city as attractive to capital. According to numerous authors (Chang, 1997; Cochrane and Jonas, 1999; Ghannam, 1997; Hiller, 2000; Nagel, 2000; Neill, 2001; Stewart, 1999; Ward, 1998; 2000) these policies followed particular models or ‘international standards’ of how a city should look and function (Olds, 1997). Such was the case of cities like Shanghai, where the planning of Shanghai’s new financial district was linked to modern imaginaries of “mushrooming skyscrapers” (Wu, 2000: 1360). These images were imported from European cities or from “well-planned downtowns such as San Francisco’s and the Parisian La Défense project” (Olds, 1997: 116). Authors tended to emphasize that notions of attractiveness embedded within image making strategies were in many cases confined to particular normative visions or standards imported from places perceived as modern, global and hence desirable.
I clearly found many different elements of this literature compelling, and initially considered them as primary components of my theoretical framework for exploring the Programa. Beyond insights regarding the different ways in which cities engage in competition for investment, I also appreciated the focus on the effects of these changes in urban public space. It was widely noted that urban entrepreneurialism tended to produce new forms of socio-spatial exclusion. Although city authorities and private investors sought to re-produce a desired vision of urban life, certain social groups and practices seemed to stand in the way. I therefore became interested in understanding how these strategies were experienced by the marginalized, the excluded. I started to ask, what are the consequences of entrepreneurial practices? Who benefits, how and why? These questions drew my attention to a strand of urban structuralist literature that focused on urban public spaces as the places where entrepreneurial strategies were apparent and materialized. For some authors, this involved the Disneyification of urban public space as spaces that celebrate consumption and recreation over any other form of social interaction (Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1991). As with Disneyland, some urban public spaces are said to be controlled, privatized, and purified through the implementation of explicitly exclusionary policies that regulate intruders, “whose appearance, conduct and moral codes may not fit in with the imageable city” (MacLeod, 2001: 1). It was claimed that city governments, urban elites, and private investors collaborated to develop commercial public spaces in which daily interactions and practices were carefully planned to foster business and consumption activities ( Christopherson, 1994; Mitchell, 2001).
The privatization of public space was also an integral element of the *Programa* and one that I observed while I conducted preliminary work in Mexico City in 2002. I noticed that the *Programa* sought to alter the multiple practices and interactions in the Historic Center’s streets and central *plaza* through the implementation of two interrelated strategies: first, increasing security and safety; and second, removing street vendors, artisans, and other participants of the so-called informal economy from the different public spaces of the Historic Center. Interviews with state representatives involved in the development of the *Programa* revealed a common discourse: the notion of the Historic Center and its *plaza* as an empty space. One official claimed that, “This land belongs to no-one” (Personal Communication, *Puesto de Mando*, November, 2003). Two interrelated and seemingly contradictory notions prevailed. On the one hand, the Historic Center was envisioned as a space in need of rescuing from emptiness. On the other hand, it was also envisioned as a place plagued by street crime and violence, of which street vendors were perceived as the main actors involved in its deterioration. Both discourses fed into each other in the implementation of strategies aimed at dealing with these perceived problems. Fighting insecurity meant fighting street vending practices because street vendors were associated with crime-ridden activities, and to the general deterioration of the area’s vitality. In response, then, the Secretary of Public Security created a new legal body called the *Puesto de Mando* (Control Post) to deal with street vendors. Its responsibility was “to ensure the safety of the 1.5 million daily visitors”

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22 My predissertation fieldwork conducted from June to September 2002 was funded by the Tinker Foundation, the Mershon Center and the Office of International Affairs (The Ohio State University).
(Personal Communication, *Puesto de Mando*, November, 2003). More than 100 Closed Circuit Television cameras were installed in the numerous streets and corners of the Historic Center (all of these controlled by a group of 30 personnel located in the central offices of the Control Post). Additionally, a new security system was developed in different strategic areas of the Historic Center. This system – known as *Sentinelas* – has a fifteen 2.5 meter tall video-security towers with a ‘red alert’ button. When pressed, the button immediately connects to the central audio and video system in the central offices. A new police force consisting of 400 officers – ‘Civic Protection’ – was created; and another force of ‘traditional police’ consisting of bilingual officers, dressed in traditional Mexican clothing, and riding on horses was trained to maintain order in the Alameda Park and help tourists find their way, feel safe, and comfortable in the Historic Center.

As Bauman (1998) noted, the unpredictability and spontaneous nature of street vending interactions generated feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and risk that seemed to jeopardize normative visions of a ‘desirable’ Historic Center. As I learned more about the strategies of the *Programa* in the Historic Center’s public spaces, I was struck by the parallels between Mexico City and Mike Davis’ (1990; 1992) account of Los Angeles’ public spaces as arenas of mass consumption rather than spaces of democratic interaction, where individuals are seen as consumers rather than citizens. I was compelled by the arguments made by authors who showed concern over fundamental questions of justice, and the rights of urban marginalized citizens (MacLeod, 2002; Katz, 2001; Smith, 1996a, 2002).
Although much of the initial urban structuralist literature I encountered evolved from observations of cities in the United States and Europe, Latin American scholars were revealing similar shifts. I attended a conference in Guadalajara, Mexico in 2002 on “*Latinoamerica: Paises abiertos, ciudades cerradas*” (Latin America: Open countries, closed cities). The conference gathered together Latin American social scientists from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico. They were interested in understanding how global economic changes affected the shape and dynamics of Latin American cities. The conference focused on issues pertaining to the privatization of urban spaces, the widening gap between the rich and poor, and the materialization of this gap in urban space. One question asked, ‘Who belongs to the city and how can the hegemony of the neo-liberal agenda be challenged?’ Scholars provided important insights into thinking through the ways in which state institutions and civil society have negotiated new forms of urban governance, especially in relation to urban revitalization projects. It was heartening, then, that issues of the privatization of public space and urban life were gaining popularity among Latin American scholars.

2.2.2 Theoretical reevaluation

I returned to Mexico to conduct preliminary dissertation research in June 2003. I was immediately forced to begin questioning my initial ideas about the *Programa*, the state, public space, governance and socio-spatial exclusion. The *Programa* had already been implemented in thirteen different streets of the Historic Center. Four of the busiest streets were ‘rescued’ by this time, that is, they had new and larger sidewalks, better
lighting, new garbage cans, new public phones; the buildings had new facades and new balconies; specially-trained police officers patrolled the streets and CCTV cameras watched from above. The streets were, according to the government, “free from street vendors” (Reforma, 2003). This was the ‘official’ story. However, the facts on the ground were quite different. I walked along one of the rescued streets thinking that I would no longer find vendors, but to my surprise the street seemed unchanged: there were hundreds of street vendors. They were selling, shouting prices, trying to attract customers; their stereos were playing at full volume and filling the streets with *cumbias*, *salsa* and *meringue*. The smell of fried food saturated the air! Overwhelmed by this encounter, I was convinced I had walked along the wrong street. How could this street be a ‘rescued’ street? Why were all the vendors still here? Physically, the streets looked different, but socially, they seemed unchanged. These were the streets I knew as a child, not the ‘rescued’ streets I expected to find. It seemed as if the city and its powerful allies were losing the battle to transform the Historic Center. The street vendors, the excluded, were winning; they were coming back to the streets and re-claiming their space and rights to the city (Jones, 2004). This finding forced me to reevaluate my theoretical framework, a process which I discuss below.

I realized that my approach to the study of the *Programa* was shaped by a particular form of knowledge: by what state officials were announcing on television, newspapers and so forth. My perspective was Marxist. I had been listening to selective voices. The story was of *The city*, *The state*, *The powerful*, *The* global economy. But I had not encountered the multiple stories and experiences of people on the streets who
were dealing in different ways with the changes brought about by the policy. I had not encountered different state officials debating amongst themselves over how to go about implementing the *Programa*. I had not considered the possibility of street vendors struggling among themselves over who gets to maintain a livelihood on the streets of the Historic Center. In short, I realized that while I was interested in understanding how entrepreneurial strategies were affecting different people ‘on the ground’, I had not considered turning the causal arrow in the opposite direction, that is, asking how people’s everyday lives ‘on the ground’ affected the implementation of the *Programa*.

Furthermore, and critically, I realized had a particular notion of power that was consistent with urban structuralist perspectives. I viewed power as a force *located* within particular groups such as the central state, the government of Mexico City, the ‘winners’ (Svampa, 2001) such as local entrepreneurs, and private investors such as Carlos Slim. I assumed power to be possessed by these groups and exercised *over* others. My understanding of agency was thus confined to specific people and defined in particular ways. Namely, power was an economically-defined luxury that few individuals possessed. In addition to the definition of power, I also homogenized people and placed them into fixed categories such as ‘the excluded’.

Many of the structuralist ideas underpinning my research were challenged after I returned from my pre-dissertation research in Mexico. I began reading post-structuralist literature, and found value in many of the insights therein.\(^{23}\) I soon realized that there

\(^{23}\) Various other elements (personal and professional) came together in a space-time that made me reevaluate my initial research questions and reframe my original theoretical perspective.
were other ways of theorizing agency, other ways of understanding people’s lives, other
ways of approaching the relationship between space and society, and other ways of
theorizing injustice (Young, 1990; 2000).

I must clarify at the outset that this intellectual path has not been in any way linear
or tidy. It took me – and is still taking me – a substantial amount of time to come to
terms, assimilate and reconsider my embeddedness in structuralist literature. For instance,
though I had read post-structural literature prior to my pre-dissertation fieldwork, it was
not until I was confronted with the unexpected encounters in Mexico City that I made
conscious efforts to re-examine this literature and draw from it to understand the
Programa’s complexity. My reading of post-structuralist literature before my pre-
dissertation fieldwork remained in the ‘academic’ sphere; I retained a separation between
what I learnt in the seminar room and my personal life, thoughts, and on-the-ground
observations.

My reading of post-structural literature focused concretely on issues to do with
urban governance and urban space (McCann, 1999; Deutsche, 1996). Drawing from
epistemologies from cultural studies on different practices of resistance that challenge the
hegemony of exclusionary policies, I engaged with work that argued that entrepreneurial,
revanchist, and neo-liberal policies can be transgressed, resisted and struggled over
(Bayat, 2000). This sort of work shed light on an entirely new dimension of the
Programa that I had not initially considered. I therefore began to consider ‘the excluded’
in my analyses of the Programa. By so doing, I sought to view urban spaces as products
of multiple social practices and interactions, that is, to affirm “the right of currently
excluded groups to have access to the city – to make decisions about the spaces they use, to be attached to the places where they live, [and] to refuse marginalization” (Deutsche, 1996: 53).

I also encountered authors who theorized resistance in new ways. One element which became particularly enlightening was the understanding of struggle beyond the material as a “process enacted when sets of social actors shaped by, and embodying, different cultural meanings and practices come into conflict with each other” (Alvarez, et al, 1998: 7; my emphasis). Struggle was not simply a material issue; rather, it was necessary to recognize that meanings and representations – whether about places, people, or issues – were contested. At issue were questions about who has the power to define, the right to contest meanings, or to be included in representations of struggle (Alvarez, et al, 1998). In the context of the Program, then, street vendors resist the practices of the Programa not only because it threatens their economic livelihood, but also because they are systematically excluded from a particular representation of the Historic Center and its plaza, a representation which street vendors contest. As the leader of one street vending organization noted:

“…what is historic about the Historic Center? Street trading! Street vendors existed before the arrival of the Spanish. We are part of the history of this area. Removing us is like removing a chunk of history. I think without street vending, Mexico City looses part of its identity…” (Personal Communication, leader of street vending organization, November, 2003)

Other authors highlighted interconnections between the discursive and the material as a way of providing a more nuanced approach for understanding urban change.
For instance, Deutsche (1996) demonstrated how public art was a site of struggle, through which social groups resist dominant state discourses of urban aesthetics (Deutsche, 1996: 56). Through reference to Wodicxko’s Homeless Vehicle in New York, Deutsche highlighted the mutual interconnections between discursive and practical (material) dimensions of resistance. As she noted, “the homeless vehicle legitimates people without homes rather than the dominant space that excludes them, symbolically countering the city’s own ideological campaign against the poor” (Deutsche, 1996: 105). Similarly, Zukin (1996) showed how cultural strategies of economic development proved to be a source of both solidarity and resistance among different groups who “battle over access to the center of the city and over symbolic representations in the center (Zukin, 1996: 43). Although for urban authorities and private investors, the streets and plaza of Mexico City’s Historic Center is perceived as an empty space and as a symbol of urban decline, for street vendors and other excluded groups the Historic Center and its plaza play a central role in their everyday life.

This literature was enlightening in that it acknowledged that despite the increased commodification and purification of certain spaces within cities, space “is always in the process of being shaped, reshaped, and challenged by the spatial practices of various groups and individuals whose identities and actions undermine the homogeneity of contemporary cities” (McCann, 1999: 168). This is what I had observed when I walked the streets of the Historic Center that July afternoon: despite the workings of the state, despite the ‘power’ of Carlos Slim’s investment, despite the 700 more police on the streets and plaza of the Historic Center, and despite the numerous efforts made by
Programa officials to reinvent this area through exclusionary practices, some street vendors returned to the streets where they were originally displaced and others found new spaces of interaction.

In trying to redefine agency, I became somewhat dissatisfied with some of the post-structural literature with which I engaged. Although some scholars recognized that specific disenfranchised groups act as agents of change, their arguments seemed to be more of a plea for recognizing agency than an empirically grounded understanding of empowerment and its spatial dimension. I believe that recognizing agency is certainly necessary, but I think it is insufficient. Street vendors have agency, they resist and struggle against the workings of the Programa. Acknowledging, for instance, that urban public spaces are always negotiated, performed, lived, and contested alone falls short of understanding precisely how individuals become agents and the processes through which urban public spaces are constructed and reconstructed in people’s everyday life. The questions that still remain unanswered are: what do individual agents do in the aftermath of the implementation of exclusionary practices? How do street vendors, artisans, and displaced residents resist the structures of constraints that have been placed upon them by virtue of the implementation of the Programa? Do they reconstitute their networks and livelihoods, and if so, how?

When it was time for me to write my dissertation proposal, I believed that the limitations of post-structural literature could be successfully addressed by introducing epistemologies and theories from outside the structuralist urban governance literature. I wanted to apply much of my post-structuralist knowledge to the case of Mexico City,
arguing for the importance of theorizing power not (only) as a force, located within individuals but as a set of practices, strategies, and techniques rooted in the whole network of society (Foucault, 1994). It was not that I suddenly believed that the Programa had no effect in people’s lives and that different state institutions were not exercising power over various social groups. My understanding of power did not suddenly shift from the hands of the state and the private sector to the hands of street vendors, artisans, and displaced residents. The point is that power is practiced in many different ways; and it is the interrelations between these multiple practices of power that I am interested in pursuing (Ettlinger, 2001; 2003).

I made an effort to think about the complexities of the Programa de Rescate and the multiple ways in which the policy was being struggled over and negotiated. Also, I wanted to de-essentialize groups of people and not place them in categories such as the ‘winners’ and the ‘losers’. Not all street vendors, for instance were being removed from the streets and plaza of the Historic Center. There are more than fifteen thousand street vendors – grouped into more than sixty organizations – located on the streets and multiple plazas of the Historic Center. As I will elaborate in Chapter Three, many of the organizations date back to the mid 1950s, when city and state authorities designated special permits to street vendors who joined the popular sector of the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) (Cross, 1998). Different spatial areas were assigned to particular street vending organizations affiliated with the unions developed and regulated by the PRI (Cross, 1996). Thus, the difficulties faced by city authorities and the private sector in removing street vendors stem, to a large degree, from the PRI’s governing
legacy. Today, street vending organizations are interwoven in a complex set of power relations associated with the political disputes between the PRI and the recently elected Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD). Representatives of street vending organizations who are themselves associated with either the PRD or the PRI regulate different streets of the Historic Center. Hence, the exclusion and movement of street vending activities out of the plaza is embedded within a highly complex set of power relations not only between different social groups, but also among the groups themselves. Some of the questions that I began asking were: was resistance taking place among groups that had been excluded from the Programa? If so, what were their strategies and tactics of resistance? Further, I was interested in understanding the existing heterogeneity among those who were being excluded and whether those differences were important for understanding different avenues of resistance.

To answer these sorts of question, I draw from a variety of different ‘post’ theories and literatures that address issues of agency. I draw from work in critical human geography that focuses on how power is negotiated both within and among different groups of excluded actors (Allen, 1997; 1999; Ettlinger, 2004; Massey, 1993; 2005). It is precisely the interrelations of different forms of power that I believe provide a rich account for understanding how different excluded groups proactively engage in the reconfiguration and reconstitution of urban space. Drawing from Latin American subaltern work (Alvarez, 1998; Canclini, 1989; 1999; Dagnino, 1998; Escobar, 1995), my focus is on the variety of forms in which subaltern or so-called excluded groups struggle over certain forms of injustice, and how in that process they create alternative ways of
being and doing. Struggle and resistance is theorized not only in the classic sense of people opposing structures of constraints, but on how they survive, and in some cases thrive despite these constraints, and how, in the process they reconstitute their social networks and relations. Through this literature, I view subaltern groups as agents whose innovations and ideas challenge the notion that power is only exercised by the state or by elites. For example, and as I will argue in the following chapter, excluded groups can tap into the state and extend their resistance into formal political spheres through a cooperative, rather than confrontational politics (Dagnino, 1998). I also draw from normative political work that recognizes the importance of multiple spaces of political action within a heterogeneous civil society (Benhabib, 1996; Fraser, 1992; 1997; Fraser and Nicholson, 1990; Young, 1990; 2000). This work does not deny the role of, for example, state institutions in the process of social change, but rather stresses the possibility of rethinking the political process as a fundamental fabric of everyday life, where diverse publics work towards inclusion in different spheres of decision-making processes.

I use these literatures to ask how groups of so-called excluded ‘others’ resist and struggle over changing structures of constrains in their everyday life, and how such struggles shape the outcomes and spaces of entrepreneurial urban governance. In doing so, I want to contribute to the theorization of resistance and struggle in urban space. By illustrating the ways in which Mexico City’s Programa de Rescate has been developed and the struggles resulting from its implementation, I argue that socio-spatial exclusion, in the context of entrepreneurial urban governance, entails differential power relations
that are more complex and dynamic than the simple removal of particular social groups from urban spaces. As I will elaborate in the ensuing chapters, the state or city governments or entrepreneurs, or even marginalized groups are not the only ones who practice power. Furthermore, socio-spatial exclusion of particular groups and activities from urban public spaces produce complex and multidimensional modes of power relations. At issue is how power is practiced and negotiated within and among all actors, such that transformations in urban public space can be understood in a dynamic manner.

As I will elaborate in Chapter Four, some street vendors continued selling their products and continued interacting with other vendors and buyers by returning in a more mobile way. Rather than setting up a metal or wooden stand, or placing their products on a mat on the floor, they practice what is known as torear, which is a mobile form of teasing or deceiving the police. Mobility becomes a practice of power which aids in the struggle against the exclusionary practices of the Programa. This particular exercise of power, namely power through ‘teasing’ practices of mobility, is intertwined in complex ways with other forms of power exercised through interactions and relations with other groups and individuals in everyday life. Their struggle is also characterized by (re)constructing ties and sustaining relationships with other individuals or social groups in daily life. Such is the case of particular street vendors and local entrepreneurs (shop owners) who typically engage in antagonistic relationships and see each other as disloyal competitors. Despite claims made by different local entrepreneurs who define street vendors as an “urban cancer” or “a bunch of cockroaches” (personal communication with shop owner, November 23, 2003), many have recognized that vending activities “…in
fact pull a lot of people into our own shops…when street vendors are outside our shop, our sales increase 70 per cent” (Personal communication with local shop owner, March 22, 2004). Furthermore, many of the street vendors I worked with left their belongings (iron stands and products) inside established shops at night time. Rather than paying extra money for a storage room, some vendors have negotiated with shop owners to pay them a fee and keep their material safely stored in the local establishments. In addition, many street vendors agree to sell some of the shop owners’ products on the streets. Similarly, when police bodies of the Secretary of Public Security performed their daily routine of removing street vendors from particular areas, vendors grab their belongings and run inside the local stores in order to avoid being caught and detained. Although these might seem like insignificant practices with little effect in relation to the practices of the Programa, everyday practices such as these have the potential for strengthening ties among individuals who at a particular time-space share similar concerns and aid in the construction of new resistance strategies.

Although I was able to identify multidimensional modes of power relations as the ones described above, there were other practices of power that I ignored and later came to me as quite a surprise. While in my proposal I discussed the importance of heterogeneity at multiple scales, my earlier embeddedness in structural literature and, more generally, education, nonetheless continued to influence my interpretations. My approach to understanding multiple voices was originally targeted only to groups that I perceived as ‘the excluded’; for instance, street vendors, artisans, and displaced residents. However, I had not considered the possibility of multiplicity among those who I believed were
benefiting from the practices of the *Programa*. For example, I had failed to acknowledge the existence of *many different* ‘private investors’ with *different* positions and interests regarding the implementation of the *Programa*. Not only were some investors excluded from the decision making process, but some felt the *Programa* was having serious negative effects on the economic development of their business (a topic that I will further explore in Chapter Four). As one local shop owner told me:

“…The people from the *Programa* came one day and started closing streets, and lifting everything. The streets and sidewalks were completely open for underground cabling; all the facades of buildings where chipped. It was total chaos. And we [local shop owners] knew nothing about this. Nothing had ever been told. Granted, one day a woman from the government came and left us a little notice on our doors saying that there was going to be a meeting to discuss the changes that were going to take place in the area. And they did this in the worst time of the year: September! The economy of the Historic Center has periods. From September onwards – until December – our sales go up significantly because the entire nation comes to the Historic Center to stock-up for December. And they closed these streets from September to February! Can you imagine? I personally lost 75 per cent of my yearly earnings because of the stupid Rescue Program. And I have often asked myself, ‘rescuing who and what? Carlos Slim’s money?’ Please! That man does not need any rescuing. He owns half of Mexico anyway. Today, one year after the rescue program began, I still have not managed to recover. My neighbor here closed down, the other person across the street closed and sold his place. This government has generated total chaos! If by next year my situation hasn’t improved, I’m going to have to leave; but I can’t imagine what I would do and where I would go…” (Personal Communication with local shop owner, November 2004).

This shop owner, together with many others that I interviewed, expressed concern over the future of their business in the area. Furthermore, they were extremely dissatisfied with the way in which the *Programa* had been implemented. Three days before the *Programa* kicked off, many local entrepreneurs were called to a meeting by
the newly created office in charge of the Programa. The objective of the meeting was to announce, without deliberation, the closure of streets for reconstruction. According to several interviewees there was no space for negotiation during the meeting or afterwards. In this context, more than 2000 local businesses came together and formed what is now called the *Union de Comerciantes del Centro Histórico* (UCCH - Union of Business people of the Historic Center) with the purpose of “establishing channels of communication with the government and having a voice in the decisions that are made regarding the Historic Center” (Personal communication with president of UCCH, December, 2003). My engagement with UCCH members and my encounters with different organizations of local shop owners from the Historic Center during my fieldwork made me realize the multiplicity of voices and struggles among those that are located in a relative position of power given their economic status (an issue that will discuss in Chapter Four).

The transformations I experienced regarding my theoretical position is a process that I am still living. Many times I find myself engaging in somewhat contradictory thoughts, swinging back and forth from one perspective to another, and sometimes making a real effort to see and listen to the heterogeneity underlying my fourteen months stay in Mexico City. My position, however, is not solely reflected in my changing theoretical position; rather it permeates all the different dimensions of the research process, including the way I went about gathering the necessary information in the field. In the following section, I discuss issues of positionality in terms of the interrelations.
between my ‘location’ within the Mexican social structure – specifically with respect to
class and race – and my fieldwork experience and strategy. I will explore how the
unboundedness of my life shaped my multiple identities and how that permeated my field
research both in relation to my emotions as well as in my engagements and interviews
with others while conducting fieldwork.

2.3 CONTEXTUALIZING MY MULTIPLE SELVES IN THE FIELD

“...when I met you I thought: ‘Is she for real? What’s a good girl doing in
these streets?’ That’s what I thought the first time I met you…You know,
we don’t see people like you here. Only the gringos who sometimes
wander around these areas, lost or exploring the exotic” (Personal
Communication, street vendor, April 23, 2004).

As a Uruguayan raised in Mexico and having lived in various cities across the American
continent, I have often felt different. I have never lived in one location for more than 5
years and this mobility has important implications in terms of my own identity formation.
For years I felt placeless and my identity was rarely bound to a specific country. For
example, I am considered Mexican when I visit Uruguay; I am Uruguayan – as well as a
‘güerita’ and/or a ‘gringa’ – when I am in Mexico; and in the United States I am a
foreigner.24 Despite these acquired labels, my identities have been shaped by multiple
axes of difference which configure differently in different time-spaces. However, this
was difficult to accept during my teenage years in Mexico when I first realized the

24 ‘Gringa’ is the term used in Central Mexico to refer to a person usually from the
United States. However, it is a common term used to describe a white-foreigner. Yankee
is the equivalent term used in other Latin American countries.
connotations associated with my identity. Not only was I different because I spoke Spanish with a ‘strange’ accent, or because I did not have a Mexican passport, but my light skin and blond hair made me a privileged ‘other’ within a particular social hierarchy. In Mexico, specifically in central and southern Mexico, race is commonly used as a reference point in social relations. Furthermore, race intersects with other axes of difference, particularly class, which reinforces historically constructed labels of domination, exploitation and privilege (Sundberg, 2003). Even though I was located in a relatively privileged position in the context of the Mexican social structure, I made conscious attempts to be del pueblo (‘Part of the people’) and to blend into the crowd. Despite my efforts, no matter where I went and what I did, I was constantly reminded of my privileged difference.

After all, I grew up in a privileged and relatively affluent household. My father’s job at an international agricultural research center brought with it a number of benefits that I enjoyed: free housing, education, and health benefits. We lived in a residential area within the research center: an enclave that separated ‘us’, physically and socially, from the rest of Mexico. Furthermore, I was bussed each day to an expensive, private British high school. Thus, at home and in school, I mostly interacted with transnational migrants who had arrived to Mexico under privileged conditions. Ultimately I grew up in a gated community where my knowledge of the streets of Mexico was informed by a daily three-hour bus journey. My parents strove to integrate ‘the real Mexico’, as they called it, into our daily lives by walking the city with us on multiple occasions; enrolling us in extra-
curricula activities in Mexican facilities. Regardless of their efforts, the *spatiality* of my positionality rendered much of Mexico’s inequality invisible. My interactions with street vendors, for example, never went beyond a casual two-minute conversation while visiting the *plaza* with my friends of family. Given my personal history, then, I was worried about how I would interact with street vendors during my fieldwork.

### 2.3.1 My return to Mexico City

After four years in the United States studying for my Doctoral Degree and preparing to conduct fieldwork, I was going to Mexico, to my ‘home’. As the plane landed, I felt that I was entering a familiar setting: the smells of cilantro and *tacos al pastor*25 on the streets, with a touch of carbon monoxide. The noise and the overall chaos were a comfort with which I was eager to engage and incorporate into my daily life. Despite the smog, the traffic and the many problems associated with a big city, I was nonetheless retuning home. This familiarity initially gave me a sense of security with respect to the purpose of my trip: I felt I was in a favorable position for conducting ethnographic fieldwork since I knew the language; I felt comfortable finding my way around the large metropolitan area; and I was familiar with the Historic Center. Further, having been raised in Mexico City, I

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25 One of the most common types of food sold on the streets.
felt I knew how to deal with the bureaucracy, the ‘ahorita’\textsuperscript{26}, the ‘regrese mañana’\textsuperscript{27} and all the other idiosyncratic expressions underlying social relations and interactions in Mexico.

Despite these initial feelings of comfort, I was quickly reminded of my positionality. Returning to Mexico made me examine and reassess areas of my life and of my ‘difference’ that until then had remained in the ‘personal’ arena and had few times consciously filtered into my professional/academic sphere. While in the past my identity struggles were related to personal issues associated with a feeling of belonging, this time they were marked by my concern over the quality and performance of my fieldwork and overall research. It is at this point that I feared that my privileged ‘difference’ would become a potential barrier to my encounters with people excluded from the Historic Center.

Days subsequent to my arrival, after the multiple gatherings with friends and family who welcomed me ‘home’, and after the relative newness slowly became part of my everyday life, the conditions of my trip began to frighten me. It began to dawn on me that I was not there for two weeks on holiday, like past trips. I was there to interact with different sectors of the population that I had always seen (for example, street vendors), and that had always spurred my curiosity in many ways, but groups with whom I had

\textsuperscript{26} Ahorita comes from the word ahora, which means “now”. Ahorita is a word used in very different contexts, but is commonly associated with the intention of performing an action within an undetermined time frame. When you ask for something and the response is “ahorita”, it is usually the polite way of saying “I will do it when I have time or when I want to”. It could be now, it could be tomorrow, or it could be ‘never’.

\textsuperscript{27} ‘Come back tomorrow’.
never fully interacted beyond temporary visits to the Historic Center. I was returning to Mexico under a different position, with different objectives that forced me to engage in and enter a new city, one that I had seen primarily through a bus window.

One month after my arrival, I found a small and pleasant apartment in Coyoacán, one of the many historical areas in the city. The apartment was an independent studio attached to a large old colonial house owned by Irma a healthy 74 year old woman who spent every afternoon sitting on her balcony watching the world pass by her doorstep. My first interactions with her were short, concise, and administrative. This soon changed, as she saw me as a friend, a person to chat with and a niña with whom she could spend time. My constant quest for ‘selfness’ became apparent one afternoon when Irma knocked on my door and asked me to accompany her to the market. As we walked out of the house, she began speaking to me in English. She noticed my immediate confusion and discomfort and explained to me that:

“...people here are clever. They are too clever. They observe every movement that takes place on the streets and sidewalks, houses, stores. They already know you live here, so we have to pretend that you are my granddaughter from the US who is staying with me for a couple of months. That way they will respect you more” (Personal Communication with Irma, July 2003).

It was at this point that the implications of positionality crystallized. While I was making all possible efforts to avoid being noticed as an outsider, Irma’s repeated

28 “Irma” is a fictitious name. In compliance with the Human Subjects Institute Review Board, the names of all individuals that I interviewed or interacted with during my stay in Mexico City have been withheld throughout this study.

29 Girl/child.
insistence in talking to me in English on the streets made me realize that I was fighting an internal battle that would be difficult to relinquish. Her comment disturbed me because I believed that the only (or best) way to build trust with the different social groups that I was interested in studying was if I was not perceived as such an ‘other’. Of course I was aware that I would never be considered a ‘street vendor’, or an artisan, or a resident of the Historic Center. But, contrary to Irma’s comment, I believed that ‘respect’ would arise if I were not perceived as a complete outsider. I too feared that my whiteness would become a barrier to my fieldwork given the common association made with the United States (*gringa*) or with a privileged sector within the Mexican social hierarchy usually associated with economic, political, and social power. As Sundberg (2003) has argued “histories of state violence and U.S. intervention in particular Latin American countries make the process of building trust with ‘research subjects’ very difficult” (Sundberg, 2003: 181). I also feared that if contacts did not believe I was a *gringa*, I would be linked to a privileged upper class and be seen as a *fresa*.³⁰

This concern stemmed from my initial belief that the best way to understand the processes I was interested in exploring was by trying to be an insider of the groups experiencing exclusion. My fears multiplied and the familiarity with Mexico City was transformed into a constant questioning of who I was, and whether, as an insider, I had

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³⁰*Fresa* is part of the Mexican slang similar to the English notion of “snob”, which according to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2004) is “a person who tends to patronize, rebuff, or ignore people regarded as social inferiors and imitate, admire, or seek association with people regarded as social superiors” (2004). This superiority aspect, which is applied to both men and women, is usually associated with an economically affluent position. In certain contexts *fresa* can imply lack of seriousness or superficiality.
the eye/I (Kondo, 1990) of a researcher. Was familiarity with a setting an advantage? Is there a danger of taking certain things for granted? Furthermore, was I really an insider? Did all of this matter anyway? Soon, my familiarity with ‘home’ was followed by a growing concern of the person I would become (a ‘güerita’ or a ‘gringa’) to others, especially who I would become in the eyes of the groups that I was interested in interacting with as part of my research.

2.3.2 Contacting street vendors

My first research concern was with identifying how the plaza (as a community center) of Mexico City’s Historic Center was being struggled over and negotiated by different social groups. This required exploring who was being affected and how. Were people resisting? If so, how? Were they moving to other areas, negotiating with state officials, protesting, using kin/social networks in new ways? In addition to identifying the multiple forms of struggles, I was interested in exploring the meaning and significance of the Historic Center and its plaza to the numerous groups involved. I concur with Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar’s understanding of meaning as fluid and symbolic and of material practices as embodied in particular people and places (at a variety of scales) (Alvarez, et. al. 1998). What did the plaza mean to different groups? Had these meanings changed with the implementation of the Programa? This entailed understanding the ways in which relations, interactions, activities, connections, and networks between and among different groups had changed in the context of entrepreneurial strategies of urban governance. For instance, I wanted street vendors to share with me important aspects of their personal
lives, their ties (or conflicts) with other vendors; their histories; their different forms of organization, what they do and no longer do in the context of the Programa; how their daily interactions had been reworked by the implementation of this policy, and whether new forms of interactions had developed across space. I thus had to pay particular attention to the experiences (emotional, personal, material, and so forth) of different groups of people, which I believed required gaining a level of trust that I was afraid I would not obtain. Admittedly, there was also an element of fear in terms of my personal security. In the last decade, street vendors in Mexico City have been portrayed – by the media specially – as a dangerous group, as a social cancer and as a mafia (CANACO, 1987; 1989). Furthermore, three weeks upon my arrival to Mexico City, I was unexpectedly in the midst of a violent confrontation between two of the largest vending organizations of the Historic Center. This street conflict resulted in the death of the husband of one of the main leaders (Salgado et. al., 2003). Similarly, for decades the Historic Center has been considered one of the most dangerous areas of the city. There are recommendations as to how to behave and what not to take when visiting this area of the city. Despite my intellectual understanding of the power relations embedded within the representation of particular groups, individuals, places, and so forth (politics of representation), I was anxious about both my safety and how I would gain the street vendors’ trust.

I realized that I had contradictory feelings about street vendors. On the one hand, there was an element of fear about my first encounters. I was going to have to enter their spaces, which were new and unknown to me. On the other hand, however, I believed that
street vendors were in a vulnerable position: I believed they had been marginalized for years from political decision making processes, and had recently been experiencing removal from the streets of the Historic Center. Their agency in a way frightened me, and the structures of constraints in which they were placed made me angry. These ambivalent feelings and thoughts originated from a multiplicity of factors. My initial fears were a product of my concern regarding the ability to gain trust, trying to hide my ‘difference’, and an imagined aggressiveness that stemmed from my own prejudice given the spatiality of my upbringing in a gated community. I also viewed them as a group of marginalized individuals who had been excluded from multiple spheres of life and were now facing further exclusion. Thus, I struggled both to come to terms with my otherness in the context of my fieldwork, but also to come to terms with how I was envisioning different groups of excluded ‘others’ in light of my relatively newly developed post-structural theoretical approach.

Some street vending organizations, for instance, wanted to know who I was, particularly those that were threatened by the practices of the Programa. Before agreeing to grant me an interview, I was asked who I was, what I wanted; on many occasions I was asked for some form of identification to prove that I was in fact a student conducting dissertation fieldwork. Their concern regarding my identity made sense, since many street vending organizations were in a vulnerable position in the context of the Programa and they were cautious as to whom they would allow access to their organization. However, I was troubled by the uncertainty of how to define myself in front of them. What aspect of my multiple identities should I reinforce and what should I ignore? Would
they trust me more if I say I am Mexican, a student, even a foreigner? Although much has been said about the privileged ‘gaze’ of the researcher (Huey-Jacobs, 2002), I was the object of their gaze. No matter how honest I was about my multiple identities, however, I soon realized street vendors had already constructed an image of who I was. This caught my attention one day when the leader of an organization introduced me to some of the members. She gathered a dozen vendors on the street and introduced me by saying:

“…Comrades, this is Veronica. She is a journalist who is doing a report on the Programa de Rescate and she is interested in knowing how we are dealing with this difficult situation. Please be kind to her and offer her your help in anything she might need.” A journalist? After her introduction I said hello and introduced myself to everyone as a student. Despite my efforts to explain who I was and what I was interested in studying, I realized that many street vendors saw me as a journalist. It is at this point that I realized that I was a “conceptual anomaly” (Kondo, 1990) to many of the people with whom I interacted. I was a journalist in the eyes of many street vendors; a fresa to others; a niña to many state officials; a gringa to others, and a researcher to many local shop owners.

2.4 RELATIONAL POSITIONALITY IN THE FIELD

Just as my earlier structuralist perspective filtered through much of my original research questions and theoretical standpoints, as I will show in this section, it also affected the methodology I employed. I decided to employ participatory action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000) in my engagements with people living, working, and struggling in Mexico City’s Historic Center to explore the interconnections between and among
different groups and their spaces of interactions. This form of inquiry involved a
combination of different methods including observation, discussion, interactions,
performance and conversations. It also required engaging with individuals from various
groups to discuss, share, and debate over issues and events pertaining to, in this case,
changes in their daily lives. Through this methodology, I hoped to account for the stories
and voices of marginalized groups who were being systematically excluded from the
streets and plaza of the Historic Center. However, I was concerned with how my
multiple identities would permeate my research and the role these multiple ‘selves’ would
play in gaining acceptance and developing trust relations with the multiple groups of
people that were being differentially affected by this policy (as a güerita, for instance, I
was afraid of being associated with the state authorities).

The overall objective of my fieldwork was to address two sets of questions. The
first set of questions focused on the practices of power among and within different
institutions and agencies involved in both the development and implementation of the
Programa. The second set of questions were related to how the exclusionary practices of
the Programa were being struggled over and whether, throughout this process, the
Historic Center and its plaza were being reconstituted. Further, if this area was being
reconstituted, how was this process taking place?

To address these two sets of concerns, I triangulated (Flick, 1998; Fontana and
Frey, 2000) information gathered from a combination of archival work, interviews31,

31 All of the interviews were organized around semi-structured, open-ended questions and
discussions through the use of narratives. In critical ethnography, this approach provides
space for individuals to voice their experiences, knowledge, concerns, and necessities. It
participant observation, and focus groups with members of the various groups involved in the struggles over the plaza, as well as with different state officials responsible for the implementation and development of the Programa. I chose to triangulate from different sources because I wanted to understand the complexity of what was occurring in the Historic Center; a complexity which is only partially understood through one source. For instance, during one of my interviews with a leader of a street vending organization, I was interested in understanding the internal dynamics of the organization: when the organization was created, how many members it had, how the organization was sustained (economically), and so forth. One of the questions I asked her was “how much does each member have to pay to have a space on the street?” The leader replied:

“…nothing. We don’t function that way. Our comrades contribute in other ways. For example, they clean the streets in the morning and in the evening, they take care of each other and make sure that nobody is getting in trouble…that’s how we sustain this organization” (Personal Communication with leader of street vending organization, April, 2004)

However, when I conducted participant observation on the streets controlled by this organization, I observed that the leader would arrive every day at one end of the street and walk along the street recollecting a daily fee. The fee varied depending on the size of the vendor’s stand: the larger the stand, the higher the daily fee ($25-$50 Pesos a day). My underlying interest was not in whether the leader lied to me or not; rather, at issue was the observation that verbal communication often contradicts practices and allows respondents to make claims that are often unheard and overlooked by policy circles and legal discussions (Young, 2000).
actions taken; it is these contradictions that enriched my understanding of the Programa. It led me to ask different questions; it drew me to places, people, and situations that I had not anticipated. The interviews allowed me to hear particular voices and perspectives that were further enriched through observation, and vice versa. I found triangulation to be a useful way of identifying unanticipated contradictions, tensions, and liaisons between different people in different places.

I now turn to address the different methodological strategies applied to each of the sets of questions identified above regarding the development and implementation of the Programa and the resulting struggles.

2.4.1 Development and implementation of the Programa de Rescate

I view the development of the Programa in terms of practices of power involving multiple agencies within and beyond the state. Through my fieldwork, I identified a number of agencies and state institutions involved in its development. My initial intention was to conduct archival research in the numerous state institutions and analyze copies of official documents, minutes from committee meetings, early versions of the Programa and other official comunicados in these institutions. This objective had to change when I faced the numerous bureaucratic constraints and lack of ‘institutional memory’ embedded within many of the state’s institutions. In 2002, the first elected Federal government (under President Vicente Fox) developed – under the new Ley de Transparencia (Law of Transparency) – the Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Informacion Publica (Federal Institute for the access of Public Information – hereafter IFAI) as “an autonomous body
of public administration in charge of promoting and propagating the right of any
individual to access public information, while retaining the confidentiality of source”
(Diario Oficial, Junio 2002). Even though the IFAI has either encouraged or forced
different state institutions to make accessible information to the public, numerous
problems remained. First, state authorities were selective in defining the ‘public’ and they
would not release information to individuals who were not associated with a Mexican
institution. However, I was not the only one who was denied access to what I
considered important information; some state officials were also denied access. As one
recently hired state bureaucrat shared with me:

“…we’re trying, but it’s not easy because sometimes different institutions
of the state hide information and refuse to share it with our offices … and
its information which, strictly speaking should be in our control, since its
essential for the objectives of our office” (Personal communication,
Mejoramiento Integral del Centro Histórico, June 2, 2004)

Hence, as a student from a non-Mexican university, it was difficult to obtain
much of the necessary information from different state institutions. Second, I soon
realized that some critical information simply did not exist. Meeting minutes, for
instance, were rarely kept; when they were, they were not considered public.
Unfortunately, this left an important gap in understanding – officially – how decision
making processes took place, how the process was contested, and how specific strategies
change over time. A third problem was related to what I call lack of ‘institutional
memory’. Every administrative change (from the national level to the local level)

32 Or who did not have some sort of ‘connection’ (personal or otherwise) with a state
official.
involves the removal of the entire body of workers. Secretaries, directors, delegates, and other administrative official’s leave the position, taking all of the accumulated information with them. And in many cases become consultants for different organizations, state institutions, and the private sector. As such, important information gathered during the 4-6 year administration is lost or privatized, leaving the new administration with little knowledge on the institutions past involvement in public matters. I came to this realization one day when I asked a local delegate of the Historic Center for information on the number of street vendors in the Historic Center, his response was:

“…well, let me look and see if I have this information. I don’t think this office has that information anymore. You must know that I just got here – in October. So, even though the person that preceded me is still of part of the team, I am not sure she has that information or whether she would be willing to share it to me. But let me check and I will get back to you.” (Personal communication with sub-delegate of the Historic Center, November, 2003).

This was by no means the only case of a state official who admitted that information comes and goes with the individuals appointed in each administration. It was therefore difficult to find archival information regarding the actual decision making process.

33 He never got back to me, and never returned my phone calls. When I returned to his office, his secretary always claimed that he was busy!

34 I began my actual fieldwork in mid-July 2003, just prior to the elections for the Delegación. Officials refused interviews before the administrative change because they were getting ready to leave office. Then, months after the elections, the new officials would not agree to be interviewed because they had just came into office!
Parallel to my fieldwork I held a research position at *El Colegio de México* for seven months on a project funded by the World Bank and the government of Mexico City. The objective of the research project was to aid in the decision-making process regarding the construction of a new system of public transportation in Mexico’s capital city (MetroBus). The research team was responsible for developing mitigation strategies for the implementation of the MetroBus through an analysis of the multiple ways in which different social groups would be affected by the construction of this new system. I accepted this position for strategic reasons because I believed that this would situate me favorably for my own fieldwork. I approached shop owners and government officials with a level of authority by virtue of my association with *El Colegio* as well as with this specific project. Doors were opened, hence I gained access to information that would otherwise have been difficult to obtain. It is at this point that I experienced the spatiality of power in policy circles: deciding over other people’s lives, behind closed doors in publicly inaccessible government buildings. Participation in the project offered valuable insights into the way the local state functions. It is through this experience – in meetings and presentation with different representatives of local state institutions – that I realized that archival work would not be the best means for understanding how the *Programa* was struggled over in the process of its development. It is for this reason that I began relying almost fully on current (as opposed to past) documents (plans, programs, and other official documents), but more importantly on interviews.

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35 The project ran between July 2003 and January 2004. I will elaborate more on my participation in this project in Chapter Three.
To understand how the meaning and significance of the plaza were negotiated, and perhaps contested during the making of the Programa, I conducted a total of 30 open-ended, semi-structured interviews with local state authorities within different institutions at various spatial scales. Fifteen of these interviews were conducted with authorities within urban state institutions (the following Federal District Secretaries: Government; Tourism; Labor and Social Provision; Economic Development; Public Security; Social Development; Culture). Seven of the interviews were conducted with authorities at the territorial-district level (different offices within the district of Cuauhtemoc, which is where the Historic Center is located) and the District of Coyoacan (the second largest historical area of Mexico City, where numerous attempts have been made to revitalize the area). The remaining eight interviews were conducted with authorities in charge exclusively on issues pertaining to the Historic Center. I conducted different interviews with officials responsible for constituents at different scales because in 1997 efforts were made to decentralize urban decision-making processes from the Federal level to the local urban county level. It was in this context that different state bodies were created to address and interfere in the multiple context-specific problems pertaining exclusively to the city (pollution, crime, tourism, culture, and so forth), with relative autonomy from the mandates of the Federal government. Similarly, a process of decentralization began whereby fiscal power and relative autonomy of decision making processes was provided to the 16 territorial districts (delegaciones) of Mexico City. Yet, despite efforts made to continue decentralizing local responsibilities to the city districts and to the newly established state institutions, and opening up channels of
communication between and among these institutions, these offices are mere functional arms of the local government, with little say in decision-making processes. For example, each *delegación* has an office that deals specifically with issues pertaining to street vending activities. This office, however, has little legal authority over decisions regarding the nature of the issue and any decision must pass first by the Secretary of the Government of the Federal District (*Secretaria de Gobierno del Distrito Federal*, under the office of *Reordenamiento en la Via Publica*).

Despite the discursive decentralization process, I was nonetheless interested in exploring whether the different institutions involved in the development and implementation of the *Programa* had a clear sense of their responsibilities. I relied on initial contacts, and through a snowball method I identified other state authorities within the same institution or beyond (Gilchrist and Williams, 1999). My goal was to identify the different actors involved in the development of the *Programa* and to get a sense of their normative vision of the *Programa* and the plaza of the city’s Historic Center.

Though the snowball approach proved useful for establishing contacts with other key actors, I had to be very careful to whom I was being referred. My participation in the research project at *El Colegio* opened a number of doors within government circles. I was able to speak to city authorities who had been appointed special responsibilities in the implementation of the *Programa*. For instance, I interviewed the person in charge of making sure that the ‘rescued’ streets remained ‘rescued’ and empty of street vendors. Given the nature of his position, he was in constant contact with street vendors and was willing to connect me with the main leaders of street vending organizations within the
Historic Center. However, I was concerned that his position within the Secretary of Public Security and his type of antagonistic relations with street vendors would make it difficult for me to build a trustworthy relationship with street vendors. I believed that my interactions with street vendors and other participants of the so-called informal economy would be challenged if I were to be associated with a commonly perceived ‘enemy’ of the organizations. Hence, although the snowball method is certainly useful, it can also be problematic in terms of whom the researcher is associated with, given the referral.

Parallel to the workings of the public domain, in August, 2001, a consultancy council was developed with 125 “distinguished members of civil society, from intellectuals, artists and academics with full knowledge and personal attachment to the Historic Center of Mexico, in order to discuss, propose, reflect and recommend rescue actions for the area” (Programa de Rescate, 2001). This council is constituted by an executive committee led by Carlos Slim, whose function is to coordinate, elaborate, execute and provide continuity to the Programa. The newly developed foundation called the Foundation for the Historic Center (funded by TELMEX - Carlos Slim’s telephone company) has also played an essential role in the development of the Programa de Rescate. Thus, in addition to local state officials, I also conducted a total of five interviews with representatives within this private organization, including the director. Furthermore, I conducted three interviews with scholars from the University of El Claustro de Sor Juana, who were also part of the consultancy council.

The methodology applied to understand the implementation of the Programa was similar to that of used to understand the development of the policy. In addition to open-
ended interviews with state officials, I also conducted ten interviews with police officers who had been appointed to regulate particular areas of the plaza. The objective was to obtain information on the various strategies employed to pursue the objectives stated by the Programa. Furthermore, I was also interested in exploring whether these strategies had changed between their formulation and implementation and whether the strategies differed from the original plan and why. In addition, I conducted archival work in the Hemeroteca Nacional de México (National Newspaper Library of Mexico) to analyze recent newspapers, articles and reports of resistances led by street vendors, artisans and other participants of the informal economy and their possible relations with the police. This was undertaken with a view to identify more specific instances of struggle elaborated below.

2.4.2 Negotiating the Plaza

To identify and further investigate the emerging struggles among and within different social groups, I conducted archival work, interviews, and engaged in participant observation. My objective was to identify the social groups that were being differentially affected by the Programa, to then explore how they were struggling over the changes brought about by the policy. Among the different social groups that I identified were organizations of artisans and street vending organizations. It was necessary to understand how they arrived at their current situation, since many of these organizations date back to the 1950. Accordingly, I conducted archival research to identify newspaper reports that might reveal the socio-spatial organization within the plaza and surrounding streets of the
Historic Center and the political affiliations that affected their negotiation strategies. My aim was to gather information on the creation, development, and spatial relations of the main organizations on the plaza and to have insights regarding political affiliations of street vendors (and possibly artisans), how these connections emerged and their significance for their status and power relations.

In addition to the archival research, I conducted a total of fifty open-ended, semi-structured interviews with members of different social groups whom I identified as being affected by the Programa. I interviewed twenty street vendors affiliated with different organizations (some of the organizations were being removed from the streets and plaza and others were not). I also interviewed ten local entrepreneurs from the Historic Center; ten new residents; five old residents, and five non-wage workers (shoe shiners).

Finally, I engaged in participant observation in numerous demonstrations, protests marches, and rallies organized by different members of the groups affected by and involved in the Programa. I also took upon the task of becoming a street vendor for a week on one of the streets that was experiencing important transformations due to the Programa. To be able to engage in this form of inquiry, I had to establish a trustworthy relationship with the leader of an organization, to then be allowed to sell products on the streets. At first I was appointed to another street vendor and was responsible for helping him in his daily activities, but I was allowed to sell products on my own after I had established some level of trust among members of the organization. Selling products on the streets of the Historic Center became an essential component of my fieldwork, since it allowed me to be in direct contact with the ‘everydayness’ of street vending and the
problems that many of them were facing in the context of the Programa. Furthermore, I identified tensions that exist among street vending organizations, which were not identified during the interviews. I became familiarized with daily practices and interactions among different street vendors, between street vendors and their leader; between vendors and the police; between street vendors and local shop owners; and finally, between vendors and their daily customer.

To come to terms with what I encountered in my everyday life conducting fieldwork in Mexico, I began simplifying and categorized my surroundings in binaries: the powerful versus the powerless, the white versus the indigenous, the capitalist versus the working class, the rich versus the poor, the bad versus the good, the ‘rescued’ streets versus the ‘un-rescued’ streets, and so forth. My initial perception was permeated through these preconceived binaries. These a priori categories (binaries) came to play an important role in the organization of my initial activities in the field. I began my fieldwork by dividing the multiple streets of the Historic Center into three different categories. The first category – the ‘rescued’ streets as the local government called them – referred to the areas of the Historic Center from where street vendors, artisans, and residents had already been removed before my arrival. The second category alluded to the streets that would be ‘rescued’ in the period of my fieldwork. In other words, streets that had been announced as part of the Programa, but had yet not been touched. Finally, the third category – ‘un-rescued’ streets – was used to describe those streets of the Historic Center that were not contemplated as part of the Programa de Rescate. My rationale at first was purely organizational and descriptive. I believed that I needed to know the
‘where’ and the ‘who’ before I could move forward. Some of the general questions that guided this initial stage were: where was the Programa being implemented, who was being removed from the streets, where were they being moved to. At first, I believed that these ‘locational’ issues were an essential starting point for identifying groups who had already been removed or who had yet to be removed and position them with respect to wider connections, flows, and changes occurring in the Historic Center. I thought that this would then allow me to identify and select actors/groups with whom I would work more closely. I wished to establish contact with street vendors who had already been removed from the streets of the Historic Center, and find out where they were and whether they were or had resisted their removal. Although I was interested in the individuals and/or groups who had been allowed to ‘stay’ in the Historic Center (an issue that I will discuss in Chapter Four), my initial concern was with those who had been excluded. However, I soon realized that of those who were removed from the ‘rescued’ streets of the Historic Center, there were many that returned to the same streets, but under different conditions. For example, rather than setting up a metal or wooden stand on the street, some vendors returned to the streets from where they were originally displaced with a blanket to place their products on the floor. In this way, if the police arrived, they could easily pick up and leave. Things became messier than what I had anticipated.

Many have claimed that categorizing is a way of surviving and understanding our complex world (Cloke and Johnston, 2005). Dualisms are just one of the many strategies of classifying and simplifying our immediate and distant context. This messiness described above worried me because underlying my initial fieldwork stages was a belief
that categories such as ‘the rescued streets’ and ‘the un-rescued areas’ were mutually exclusive and fixed; or that the only element that connected binaries these was a negative construction. However, as Massey (1999) argued, binaries are not necessarily a negative aspect of organizing. The problem arises when “one is constructed as the negative of the other [and] constructed in thoroughly counterpositional ways, by the exclusion of the other” (Massey, 1999: 52). I defined the streets rescued and un-rescued streets, in relation to the presence and absence of street vendors, rather than beginning with a more nuanced approach by focusing on the interconnections among these binaries such that the resulting politics is nuanced to the complexities and fluidity of identities, categories, people, and places.

2.5 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS ON MY REFLECTIONS

Reflexivity is an on-going and never ending process that requires a constant evaluation of the self and its changing context. There are critical moments/decisions in ones’ life when reflexivity is an almost self-evident process. Searching for graduate schools, thinking about funding for research, going into the field, writing a dissertation, looking for jobs, changing locations, and so forth are all experiences that require thoughtful and informed decisions. These are all moments which have the potential of triggering a number of critical reflexive thoughts. But there are other – more mundane – moments in which these thoughts might be taken for granted and left unexplored. My experience in the field was one of these unusual moments that stimulated an internal thought-process that lead me to
explore aspects of my life that I had taken for granted. As I elaborated in this chapter, my embeddedness in structuralist literature and education barred me from thinking though the multiplicity of ways in which different people practice and negotiate power.

My intention here is not to paint a ‘before’ and ‘after’ picture. The material with which I have engaged is an on-going process, with which I struggle to come to terms as I write this manuscript. As post-colonial and feminist scholars have long argued, the position of the author matters and affects the stories that are told (Bondi, 1997; Chacko, 2004; England, 1994; Hartsock, 1987; Moss, 1995; Nast, 1994). However, I stress the need to recognize that one’s position changes with respect to the theories and literature that one draws from to understand a particular issue.

In the following chapter, I explain some of the nuances of socio-spatial exclusion. I achieve this through a critical analysis of the literature that attracted me to Mexico City’s Programa: theories that discuss the notion of the entrepreneurial city. I begin by questioning the unilateralist claims underlying much of the entrepreneurial governance literature, and use the case of Mexico City to show how entrepreneurial urban governance is not a unilateral process, but rather a practice of power that is contested, struggled over and resisted by groups of affected citizens (street vendors, artisans, residents, state officials, and local entrepreneurs). My objective is to illustrate: how the management of urban space is multidimensional; how the state is internally differentiated and often conflicted. I show how city authorities implement incoherent policies that cannot be reduced to binaries such as ‘entrepreneurial’ and ‘managerial’. 
CHAPTER 3

MEXICO CITY: AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY?

3.1 INTRODUCTION

My visits to the Historic Center were limited for the first month of my fieldwork to the daylight hours when I conducted interviews with state authorities, shop owners, residents and street vendors, or observed the various movements on the streets and central plaza. According to the Secretary of Public Security of Mexico DF, the Historic Center is the most dangerous area of the city, with an average of seventeen crime-related activities per day, adding up to more than six-thousand per year (Llanos and Romero, 2003). This sort of information, together with my personal experiences in the area, led me to avoid the Historic Center after seven pm, at least until I felt more familiar with the movements and overall rhythms of the area. By that time of the evening, street vendors were usually packed and gone, shops were closed, rush-hour traffic was dying, offices were empty and dark, and tourists were back in their hotels. The overall serenity and darkness on the streets initially made me feel uncomfortable.
As my familiarity with the Historic Center increased, however, I became more comfortable. One cool autumn day, I decided to change my usual fieldwork routine and go ‘have fun’ in the Historic Center and explore the nocturnal rhythms of the area. A free outdoor concert organized by the city government was held at the central plaza. The concert formed part of the DFiesta policy implemented in March 2003, by the city’s Secretary of Tourism to enhance national and international tourism. The DFiesta was implemented by the Secretary of Tourism of Mexico City who, in coordination with the Secretary of Culture, Secretary of Finance, Secretary of Government, Secretary of Social Development and Secretary of Public Security developed a program to encourage the influx of national and international tourists. According to the general director of tourist promotion:

“DFiesta is a policy that has two interrelated objectives. The first is to improve the image of the city; and the second is to generate larger flows of national and international tourists. Unfortunately, Mexico City is a place that is associated – for logical reasons – to violence, traffic, pollution, and crime. All of these things obviously scare the tourists away. DFiesta is precisely geared at changing the image of the city overall, but with emphasis on certain areas, particularly the Historic Center” (Personal Communication, General Director of Tourist Promotion, Secretary of Tourism of Mexico DF, May 27, 2004)

Although the objective of DFiesta was to improve the image of the city as a whole, certain areas were given priority. The Historic Center was among the most important areas targeted by the DFiesta policy. Similarly, the Programa, although it was implemented by a different state institution – the Fideicomiso del Centro Historico – also targeted the improvement and beautification of the Historic Center. The implementation
of the Programa de Rescate and the DFiesta policy could have not been a better context for my interest in exploring entrepreneurial urban governance ‘on the ground’.

Underlying both the Programa and the DFiesta was an attempt by city authorities and private investors to make Mexico City and its Historic Center the cultural capital of the country by promoting the area as the most important center of cultural, historic, and artistic entertainment as well as the core for sporting events and business-related activities (ibid.).

As I stepped out of the subway station on the night of the concert, I was amazed at the number of people in the plaza waiting for the concert to begin: from children and teenagers, to elderly and young parents with babies. More than just the number of people, however, the most striking aspect of this event was the general class/race characteristics of the crowd: they were mostly working class, indigenous and mestizos. Admittedly, this caught me off guard since I was expecting a different crowd, one that fit into the ‘new’ image that the Programa sought to construct; an image based on the yuppification (Hernandez, 2004) of the Historic Center. The crowd I expected to encounter was the same crowd that spent hours chatting with friends in the recently constructed Starbucks, or the crowd that now rents or owns the newly built apartments of Carlos Slim in the Historic Center; a crowd that visits the large Santa Fe mall, or spends time wandering

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36 The Santa Fe area, at the western outskirts of Mexico City, is one of the newest financial and commercial areas in Mexico City. Santa Fe Shopping Mall (located in the Santa Fe area) was opened in 1993 and is now the largest shopping mall in Latin America. See Madrid (2004) for an analysis of the new springing millionaire gated communities in Santa Fe. Furthermore, the Santa Fe mall was featured in Mexican Romeo and Juliet love story about class differences in Fernando Sariñana’s 2002 youth film called Amar te duele.
through and shopping at the expensive stores of Polanco. At first glance the DFiesta policy can be interpreted as an additional expression of entrepreneurial urban governance, whereby city authorities engage in image-making strategies to attract inward investment and consumer dollars through festival events (Harvey, 1989b). However when analyzed more closely the audience at which this particular policy is aimed differs considerably from the spectators contemplated both by the entrepreneurial literature as well as from the goals expressed by the Programa officials. How, then, should I understand the seemingly contradictory nature of the Programa’s exclusionary objectives on the one hand, against the more ‘populist’ practices of the DFiesta on the other?

I was very excited about the time-space I was in; I felt I was at the heart of the implementation of what urban scholars have long identified happening in the US and European cities. It was not until I was faced with the unexpected crowd on the night of the concert promoted by the DFiesta policy that I began questioning how ‘entrepreneurial’ Mexico City really was. As I paid closer attention to the practices of the local state and the various urban policies implemented by the newly elected left-wing governor Andres Manuel Lopéz Obrador (hereafter Lopéz Obrador) I became more interested in their seemingly contradictory objectives. For example, different urban policies concerned how they were pitched at a wide range of different urban actors across multiple axes of difference. For instance, Lopéz Obrador’s public housing policy implemented in 2001 improves housing conditions for the urban poor who live in the outskirts of the city; the Tarjetas para Adultos Mayores (supplementary monthly benefits for the urban senior citizens), a monthly payment, helps senior citizens over seventy
years of age by compensating their low pension rates; education policies target the infrastructure of existing schools; other programs provide school supplies for children, computers for schools, food packages, and grants and scholarships to low-income students; and the construction of the segudos pisos (second floor) had the objective of improving the quality of travel for private automobile owners by significantly reducing traffic congestion during rush-hour.

Through my archival work and my interaction with different state authorities, I paid closer attention to the multiplicity and sometimes contradictory policies implemented by the newly elected left-wing government. In addition to the particularities of each policy, one aspect that caught my attention and spurred my initial curiosity was the political context in which these policies emerged. The Programa was launched shortly after the winning election of Lopéz Obrador of the left-wing Partido Revolucionario Democático (Democratic Revolutionary Party, hereafter PRD). I could not understand how a progressive and leftist Mayor who claimed to “govern for the poor” (Entrevista/Andrés Manuel Lopéz Obrador, 2005) would engage in an urban revitalization strategy that resulted in the exclusion of large sectors of the urban poor population such as street vendors, artisans, and poorer residents of the Historic Center. In a speech given shortly after the implementation of the Programa, Lopéz Obrador stated that:

“We will continue moving forward with our social development programs, which are not, as our adversaries suggest, examples of ‘populism’ or ‘paternalism’. Those are the terms they use to describe any efforts made to help the poor. To hell with the right that qualifies as ‘populist’ any
program targeted at improving the life of those at the bottom. Our government will continue governing for the poor; *arriba los de abajo!*” (Speech by López Obrador, Mayor of Mexico City. Ramirez, 2002).

López Obrador clarified that the city’s budget would not be used to subsidize entrepreneurs and bankers, but only to improve the conditions of the majority of the city’s population; notably, the poor (Ramirez, 2002). Yet he was at the same time signing agreements with Carlos Slim, the wealthiest man in Mexico and Latin America, to ‘rescue’ the city’s symbolic heart (Venegas, *et. al*, 2001). The claims made by López Obrador and the implementation of *Programa* appeared incoherent. Furthermore, the practices of the *DFiesta* seemed to contradict the different objectives and strategies identified within the urban governance and image-making literature.

I reflect on the apparent contradictions of state practices because, as I will elaborate in this chapter, they are central to understanding the nature of socio-spatial exclusion in what has been denoted ‘the entrepreneurial city’. The contradictions I identified made me question notions such as ‘the entrepreneurial city’, which essentialize and reduce the complexities of urban life and city politics into one, coherent and homogenous category. My intention in this chapter is to think about urban politics in a less coherent way, and in the process think about the multiplicity of actors, possibilities, alliances, conflicts, and power relations inherent in decision-making processes and in urban change (broadly defined). In this chapter, I explore what Ettlinger (2004) notes as the “multitude of non-conforming cases that are too important to suppress by implicitly or explicitly conceptualizing them as exceptions, outliers, deviants, and residuals, or more generally, as analytical noise” (Ettlinger, 2004: 29). My objective, thus, is to
disentangle state practices and value their incoherence to highlight the heterogeneity and difference within decision-making processes, and to theorize the underlying multiple practices of power embedded in urban policies.

Much of the structuralist urban literature interprets policies like the Programa as inevitable aspects of cities’ tendencies towards “structured coherence” (Harvey, 1985b) under urban (entrepreneurial) governance. At issue, and a point that I want to stress in this chapter is not whether the Programa is entrepreneurial or not. Certainly some of the practices of this policy can be characterized as entrepreneurial. Following Ettlinger’s (2004) critique of structured coherence regarding production, I emphasize that a “structured coherence” perspective on urban politics and change ignores ‘other’ policies, ‘other’ actors, and ‘other’ strategies that may contradict the so-called entrepreneurial agenda. I do not view the D Fiesta as an outlier to urban entrepreneurial practices, nor do I explore the Programa as a deviant to the left-wing project of Lopéz Obrador, as much of the structuralist urban literature would argue. Rather, my interest lies in thinking about difference and heterogeneity within state practices – some which might appear to be contradictory – as a “potential gateway for the expression of agency” (Ettlinger, 2004: 33). Looking at the state and its practices as non-monolithic allows for thinking about the greater range of actors involved in urban change and in decision-making processes, beyond the exclusive domain of the state and the private sector. State authorities – including the city Mayor – thus engage in what I call multiple incoherent strategic alliances with different social groups who have different and sometimes conflicting concerns. While Lopéz Obrador is involved in a strategic alliance with Carlos Slim, who
has particular interests, objectives, and normative visions of the Historic Center, he is at the same time developing and strengthening alliances with certain leaders of street vending organizations, each with their own interests, objectives, and normative views of the Historic Center. These alliances help bring forward certain agendas that would otherwise potentially be ignored (Alvarez, 1997).

Many of the alliances between the local urban state and different social groups that I identified while conducting fieldwork have a history that can be traced back to the formation of the Mexican state under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) at the turn of the twentieth century. Hence, to understand the multiple and seemingly contradictory alliances between the local state and different social groups in contemporary Mexican urban politics (specifically in the context of the Programa), it is important to explore the history of the Mexican state, particularly with regards to their formation and changing composition in post-revolutionary Mexico. Through a historical perspective, I explore the changing relationship between the Mexican state and different social groups to show how certain urban marginalized groups managed to exert influence over the workings of the state. My objective is to show that social actors are not necessarily subsumed by the power of ‘the state’; rather they are agents who have the ability to exert influence and pressure on the workings of the state and its policies via their elected representative. In doing so, I engage in debates about the nature of state-society relations, broadly construed.

Scholars interested in Mexican state-society relations have argued that the political structure in Mexico, specifically during the seventy-year rule of the Partido
Revolutionario Institucional (PRI), was based on a clientelist system distinguished by hierarchical relations and unequal sets of exchange between the state and its societal base (Brachet-Marquez, 1992). The Mexican clientelist system worked in conjunction with the development of a political camarilla, or ‘clique’. Underlying the patron-client hierarchical relationship was a camarilla that provided support and a social network through which offices and other benefits were exchanged (Camp, 1990). According to Lomnitz (1982) politics in Mexico “is made possible by the presence of significant channels of solidarity through the patron-client network” (Lomnitz, 1982: 52).

Consequently, scholars have argued that a clientelist system fed on unequal forms of exchange and bargaining relations – both formal and informal – between state institutions and a horizontally divided societal base. Under the PRI the party leadership satisfied the

37 Much of the literature on state-society relations in Mexico, notably assertions of a clientelist political system during the PRI years, represents theoretically an important departure from early ‘statist’ perspectives (Evans, 1995; Jenkins, 1991). Early statist views on state-society relations argued that an effective state was autonomous from “the dominant class or class fractions, which enables the state to pursue goals that do not reflect the interest of these groups and may even go against their short term interest” (Jenkins, 1991: 200). Conversely, clientelist perspectives on state-society relations concur with revised statist perspectives that emphasize the networked state and the changing composition of coalitions between the state and its societal base (Evans, 1995; Migdal, 1994; Moon and Prasad, 1994). This perspective highlights the “blurred and moving boundaries between states and societies, and views states and societies as mutually transforming” (Migdal, 1994: 3). Revised statist perspectives have made important contributions to understanding the effectiveness of the state vis-à-vis its ties with society, suggesting a “state-in-society” approach (Migdal et. al., 1994). Hence, different state policies and programs cannot be attributed exclusively to the domain of the state because the stated goals of the state have been in many cases influenced and shaped – in formal and informal ways – by groups that are not conventionally considered as part of the “state”.

demands of its different constituencies in return for political support – in public events, political rally’s, public party campaigns, and so forth. In return for participating in public presidential campaigns, for example, PRI leaders granted the participants gifts that ranged from food and clothes, to neighborhood services such as paved roads, and underground drainage.

Clientelist literature on state-society relations highlights the *networks* established between state institutions and different interest groups within society, beyond merely the capitalist class. A clientelist approach thus recognizes that labor unions, for instance, peasant groups, or the popular sector play an important role in shaping the governing structure and practices of the state. Alternatively, structuralist literature on urban governance discusses changing state-society relations by highlighting the changing role of the state with respect to private capital, arguing that the state ultimately serves the interest of urban elites and private investors (notably capital). Little attention is given to the role of non-elite groups in processes of urban change. Contrary to urban structuralist literature that addresses the changing composition of networks between the state – broadly defined – and the capitalist class, clientelist literature delves into the changing structure of the state recognizing the role of ‘other’ interests groups that go beyond the capitalist class.

When compared to urban structuralist accounts on state-society relations, the clientelist literature offers a broader analysis of the structure of the state and the changing relations between state and different interest groups (beyond capital). Clientelist analyses highlight the unevenness of power relations materialized through unequal relations of
exchange between state authorities and different social groups. The state, in this sense, is theorized as the central body that holds power over different social groups through manipulative strategies. As Brachet-Márquez (1992) argued, “in clientelist structures of authority, power is vested in the top individual (the boss, sovereign, or head of clan) who personally decides how to distribute resources according to personal preferences” (Brachet-Marquez, 1992: 94). Further, different social groups such as labor unions and peasant groups remain marginal to the workings of the state and subsumed to party interests. Hence, both urban structuralist literature and clientelist analyses of state-society relations, although distinct both substantively and in terms of their underlying assumptions, share a similar conclusion about the role of marginalized groups in shaping state policies and outcomes. Both bodies of literature pay little attention to the active role that disenfranchised groups play in influencing policy outcomes and practice.

My objective in this chapter is to disentangle the state by focusing on the incoherence and contradictory nature of state practices. My interests in exploring the incoherence of urban politics stemmed partly from the interactions I had with the city government while I collaborated on a research project at El Colegio de Mexico that was funded by the World Bank and the Government of Mexico City (GDF). In July 2003 the GDF was in the process of implementing a new and sustainable public transportation system in Avenida Insurgentes, one of the most important avenues of the city. This form of public transportation has become popular in many cities in Latin America, including, Curitiba, Sao Paulo, and Bogota. For the GDF to be eligible for funding from the WB one

39 See Wade (1996) and Stiglitz (2002) for ethnographic accounts on the incoherence and contradictory politics of global institutions such as the World Bank.
general condition had to be met: the GDF had to conduct research on the effects of the new transportation system on different sectors of the urban population who live and work in Insurgentes. The identified sectors of the population were local shop owners, residents of the area, street vendors and other individuals who depended on public spaces for their daily livelihood, bus drivers, and carriers. I agreed to collaborate on this project because I thought it would be a good opportunity to establish contacts with different state authorities and because it would provide me with an institutional affiliation to support my research. My involvement in this project was critical to my dissertation fieldwork since it shed light on decision-making practices within the local state, how information becomes centralized in one state institution, the difficulties of accessing that information, and how different state representatives negotiate their sometimes conflicting interests and perceptions of change. Further, it shed light on the internal workings of the local state and the limited communication among different state institutions with respect to the development of policy.

In the process of disentangling the state and highlighting its contradictory practices, I challenge structuralist and clientelist arguments on the role of marginalized groups in urban politics. My goal is to de-essentialize state practices through a perspective that recognizes that the state is not monolithic, and thus its ability to exert power over different social groups is not unilateral. Non-essentialist depictions of the state help reveal existing contradictions within state practices that can be explained by
highlighting the changing relations between the state and its societal base. Specifically, I discuss how the evolution of the post-revolutionary Mexican state provided opportunities for urban marginalized groups to influence the workings of the state.

In the following section, I provide a more detailed account of the *multiple incoherent strategic alliances* by exploring the seemingly contradictory dimensions of policies aimed at changing the image of Mexico City’s Historic Center. I focus specifically on the existing contradictions between two policies (*DFiesta* and the *Programa*), which have sought to re-imagine this particular place, and explore their incoherence in terms of the practices, objectives, and social constituents. In the final section of the chapter, I present the case of the relatively young post-revolutionary Mexican state (formed in the early twentieth century) and its evolving ties with the PRI. I argue that understanding state-society relations in Mexico requires thinking about the formal and informal networks established between the PRI and different social groups. Through a historical perspective I show how different social groups – specifically urban marginalized groups like street vendors – have managed to exert influence over the workings of the state and have thus undermined the workings of the *Programa*. Highlighting the role that urban marginalized groups have played in the evolving structure of the Mexican state is critical towards explaining the apparently contradictory policies of the current local state in Mexico City.
3.2. MULTIPLE INCOHERENT STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

“...why has the neo-liberal model failed? It has failed not only because of its structural defects, but because of the fundamentalism of the technocrats who have applied this model in Mexico. Not only have they adhered to the recommendations of international financial organizations, but they have become fanatics and converted the recommendations into an ideology […] I am from the left. This means fighting for equality. The neo-liberal model has undeniably failed, but there are alternatives […] My administration in Mexico City does not run under the logic of the neo-liberal economic system…” (Interview with Andres Manuel Lopéz Obrador – Mayor of Mexico City. Flores, 2004; Venegas and Gallegos, 2004).

“…Never has so much money been destined to the poor as has been under this administration, which has irritated many people. And it bothers them even more now because we are in a period dominated by the neo-liberal model; a period where the most important criteria is that the state must be diluted to give way to the market. That is why our government has been accused of being ‘populist’ or paternalist; because we invest in the poor…” (Andres Manuel Lopéz Obrador – Mayor of Mexico City. Entrevista, 2005).

Neo-liberalism, understood as a system that encourages free-market enterprise as the best vehicle for the development of collective social well-being (Smith, 2002) has been identified as a new religion which “seems to be everywhere” (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 380), including in Mexico. For example, President Salinas’ (1988-1994) national economic plan was one of the most ambitious neo-liberal reforms in the history of post-revolutionary Mexico. One key element of Salinas’ administration was to open Mexico to foreign direct investment, thereby converting the nation from a state-led to a free-market economy (Harvey, 2005; Camp, 2003). In 1983 more than one thousand firms in Mexico were state owned; by the year 2000 there were less than 200 state-owned firms (Camp, 2003). As Macleod (2004) highlighted:
“In 1994, Forbes magazine’s list of the richest people of the world revealed that Mexico’s economic restructuring had produced twenty-four billionaires. Of these, at least seventeen participated in [Salinas’] privatization program, buying banks, steel mills, sugar refineries, hotels and restaurants, chemical plants, and a telecommunications firm as well as concessions to operate firms within newly privatized sectors of the economy, such as ports, private toll highways, and cellular and long distance telephony” (Macleod, 2004: 100-101).

The privatization of state owned financial (Banamex, Bancomer, Serfin) and non-financial enterprises (such as Mexico’s monopoly telecom provider, Teléfonos de México - TELMEX), gave rise to a new elite, primarily an elite of private investors seeking to remain competitive in international financial markets. Carlos Slim, the wealthiest man in Latin America and an active player in the development of the Programa de Rescate was among the new class (Chua, 2003; Macleod, 2004; Harvey, 2005). How can we understand the role that people such as Carlos Slim play in urban change?

3.2.1 Urban neo-liberal strategies? Understanding the D Fiesta and the Programa

My objective is to show the incoherence of state policies by exploring the contradictions between the D Fiesta policy and the Programa de Rescate. The D Fiesta policy seeks to change the image of the city and attract local and international tourists to Mexico City. The Programa has as its general objective the revitalization and beautification of the city’s Historic Center. As I will show, although both policies have drawn particular attention to the Historic Center, their practices, alliances, audiences, and underlying assumptions have important contradictions that create a number of tensions in the symbolic hearth of the capital city.
Urban scholars interested in neo-liberal expressions at the local/urban scale have identified a number of changes in the structure, management, organization, and role of cities in local and national economic development (Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Judd and Ready, 1986; Kirlin and Marshall, 1988; Peck, 2001). Urban governments have had to find new ways to attract inward investment. Hence, urban politics today are characterized by policies geared at improving cities’ competitiveness in the global economy.

Structuralist literature concerned with the political economy of contemporary cities argues that economic restructuring has caused a general shift in local states’ concern, “with broad-based welfares and social policies (the provision of welfare, services and collective consumption) to the adoption of a more outward-oriented stance designed to foster and encourage local development and economic growth” (Hubbard and Hall, 1998: 13). Accordingly, neo-liberalism has affected state structures in two ways: first, by shifting governing power from the national to the local (urban) scale; second, by changing the nature of urban policies from a welfare-oriented government to outward-oriented governance.

It is in this context that the notion of ‘the entrepreneurial city’ has emerged. Urban entrepreneurial strategies developed by public-private partnerships under urban governance prioritize the need to compete for investment over, for example, the provision of local services. For these strategies to be successful, a city must be attractive, not only in terms of favorable taxation policies and low labor costs, but also in terms of its overall image (Boyle, 1999; Ward, 1998). Hence, an important feature of entrepreneurialism

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40 See the special issue of Antipode (Vol 43, issue 3, June 2002) on the neo-liberal city.
among urban governments has been the attention devoted to transforming the image of the city (Ward, 1998). A number of cases have shown that cities around the world increasingly adopt policies aimed at representing the city as an attractive place for local and global investment (Chang, 1997; Cochrane and Jonas, 1999; Ghannam, 1997; Hiller, 2000; Nagel, 2000; Neill, 2001; Olds, 1997; Stewart, 1999; Ward, 2000). Re-imagining the city can be achieved through the implementation of a diverse set of strategies, from the creation of consumer attractions centers – such as malls, sport stadiums, convention centers, cultural spaces – to the reconstruction of the urban built environment (Crilley, 1993a; Hubbard, 1995; Knox, 1997). What stands out is the need for cities to appear as innovative, exciting, creative, and safe places to live, visit, invest, play and consume in (Harvey, 1989b). Underlying these strategies is the notion of cities as products to be sold, promoted and marketed to the global economy (Chang, 1997; Goodwin, 1993).

When I arrived in Mexico City in June 2003, the city seemed to be engaging in similar image-making economic strategies as those described by numerous authors interested in local economic development and urban politics. In March, 2003 the government of Mexico City, through the Secretary of Tourism of the Federal District announced the establishment of a new slogan: ‘Mexico City: capital of entertainment, culture, and sports’. Through the involvement of private investors (predominantly those involved in the restaurant, hotel, and entertainment industry) and multiple local state institutions, including the Secretary of Culture, Finance, Public Security, and Secretary of State, the objectives were to:

“…revamp the image of the city in the eyes of its visitors and its inhabitants; make the best out of the enormous potential of this city to
increase tourist flows towards the capital city, particularly during the weekends… The goal is to diffuse a positive and attractive image of Mexico city, promoting its enormous cultural richness, its wide variety of entertainment activities and its extraordinary quality of services, making it the best center of culture, entertainment and sport activities in the nation” (Secretaría de Turismo, September, 2003).

The way in which these broad objectives materialized on-the-ground is through the implementation of what became known as the DFiesta en el DF policy. This is one of many attempts by Mexico City’s authorities to re-imagine and change the image of the city to attract global, national, and local investment.41

The DFiesta policy has two interrelated strategies to improve the overall image of the city to attract local and foreign investment. The first strategy is based on increasing national and international tourist flows by marketing the city. Different approaches have been developed to fulfill this objective. For instance, publicity campaigns have been launched through the local and national media, television (private companies such as TV Azteca and Televisa), radio and newspapers42; billboards have been placed throughout the city’s public spaces to announce different events; new websites – including a website for

41 Other examples of such policies include the Program Corredor Reforma-Centro Histórico, a financial/tourist corridor developed in coordination with the Programa de Rescate. The objective is to ‘beautify’ Paseo de la Reforma, one of the most important avenues of the city, by improving the lighting, decorating the avenue with seasonal flowers, changing the middle-lane from cement blocks to fancy small pyramid structures, etc. Another example of urban policies aimed at revamping the image of the city is the new program of public security, “Ciudad Segura” (the ‘Safe City’). Further, in compliance with World Bank guidelines for urban transportation, the new MetroBus is a transportation policy which has the objective of providing a more sustainable form of public transportation for ‘greening’ the city.

42 The government placed the DFiesta adds in a wide range of national newspapers; from left-leaning papers like La Jornada, to more center-right newspapers like Reforma.
the Secretary of Tourism of Mexico City\(^{43}\) – have been created to promote different areas of Mexico City; new tourist information booths were placed throughout the city’s main tourist centers (see Figure 3.1); and annual newsletters have been distributed to national and international travel-agencies promoting particular tourist sites in Mexico’s capital city. Furthermore, and as part of the first general objective concerned with increasing tourist flows into the city, the \textit{DFiesta} policy has promoted inexpensive weekend packages that include transportation, lodging, meals, and planned visits around specific parts of the city. This has involved partnerships with hotels, restaurants, Mexican airlines (such as \textit{Mexicana}, \textit{AeroMexico} and \textit{Aeromar}), and other tour operators. Finally, \textit{DFiesta} has actively participated in the promotion of the recently constructed \textit{Torre Mayor} (which is proudly advertised as the highest building in Latin America) as well as the promotion of a new luxurious hotel built in the Historic Center to house business tourists (and serve as a conventions center for national and international events business events).

\(^{43}\) The new website of the Secretary of Tourism of Mexico city is http://www.mexicocity.gob.mx/
Figure 3.1: Tourist information booths. Three are located in the Historic Center and there are several others in places such as Coyoacán, San Angel, Zona Rosa, and Paseo de la Reforma.
Fig. 3.2: Fun in the Historic Center. One of the city government’s first strategies to encourage festival events in the Historic Center: fun for all the family at the circus.
The second objective of the *DFiesta* is concerned with increasing and fomenting cultural, entertainment and business activities in the city’s Historic Center. A variety of events have been organized to accomplish this objective. There are free concerts at the central Plaza (Zócalo) by musicians who otherwise perform in expensive private spaces. Further, the implementation of seasonal festival events in the central plaza of the Historic Center such as spring festivals, gay parades, book festivals, celebrations for the day of the dead, free summer circus for children, international marathon, and so forth (see Figure 3.2). In addition to these activities quite successful strategy put forward by the *DFiesta* authorities is a new double-decker bus tour that provides a four-hour ride around selected areas of the capital city.

The *Programa* on the other hand, seeks to revitalize and beautify Mexico City’s Historic Center in order to attract new foreign and domestic investment. The underlying objective is to address what the city government has defined as the ‘crisis of the Historic Center’; a crisis resulting from depopulation that began in the late 1970s and reached its pinnacle in the mid-1980s after the earthquake of 1985 that affected mainly the areas of the city’s center. In the last twenty years the Historic Center has lost more than forty percent of its population. The demographic transformations that have taken place in the Historic Center in the last thirty years area associated with broader economic, political, environmental, and social processes. For instance, the decrease in manufacturing

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44 A wide variety of bands have played in the Zócalo of the Historic Center. Most of shows have particular appeal to working-class and middle-class sectors. Such is the case of salsa groups like los Van Van, or Willie Colon; the famous Mexican signer Juan Gabriel; or pop bands like OB7, Alejandro Sanz. However, *DFiesta* has also organized some concerts with more politically active bands such as Manu Chao, Pablo Millanes, Café Tacuba which tend to attract a wider audience – with respect to age, race, and class.
activities (such as small textile, confectionary, and wholesale industries) many of which were located in the Historic Center closed or moved to other parts of the country. The economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s contributed to increasing unemployment and triggered the growth of street vending activities in the area. Other cited factors that have contributed to the overall depopulation of the Historic Center are: the frozen rent laws implemented in the 1940’s as a way of protecting low-income residents led to the deterioration of buildings and an inadequate quality of housing supply in area. Furthermore the relocation of the largest wholesale market of the nation (Central de Abastos) from the Historic Center to the outskirts of the city added to the declining circulation and movement of goods, services, and people in the area.

Thus, it is in the light of the crisis of the Historic Center that Mexico City’s political and business leaders wish to re-imagine the Historic Center and make it an attractive place in which to live, and invest. The Programa has followed three general phases. The first stage involves the development of a commercial corridor (Zócalo - Reforma) to link the Historic Center’s main Plaza (Zócalo) to Paseo de la Reforma business district. This phase includes the construction of the largest office and residential tower in Latin America, Torre Mayor; a hotel operated by a multinational company; a new nine-theater cinema; a larger and more visible police presence on city streets (see Figure 3.3); and the construction of coffee shops, restaurants and bars along the corridor.

A second stage entails the renovation and beautification of Alameda, one of Mexico City’s oldest and largest public parks. Part of the renovation process has involved the removal of hundreds of street vendors located in the park. Finally, a third stage aims to
‘revitalize’ and ultimately ‘repopulate’ the Historic Center, its Zócalo and its surrounding area; this too involves the removal of many thousands of street vendors and low-income residents. Central to this phase is improving the quality of the built environment through the renovation of buildings, infrastructure improvements – such as drainage pipes, running water, electricity – and the renovation of the facades of a number of historical residential buildings. Another important element is the installation of security and surveillance systems, including closed circuit television in strategic corners and other public spaces of the Historic Center (see Figure 3.4), and the creation of a new police force – called citizen protection force – specifically to “protect, guide and inform people that come to the Historic Center” (Personal Communication, Director of Puesto de Mando, August, 2003).
Figure 3.3: The Charro police. Bilingual police dressed in traditional Mexican *Charro* clothing in the Alameda Park.
Figure 3.4: New CCTV security systems in the Historic Center. The caption says, “By simply pressing this button, you will be immediately connected to the audio and visual system of the police Command Post of the Historic Center.” (Revista Centro Historico: Guia para caminantes, 2003: 3)
The organization and structure of the city government had to be re-organized for the Programa to be implemented. For example, responsibilities related to the revitalization of the Historic Center were delegated to a new public office, the Fideicomiso del Centro Histórico (Historical Center Trust Fund). Although this entity already existed as a private organization, it was closed in November 2001 and reactivated in March 2002 as a public body fully dependant on funds provided by the local government.

My interest is in understanding urban policies such as the Programa not as a unilateral process with a coherent and monolithic state body involved in the decision making process; rather, I theorize state practices (materialized in policies) as conflictive, contested, resisted, and negotiated. Under this perspective the state is composed of multiple agents, each with their particular imaginaries and normative visions of what the Historic Center is and should be. Indeed, the development of the Programa was far from a straight-forward, unilateral process. There were competing views about its objectives; implementation strategies; underlying visions of the Historic Center and its plaza; and normative visions of who had the right to remain in the ‘new’ Historic Center. And, while some state officials were skeptical of Slim’s involvement (calling the project ‘Slim-City’), others believed it was the best way for the people to re-establish trust in the government. Further, state officials contested the involvement of Rudolph Giuliani as the main consultant for Mexico City’s new anti-crime policy; numerous respondents expressed to me the malinchista\textsuperscript{45} nature of Giuliani’s involvement, and indicated that,

\textsuperscript{45} The translation of Malinchista is ‘treacherous’.

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while their opinion was required during the hiring process, it was not included in the “real
decision making process” (Personal Communication with official of *Puesto de Mando*,
November, 2003).

The official document released by the *Fideicomiso* describes the four-year history
of the *Programa* as an “integral process that seeks to solve the numerous structural
problems which have materialized in the last twenty years in Mexico City’s Historic
Center. Problems related to the lack of economic and social well being of a large sector
of the Mexican population” (*Programa de Rescate*, 2002). In terms of the economic
aspects, the *Programa*’s guiding actions are: to increase the rental value of private real
estate investments in the area; to reactivate the area’s economy; and to generate jobs in
the area. The social aspects are: revitalize and recover the residential conditions of the
area; strengthen the embeddedness of families who reside in the area; solve the problem
of street vending, insecurity, poverty, and human deterioration (*Programa de Rescate*,
2002). The ‘new’ Fideicomiso was established as the central body to coordinate the
different actions carried out by the various state institutions and private investors. With
$50 million provided by the city government and $100 million from Carlos Slim, the
*Programa* established four specific plans of action which included renewing all
underground infrastructure and cabling (drainage pipelines, electric cables, and telephone

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46 Carlos Slim became involved through the creation of the Fundación Centro Histórico,
which was directly tied to his real estate agency (INBURSA) with funds from his
corporations, Grupo Carso and Teléfonos de México.
cables), refurbishing the facades of buildings, improving and increasing street lighting, and standardizing street infrastructure (garbage cans, newspaper stands, and shoe shiners chairs).

Through the involvement of local residents and entrepreneurs, this revitalization project became a collaborative plan aimed at increasing the participation and initiative of the local population. According to Lopéz Obrador:

“Neighborhood participation is essential. The ones who take care and are most aware of all the things that happen in the Historic Center are the residents and neighbors. We are trying to enhance their participation. The idea is to integrate them more and more into the maintenance process of this policy” (Lopéz Obrador, quoted in Revista Centro Historico: Guia para caminantes, 2003: 3)

The project began by concentrating specifically on the revitalization of thirty-four blocks (a total of thirteen streets, 40 square hectares and more than 500 estates) among the 666 blocks located in the Historic Center. Before it began, the Programa officials organized meetings with some residents and property owners of buildings located in the area. Each street was organized into a group called “Citizens in support of the improvement of the Historic Center”, constituted by residents and local entrepreneurs. Such organizations were responsible for insuring that the overall process, specifically the allocation of funds, ran smoothly. Furthermore, a renowned Mexican architect was allocated to each street to design and direct the construction and reconstruction of the facades. A total of $30,000 was assigned to a bank-account for each street representative. The representative managed and administered the resources provided by the local
government in coordination with the members of the street group. The idea of this collaborative plan was to “guarantee transparency in the management of economic resources and provide certainty and citizen participation in the actions taken by this new democratic government” (Programa de Arreglo de Fachadas, 2002).

Recently, collaborative planning has received attention from a wide range of scholars interested in urban policy and space (Atkinson, 1999; Elwood, 2002; Taylor, 2000). Although some authors suggest that collaborative planning forms part of the neo-liberal agenda characterized by the downsizing of the state (Lake & Newman, 2002), others scholars have argued that collaborative planning initiatives have offered new citizen involvements in urban policy. Following Elwood (2002), I argue that the two dimensions are not mutually exclusive, but rather work together in decision making processes. In the case of the Programa, however, the scope of participation of urban residents is limited specifically to the management of resources and not to further inclusion in the actual decision making process. The established “Citizens in support of the improvement of the Historic Center” is not a democratically elected neighborhood council in charge of listening and responding to the demands of the local residents, but rather a body of appointed individuals who – for different reasons – have been granted control over economic resources.

Parallel to the workings of the public domain, the private sector, through the newly developed foundation called the Foundation for the Historic Center (funded by TELMEX - Carlos Slim’s telephone company) has also played an essential role in the revitalization of Mexico City’s Historic Center. One of the main objectives of this
organization is to “make the Historic Center an area where people live, study, work, and have fun. In other words, bring life back to the area” (Personal Communication with Director of Historic Center Foundation. July 12, 2004). The way this process has been carried out is through the revitalization of specific buildings. With an investment of over $60 million, the Foundation – through Slim’s real-estate agency INBURSA – has bought over seventy buildings, refurbished them and converted them into high-income apartment residents (Monge, 2003).47

Underlying both the Foundation and the Fideicomiso’s discourse is a notion of the Historic Center as a void space; a space which is empty and in need of revamping. In addition, it is important how the Foundation has discursively constructed the Historic Center and its central plaza as a culturally and historically rich area with reminiscence of ‘traditional’ practices that still have the potential of being ‘rescued’. In October, 2002, the Foundation began publishing a new magazine entitled “Centro: Guia para Caminantes” (The Center: A guide for pedestrians). Funded by TELMEX, Sanborns, and other companies owned by Slim, this colorful monthly magazine seeks to, “enlighten the Mexican public of the Center’s hidden and forgotten magic” (Personal Communication with Director of Historic Center Foundation. July 12, 2004). More than sixteen issues have been published so far, each one with a detailed account of the history of different buildings and particular practices identified as unique to the Historic Center: gatherings

47 A total of approximately 400 new apartments have recently been offered by the real estate company (rents increased from an average of $200 before the Programa to $1000 afterwards)
in local cantinas (bars), classic danzón and salsa clubs, traditional wrestling matches, local stores that sell Mexican relics, traditional restaurants, and so forth. As the first issue of the magazine stated:

“Without doubt, this project is going to benefit a lot of people. It will make us feel proud of our roots and our culture. Historic Centers are places that give us identity, which belongs to the entire country and each and every one of us. When [Historic Centers] are deteriorated, it’s like having a deteriorated soul. But when they are in good conditions, one feels proud and shows it” (Revista Centro Histórico: Guía para caminantes, #1)

Among the numerous strategies implemented by the Foundation to attract residents to the area, Carlos Slim began by encouraging his own workers to move there. Thousands of jobs from Slim’s companies have been relocated from the city’s suburban areas to the Historic Center. In 2001, Slim purchased seven floors of the Historic Center’s landmark skyscraper – the Torre Latinoamericana – and has moved several of his TELMEX operations to the tower in the hopes of stimulating the workers to reside in the area. As Slim himself has expressed, “the best workplace is the one that is closest to your home” (McCosh, 2001). The strategies to repopulate the area, however, have been highly selective. It is not about having more people reside, visit, and play in the Historic Center; rather, it is also about attracting an exclusive group of people. As a new resident of the Historic Center expressed:

“Not anyone can rent or buy one of these apartments. I mean, obviously it’s selective because the rents are significantly higher. But it’s also selective because in order to rent an apartment, you have to be recommended by someone. And you have to have a specific profile. You
know, the typical bohemian, hippie-yuppie kind of person. If you take a
look at the people who are now renting Slim’s apartments, they are all
artists, models, actors, etc. It’s the yuppiefication of the Historic Center”
(Personal communication with new resident of Historic Center, July,
2004)

Recognizing that infrastructure alone is not enough to attract people to an area
that has been constructed by the local and national media as one of the most dangerous in
the city, the foundation has worked in coordination with the local secretary of public
security to increase police presence on the streets of the Historic Center. For instance, the
local state provides a 24-hour police guard to stand at the doorstep of buildings
refurbished by the Foundation. This complex private-public mesh is expressed differently
and at various scales. Discursively, the separation between the public and the private
sphere and their responsibilities seem to be very clear:

“The Fideicomiso is the right arm of the city government. Everything that
is public is their responsibility. We can’t fix a sidewalk or a street of deal
with street lighting. That is what they do. What we deal with is exclusively
the private sphere. We buy buildings, fix them and then rent or sell them.
The Fideicomiso can’t do that. They deal with garbage, lighting, public
spaces, street vendors… All of those social things depend on the
government. We have nothing to do with that”. (Personal communication
with Director of Historic Center Foundation. July 12, 2004)

In practice, however, while the state’s responsibilities (through the workings of
the Fideicomiso) in the revitalization of the Historic Center have been centered mainly on
‘public’ assets and the physical appearance of the area (buildings, sidewalks, streets,
etc.), the private sphere has developed a number of different social programs aimed at
improving the quality of life of the local population.
“This is the focal point of the Foundation. We have health programs, employment programs, scholarships, micro-credits for local entrepreneurs, cultural programs, and so forth… We try to solve almost every problem. I mean, if you don’t really know how to do anything, we give you a scholarship so that you can learn to do something. If you don’t have a job, we will look for a job for you or we help you start your own business. If you have a good idea, we will provide you with the resources to develop that idea. We also are working with local schools, with hospitals, and health centers, providing them with better equipment; we provide training programs for workers… Basically, evaluating what the major problems are, and try to attack them” (Personal communication with Director of Historic Center Foundation. July 12, 2004 )

Although DFiesta and the Programa are two different policies implemented by different local state institutions, their objectives and interests appear to be very similar: change the image of Mexico City, with particular attention to the Historic Center. On the one hand, by sponsoring a variety of entertainment and cultural activities DFiesta seeks to recreate the Historic Center as an enjoyable and amusing place to ‘hang-out’. On the other hand, the objective of the Programa is to recreate the Historic Center as a ‘friendly’ and ‘livable’ area for a wealthier population of potential residents.

Both DFiesta and the Programa appear to represent the well-cited neo-liberal scenario of an urban government attempting to increase its competitiveness by transforming the image of the city. For example, DFiesta is emblematic of Mexico City’s authorities seeking to attract ‘consumer dollars’ (Harvey, 1989b) by representing the city as a safe place in which to invest, play, and consume. Moreover, DFiesta is a policy that can be interpreted as targeting a specific group of people. It seeks to attract those sectors of the population with the economic means to consume and participate in the cultural, entertainment, and sports events organized under the umbrella of the DFiesta policy.
However, if one takes a closer look at those who participate in the practices organized by the \textit{DFiesta} policy, the picture differs from that painted by the entrepreneurial literature. The question arises: Who is enjoying the \textit{DFiesta} events?

3.2.2 \textit{Who’s partying in Mexico City?}

When analyzed closely the target audience(s) for \textit{DFiesta} differ(s) considerably from the audience identified in the entrepreneurial image-making literature. Shortly after the government of Mexico City implemented \textit{DFiesta}, Lopéz Obrador clarified that the \textit{DFiesta} policy is geared at:

\begin{quote}
“… fomenting interest among economically marginalized sectors of the population to the cultural richness of the city. Through free access to different events, every sector of the population will be able to enjoy and live Mexico City at its fullest. The focus is specifically on low-income residents, poor senior citizens, people who have been socially marginalized, like the disabled, indigenous, women, children, orphans; and children studying in poorly funded schools…” (Secretaria de Turismo, September, 2003).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
“…the purpose is not only to change the idea that the Federal District is a ‘chaotic, insecure and terrifying’ city, but also to open quality cultural and entertainment possibilities to all the inhabitants of the city, not only the rich that can pay for it” (Baltazar and Olivares, 2003)
\end{quote}

Furthermore, when asked about his alliances with \textit{empresarios} (‘business people’) and what their role should be in the future of Mexico, Andes Manuel Lopéz Obrador stated that:
“…nothing will be resolved with the ‘politics of patching’. Nothing can be solved by thinking that economic policies are for the benefit of a minority. It is no longer possible to think that the government is going to function to serve a small sector of the population. New rules have to be defined that don’t exclude anybody. And this is where business people must participate. It is important to create a solid convergence between the public sphere, the private sector, and society. This country will move forward to the extent that it manages to come to a consensus, namely a new pact that incorporates the interest of the pueblo (the people’s) […]

Decisions cannot be made without taking into account the need of the pueblo. In order for decisions to be made, the table must have representatives of the pueblo, but also business people, the church, unions, and different social organizations. A pact among everyone is urgently needed to transform the future of this country” (Venegas and Gallegos, 2004; my emphasis).

The ‘pact’ mentioned by Lopéz Obrador raises important questions about entrepreneurial forms of urban governance and the actors included in decision-making processes. Urban scholars interested in new forms of urban politics in the context of a changing global economy tend to agree that public-private coalitions have “undermined the class-based constituency, and resulted in a heightened control of the polity by new bourgeoisie and property interests, consisting almost exclusively of businessmen” (Hubbard and Hall, 1998: 9). Some scholars have drawn upon the theoretical insights of regime theory to understand the growth of urban public-private coalitions. Interest has centered on the composition of growth coalitions and the permeability of boundaries between state institutions and the private sector in processes of urban change (Jonas and Wilson, 1999; Lauria, 1997; 1999). What urban regime scholars argue is that the ability and power to transform the urban environment for purposes of economic growth lies not only within the domain of state institutions, but can shift from one individual or group to another depending on the changing composition of state-society relations. Urban regime
theory provides an interesting account of the changing constitution of urban coalitions, recognizing the multiplicity of groups that function together to carry out particular policies for urban economic growth (Leitner, 1990). However, since the relations established between state and society center on growth coalitions and public-private partnerships, the notion of ‘society’ that is emphasized within this literature is limited to “the movers and shakers whom we often find leading local growth coalitions or on the boards of public-private partnerships” (Hubbard and Hall, 1998: 256).

Despite the recognition of the range of actors who participate in decisions over how to bring about urban economic growth, embedded within this literature is a focus on certain groups as the central players in such decisions, specifically property interests, business groups, local media, urban elites, and so forth. The actors identified as the main players in the composition of coalitions are mainly urban elites and different private investors; notably capital. Although the composition of coalitions may change and the power relations between the different groups within coalitions may also vary, there is little analysis of the role of ‘non-elite’ groups in processes of urban change. This literature thus adopts what Hubbard and Hall (1998) call “an elite pluralist position that recognizes that access to local politics is uneven, so that certain groups enjoy more favorable terms (Hubbard and Hall, 1998: 10).

The case of Mexico City however, provides a different account of the groups that ‘enjoy more favorable terms’ in the context of urban change. I do not wish to deny the important role played by private investors such as Carlos Slim and others in the context
of the Programa; rather, I want to emphasize how urban social groups that have traditionally been marginalized from ‘formal’ economic relations, have managed to exert influence over the direction of specific urban policies.

Although structuralist entrepreneurial literature has been useful for understanding the changing role of the local state and its ties to the private sector, especially through growth coalitions, it falls short in thinking about how urban governments engage in multiple strategies for urban development that, in many cases, may not coincide with the more neo-liberal and outward-oriented agenda. Further, overlooking the internal workings of the local state leads to its interpretation as a body autonomous from society. Hence, structuralist urban literature on entrepreneurial governance oversees the internal workings of the state and depicts the state as a homogenous and cohesive unitary agency (Evans, 1995). This can, in turn, lead to simplistic accounts of the existing relationship between ‘the’ state and society.\footnote{As different scholars have argued, the state is interrelated with society in complex ways through formal and informal channels (Evans, 1995). Further, different groups within society have an impact on the paths taken by the state (Bosco, 1998; Park, 1998). As Moon and Prasad (1994) argue, state officials are not “organizational islands” autonomous from civil society. Rather, state officials represent social constituents and articulate their interests and concerns through a political system and thereby attempt to influence policy in the direction of their constituent’s interest.} Social actors are not passive individuals subsumed to the power of ‘the state’; rather, they are agents who have the ability to exert influence and pressure on the workings of the state and its policies via their elected representative (Moon and Prasad, 1994). State policies and programs cannot be attributed exclusively to the domain of the state because the stated goals of the state have been in many cases influenced and shaped – in formal and informal ways – by groups that are not
conventionally considered as part of the ‘state’. Thinking about state-society relations in this manner allows further investigation into the changing composition of that relation. What social groups are forming coalitions and alliances with different state institutions at a particular time-space and why? Has the nature of these coalitions changed (Bosco, 1998)? What social groups are exerting pressure to change state policy, and why? It is to these questions that I now turn to in the context of the Mexican state. Through a historical account of the Mexican state in the following section I explore the changing composition of coalitions between the state and different social groups to show how so-called marginalized groups have managed to undermine many state practices by taking advantage of the clientelist political system developed during the PRI governing years.

3.3. EXPLAINING MEXICAN STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS UNDER THE PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO INSTITUCIONAL

State-society relations in Mexico during the seventy-year rule of the PRI have been characterized by a strong and dynamic involvement of urban, organized labor, rural campesinos (peasants), and the popular sector (predominantly urban based). 49 This last sector – categorized under the umbrella of the National Confederation of Popular Organization (hereafter CNOP) – is a heterogeneous group, which includes self-employed urban workers, state employees, students, artisans, street vendors, urban

49 The PRI was originally called the Partido Nacional Revolucionario – PNR – and was founded in 1929 through the alliance of labor unions, peasant organizations and urban elites (Garrido, 1984). In 1938 the party changed to the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM), which substituted the PNR. It was not until 1946 that the PRM was renamed as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)
residents, teachers, and “others elements of the middle class” (PRI, 1984: 76). Although the PRI was originally founded through the consolidation of these three social sectors, the alliances have undergone significant transformations since their formation, and the lobbying power of each group over the direction of the state policies has seen dramatic changes during the twentieth century. In this section I highlight some of the major shifts in relations established between the Mexican state and different social groups. For example, the popular sector as the third tier of the PRI did not materialize until the early 1940s as a result of increasing demands of sectors of the urban population marginalized from labor unions and peasant groups. Similarly, although labor organizations have historically influenced the workings of the state and the PRI, heterogeneity among the working class has led to substantial divisions and confrontations between different labor movements. These have resulted in changes in the PRI’s governing strategies. By exploring the changing composition between the state and the societal base, I argue that the implementation of state policies and programs cannot be attributed exclusively to the domain of the state since the goals of the state have in many cases been influenced and shaped by groups that are not conventionally considered as part of the state. As I will show, part of the difficulties faced by today’s local state in the implementation of certain practices of the Programa (particularly the removal of street vendors from the Historic Center) is a product of alliances established between the Mexican state and street vending organizations affiliated to the CNOP during the 1950s.

Scholars interested in Mexican state-society relations during the PRI years have described the Mexican political structure as a clientelist system characterized by a
relative influence of non-powerful groups in the workings of the state (Brachet-Marquez, 1992; Coppedge, 1993; Cross, 1997; Hellman, 1994). In return for political support, the PRI leadership satisfied the demands of the three dominant constituencies, including the interests of urban marginalized groups within the popular sector. Many scholars have argued that the clientelist relations established between the Mexican state and society provided the PRI state apparatus with the ability to exercise power over both urban based social groups and rural campesinos. As Brachet-Marquez (1992) argued when describing state-society relations in Mexico:

“…[clientelism] represents the state as a top-down pyramid headed by the chief of the executive branch, who directly or indirectly dispenses favors to those below through complex patron-client relations that link the top of the social structure to the base. Civil society, in contrast, is perceived as a fragmented set of vertical relationships inhibiting the formation of horizontal interest groupings, whether based on party or social class” (Brachet-Marquez, 1992: 94).

Similarly, according to Cross (1997; 1998) clientelism is described as a mechanism by which the state controls different sectors of the population by “releasing a small amount of resources but keeping organizations in line politically by threatening to withhold resources necessary for the leader to keep his position” (Cross, 1998:76). Rather than “opening up the power structure to the masses, [clientelist strategies] have been interpreted as co-opting popular leaders and thereby depriving the grass roots of their capacity to voice grievances” (Brachet-Marquez, 1992: 98). Furthermore, the PRI managed to control popular movements, their actions, spaces of interaction, and demands by incorporating them into the formal political hierarchy (Coppedge, 1993). An example
is the set of formal and informal relationships established between the state and street vendors during the heyday of the Mexican interventionist state (Coppedde, 1993; Cross, 1997).

Underlying theories of the clientelist Mexican state is the notion of the state as the central force that exercises power over the party’s constituency through different co-optive strategies. This approach, however, downplays some of the ways members of the popular sector can exert power over the workings of the state through, for example, alliances made with the party in return for a variety of public services such as housing, health care, residential services, and so forth. Rather than conceptualizing the clientelist system as one that facilitated and enhanced the state’s hegemony over different marginalized groups, I argue that the clientelist Mexican post-revolutionary state under the PRI opened up new channels for negotiation, involvement, manipulation, and influence from the part of different urban marginalized groups on the workings and practices of the state. These spaces of negotiation, which allow the popular sector to tap into the state, have played a central role in constructing and strengthening resistance strategies within the Mexican popular sector. They have given groups formal political leverage to negotiate change in their daily life. Such was the case of street vending organizations associated to the CNOP, for example, who during the 1950s gained significant influence over the workings of the local and central state. In the context of

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50 In addition to the study of street vendors and the clientelist state, a wide variety of Mexican urban scholars have also discussed the informal housing sector and the city’s regulatory policies designed to provide legal housing and thereby satisfy the demand of the growing poor population living in the outskirts of the urban area. For example, see Duhau (1998); Salazar (1999); Schteingart (1997).
today’s *Programa*, moreover, the clientelist system inherited by the PRI’s governing structure has undermined how policy has been carried out. As I will elaborate in Chapter Four, some organizations of street vendors within Historic Center are calling upon their allies in the popular sector (CNOP) to exert influence in the local Legislative Assembly to gain leverage with respect to the implementation of the *Programa*; rather than rejecting political institutions, some street vending organizations faced with removal from the Historic Center have actually extended their resistance strategies into formal representative political arenas (Dagnino, 1998). I argue in the following section that street vendors’ ability to remain in the streets of the Historic Center despite the exclusionary character of the *Programa* is partly a product of the PRI’s clientelist governing legacy.

3.3.1 The formation of formal political spaces among urban marginalized groups: The early years of the PRI

The formation of the PRI was a product of lengthy disputes and fragmented interest between different revolutionary leaders, who had conflicting political and economic agendas for constructing a post-revolutionary Mexico. Although Mexico’s revolution (early 1900s) managed to overthrow the thirty-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911; also known as the ‘Porfiriato’ era), the years following his defeat were characterized by complex struggles among different revolutionary leaders over how to best achieve the practices preached by the revolution’s ideology. These struggles were
geographic, shaped largely by a socio-spatial division between rural areas and peasant
groups, on the one hand, and urban centers (specifically, Mexico City) and industrial
workers on the other hand.

For some revolutionary leaders such as Madero, Carranza and Obregón, the
objective of the revolution was to overthrow an undemocratic president. They
emphasized reviving the national economy by focusing exclusively on Mexico City’s
demands, and developing a system of political stability for the sake of securing foreign
capital; maintaining foreign capital played a central role in Mexico’s national economy
during the Porfiriato. By 1911, for instance, 97.5 per cent of mining activities were
foreign owned (by the United State with 81 per cent and Britain with 14.5 per cent); 95.9
per cent of agricultural activities were in foreign hands; 85 per cent of the industrial
sector was foreign owned (53.2 per cent French, 15.3 per cent of the United States, 12.8
per cent British, and 3.7 per cent German); and 100 per cent of oil was also in the hands
of foreign capital (Hernandez, 1973). Further, two of the most important urban
infrastructural services (transportation and electricity) remained in the hands of foreign
capital (Davis, 1994). In contrast to the urban demands from some revolutionary leaders,
revolutionary fighters such as Emiliano Zapata in the south of Mexico and Francisco
Villa in the north sought to reorganize an unjust system of land distribution (haciendas
and latifundios) that had remained practically unchanged since colonial times. Indeed, a
critical element of the Revolutionary discourse was the importance of achieving agrarian

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51 Madero was the first president of Mexico after the defeat of Porfirio Diaz; followed by
Carranza (1914-1920), and Obregón (1920-1924)
reform to grant marginalized rural peasants equal access to land; a right which peasants
had been denied during the Porfiriato. Given these disputes, one of the most critical
problems that confronted the revolutionary forces was whether power and political
priority should be granted to rural areas and thus peasant concerns, or to the urban
constituencies through organized labor (Davis, 1994).

The clash of interest between these two paths shaped much of the immediate post-
revolutionary political system. Critically, the post-revolutionary Mexican leadership
allied itself with urban labor organizations with the aim of maintaining power over the
peasant forces of Zapata and Villa. However, the formal ties established between labor
organizations and the state in the post-revolutionary years were transformed during the
1930s. The world-wide economic depression, the PRI’s slow abandonment of the original
revolutionary goals in favor of local elites, and private sector demands for urban
economic growth led to a series of labor and peasant mobilizations demanding
fundamental changes in state policies. The overall discontent among the Mexican
population resulted in the electoral success of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934.\(^{52}\) Described by
many historians as one of the most revolutionary presidents of the twentieth century
(Hamilton, 1982) Cárdenas reorganized the ruling party under a corporatist structure with
two central sectors: labor through the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM

\(^{52}\) From 1934-1940 Lázaro Cárdenas established a strong, interventionist state. Many of
the policies implemented during his administration were geared at reintegrating labor and
peasant interests into the political agenda. He was the first president to legislate the
system of land redistribution (ejidos) that had been established under the new constitution
of 1917; he nationalized the Mexico’s oil reserves and expropriated the equipment of the
foreign oil companies in Mexico; and formed the new party: the Partido de la Revolución
Mexicana (PRM), which replaced the PNR.
– Confederation of Mexican Workers) and peasants through under the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC – Confederation of National Peasants). Then, in 1938, Cárdenas removed state employees from the party’s labor sector and reorganized them in the newly created body of the Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado (FSTSE – Federation of Government Employees’ Union) with the objective of incorporating a wide variety of state workers who had not been active in past organizations (Méndez, 1985). 53

Although Cardenas’ administration was supported by both the working class and peasantry, many argued that his policies were exclusionary because they were oriented towards the industrial working class and confined exclusively to work-place demands (Hamilton, 1982). At the same time Cardenas’ support of the working class left institutionally handicapped a number of urban petite bourgeoisie. Davis (1994) claimed that much of the general discontent towards Cárdenas came from “Mexico City’s popular sectors, or marginally employed, low-income residents including urban artists and other self-employed workers excluded from labor or the state worker federations” (Davis, 1994: 92); in other words, dissatisfaction emerged from those sectors of the population who had been excluded from the alliance between the state and organized labor.

Widespread discontent among Mexico City’s small industrialists, middle-class residents, shop-keepers, and self-employed artisans and street vendors led to the formation in 1943 of the Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP)

53 The 1930, specifically under Cárdenas, is identified as the period that gave rise to the PRI corporatist state structure, with “popular movements collaborating in and encouraging the spread of clientelistic and patrimonial lines of control” (Foweraker, 1990: 8).
as a way of incorporating the urban popular sector and middle class into the party’s governing structure. Thus, CNOP became the third axis of the ruling alliance. It gave a voice to the Mexican urban popular sector, which included a wide range of social groups (street vendors, artisans, shop and other self employed groups) who had been excluded from the organized labor groups (CTM) and peasant groups (CNC) (PRI, 1984).

Although the CNOP was a national organization, members in Mexico City pushed for urban-centered policies such as industrial development programs, which were part of the Mexican government’s import substitution strategy to achieve economic growth in the early 1940s. Import substitution placed Mexico’s industrial elites in a strong political and economic position to negotiate and influence the party’s economic development policies. Between the mid 1940s and late 1960s, then, political leaders abandoned Cárdenas’ concern with rural development and land reform, concentrating instead on supporting the development of industries that would manufacture consumer durable goods (Garza, 1985; Davis, 1994).

3.3.2 The PRI, uneven development, and rapid urban change

Economic development strategies of import substitution also had important spatial dimensions and impacts. The PRI during the 1940s and 1950s was concerned primarily with stimulating urban-led economic development through industrial growth; all party efforts were concentrated in Mexico City as the base for nationalist industries (Krauze, 1997). The state strongly supported the Cámara Nacional de la Industria de la Transformación CANCINTRA (National Chambers of Manufacturing Industries) and
legally recognized its status in 1943 in order for Mexico City to become the centralized power of economic growth.\textsuperscript{54} In addition to supporting the party’s political agenda, CANACINTRA strongly supported import-substitution strategies while opposing foreign investment (predominately from the United States), and generally supported government intervention in matters of economic development. However, industrialists in the north of Mexico opposed strategies of import substitution because they relied heavily on foreign markets for inputs, particularly imports from the United States. But industrialists in Mexico City had the upper hand: not only was there more capital in Mexico City available for investment in industry, but there was also a well established market for consumer durable goods (Davis, 1994). Thus, by the mid 1940s, CANACINTRA became the “principal base of support for the ruling party within the private sector” (Davis, 1994: 113).

The rapid growth of the capital city in the 1950s and 60s further bolstered the urban bias of policies. For its part, the CNOP began “devoting its energies to coordinating urban-specific demands of its broad-based Mexico City” support (Davis, 1997). Salient urban problems included the growing number of squatter settlements and irregular housing on the fringes of the city, and increasing street vending activities resulting from an excess labor supply in a context of rapid rural-urban migration (Tokman, 1995).

\textsuperscript{54} CANACINTRA’s members were mainly urban industrialists who had remained loyal followers of the PRM.
A major change – and one that is critical for understanding the current situation in Mexico City – occurred in 1952 when Uruchurtu was appointed Mayor. His first priority was to regain legitimacy among CNOP members who viewed the PRI with suspicion because industrial-led economic development marginalized the popular sector. One way was to address the interests of street vendors by constructing covered market buildings to house the vendors. As Cross (1998) has argued:

“by constructing massive new markets for them [street vendors] in the area, and later throughout the city, he [Uruchurtu] was able to turn the vendors into a subsidized class of petty merchants who would be loyal to his political banner, while at the same time he placated the interests of large construction firms that had been hoping to profit from the urban renewal project” (Cross, 1998: 161).

Street vendors had to align with organizations affiliated with the CNOP to receive permits to enter the new market spaces. Consequently, these organizations grew in significance; they became an important source of support for the party (e.g. attending PRI electoral rallies, cheering for the Mayor at public appearances, and even planting trees and performing other public duties in public spaces); and they gained political leverage to negotiate with state institutions. By no means did all street vendors want to move from

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55 Ernesto Uruchurtu was the Mayor of Mexico City for fourteen years (1954-1966). He is well remembered for his explicit policies in the Historic Center geared at street vendors and is known as the “Regente de hierro” (the ‘Mayor made of steel’).
the streets. Those who refused and who had no legal representation or alliance with the PRI were subjected to violence. This was noted in an interview I conducted with the personal assistant of street vending organization’s leader:56

“…according to the señora, 57 those were moments of extreme abuse from the city authorities, from the camioneros 58 the police, the authorities from the delegación Cuauhtemoc, etc. The señora was mistreated, abused, and hit; many times the police took her merchandise, other times they would throw it on the ground and squash it in front of her. So, there was a great need to create a common front against the abuse of the authorities. She started organizing other vendors of the same street…. the fight started precisely on this street, where the current offices are. The señora was a natural leader, you know. She mobilized, organized, and fought for others. That is how this organization was eventually formed. It started with the señora’s leadership and courage.” (Personal communication, November 25, 2003)

The repressive acts of the 1950s and 1960s against non-affiliated CNOP street vendors angered many social groups within Mexico City’s popular sector. The popular sector was also frustrated by the PRI’s willingness to cater to the urban middle class (Davis, 1994). 59 The repression of street vendors and squatters elsewhere in the city and

56 I was unable to speak directly to the leader of this organization since she had recently been accused of the murder of the husband of another major leader; three months prior to my interview she was imprisoned.

57 Señora stands for Mrs.

58 Camioneros comes from the word camioneta, which stands for “van”. The camioneta is the van/truck that picks up vendors and their merchandise and takes them to the local delegación.

59 Prior to the Uruchurtu years the PRI support in Mexico City had declined to less than fifty percent during the early 1950s (Cross, 1998).
Uruchurtu’s close links with the middle class, “gave him a decidedly authoritarian image […] which his opponents in the PRI used to force his resignation in 1966” (Cross, 1998: 162).

3.3.3 Changing political spaces for urban marginalized groups: The demise of the PRI

Uruchurtu’s successor, Alfonso Corona del Rosal (1966-1970)\textsuperscript{60} appointed strategically by the Federal government was an active member of the CNOP who began re-establishing and mobilizing the existing clientelist links between the city government and the popular sector (Davis, 1994). Since much of the existing urban unrest was triggered by the city’s popular sector, Corona del Rosal’s primary objective was to “maintain social peace in the city” (Ward, 2004: 192). After Uruchutu’s dismissal, the succeeding Mayors of Mexico City were selected strategically by the Federal government to strengthen ties with the CNOP (Davis, 1994). For example, Octavio Sentíes, Mayor of Mexico City from 1971-1976, regained the trust of many CNOP leaders who had turned away from the CNOP and the PRI during the Uruchurtu years. Further, Sentíes’ discourse and policies explicitly targeted urban disenfranchised groups “formally represented by the CNOP […] like street vendors and small comerciantes who populated downtown areas (Davis, 1994: 208).

In response to the overall discontent of different interest groups in the city over the undemocratic character of urban politics, Sentíes’s administration sought to develop a more democratic, representative, and participatory governing structure in the city. The

\textsuperscript{60} From the mid 1920’s to 1997 Mexico City’s Mayor was appointed by the Federal government, rather than elected democratically by the city’s jurisdiction.
objective of this new system, known as the *junta de vecinos* (‘neighborhood council meetings’) was to open up new spaces for deliberation and give representation to the urban population. Representation was achieved through a hierarchical voting system whereby an individual voted for a *jefe de manzana* (chiefs/president of the block); all the *jefes de manzana* then elected a *jefe de colonia* (chief of subdistrict), and all the *jefes de colonias* then elect a *jefe de delegación* (chief of district). Voting for the sixteen *jefes de delegación* through the *junta de vecinos* was a revolutionary attempt by Senties to incorporate the urban population in decision-making processes beyond the three sectors of the PRI structure, rather than being appointed directly by the city Mayor. According to Davis (1994), the *juntas de vecinos* system aimed to attract social groups who had not been able to “push for their demands through other formal political structures, especially through the CNOP” (Davis, 1994: 209).

The juntas emerged just as the CNOP’s ability to exert influence over the workings of the national and city government was weakening. The decline of government revenues resulting from the economic crisis of 1982 led to increasing levels of unemployment in the capital, which intensified urban problems such as irregular housing – or squatter settlements on the outskirts of the city – and increasing levels of informal economic activities (street vending) on the multiple public spaces of the city (Schteingart, 1997; Tokman, 1995). The debt crisis of the early 1980’s led to new urban social

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61 The emergence of the *junta de vecinos* systems is relevant in the context of Programa because two of today’s largest street vending organizations in the Historic Center (still existing today in a somewhat mutated form) sprung during this period. However, it was not until the mid-1980s that these organizations were officially recognized as civil institutions with legal representation.
movements, which, as Davis (1994) has noted “constituted a challenge to the CNOP and the PRI because these movements purposefully sought organizational autonomy and rejected more formal channels of political participation” (Davis, 1994: 279).

By the late 1980s, then, the combination of urban social discontent, the increasing social demands for real democratic elections,\(^62\) declining support for the PRI in the capital city, and growing support for alternative political parties presented the PRI with serious problems of political legitimacy.

In response, PRI political leaders created the Asamblea de Representantes del Distrito Federal \(^63\) (Representative Assembly of the Federal District hereafter ARDF) in 1988, as a non-legislative urban body aimed at enhancing local democratic political participation at the city level. Even though the ARDF lacked executive, legislative and budgetary authority, it functioned as an “agenda-setting body for the DF; monitored DF agencies (though it lacked enforcement powers); served as a forum for public debate of important issues; and acted as an ombudsperson for the powerless and the dispossessed” (De la Isla and Wirth, 2001: 32).

\(^{62}\) It is well known in Mexico that the 1988 presidential elections were fraudulent. The PRD candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, won almost 50 per cent of the vote in Mexico City and the PRI candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari gained 27 per cent of votes in Mexico City (De la Isla & Wirth, 2001). According to Reding (1989), poll watchers “showed Cárdenas leading Salinas by 40 to 36 percent (Reding, 1989)

\(^{63}\) The ARDF was created as a non-legislative governing body. The 1994 political reform granted the ARDF new functions and legislative powers. This led to the renaming of the ARDF to the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District (ALDF), thereby highlighting the legislative abilities of the reconstituted body.
Crucially, the ARDF replaced many of the CNOP’s responsibilities and left the organization with little purpose other than as a vehicle for voicing the popular sector’s concerns (Davis, 1997). Because the ARDF included direct elections of delegates, it became the new political arena to voice the popular sector’s concerns.64

Yet the PRI’s three-sector governing structure did little to halt its demise. Neo-liberal economic reforms initiated by Miguel de la Madrid after the economic crisis of 1982, and the growing influence of international economic institutions in national politics, were both instrumental in increasing the role of the private sector in the provision of services to the population. This deregulation and privatization process eroded many of the corporatist arrangements established in the mid 1930s by President Lázaro Cárdenas (Teichman, 1996). The reforms were intended to dismantle the control of labor leaders in the PRI governing structure and reduce the political weight of the three traditional PRI sectors (CNC, CTM, and CNOP). Thus President Salinas’ (1988-1994) neo-liberal market reforms radically transformed relations between the state and its societal base (Cornelius, et. al., 1994).65 The post-revolutionary PRI, based on corporatist

64 In 1990, the CNOP was replaced by the UNE (Unite – citizens on the move) as a National Front of Organizations and Citizens integrated by five different national movements: the National Labor Movement, National Union Movement; National Movement of Professionals and Technicians, the National Urban Movement and the National Movement of Citizens (CNOP, 2002) Many of the street vendors that I interviewed were under the leadership of a delegate of the ARDF (not ALDF). I also interviewed the delegate who claimed to oversee approximately 125 organizations in Mexico City, housing more than 50 thousand people.

65 The reforms included the privatization of more than 800 companies that were previously in the hands of the Federal state (including TELMEX, which was sold to Carlos Slim); privatization of all the banks; efforts to reform Article 27 of the
and clientelist politics, was replaced by a “new form of clientelism, more amendable to the neo-liberal model, which operated more selectively and which did not operate through the hierarchy and intermediaries of the party/state apparatus” (Teichman, 1996: 11).

The neo-liberal market reforms generated important divisions within the PRI. There were, on the one hand, those who were committed to the original revolutionary ideas, as well as those who subscribed to the new neo-liberal agenda. One group of unsatisfied members of the PRI – led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of Lázaro Cárdenas – formed the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (Revolutionary Democratic Party) in 1989. The PRD sought to “maintain the social objective of the original party, but also challenge the economic and social contradictions of the new neo-liberal economic model (PRD, 2005).

The PRD pushed for a more democratic political system in the capital city. Prior to 1997, Mexico City was governed by an administrator (Mayor) appointed by the Federal government, who in turn appointed delegados responsible for overseeing administration within the sixteen territorially defined urban delegaciones or districts. For

Constitution, which gave communal farmers the right to land (ejidos); and the weakening of trade unions.

66 Three PRI members – Rodolfo González Guevara, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas – combined to create the Corriente Democrática (the ‘Democratic Front’) in 1986. The Democratic Front developed as a caucus within the official party. The objective was to exercise pressure within the PRI to change the direction of the party’s economic policies. Cardenas ran as a candidate of a leftist coalition called the Frente Democrático Nacional (National Democratic Front - FDN) in 1988. Finally, in May 1989, the FDN changed its name to the PRD.
more than a decade oppositional parties as well as different PRI members began pushing for a ‘democratic’ political system in the capital city. Moreover, Mexico City’s legislation depended on the Federal executive system, in which the capital city had limited capacity to legislate at the local/urban level. The national president appointed the city Mayor, who in turn appointed delegados responsible for overseeing administration within the sixteen territorially defined urban delegaciones or districts. The city had little autonomy; it depended on the allocation of funds provided by the Federal government.

The Mayor was elected democratically for the first time in 1997; the PRD was victorious. It began wide-ranging efforts to change the organizational hierarchy inherited from the PRI (Ward, 2004). The Departamento del Distrito Federal (Department of the Federal District) changed its name to the Gobierno del Distrito Federal (Government of the Federal District) and with this new status came a greater level of legal and executive autonomy from the central state (Enriquez, 2002). Among the numerous administrative reforms was the formation of local state bodies (Secretary’s) in charge of dealing with the multiple context-specific problems of the city (crime, pollution, cultural activities, tourism, and so forth). They had some independence from mandates of the Federal government. Similarly, a process of decentralization began whereby fiscal power and relative autonomy of decision making processes was provided to the sixteen territorial districts of Mexico City.

The administrative reform experienced in the late 1990s under the newly elected PRD made local/urban governance more democratic, participatory, and more responsive to local concerns (Eckstein, 1990). For instance, in response to opposition party demands
for effective forms of representation at the city level, the national government created the ALDF in an attempt to develop a democratically elected local congress (De la Isla and Wirth, 2001). Even so, some procedures and decision-making strategies inherited from the PRI’s governing legacy remained. The PRD itself was formed in 1988 through a collection of *ex-priistas*, and various left-wing social organizations who sought to remove the PRI from power both at the national scale and city scale. Hence, most of the PRD party founders were schooled under the PRI’s clientelist politics and they knew how to apply “new tricks in the new party in an attempt to steer the ship” (Hilgers, 2005: 2). In staffing the new government, for instance, Cárdenas followed the PRI’s *compadrazo*\(^67\) (Smith, 1979) strategy, thereby placing greater reliance and loyalty upon long-time friends, and collaborators, reproducing the PRI’s clientelist forms of linkage (Bruhn, 1997). According to Bruhn (1997), the long-time friends “shared an ideological discourse from the traditional left wing of the PRI as well as specific criticisms of economic and political trends under De la Madrid. Many of these personal relationships flourished because of their origins in a common ideological enterprise” (Bruhn, 1997: 80).

The PRD’s ties with different social actors was one of the elements that strengthened party’s ability to perform its functions in Mexico City, despite the problems faced by the new leaders and their tendency to reproduce certain PRI practices. For instance, the PRD gave popular movements better leverage to negotiate with the local government over substantive demands (housing and transportation, for example). Thus, and as Moon and Prasad (1994: 366) have argued, state officials are not “organizational

\(^67\) *Compadre* is typically used to describe a close relationship between male friends.
islands” autonomous from civil society. Rather, state officials represent social constituents and articulate their interests and concerns through a political system and thereby attempt to influence policy in the direction of their constituents’ interest. In this sense, the state is embedded by virtue of the PRD officials and bureaucrats who function as representatives and thus voice the concerns of their constituents, including the popular sector who have different and sometimes conflicting interest. Different groups within the popular sector are thus not passive individuals subsumed to the power of ‘the state’; rather, they are agents who have the ability to exert influence and pressure on the workings of the state and its policies via their elected representative.

In summary, the changing form of the state in Mexico throughout the twentieth century has been influenced by various groups. The notion of the state as monolithic is therefore quite problematic. The history of the PRI has created opportunities for groups within the popular sector (including street vendors) to tap into the state by virtue of its tendency to co-opt members of society. In the case of the Programa, for example, local state institutions such as the newly created Fideicomiso del Centro Histórico, the Secretaría de Seguridad Pública del DF, and the Secretaría de Gobierno del DF have formed alliances with “maverick entrepreneurs” (Hubbard and Hall, 1998: 11) such as Carlos Slim. The public-private coalition has of course posed a number of important constraints upon other groups by removing or displacing them from their spaces of interaction and their economic niche. As I argue in following chapter, despite these constraints, as in the past, so-called excluded groups have continued to exerted pressure over and have influenced the workings of state policies; in so doing, moreover, they have
undermined many of the desired objectives set by the *Programa*. What has made this resistance possible in part is the political legacy of the PRI’s three party sector and clientelist strategies, which have remained embedded within today’s state structure despite the changing political party in power in 1997.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

My objective throughout this chapter has been to react to urban structuralist and clientelist literatures that view the state as monolithic and necessarily constraining to marginalized groups. State practices are shaped by different social groups, including those sectors of society typically viewed as excluded and disempowered. Historicizing the Mexican state, shows that so-called excluded groups have managed – through formal channels like the CNOP and informal channels like the *junta de vecinos* – to tap into the state and thus exert influence over the shape and workings of policies. In sum, analyzing the history of the Mexican state in post-revolutionary Mexico is essential for understanding the complexity of actors involved in contemporary Mexican urban politics and how different sectors of society who are typically viewed as excluded and disempowered have managed to tap into the state and thus exert influence over the shape and workings of state policies.

As I discuss in the next chapter, the ability of street vendors to exert power over the workings of the *Programa* has been practiced in multiple ways. One important avenue through which different vending organizations have dealt with the constraints placed upon them in the context of new power structures has been by tapping into the
state. But it has not been the only practice of power exercised by street vendors. Socio-spatial exclusion in the context of Mexico City’s Historic Center entails differential power relations that are more complex than merely entailing the removal of particular social groups from urban space. By empirically grounding processes of resistance, I demonstrate that so-called urban excluded groups find new, alternative, and innovative ways of claiming their right to the city despite new structures of constraints, despite the neo-liberal city and despite exclusionary entrepreneurial strategies. My objective is to shed light on the geographies of power by examining how excluded groups practice power; attention to the multiplicity of ways in which power is practiced provides a more nuanced account of how change is negotiated in people’s everyday lives.
“De los centros históricos provenimos y a ellos siempre volvemos. Lazos entre las generaciones, cada una deja su impronta para bien o para mal; entre el pretérito, el presente y el porvenir; entre los pueblos. Todos, por pequeños que sean, son parte de la historia de cada persona, de cada localidad, de cada municipio, de cada entidad federativa, de la nacional y de la humanidad. Legados por nuestros ancestros, debemos enriquecerlos para nosotros, para las futuras generaciones.” (Nieto, 1999:51)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As a twelve-year old living in Mexico City, I always looked forward to Saturday afternoons; it was the day when my family and I went to the Zócalo for ice cream. My brothers and I would get a different flavor ice cream from Don Martin – a local street vendor – and walk around enjoying the multiple activities such as street performances, artisans, and vendors selling all sorts of products and, of course, food. Later, while I was attending high school, I spent the occasional Saturday afternoon at the plaza with my friends. We would meet in front of the Cathedral and spend time in the Historic Center.
As I grew older and traveled with friends through different cities in the country, we would often spend time in the plazas of the Historic Centers of other cities. Wherever we traveled, whether it was large urban areas such as Guadalajara, Puebla, Querétaro, or Veracruz, or smaller cities such as Guanajuato, Morelia, Oaxaca, Taxco, or Zacatecas, there was always something about the Historic Centers and its plaza that caught our attention. Part of the attraction was the architecture of the place: beautiful colonial buildings with colorful plants and flowers hanging from picturesque balconies. But the most attractive aspect was the multiplicity of activities and people that came together in one place. It was the intensity of diversity that we enjoyed so much. The Historic Centers were always the liveliest areas.

When I arrived to study in Columbus, Ohio, my need to relive these past experiences drove me to wander around Columbus’ downtown district in search of a plaza. I found empty streets; there were literally no people there! To my surprise, I was stopped by two concerned police officers who asked what I was doing and why I was walking on my own. I realized that my search for a plaza, a space so familiar to me, was in vain; the streets and life of the U.S. city were radically different from what I enjoyed in Mexico.

My personal attachment to the plaza – and my lack of success in finding a similar place in the United States – has contributed to my interest in studying the Programa de Rescate for my doctoral dissertation. Critically, underlying my academic curiosity about the Programa was a personal concern and fear of the possibility of seeing the Historic Center become ‘plaza-less’. Might I one day find in Mexico the similar, and far less
desirable, character of the U.S. city? I was, and continue to be, worried that the intensity of interactions – what Massey (1999) describes as the coming together of difference – in one place would disappear and be replaced by fancy restaurants, Starbucks coffee shops, expensive apartment buildings, and empty public spaces guarded by police officers and security cameras. I was and remain concerned that Mexico City’s central plaza will be ‘purified’ and dismantled. My fear, in short, was that the plaza would disappear. Thus, as I read in the newspapers and heard from friends about the different strategies of the Programa, I wondered about its development and implementation, and what sort of effect it would have on people such as Don Martin and the thousands of other street vendors that worked in the area.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, many of my initial empirical questions on the Programa were informed by urban structuralist literature on entrepreneurial governance. Although this literature derived its insights from experiences in Western Europe and the United States, I drew parallels between these contexts and Mexico City. Neil Smith (2002) argued that gentrification and urban revitalization was a global urban strategy that “is no longer isolated or restricted to Europe, North America, or Oceania” (Smith, 2002: 427). Along these lines, I viewed the Programa as an urban policy that shared a number of similarities with gentrification policies implemented in downtown spaces of cities in the United States; it was another classic example of attempts to beautify spaces of the city. Similar to Neil Smith’s account of changes in New York’s Tompkins Square or Harlem and Don Mitchell’s account of People’s Park, the Programa was a competitive urban strategy implemented through exclusionary practices such as the displacement of
undesirable residents and homeless people. According to other structuralist literature on urban governance, cities such as Mexico City are caught up in a global competition for investment; a competition, moreover, in which the transformation of urban space tends to occur. In such a contest, major private investors like Carlos Slim become integral actors in the reconfiguration of certain parts of the city; this helped to explain why Mexico City’s authorities were engaging in practices that involved changing the image of particular places in city. Such practices as gentrification and urban revitalization, according to the entrepreneurial literature, were part of what Smith (2002) called *neo-liberal urbanism*.

Whether it was Mexico City’s Historic Center, New York City’s Tompkins Square (Smith, 1996b), downtown Los Angeles (Davis, 1992), or the Merchant City neighborhood in Glasgow (MacLeod, 2002), neo-liberal urbanism was ongoing; it was the product of changing global economic circumstances. Changes in urban space were in this sense seen as a direct product of wider shifts in the global economy. At first glance, therefore, the *Programa* appeared to be a typical scenario of gentrification and displacement.

Yet, and although I began understanding the *Programa* by drawing parallels with contexts elsewhere, I began thinking about the *particularities* of Mexico City. Some of the questions I asked centered on the context-specific processes of Mexico City’s Historic Center. For instance, was there something different about the *Programa*? If so, what role did the Historic Center as a place play in shaping those differences? Furthermore, given the importance of Historic Centers and their *plazas* in Latin American cities, was the

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68 See the special issue of *Antipode (Vol 43, issue 3, June 2002)* on the neo-liberal city.
Programa going to entail the dismantling of the social practices and interactions characteristic of plazas, or would the Latin American context alter the process and, if so, in what ways?

It was difficult to answer these questions by relying solely on strutralist interpretations of urban change. Structuralism tended to downplay the symbolic role of the areas such as the Historic Center; all that mattered were economic factors. I argue that this difficulty is primarily a result of the way in which context is defined and understood by structuralist urban scholars. Context is typically defined in relation to broader shifts in the capitalist economy such as the hypermobility of capital, time-space compression, and shifts in dominant governance regimes. This conceptualization of context, which broadly prioritizes the ‘political’ and ‘economic’, leads to an understanding of changes in urban space as byproducts of exclusively capitalist social relations (Hall and Hubbard, 1998). Notwithstanding that urban spaces are affected by political and economic processes, such an understanding of context ignores the heterogeneity of social relations at work in the production of places (Ettlinger, 2003; Massey, 1999). Thus, to interrogate change in urban spaces like the Historic Center I argue that a much broader set of contextual conditions must be included.

In the following section, then, I argue that attention to economic or capitalist social relations alone cannot provide a full account of how places are shaped by real people living, working, mingling, visiting, and experiencing places in their daily lives. Relations of domination or subordination, cultural shifts, ecological processes, or the symbolic representations of place are all examples of the “constellation of relations
articulated together at a particular locus” (Massey, 1993: 66) – in short, the multidimensional context – that tends to be overlooked in urban structuralist analyses. For instance, in the case of Mexico City’s Historic Center, many of the struggles that have been generated as a result of the Programa are not only a product of the economic exclusion of vendors from different areas of the Historic Center; rather, struggles also have emerged because vendors feel excluded from a particular representation of what the Historic Center should be: the Historic Center has extra-economic meaning to many street vendors; the area materializes the historical struggles of vendors since the 1950s. Any attempt to beautify the Historic Center according to ‘first world standards’ is therefore an attempt to render street vendors’ struggle invisible. To reiterate, although places such as the Historic Center are affected and shaped by political and economic processes, they are also produced and reproduced through people’s everyday lives, through the meanings and experiences that are attached to place. Following Massey (1999, 2005), then, I view places as ‘always in the process of becoming’, which entails recognizing that socio-spatial change is a product of strategic and happenstance juxtapositions that presuppose difference and heterogeneity. Further, I argue that an understanding of place and context along these lines opens up the opportunity to view the multiple meanings and understandings people attach to particular places such as the Historic Center and its plaza as arising from and contributing to the sense of the Historic Center as a community center. I then conclude this section of the Chapter with a discussion of the Historic Center in Mexico City. I show how the Historic
Center was produced by overlapping, juxtaposed histories; how the meaning of the place is contested; and how, therefore, the place currently can be understood as a community center.

I turn in the third section of the Chapter to my argument about agency, power, and resistance in the Historic Center of Mexico City. I argue, first, that structuralist literature on entrepreneurial forms of urban governance privileges economic processes over other sets of social relations and thereby neglect the active and continuing conflict of meanings produced by different individuals and social groups (Cresswell, 2004). Structuralism gives insufficient attention to the multiple dynamics at work in the struggle and negotiation of changes in the context of everyday life. Furthermore, underlying analyses of urban governance is an understanding of power as held by certain individuals or groups – for example, city authorities or private investors – and exercised over excluded groups such as street vendors, panhandlers, or the homeless. Such an understanding of power runs the risk of constructing the marginalized as passive, powerless, and without any agency. An important silence therefore pertains to the ways in which power is negotiated within and among different interest groups for whom certain parts of the city assume major significance.

My overall objective in this chapter is to re-think geographies of power in cities by examining resistance and the constitution of resistance. For this I first draw from work in critical human geography that focuses on how power is negotiated within and among different groups of excluded others (Allen, 2003; Ettlinger, 2004; Massey, 1999; 2005). I argue that recognizing different forms of power can contribute towards understanding
how different excluded groups proactively engage in the reconfiguration and reconstitution of urban spaces. I show how politics in the Historic Center occurs through both cooperative and conflictive paths (Ettlinger, 2004). Further, because state authorities and urban elites are not alone in practicing power, I show how excluded groups can tap into the state and extend their resistance strategies into formal political spheres. The point: resistance is not only about fighting the state on the streets; rather, resistance can occur by working with the state beyond the streets (Brown, 1997). Drawing from subaltern studies (Bayat, 2000; Dagnino, 1998; Escobar, 1995) my work also focuses on the variety of forms in which subaltern or excluded groups struggle over certain forms of injustice and how they create alternative ways of being and doing. Resistance, in this sense, is theorized not only in the classic sense of people opposing new structures of constraints, but on how they survive, and in some cases thrive despite these constraints, and how, in the process they reconstitute their social networks and relations. Practicing power through resistance can lead to a re-constructions and new forms of social life.

My aim is to use these diverse literatures to question how the so-called excluded exercise power and agency in the context of urban change. I ask how groups of excluded ‘others’ resist and struggle over changing structures of constraints in their everyday life, and how such struggles shape the outcomes and spaces of entrepreneurial urban governance. By exploring the ways in which various urban actors negotiate and struggle over the changing meaning and significance of the plaza, my central concern is to explore whether the plaza, as a symbol of the center of a community, has been dismantled and if the concept of community center has been reconstituted physically and/or symbolically.
4.2 CONTEXT AND THE LATIN AMERICAN PLAZA

Following Ettlinger (2002), I define context as the juxtaposition and interconnection of multiple processes – economic, political, social, cultural and ecological – existing at a variety of scales that are constantly being reworked in the production of places. Places (and spaces) are products of multiple social relations that entail political economy and much more besides. For example, people’s sense of place – the feelings, emotions and the meaning attached to particular places – is an essential component in the production of place (Lefebvre, 1991; Rose, 1995). Places are infused with feelings and meaning. This approach requires recognizing that people do not experience a place in a social vacuum. Rather, meanings are shaped by cultural, economic, political and social circumstances. Thus, in the case of processes of socio-spatial exclusion under entrepreneurial governance, a wider set of conditions, processes, and actors have to be conceived and theorized as part of the context.

4.2.1 Place, context, and re-defining Latin American Historic Centers

Historic Centers and plazas in Latin American cities are multi-functional and symbolic spaces where diverse publics – street vendors, business people, state authorities, global tourists, residents, indigenous artisans, and so forth – overlap in both harmonious and conflicting ways. They have for centuries been the most important public spaces of the city (Carrion, 2005, Pareyón, 2002; Silva, 2001). The Latin American plaza is more than just a square located in at the center of a city. Rather, as Scarpaci (2005) suggested, “they
affirm many aspects of public culture, material and nonmaterial (Scarpaci, 2005: 48). Symbolically, they play an important role in discourses of national identity; they are centers that concentrate major national powers (political, religious and economic), materialized in state buildings (national and urban), churches, and market places (see Figure 4.1). As the centers of life and work for the urban population (Hardoy and Gutman, 1991), they are also important in economic terms. Nationally, the tourist industry has a vested interest in the transformations of Historic Center because tourists from all over the world visit the area to admire its historical richness. Further, they are valuable economic spaces for sectors of the urban population: they are places to purchase goods or services at what are often relatively low prices. Plazas also function as arenas of public protests where different social organizations congregate to challenge authority (see Figure 4.2). In all of these ways, then, the plaza operates as a place where families, students, teenagers, neighbors, and political organizations mingle, interact, and also challenge authority (Bosco, 2001). Hence, the struggles resulting from the implementation of revitalization projects like the Programa are not only a result of the economic importance of the plaza; they are also products of the particular cultural and social processes that have produced this form of public space.
Figure 4.1: Mexico City’s Historic Center. The picture shows the Central Plaza (Zócalo), which is surrounded by the National Cathedral and Federal and city government buildings. (Source: Fideicomiso del Centro Historico, December, 2004).
Fig 4.2: The people are tired of corruption. The banner on this government building was placed by PAN sympathizers in March, 2004, during which time Lopéz Obrador was under scrutiny for fraudulent activities. The banner, which paraphrases one of his statements, says, “AMLO: The people are tired of so much fucking corruption”).
In understanding the intense struggles wrought by exclusionary policies in Historic Centers and plazas, and by setting forth a conceptualization of place and context as per the insights of human geographers, it is possible to view them as ‘community centers’: areas where constellations of power relations are materialized, and where multiple practices and interactions occur (Carrion, 2005; Fenochio and Dillingham, 2002; Low, 2000; Monnet, 1995). Yet, in viewing Historic Centers and plazas as community centers, it is unhelpful to view the ‘community’ as a homogeneous body of spatially and temporally fixed individuals with similar concerns, backgrounds and needs. Following Young (1990), then, I suggest conceptualizing ‘community’ as a physical and symbolic space through which different individuals interact with each other for multiple reasons. A community in this sense can be viewed as an arena in which individuals “witness and appreciate diverse cultural expressions that they do not [necessarily] share and do not fully understand” (Young, 1990: 241; my emphasis). At issue is recognizing that social actors negotiate, confront and struggle over change in their daily life, that is, that Historic Centers and plazas as community centers are fundamentally contested. Furthermore places like the Latin American plaza are always in the process of becoming because they are, as Massey suggests “products of social relations, relations which are active practices, material and embedded, practices which have to be carried out” (Massey, 1999: 283). Plazas in this sense are always being constructed and reconstructed through changing social interactions; new players such as Carlos Slim become involved, new interests emerge; new post colonial histories are juxtaposed with colonial and pre-colonial processes.
4.2.2 *The case of Mexico City*

The Historic Center in Mexico is the largest in Latin America, not only in size but arguably also in terms of its iconographic importance with respect to: notions of national identity; popular protest movements; its role as a central meeting point for Mexico’s diverse political interests; national and international tourism. It is a product of multiple histories, each of which have overlapped with one another, and each of have deposited elements that have remained in the material and symbolic representations of the place. It is, to be precise, the product of ‘happenstance juxtapositions’ (Massey, 1999).

The site of the Historic Center was Tenochtitlan, the center of the Mexica Empire from 1325 to 1521. The area’s approximately 300,000 inhabitants followed the ancient religious and urban traditions of the civilizations that preceded the Mexicas. The city was designed for collective participation in rituals and was the stage for sacred ceremonies. It was the heart of public, social, religious, and economic functions. It housed a main *tianguis* or market which functioned as the focal point for the exchange of products, attracting large crowds from nearby and far away localities. Exchange played a

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*Aztec’ and ‘Mexica’ have been used interchangeably. However, Latin American historians note an important distinction: ‘Aztecs’ is the name given to the people who came from the mythical place of Aztlan; whereas, the ‘Mexicas’ were the Aztecs who separated themselves from other Aztecs and settled in present-day Mexico City. According to Romero (1988), King Huitzilopochtli renamed the Aztecs to Mexicas.*

*Tenochtitlan’s urban structure was based on four cardinal points. The city was formed by a walled quarter whose central feature a square ceremonial precinct with smaller complementary structures (Medellín, 1968). To the south and west of this center was the government palaces and the public administration; all of this was surrounded by four major residential areas (Pareyón, 2002).*

*The most important structure in the ceremonial center was the temple of the sun.*
central role in the organization of urban life. As Hernán Cortes, the conqueror of Mexico describes when making reference to the commercial life of Tenochtitlan, in his second letter to the Spanish Crown:

“This city has many squares where trading is done and markets are held continuously. There is also one square twice as big as Salamanca with arcades all around, where more than sixty thousand people come each day to buy and sell, and where every kind of merchandise produced in these lands is found; provisions as well as ornaments of gold and silver, lead, brass, copper, tin, stones, shells, bones, and feathers. They also sell lime, hewn and unhewn stone, adobe bricks, tiles, and cut and uncut woods of various kinds. There is a street where they sell game and birds of every species found in this land […] They sell rabbits and hares, and stags and small gelded dogs which they breed for eating. There are streets of herbalists where all the medicinal herbs and roots found in the land are sold […] There is in this great square a very large building like a courthouse, where ten or twelve persons sit as judges. They preside over all that happens in the markets, and sentence criminals […] There are, in all districts of this great city many temples or houses for their idols […] amongst these temples there is one, the principal one, whose great size and magnificence no human tongue could describe, for it is so large that within the precincts, which are surrounded by a very high wall, a town of some five hundred inhabitants could easily be built (Pagden, 1971: 103-105)

After the arrival of the Spanish in 1521, the city was then re-founded in the late 1520’s by the Spanish who, following a rectangular grid system, built over the Mexica’s religious, economic, and political center. The symbolic meaning of the central city was fundamentally altered, even though certain elements of the city remained relatively untouched by the Spanish. For instance, many of the Mexica temples, which embodied a polytheistic system of religious beliefs, were supplanted by monotheistic catholic structures including several convents and the central cathedral built over the Templo Mayor. Similarly, Moctezuma’s palace, which housed the Mexica ruler and which
embodied pre-colonial systems of rule and governance was reconstructed and transformed to the national palace of what became known as *La Nueva España* (`The New Spain`). Colonial *plazas* became centers of public life that accommodated a wide range of economic, political, social, and religious activities; from religious processions, to public executions the *plaza* functioned as spaces that drew together disparate social groups and activities. During the colonial period, the city reached its material splendor in the eighteenth century when groups of wealthy mining families, land owners, and the rich merchant class built large residential palaces in the surrounding areas of the central *plaza*.

Almost four centuries after the Spanish first arrived, relics of the Mexica heritage lie buried in what is now the Historic Center of Mexico City. Today’s Historic Center of Mexico City is thus a hybrid urban landscape that represents the juxtaposition of different historical periods each with particular political, economic, and social nuances. Hence, the significance of today’s Historic Center transcends the local/urban scale and ties this particular place to both the national scale and the global scale.

Explicit attempts have been made by the Mexican government to rescue Mexican history and develop affection among the national population for the past. This has been institutionalized through the term *patrimonio cultural*, which is used by the state to  

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72 The large palaces functioned not only as residential spaces for the wealthy sectors of the population, but also as a work-space for small scale manufacturing and commercial activities. The majority of these houses shared the same architectural characteristics: a central (square) outdoor patio surrounded by four corridors that gave access to the different spaces of the building, where each space corresponded to specific activities (residential, manufacturing, and commercial) (Pareyón, 2002). After independence in the early 1800s, these buildings were subdivided and appropriated by middle-class residents called *vecindades*. The *vecindades* housed from five to fifteen families, depending on the size of the original building.
protect historical spaces defined to be in the ‘national interest’. Nationally, the Historic Center and its plaza are central in the production of Mexican History; especially after the archeological excavations conducted during the 1970s which exposed the foundations of the Templo Mayor in the Historic Center. This archeological discovery led to the official naming of the center of Mexico City the ‘Historic Center’ (Romero, 1988). Prior to this, the area was simply called El Centro. Since the 1980s the Federal state began playing a central role in assisting certain institutions (mainly those in charge of tourism and culture) in the formation of a formal system of museums in Mexico City and ‘archeological sites’. Numerous plans were developed to improve the overall infrastructure of different historical sites (from museums to pre-Colombian ruins). With the help of historians, archeologists, and anthropologists, one of the objectives was to make these historical spaces much more accessible and ‘tourist-friendly’. At the same time, underlying these strategies was a re-definition and re-interpretation of Mexico (as a nation) through the commodification of its history.

The Historic Center and its central plazas are considered fundamental spaces to the cultural patrimony of Mexico. Many of the national historical festivities such as the

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73 Such as pre-Colombian ruins, Teotihuacan and Mayan cities in the south of Mexico

74 As Canclini (1989) states, until the mid-70s Mexican history was believed to be ‘responsibility’ of the public sector, namely the State. Indeed, state institutions administered the ‘traditional’ and ‘historic’, while the ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’ was left in the hands of the private sector (for example the creation of the Museum of Modern Art, was a result of investments made by private Mexican corporations such as TELEVISA). Today, the private sector has been ‘granted’ numerous responsibilities in the production of both Mexican history and culture. This shift is evident in the context of today’s Programa de Rescate, as part of which, Slim’s newly created Foundation – Fundación Centro Histórico – has taken upon itself to capitalize over the historical elements of the Historic Center.
day of independence are commemorated in the Historic Center and the plaza of Mexico City (as well as in the plazas of different cities across the nation). It is also a central meeting point for national social organizations and groups who come together to protest in front of the national government building or in front of the city’s administrative building against different legislative concerns. Furthermore, the Historic Center is a national commercial center where large and small-scale merchants from all over the nation travel to purchase goods at a relatively low price. Until 1982, the largest wholesale market of the country was located in the Historic Center. Finally, Mexico City receives more than seven and a half million national tourists a year. The majority of these stay at hotels located in the Historic Center (Personal communication, May, 2004). Hence, national tourism is yet another contributing factor to the symbolic and material significance of this particular place.

Recent developments have attached the Historic Center and its plaza to interests of a more global sort. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared Mexico City’s Historic Center as a World Heritage Site in 1987. Along with this sort of recognition of the Historic Center as a historical and cultural landmark of global importance, however, come responsibilities. Consequently, there is pressure on the city to improve general conditions in the area (Monge, 2003) given that the Worlds Monuments Fund (hereafter WMF), 75 a major player in global policies geared at protecting endangered historical landmarks across the globe, has added

75 The World Monuments Fund, formed in the late 1960s as a private non profit organization based in New York, has as its primary objective the preservation of major historical, cultural, and architectural sites in the world.
Mexico City’s Historic Center to its list of the one-hundred most endangered sites. Such pressure to protect the historical richness of the area has played into the hands of people such as Carlos Slim, the most important private investor involved in the Programa. Slim recently flew to New York (Guggenheim Museum) were he was awarded a prize from The WMF for the “success of the Mexico City’s Rescue Program” (Reforma, 2004).

According to the president of the WMF in 2004:

“Through its work in Mexico over the last twenty years, the World Monuments Fund became acutely aware of the myriad conservation problems in the capital, problems that steadily grew as the city suffered the effects of urbanization, including pollution, a falling water-table, and a range of other factors. Today, thanks to the remarkable efforts of Carlos Slim, the dire situation in the city’s Historic Center has dramatically improved. The World Monuments Fund looks forward to working hand-in-hand with the Fundación del Centro Histórico de la Ciudad de México to continue the progress towards the rehabilitation and revitalization of this important area”. (World Monuments Fund, Hadrian Award, 2004)

Indeed, it is in the context of the more global interest in developments in the Historic Center that the role of individuals such as Rudolph Giuliani – hired as the main consultant for the city’s anti-crime policy – must be placed: seeking to advance a particular vision for the Historic Center, Slim and Giuliani drew upon the experience of urban change in ‘attractive cities’ to embrace a policy of so-called renewal (Olds, 1997). As the director of Slim’s Fundación del Centro Histórico shared with me: “you go to places like Barcelona, or Madrid, or Soho in New York, and you see exactly what we would like to see in Mexico: life […] we imagine the Historic Center in ten years to be
the heart of the city’s entertainment. Kind of like the Broadway of Mexico City”
(Personal Communication, Director of Fundación del Centro Histórico, July, 2004).

Given the multiple forces and influences combining to produce the Historic Center, it is insufficient to understand it as a temporally fixed and circumscribed location with clear boundaries and borders. Rather, I argue that the Historic Center must be understood as a product of social relations emanating both within and beyond (Massey, 1994; Soja, 1999); it is produced by the juxtaposition and co-existence of different histories, multiple activities, and different people each with their own ‘sense of place’. This process of production leads to the co-existence of multiple meanings and tensions. As Cresswell (1996) has noted, this co-presence of people – each with their own understandings of ‘their’ places – entails the constant interplay of tension and struggles, which contribute to the production of place (Cresswell, 1996). Furthermore, material and discursive practices that ascribe meanings to places are deployed in the resolution of these tensions. As Lefebvre (1991) stressed, places (and spaces) should be theorized as products of three mutually embedded moments: the experienced (spatial practices), perceived (representations of space), and the imagined (representational spaces).

In this sense the Historic Center and its plaza are constituted not only by experienced material spatial practices which are fundamental processes of economic production and social reproduction (Knox and Pinch, 2000). These processes include, for instance, the flow of capital from Carlos Slim and the city government in the restoration of residential buildings in the Historic Center; the flow of international money from agencies like UNESCO to improve the status of the Historic Center as a World Heritage
Site; or the movement of people who visit, reside or consume in the Historic Center.

Although these multiple economic flows are key aspects in the production and reproduction of the Historic Center, this particular place is also constructed through the perceptions and imaginations of different actors who attach different meanings to the Historic Center. For instance, in the restoration of the built environment in the Historic Center, the Programa was implemented through a ‘one architect per street’ model, which involved hiring a group of architects, university experts and planners to develop and control the reconstruction and revitalization of each street. Each architect brought with them an architectural discourse that coincided with that of the Fideicomiso’s. However, while the Historic Center was represented and discursively constructed through the perspectives of planners, architects, bureaucrats, and the like, these perceptions are simultaneously being challenged and reshaped by the practices and interactions of different people in their every day lives. In the Historic Center, these normative visions developed by urban ‘experts’ have been challenged by street vendors, despite the attempts to remove them from the streets. Street vendors have undermined the practices of the Programa’s ‘experts by returning to the streets from which they were removed.

Questions therefore arise such as: What is defined as ‘in’ or ‘out’ of place? What is welcome or unwelcome and welcomed or not by whom? Viewing places as products of processes that include but are not reduced to economic processes is therefore helpful.

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76 For instance, Ricardo Legorreta a famous Mexican architects was highly involved in the Programa through the development of a large project (called Plaza Juarez) which involves the development of a massive residential and entertainment complex in front of the Alameda Park in the Historic Center.
because it tells us “something about who gets to participate in the construction and dissemination of meanings for places and thus places themselves” (Cresswell, 1996: 60).

As I have shown, Latin American Historic Centers and their plazas are imbued with multiplicity, albeit incorporating conflicting and cooperative politics. They are ‘community centers’, characterized by multiple practices and interactions among different sectors of the urban population, where multiple communities overlap. It is precisely this overlap that produces tensions, confrontations, and contestation. I argue that the struggles produced by the implementation of the Programa are not only a result of the economic importance of the plaza; rather, they are products of the particular cultural and social significance of this form of public space. In this sense, intense struggles have emerged over these exclusionary processes precisely because the plaza represents and functions as a community center. The question that I therefore ask is whether and how this process of reconstitution is being negotiated among the different actors? These sorts of negotiations involve differential power relations because there are competing interests, needs, concerns and normative visions about how this process of change will. Analysis of the complex interplay of different interest groups and their practices of power will clarify how the reconstitution of the community center plays out.
4.3 MULTIPLE PRACTICES OF POWER

The Programa is a policy which has been discursively constructed and legitimized as a government practice that attempts to rescue the Historic Center from a ‘severe crisis’; a crisis resulting from high rates of depopulation, increasing street vending activities, and an increased perception of crime, violence, and overall insecurity of the area. The argument underlying the Programa is that crime and insecurity in the area and the overall deterioration of the Historic Center is partly a product of the ‘invasion’ of these unwelcome people and practices in public space. Among the ‘undesirable groups’ are street vendors, who have been criminalized by the media, shop owners, and some residents. According to many of the old residents of the Historic Center, the deterioration of the area occurs because:

“[…] street vendors are taking old beautiful Historical buildings and using them as storage spaces for their products. You can imagine the dirtiness and just the overall abandonment of these spaces […] What use to be beautiful houses for people are now used for the storage of junk” (Personal communication with old resident of Historic Center, December, 2003).

One year after the Programa was launched, the Secretary of Public Security, when asked to discuss how the Programa deals with the numerous street vending organizations located in the Historic Center, stated:

“…we are working with street vending organizations, trying to come up with alternative places where they can be placed; but it must be very clear that in the rescued streets of the Historic Center, vending activities are going to be strictly prohibited. Street vendors will no longer be allowed on
those streets. It’s as easy as that. And I will do everything that is in my power to make that happen” (Head of the Secretary of Public Security of Mexico City. Reforma, 6 November, 2002).

In February 2002, as part of the Programa’s policy to remove street vendors from areas of the Historic Center, more than seventy police with anti-riot gear were ordered to ‘clean’ the central plaza, the Zócalo, of street vendors selling fruit, ice cream, chicharrones, chips, cotton candy, and other food-items. Police officers were faced with lots of opposition from street vendors facing removal as well as pedestrians and concheros, who argued that the police scared away their audiences (Reforma, 24 Febrero, 2002, Ciudad de México). In December 2003, on the other side of the central plaza of the Historic Center, protesting vendors met hundreds of police officers intending to remove vendors located in the ‘rescued’ streets of the Historic Center. Fights broke out; officers and street vendors were injured; and five street vendors were arrested and then charged with violent conduct.

These and numerous other cases of pitch battles and street fights between police and street vendors were widely discussed in the media as the Programa tried to rescue streets of the Historic Center and its central plaza. As I will elaborate, they illustrate an explicit, visible, and ‘in-your-face’ exercise of power that has emerged as a result of the implementation of the Programa. The above cases illustrate one way in which street vendors exercise power; that is, through violent confrontations in public space. This is

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77 Concheros refers to a traditional Aztec ritual (dance). During the day there are always several concheros on the Plaza of the Historic Center in Mexico City performing dances for local and international tourists.
not the only way in which street vendors have dealt with the changes brought by the
Programa. In daily practices the resistance strategies are perhaps more subtle and less
confrontational, yet nonetheless persistent.

In my multiple field visits and participant observation gatherings with street
vendors of the Historic Center, I noticed the continual return of vendors to the ‘rescued’
streets and plaza of the area, albeit under different conditions. Despite the increased
police presence on public spaces, numerous street vendors continued to sell their products
and continued to interact with other vendors and buyers by returning in a more mobile
way. Rather than placing their product in a relatively fixed stand, many street vendors
engaged in practices of torear\textsuperscript{78} – walking around on the streets carrying their products
or attaching them to their body (depending on the nature of the product). As I will
elaborate in this section, this spatial strategy of mobility suggests that the right to remain
on the streets of the Historic Center changes with their ability to tease (torear) authorities
and hence practice power. As I will elaborate, mobility becomes a practice of power
which aids in the struggle against the exclusionary practices of the Programa.

By drawing attention to the ‘practices of power’ (Foucault, 1980; Allen, 1999), I
argue that socio-spatial exclusion is not a unilateral process that (re)produces necessarily
a group of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. Rather, processes of socio-spatial exclusion are
embedded within a complex set of power relations that are multidimensional, ones that
cut across a variety of axes of difference. The question I ask is if there is resistance
among the excluded. In the context of Mexico City’s Programa I am interested in

\textsuperscript{78} Torear comes from the word “toreada” (bullfight). Figuratively it means deceive, or
tease.
understanding what is happening to street vendors and other excluded groups. Are they resisting the exclusionary practices of this policy? If so, what are their tactics of resistance? I use the notion of “subaltern counter publics” (Fraser, 1992) to pose questions about the nature of socio-spatial exclusion in the context of entrepreneurial urban governance. I argue that examining the ways in which excluded social ‘others’ create alternative spaces that challenge dominant discourses provides a critical tool for understanding how new power structures are struggled over and negotiated by different social groups in their daily lives.

In her critique of Habermas’s (1974) account of the bourgeois public sphere – as a singular theater for deliberation and thus the institution of public opinion – Fraser (1992) provides a nuanced approach. She argues that we should think about “postbourgeois public spheres”, as spheres of multiple publics where heterogeneous expressions and associations are made between different social groups and individuals (Fraser, 1992; Young, 2000). Mexico City’s Historic Center and its plaza exemplify this multiplicity of publics that overlap in ways that produce both conflict and cooperation. Acknowledging a multiplicity of publics highlights the ways in which subordinated groups contest, challenge, and respond to the exclusionary character of particular hegemonic discourses (Fraser, 1992). Fraser conceptualizes these alternative publics as “subaltern counterpublics”, understood as the sorts of spaces through which marginalized groups “invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser, 1992: 210). Furthermore, these counterpublics develop in response to exclusions within dominant publics, and in doing so they broaden
the arena of discursive contestation (Fraser, 1992). Thus, Fraser’s contribution indicates that socio-spatial exclusion in the context of entrepreneurial urban governance involves a complex and dynamic interaction of differential power relations, which suggests much more than the simple removal and exclusion of particular social groups from urban public spaces. Although local authorities and urban elites like Carlos Slim form coalitions with the objective of regulating and reinventing Mexico City’s Historic Center, their actual ability to exert power over others is contested by groups such as street vendors who have their understanding of that particular place. Excluded/subaltern groups develop what Mansbridge (2001) has called “oppositional consciousness”, understood as an “empowering mental state that prepared members of an oppressed group to act to undermine, reform, or overthrow a system of human domination” (Mansbridge, 2001: 4-5).

Numerous authors interested in street vending activities in Mexico City argue that the struggles among street vending groups are a struggle specifically over the loss of physical selling space (CANACO, 1987; 1989; Solis, 1997); namely, the one-square meter assigned to each vendor in the Historic Center. While I do not disagree entirely with this understanding of the relationship between struggle and space, some unanswered questions nevertheless arise. For instance, if the struggles resulting from the implementation of the Programa were merely struggles over the one meter square area that each vendor ‘possesses’, then why are so many vendors reluctant to change locations to areas where their assigned space would be expanded? Why do so many vendors insist in remaining on the streets and plaza of the Historic Center?
As I will discuss, there are other important dimensions of street vendors’ struggles over the changing Historic Center. Although the Programa threatens their economic space, it also disrupts kin networks that have developed throughout the years in the Historic Center; the policy disturbs social relations between different groups of street vendors; and it potentially disrupts a sense of community that has existed and has been a source of strength in a context of a harsh economic crisis. The Programa does much more than simply interrupt the daily economic practices of street vendors; it alters their community center.

It is commonly accepted among urban scholars interested in citizenship and democracy that public spaces are arenas of public contestation and struggle (Young, 2000). Urban public spaces have been conceptualized as spaces of deliberation where diverse publics with different interests, backgrounds, and concerns have the potential to engage with each other as a community (Kuri, 2003; Staeheli, 1997). Embedded in these approaches is a general concern over the relationship between citizenship, rights and political struggle, and the articulation of these processes in the production of spaces that allow for multiple voices to be heard and seen. As Young (1990) argues, “cities provide important public spaces […] where people stand and sit together, interact and mingle, or simply witness one another, without becoming unified in a community of ‘shared final ends’” (Young, 1990: 240). Street vendors’ resistance over the practices of the Programa is thus more than a territorial struggle; rather it is a struggle over their rights as citizens to remain as members of the Historic Center – that is, their community center. As the leader of one organization of street vendors in the Historic Center discussed:
“There are many of us and we are inclined to fight. Because this is the only way we can make it. Our people – young and old, women that were abandoned, mothers with children to feed – are working in the streets because they have no other option. We are constantly fighting. Street vendors are decent, hard-working people that support their families. We are entitled to the same rights to work as all men have as a basic human right. This is guaranteed in the Constitution”. (Brayman, July, 2003)

Social subjects as active participants in processes of change broadens our understanding of political space. Political processes are not confined exclusively to the modernist political theorization of state-society relations, where state institutions possess power and are therefore the forces of social change; rather, the ‘new citizenship’ recognizes the importance of multiple spaces of political action within a heterogeneous civil society (Dagnino, 1998). To achieve an inclusive and participatory political process, many scholars have recognized the importance of moving beyond a universalistic theorization of citizen, and attend to the existing differences among and within social actors and groups (Alvarez, 1998; Ettlinger, 2002; Fraser, 1997; Young, 2000). This meaning of inclusive political action that recognizes social differentiation highlights the importance of thinking about active social groups as a body of individuals who have different needs, cultures, histories, experiences and perceptions, but who at a particular moment in time, share and identify with a specific concern (Young, 1997). Political action and participation is thus created and recreated through the coexistence of multiple forms of identity that are fluid, hybrid and ever changing (Canclini, 1989; Rubin, 1998; Young, 1990)

A second common presumption embedded within much of the urban entrepreneurial literature is that excluded groups are homogeneous and equally displaced.
A question that I pose: what differences exist among the excluded, and how are these differences significant for understanding different avenues of resistance? Are all street vendors being equally displaced from the Historic Center?

There are between nine and thirty thousand vendors selling products on the streets and central plaza of the Historic Center. The figures vary depending upon the source of information: one city official said during an interview in June 2004 that there were between nine and twelve thousand; however, members of CANACO (National Chambers of Commerce) and other local shop owners claimed there were between twenty-five and twenty-seven thousand street vendors. The precise number of street vendors has unquestionably grown since the 1980s, that is, in the precise period in which the population of the Historic Center has declined.

Reflecting on the influence of earlier co-opting strategies on the part of the PRI – discussed in Chapter Three – the majority of street vendors are members of a street vending organization. There are a total of seventy-one organizations of street vendors in the Historic Center according to the Secretary of Government of Mexico City. Not only does each organization have access to a different part of the Historic Center and the central plaza, but in other ways, too, they are far from homogenous. Some organizations have thousands of members; others consist of 100-200 members. There are those formed in the 1960s; and those formed in the last ten years or so. Many are affiliated with either the PRI through the CNOP, or the PRD. Some have no affiliation at all. Finally, and most importantly for purposes of this chapter, they also have dealt with, and struggled over, the exclusionary practices of the Programa in quite different ways. For instance, some street
vending organizations have practiced what Allen (2003) has called associational power, where “power acts more like a collective medium enabling things to get done or facilitate some common aim” (Allen, 2003: 5). Some organizations of street vendors who have practiced associational power have done so by strengthening alliances with state institutions; others have formed ties with different street vending organizations, and other groups have developed cooperative ties with local shop owners. I am interested in the multiplicity of strategies – the heterogeneity of negotiations with the Programa.

I focus on two different organizations of street vendors to discuss issues of resistance and the multiplicity of ways in which power has been practiced between different groups affected by the Programa. I also use the two case studies to highlight the heterogeneity among the so-called excluded along several axes of difference. Both organizations share a number of similar characteristics. For instance both organizations are affiliated and supportive of a political party, they both have a single recognized leader, both organizations are resisting the exclusionary practices of the policy, and they are both located in areas of the Historic Center that are being ‘rescued’ from the Programa. Despite these similarities, both organizations have their own particularities that are not shared with other organizations. These differences include the size and age of each organization, their political affiliation, their resource base, both in terms of their economic and social capital, and the particular areas of the Historic Center where they sell their products. I show how marginalized groups such as street vendors are not equally displaced from the Historic Center, by highlighting the heterogeneity among these two different organizations.
The first organization, which I refer to as TAP, was formed in 1982 and is one of the largest street vending organizations in the Historic Center. It has always been affiliated with the PRI, via the CNOP structure. TAP organizational hierarchical structure is kin based. Although there is a single recognized leader, the organization is run in coordination with the children and sisters of the leader. TAP authorities claim the organization has over 2,500 members located in different areas of the Historic Center; it also has members based in other areas of the city. In terms of their physical selling spaces in the Historic Center TAP members sold on approximately forty streets of the Historic Center before the implementation of the Programa; since streets have been ‘rescued’, however, TAP has lost control of twenty-five streets.

The second organization, to which I refer as UMC, is a small organization that consists of eight-hundred members in the Historic Center (no members in other parts of the city); it was formed in 1998 and has always been affiliated to the PRD. The creation of UMC was a byproduct of the death of the leader of the second largest organization of street vendors in the Historic Center. Her death led to the dismantling of the organization and the creation of numerous smaller organizations, including UMC. Before the Programa, UMC members sold on approximately ten streets of the Historic Center; since the implementation of the Programa, however, UMC has lost seven streets.

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79 I have changed the name of the organization to protect the identities of the research subjects.

80 Interestingly, although the leaders of TAP deny their association with any political party, the walls of their central office (headquarters) are proudly decorated with pictures showing the leader of TAP in different events with important political figures of the PRI.
I ask how TAP and UMC members have resisted the exclusionary practices of the Programa. What factors have contributed to losing and/or retaining spaces in the Historic Center? In the following section, I empirically ground issues of agency and power by examining how these two organizations, which differ in membership size, geographic location, creation, and political affiliation, have reconstituted their identities and places. I use this comparative approach to show that exclusionary practices among the so-called marginalized are experienced differently. Both TAP and UMC disagree profoundly with the city government’s approach to the production of a ‘desirable’ Historic Center. Although both organizations have felt squeezed by the Programa, their resistance strategies vary significantly. For example, whereas TAP members have exercised power by confronting the police in different public spaces within the Historic Center, UMC members have used public space to practice power by becoming mobile vendors. Furthermore, even though both organizations have engaged in associational power, TAP members have extended their resistance strategies to formal political spheres and UMC members have formed alliances with other excluded groups who have faced removal from the Historic Center. It is to these differences that I now turn.

4.3.1 Classic resistance politics: TAP members and struggles in public space

As part of the Programa’s attempt to increase safety and security on the streets and plaza of the Historic Center, approximately sixty auxiliary police entered an area of the Historic Center controlled by TAP in April 2002. They were immediately confronted by hundreds
of street vendors, who sprayed the police with tear gas and struck them with wooden sticks (Reforma, 17 April, 2002). This event represented a victory for TAP.

In August 2003, TAP members engaged the police in another confrontation. The dispute began early in the morning. Vendors from a different organization who had been removed from their spaces of the Historic Center began setting up stands in front of TAP’s main office. One of the members of the other street vending organization ‘invading’ TAP’s zone was killed; the leader of TAP, who initially escaped from the police, was found by the police four months later and charged with murder.81

In June, 2004 members of various street vending organizations of the Historic Center gathered on the central plaza to protest against the incarceration of TAP’s leader who was accused of the murder of the husband of the leader of the second largest organization of street vendors of the Historic Center. More than four thousand people attended the demonstration to show support for the leader and its organization. Among the attendees were leaders and members of other vending organizations, family members of TAP’s leader, representatives from ‘single-mother’ organizations, members of non-wage workers unions, members of local Parliament, and other militants of the PRI (see Figure 4.3). There is little doubt, then, that TAP members have tried to halt their removal from the Historic Center. Street battles such as those described above were common.

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81 Two months after this incident, I was invited to a meeting with TAP authorities to watch a video of the event and discuss possible legal avenues for releasing the leader from jail. The video was given to the organization by a journalist from a mainstream TV network and also TAP sympathizer. Many of the links and relationships I established with TAP members began through this first meeting with TAP authorities.
Figure 4.3: Rally in the Historic Center. A crowd of four thousand street vendors gathered in the central plaza of the Historic Center 23 June, 2004 to protest the incarceration of TAP’s leader.
Although the examples mentioned so far have taken place in the context of the implementation of the Programa, violent street confrontations have been a resistance mechanism throughout much of the history of street vending activities, including those of TAP. TAP’s leader recalls having to deal with police force on the street since she was a child helping her parents sell vegetables on the streets of the Historic Center. As she stated in a recent interview:

“My parents were both ambulantes. I remember selling wares in the street near the Lagunilla market when I was very young […] But then, a regent called Ernesto Uruchurtu came along who threw the vendors into the street with the help of the police and granaderos (riot police). They tossed out my parents and the people who sold goods there. […] The police and granaderos broke up the stalls, destroyed the merchandise and beat up the vendors. After a great fight on the part of my parents and their compadres to defend themselves and their livelihood, plazas and designated areas to sell their goods were set up” (Brayman, July 2003).

Police brutality experienced by the vendors during the time of Uruchurtu became for many of today’s street vending organization a stepping stone for the creation of informal support blocks, which then became official organizations. Many of today’s leaders experienced Uruchurtu’s violent policies either indirectly, through their parents or directly as children selling products in the Historic Center. Given this history of confrontation, many of the street vendors I interviewed expressed having no fear to confront the police in violent ways if necessary. “I will continue to fight with the
granaderos and the camioneros if I have to [...] I know I’m not on my own. I know that all my compañeros will fight with me.” (Personal communication with street vendor from TAP, November, 2003).

Although the examples mentioned so far may lead to the conclusion that street vendors are turning their back on different formal political institutions (for instance on the secretary of public security) – by engaging in explicit acts of resistance, such as violent street confrontations with police, returning to ‘recovered’ streets, and so forth – their struggle also extends into formal representative political spheres (Dagnino, 1998).

4.3.2 Associational power: Tapping into the state

Numerous scholars interested in the politics of resistance in the context of Mexico argue that the power of urban social organizations and popular urban movements rests in their ability to mobilize outside formal political institutions (Eckstein, 1990). However, I argue that there is not one single form of resistance practiced by organizations such as street vendors. While some street vending organizations have found ways of contesting mainstream exclusionary urban policies by explicitly avoiding formal institutional channels, others have found ways of tapping into the political system by gaining allies within the system and using them as political mediators between the vendors and the local government.

Persistent and sometimes violent street confrontations like the ones mentioned above and the negative unwelcome media attention they brought to the Historic Center led the city government to create a new institution called the Oficina para el
Mejoramiento Integral del Centro Histórico (Office for the Integrated Improvement of the Historic Center – hereafter OMICH). This new office did not develop in a historical vacuum. In 1993, Mexico City’s Assembly of Representatives approved an ordinance – Bando para la Reordenación y Regulación del Comercio en la Via Pública del Centro Histórico – which prohibits street vending activities specifically in perimeter A and B of the Historic Center (see Figure 4.4).

This ordinance gave birth to the program known today as Programa de Reordenamiento del Comercio en la Via Pública (The Street Vending Reorganization Program for the Federal District). Since 1997, this program has been managed by a newly created institutional body that became responsible for street vending activities in the entire metropolitan area. The objective was to create an institutional body with the resources to manage and reorganize street vendors, not only in the Historic Center, but in the entire city (Dirección de Programas Delegacionales y Reordenamiento en la Vía Pública).
Figure 4.4: Map of the two perimeters of the Historic Center. Data source: IRD
With the implementation of the *Programa*, however, there was a need to concentrate efforts exclusively in the Historic Center. OMICH – developed in November, 2002 under the supervision of the local Secretary of Public Security – was therefore created with the purpose of “sustaining order in the recovered streets of the Historic Center” (Personal Communication, June 2004). This public body works in coordination with the Secretary of State of Mexico City (through the office of ‘Rearrangement of Commercial activities in the Thoroughfare’) and the Cuauhtémoc County (through the office of Markets and Thoroughfare). As the director of the OMICH stated:

> “…the idea behind the creation of this body was to make street vendors realize that there were no more governmental fissures and internal incongruities within the state. By realizing that all the powers were concentrated in one central body, well, the leaders started realizing that this time, change was for real”. (Personal Communication with Director of Office for the Integrated Improvement of the Historic Center. June 2, 2004)

The creation of OMICH opened up new avenues for street vendors to tap into the state. In addition to protesting and confronting the police, TAP members have also used less confrontational resistance strategies. They have exploited historical alliances with the PRI. Although the PRI is no longer in power, many city government officials are PRI members. TAP and other street vending organizations have a relatively long history of connections with the PRI. As discussed in Chapter Three, street vendors were part of the popular sector, which for more that seventy ears was an ally of the governing PRI. The popular sector – or CNOP – was a heterogeneous group consisting of groups such as street vendors, artisans, and other self employed groups who had been excluded from
formal labor unions and peasant organizations. Hence, the Mexican state under the PRI was a three-sector corporatist political system where the PRI satisfied the demands from these three constituencies in return for political support. This system granted many street vendors territory in the Historic Center during the 1950s under the office of Uruchurtu.82

In the context of today’s Programa, TAP has called upon its allies in the popular sector to exert influence in the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District to gain leverage with respect to three general issues. First, to stop city authorities involved in the sustainability of the Programa from ‘rescuing’ the streets and spaces where TAP members conduct their daily economic activities. As the TAP leader shared in an interview:

“…we just met with the chief of police […] and he agreed to stop the operations against the ambulantes and assured us that our rights – both human and constitutional that have been violated repeatedly in the past – would be respected” (Brayman, July, 2003)

TAP members have used their ties with the CNOP and the Legislative Assembly to demand for prior notice of what streets are going to be ‘rescued’ so TAP can rearrange its members accordingly. Finally, TAP’s leader has asserted pressure on city authorities to negotiate for the acquisition of spaces in the planned ‘closed’ market spaces. This form

82 See Chapter Three for a more detailed account of Mexico City under the Uruchurtu regime.
of associational power is highlighted in a letter I was given by the personal assistant of a member of the Legislative Assembly – who is also the representative of street vendors of the CNOP. The letter, dated June, 2004, stated that:

“…street vendors from [TAP] have solicited our intervention in matters related to the removal of vendors from the Historic Center. [TAP] kindly asks you to not give spaces to other organizations on the east sidewalks of Eje Central between the streets of Donceles and Cuba. Especially to organizations such as [WIT] and [DUR]\(^3\) we all know have had, for many years, ample spaces in the Alameda Park. For this, I ask for you valuable intervention in order to maintain absolute respect over the already established agreements. Further, I hope that the problems that may arise are resolved though a peaceful dialogue and process of respectful concurrence between [TAP] and the institution that you represent with such dignity.” (Personal communication, July, 2004)

TAP’s ability to exercise association power by tapping into the state is not only a product of the organization’s connections to the CNOP during the PRI years, but also from the history of TAP’s leader in the Historic Center. TAP’s leader is well known not only among her members, but also among city authorities. As the director of OMICH expressed to me when asked about negotiating with leaders from different vending organizations:

“Well, there are leaders and leaders. There are historic leaders. Those that have been here for decades, you know. Those old leaders like [TAP] still talk about respect, negotiation, citizen’s rights, etc. They provide all sorts of benefits to their members, beyond just a space on the street. For example, [TAP’s] leader is among the few that expresses concern for her members. She provides health care services, housing credits to her

\(^3\) WIT and DUR are fictitious names.
members. She has a day care center for her female members that don’t have anywhere to take their kids when they are out on the streets. The older leaders have a very different approach that the younger leaders who are pure gangsters. For example, there is this leader who we know is involved in really shady activities. You know? It’s those young kids who are leaders not because of their history in the Historic Center, like [TAP’s] leader who has been here for years, who helped her parents sell vegetables in the Merced Market. No, they are leaders because people are afraid of them. So it is not fair to talk about street vending organizations as a whole. Their approach is very different” (Personal Communication with Director of OMICH, June, 2004)

Associational power in this sense is made possible by acquaintance and involvement between TAP’s leader and city authorities. TAP has also exploited relations with the jurisdictional powers of the Delegación Cuauhtemoc (county which the Historic Center forms part of) over acquiring special permits to continue selling on streets of the Historic Center. Since the 1960s street vendors were granted special temporary permits to sell product in ‘special occasions’, also called romerías. Although these permits were temporary, valid for no longer than a month (depending on the event), many street vendors took advantage of this opportunity to remain on the streets even after the permit expired. During the PRI years, these permits were granted by the jurisdictional authorities only to a single representative (leader) of a vending organization. After 1997 when the PRD won the local elections, the permits for romerías were granted to individuals, regardless of whether they were members of an organization. The idea behind this change

84 Officially, romerías are special festival events such as Christmas, Day of the three kings, Easter, The day of the Dead, Mexican Independence, and so forth. However, permits for romerías have been extended to any event of the year that has the potential of encouraging mass consumption. Such is the case of ‘back-to-school’ month in September, Dia del Niño (Day of the children) in April, Mothers Day in May, and Valentines Day in February.
was to discourage and dismantle the clientelist system of exchange that had been established during the PRI years. Officially, permits can no longer be granted to street vending leaders located on the streets that have been rescued by the *Programa*. In practice, however, permits are still being authorized and granted. TAP’s leader has been actively involved in this unofficial form of exchange. This informal exchange became evident during my fieldwork when the first director of OMICH – the government office created as part of the *Programa* and set up exclusively to deal with street vendors located on the ‘rescued’ streets – was forced to resign after he was found guilty of accepting money from street vendors to remain in the ‘rescued’ streets.

Rather than engaging exclusively in confrontational forms of power related with the first form of resistance identified above, the second strategy shows that TAP has also practiced associational power by extending resistance strategies into formal representative political arenas (Allen, 1999; 2003; Dagnino, 1998). In the case of TAP, this form of power works along side confrontation but requires a significantly different approach. Subaltern publics were able to carve out an important niche within dominant publics in post-PRI Mexico because of the clientelist structure of the Mexican state developed during the PRI years, a structure which, as I argue in Chapter Three, has not been entirely dismantled (Alvarez, 1997).

Associational power can be exercised and exploited in multiple ways and with different objectives in mind. The clientelist structure established during the PRI years has allowed street vending organizations such as TAP to extend their resistance strategies into formal political spheres and thus practice associational modes of power (Allen,
Institutionalized and formal connections such as those established between TAP and the state, through the influence of CNOP, are one way in which associational power has been practiced. There are, however, various ways in which social groups can establish connections with each other and engage in associational modes of power. As Ettlinger (2003) suggests, critical connections can be made through informal ties and contexts. Associational power is not limited exclusively to ‘official’ and formal avenues of collaboration; rather, alliances can also be established in informal and subtle practices in daily life.

4.3.3 Associational power: Overlapping networks

Unlike TAP, which has used its alliances with the CNOP to tap into the state and thus gain leverage over the workings of the Programa, – with regards to negotiations for new spaces in the Historic Center – UMC members have engaged in collaborative politics, forming new alliances with different groups, including other street vending organizations and local shop-owners. Although both organizations exercise associational power, their networking strategies have varied. For instance, one of the alliances made by UMC is with another small organization of street vendors, which I identify as ‘LOK’, affiliated with the PRD and whose community center has not been dismantled though the workings of the Programa. The alliance between UMC and LOK were made possible by the leaders’ political ties with the PRD. Further, prior to being leaders of different organizations, both UMC and LOK leaders formed part of the same organization; during the 1990s the organization was the second largest organization of street vendors in the
Historic Center and split-up after the death of its main leader in 1996 (Posada and Urrutia, 1996). Both UMC and LOK leaders have capitalized on relations of trust developed throughout the years as friends and members of the same organization (Ettlinger, 2003). Their cooperative strategies are not limited to their work-space, i.e. the streets; rather, their connections cut across different dimensions of their everyday life. As Ettlinger suggests when discussing connections and overlaps between networks or organizations, “informal, subtle connections among people in overlapping networks across different public and private spheres of life (home, church, neighborhood, workplace…) may be critical to effecting change in a workplace through collaboration” (Ettlinger, 2003: 162). For instance, UMC and LOK leaders were part of the same street vending organization for more than ten years; they live in the same neighborhood; they share the rental costs of office space; they take care of each other’s children; when interviewed by state officials, journalists, or students like myself, they participate in the interviews together. These and other ties have been beneficial for the sustainability of UMC’s members in the Historic Center, despite the exclusionary practices of the Programa. Indeed, UMC members who have been displaced by the Programa have relocated to LOK street-segments. The connections developed between UMC and LOK leaders in the past have been capitalize to help UMC members maintain their social and economic niche in the Historic Center, albeit in a different location. Since UMC did not have access to other spaces in the Historic Center, LOK members agreed to reduce their physical selling spaces to give way to the displaced members of UMC. This spatial relocation is coupled with a rearrangement of different social relations. For instance,
those street vendors who have large stands tend to have better sales and can thus afford to hire a *chalan*\(^{85}\) to help them with their daily activities. UMC members who were relocated and to LOK street-segments and who could no longer afford to hire a *chalan* on their own, decided to share the costs of hiring a *chalan* with LOK members. These were individual negotiations done among the vendors themselves and did not involve the leader’s consent. As one LOK member who had to reduce one meter of his original stall shared with me:

> “I was not displaced. I have always been on this street. But those who were in *Correo Mayor* [a street in the Historic Center] were removed. They had their space there for years, but the street closed and they had to leave. So they were accommodated here. I had to reduce my stand a little, but that’s fine. Coz, I mean, we have to help our *compañeros*. We can’t close our doors to them. What would they do? They are vendors just like us. What would they do if we don’t give them a space to relocate here? How would they eat? How would the feed their families? We all have necessities. We have to be united so that we can all move forward.
> (Personal Communication with UMC member, April, 2004)

Relocation however has not been an equally accessible strategy to all vending organization. In UMC’s case, relocating to new areas of the Historic Center was made possible by the existing ties between the leaders of UMC and LOK. In TAP’s case, however the relocation of displaced vendors has been managed within the same organization. Although TAP lost a significant number of street-segments since the

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\(^{85}\) *Chalan* stands for ‘helper’. The *chalanes* of street vendors are usually young adolescents who help street vendors set-up their stand, move products from the storage to the stand, and runs errands for the street vendors. They are paid per week or per month, depending on the agreements established with the vendor. *Chalanes* are typically a family member e.g. nephew, niece, or cousin.
implementation of the *Programa*, they still had access to fifteen streets in the Historic Center (in addition to spaces elsewhere in the city). In response, TAP has relocated some of the displaced to the remaining fifteen streets. This has created problems since it has forced the organization to squeeze all 2500 members into a smaller geographic area within the Historic Center. Many of the street vendors who have had to accommodate new circumstances expressed their anxiety and frustration over the heightened competition generated by the ‘new comers’. As one street vendor stated, “Some days I don’t sell at all. I finish my daily work and go home without my first blessing” (Personal communication with street vendor, November, 2003).

Not only do TAP members have less room on the streets to place their products, but they also have less storage space on the street because their stalls are smaller. Their warehouses are located far from their stalls which mean that they must take fewer trips per day to collect additional stock. So, for many TAP members, the *Programa* has squeezed their daily work space. Sales have reduced, storage space is tight, and competition is greater than before. TAP members expressed in interviews a strong sense of injustice about the *Programa*.

“It’s unjust that they [the government] want to remove us from the streets. From one day to another they come here and say ‘this is our street, it’s all been planned, we’re going to rescue this street and you are no longer going to be allowed to sell things here any more. No! The streets are not theirs. The streets are of the people of Mexico. Mainly ours! We have a saying among street vendors ‘the streets are of those who work it’. Who has been on these streets for years and years? Us! We really have tried to come to terms with the authorities, but they have really disappointed us. But we aren’t going to sit around and do nothing.” (Personal communication with TAP member, February 2004)
The relocation of TAP members from their original spaces in the Historic Center, to smaller and reduced spaces has generated a number of tensions within the organization. In addition to expressing injustice about the practices of the Programa, TAP members also expressed discontent over the strategies of the leaders of the organization regarding the decisions that have been made to re-accommodate every TAP member in the limited spaces. This has generated a series of internal concerns in the organization because many TAP members left the organization and joined other vending organizations that have control over streets unaffected by the Programa.

Further, the process of relocation has generated tensions between shop-owners in the ‘non-rescued’ streets who have also felt squeezed. I interviewed a number of local shop owners who expressed hatred and antagonism against street vendors and against the state for allowing such ‘levels of anarchism to plague the streets of the Historic Center’ (Personal Communication with shop owner, November 2003). Different local shop owners argued that the Programa is not about solving a problem; rather, it is about shifting the problem around. Street vendors are being moved around the Historic Center, from rescued to non-rescued streets and in this process, local shop owners feel threatened and economically vulnerable. For example in one major avenue of the Historic Center, Eje Central, more than fifteen-hundred street vendors from TAP have been relocated in front of more that one hundred local businesses. One shop owner in Eje Central with whom I worked closely during my fieldwork closed her shop three months after I began my fieldwork. When asked the reasons why she closed her store, she explained:
“The Historic Center has the potential of being the best place to set up a business. I mean, more that ten thousand people visit the area a day. Well, at least they visited in the past, because now the street vendors have taken over. That is why I sold my business. I had no choice. I sold nothing. Literally nothing in the last few months. My side walk was infested with vendors. I was mugged four times in the last six months, and I have no doubt it was those vendors outside my store. They are like pests that feed on other people. They tried to feed on me [...] I could not stand it any more. In addition to that, we [shop owners] got absolutely no support from government authorities […] The government is rescuing some streets and what is happening is that they are shifting the street vendors to the un-rescued streets. I happened to be in one of those so-called ‘un-rescued streets’, so the government didn’t give a damn about me and my store. (Personal communication with shop owners, July 2004)

Relocating to other streets in the Historic Center has been a way in which certain members of TAP have tried to maintain and sustain their social and economic niche. The process of relocation, however, has generated new sets of antagonisms both between different groups, for instance street vendors and shop owners, and among some of the street vendors of the same organization who have had to reduce the size of their stand and squeeze on the sidewalk to give space to other vendors who were displaced from the rescued streets.

Although these sorts of conflicting politics developed both among TAP members and between different groups is a byproduct of the Programa’s attempt to ‘clean’ the multiple public spaces of the Historic Center, collaborative relations between vendors and shop owners have also developed. A significantly different alliance between UMC members and local shop owners from the Historic Center was also established. This was an initial surprise for me since street vendors and shop owners typically engage in
antagonistic relations. Unlike the connections between UMC and LOK, which was established directly between the leaders and rests upon relations of trust shared by the leaders, the ties between UMC members and shop owners is an informal relationship based on subtle and unwritten agreements of ‘acceptable’ practices for the benefit of both groups. Unlike the case of TAP, UMC members have nurtured a more cooperative relation with shop owners. This is partly because many shop owners in the Historic Center have also been excluded from the Programa’s decision-making process and have therefore been willing to work with street vendors, rather than against them. Not only were shop owners being excluded from decision making processes, but some felt that the Programa was generating serious negative effects on the economic development of their businesses.

In this context, more then two thousand local businesses came together and formed what is now called the Unión de Comerciantes del Centro Histórico (UCCH – Union of Business people of the Historic Center) with the purpose of “establishing channels of communication with the government and having a voice in the decisions that are made regarding the Historic Center” (Personal Communication, director of UCCH, December, 2003). As one shop owner expressed:

“There are so many businesses with a long tradition here, and we don’t have the means to survive any longer. The cost of everything, services, rents is going up, and the only ones that can afford to do business here anymore are the large chains” (Clark, 2005)
Throughout my fieldwork, I noticed several dimensions to the alliance between UMC members and shop owners. For example, when I engaged in street vending activities in the Historic Center with UMC street vendors I noticed that rather than paying extra money for storage, several street vendors left their belongings in the store overnight for a small fee. Also, when the police did its occasional rounds, many street vendors grabbed their belongings and ran inside local shops to avoid getting caught by the police and have their products confiscated.

During my one-week interaction as a street vendor with members of UMC I identified a number of subtle daily practices which suggest that UMC members and shop owners collaborate to achieve a similar objective: to stay in the Historic Center and continue to make a living. They practice what Bayat (2000) has called quiet encroachment, a ‘non-collective but prolonged direct action by individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives (land for shelter, urban collective consumption, informal jobs, business opportunities and public space) in a quite and unassuming illegal fashion” (Bayat, 2000: 536). These subtle and non-collective forms of ‘encroachment’ became evident one day when one of the vendors I worked with was running out of products and needed to make an urgent phone call to his supplier. When he realized that his cell phone battery was off, he asked a local shop owner if he could tap into his electricity to charge his phone. The shop owner agreed. I observed similar sorts of daily agreements between UMC vendors and shop owners. For instance, when street vendors needed leave their stall for an hour to run errands or pick up their children from school, shop owners would look after their stalls to make sure that products were not
stolen; when vendors had to use the bathroom or need running water, they would ask local shop owners. In this sense, street vendor’s daily activities were facilitated by the help of shop owners.

UMC street vendors have tapped new resources, but so have shop owners. A number of shop owners admitted that street vending activities outside their shop in fact attracts people and helps increase sales. Street vendors’ activities have the potential of attracting large flows of people to certain parts of the Historic Center. Shop owners have tried to capitalize on this by negotiating with street vendors to use a small space in their stand to sell their products. Indeed, many street vendors agreed to sell products on the street on behalf of shop owners. Furthermore, shop owners practice what is known as *desdoblamiento*, which literally means to unfold or spread out. Street vendors agree to provide shop owners with a space on the streets in which to sell their products; while the shop worker remains inside, the street vendor sells his/her products outside (sometimes at a cheaper rate). So, it works both ways and suits both parties. For street vendors, the alliance helped them avoid being caught by the police and it opened up new spaces of the Historic Center for them to sell; but it also helped increase the sales of local shops.

Everyday experiences such as these strengthen ties among individuals and groups and aid in the construction of everyday resistance strategies. What occurs daily in the Historic Center is an interplay between the police in charge of removing street vendors, shop owners, and street vendors in which the authority of the police and the *Programa*
authorities is undermined. Further, these practices allow vendors to remain in the Historic Center, raising important questions about the power of the Programa to unilaterally displace so-called excluded groups.

In addition to engaging in classic resistance politics by confronting police authorities in public space and constructing new alliances in order to gain leverage over the workings of the Programa, some TAP and UMC members who have been displaced from their original physical selling spaces have found ways to reconstitute their social networks. Many vendors continue selling their products and continue interacting with other vendors and buyers by returning to the streets but in a more mobile way. They have engaged in what is known as torear, a resistance strategy to which I now turn.

4.3.4 Power through mobility: Reconstitution of social and economic niche

“Resistance involves the spatialities of location and boundary formation, but it is also constituted through the idea of movement – a change from one place on the map to another, or possibly many others […] It is mobility that has been seen as radical and transformative” (Pile, 1997: 29).

Despite claims made by different shop owners, residents, and certain city authorities, the daily life of many street vendors is neither effortless nor problem-free. Aside from the difficulties of having to be in the constant look-out for police and clandestine burglars, or of having to deal with the burden of harsh weather (sun, heat, rain, and cold) street vendors’ daily life entails long and far from ideal working conditions. Street vendors are a highly diverse set of individuals, not only in terms of their political affiliation but also in terms of their daily lives and working rhythms. The majority of vendors I engaged with
during my fieldwork live in the outskirts of the city or in the bordering state, Estado de Mexico and commute for more than three hours a day to arrive at the Historic Center.

Some cannot afford storage space in the Historic Center and thus carry their products back and forth from their home to their work space. When they arrive to the Historic Center – typically at nine in the morning – they sweep the street of dust, which during the dry season can stain products, and prepare to set up their stand. This entails first, creating some sort of roof to protect them from the sun and or rain. They do this by hooking up a large piece of synthetic or fabric cloth from a long vertical metal pole to one of the sides of the buildings or a neighboring street vendors’ stall. Once the roof is complete, they build the stand for their products. After one hour of cleaning, organizing, setting their stand, and placing their products they are ready to begin their regular selling routine. For some vendors, this routine has had to change with the implementation of the Programa. Rather than setting up a metal or wooden stand in another (squeezed) area, some of the displaced street vendors have become mobile and have returned to the streets from which they were originally displaced, by engaging in torear practices. What exactly does torear entail in everyday life? Street vendors place a small blanket on the ground and arrange their products (see Figure 4.5). Before police officers enter the area, the vendors are warned, they grab the four corners of the blanket, pick up their products, and leave. As many different street vendors told me, the practice of torear is something that they will continue to do if that is the only way to remain in the Historic Center:

86 Street vendors’ stalls are either made out of metal or wood. In the first case, the stand is made by connecting a series of short metal rods together. In the latter case, they set up a series of wooden crates on the floor – one on top of the other – and place a large sheet of thin wood that functions as a table for setting their products.
“…I’ve been on this street since I was 8. This is my home. I spend more time here than in my own home. A block from here is my son selling socks, my husband also works here. Nobody is taking me out from this place....And if the government continues to prohibit our entry to the rescued streets, what do we do? Well, toreamos. (Personal Communication, leader of street vending organization, February, 2004)

“… here I feel at home. Like with my family. I mean, among us we really help each other. There is more communication here among us than in my own house where I just eat and sleep. This is like one big family. We basically live here. And as a home, we fight for it. Nobody is taking us out of here…that’s for sure.” (Personal communication with street vendor, April, 2004)
Figure 4.5: Toreros. Street vendors in front of the central cathedral next to the central plaza. They are toreros who place their products on blankets on the floor. When the police arrive, they grab their blankets with their products and run inside the cathedral, which is located behind the gates shown on the top left hand side of the picture.
Mobility as a spatial strategy of resistance has been well cited as a way in which excluded groups express their concerns and maintain a livelihood despite structures of constraints. Such is the case of the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, in Argentina (Bosco, 2001) or homeless people in cities across the United States (Davis, 1990; Deutsche, 1996), who despite authoritarian dictatorships or despite tightened regulations on the uses of public space, still find ways of rendering themselves visible. In the case of street vendors, their spatial strategy of mobility suggests that vendors’ right to remain on the streets of the Historic Center changes with their ability to tease authorities and hence practice power. From being “out of place” (Cresswell, 1996), they are suddenly in place (Jones, 2004) and are thus not confronted by the police. In this case, mobility becomes a practice of power which undermines practices of the *Programa* and generates high levels of frustration among the police and the local authorities.

Although power through mobility might sound like an easy task, it requires extensive organization and resources. The street vending organization pays certain members to monitor the streets, to watch for the police, and to warn other vendors of the police activities through the use of walkie-talkies. *Torear* strategies are therefore not a spontaneous task. It requires extensive organizational skills, geographic coordination, and financial and social resources: they need walkie-talkies and a committed organizational structure to support the *toreros*. TAP has a financial and social resource base that is not shared among all street vending organizations of the Historic Center.

Members of UMC have also practiced power through strategies of mobility, but the characteristics of this practice are significantly different from those practiced by TAP
members. UMC does not share the social and economic resources that would allow them to organize themselves the way TAP members do. UMC lacks the organizational structure to provide protection from the police. In the case of TAP, although torear involved placing blankets on the street and enjoying a certain level of protection from the organization’s support network, torear for UMC members implies walking on the ‘rescued’ streets – constantly moving, never stopping, carrying their products, and in some cases attaching products on their body (depending on the nature of the product). In some cases, UMC members warn each other about police activities and movements during the day. But this level or ‘warning’ is spontaneous and does not involve any sort of technological communication tools – cell phones, walkie-talkies, and so forth. In some cases, UMC members engaging in torear strategies on the same street whistle to each other to communicate about police activities or other potential threats. Whereas for TAP members, torear was a relatively protected practice, UMC’s form of torear places street vendors in a much more fragile and vulnerable position. The police appear suddenly and, if caught selling on the ‘rescued’ streets, vendors risk losing their products.

Again, UMC engaged in a practice of power which undermines claims that power is exercised by the state and private investors over urban marginalized groups. This particular exercise of power overlaps in complex ways with other forms of power exercised through interactions and relations with other social groups or individuals in daily life in the Historic Center. Although some members of UMC practice torear, the majority have found alternative ways to remain in the Historic Center by building new alliances.
What the cases of TAP and UMC highlight is that despite the fact that they are both organizations of street vendors – they are both targeted by the Programa’s policies and the city authorities – they have managed, in different ways to undermine the exclusionary practices of this policy. Acknowledging the differences between these two groups also brings to light new players and new groups who have been excluded and felt squeezed by the Programa’s practices (for instance, shop owners). Although both TAP and UMC have reconstituted their social and economic niche in the Historic Center, they have done so through different cooperative and also confrontational paths (Ettlinger, 2004). They both engage in torear practices and they both practice power by teasing the Programa’s authorities. There are, however fundamental differences within this same practice. TAP relies on extensive financial and social resources from within the organization; UMC relies on their ties with shop owners who help minimize their risk of being caught by the police. Furthermore, TAP has established alliances with the state which has placed them in a position to negotiate within the existing power structures. UMC on the other hand has established alliances with other organizations of street vendors; these alliances have placed them in a position to remain in the streets and maintain their existing social ties. Exclusion is not experienced equally, and displacement does not entirely occur as planned by the new structures of power. In different ways, street vendors claim their right to remain in the Historic Center and its central plaza.
4.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

I argue throughout this chapter that it is misleading to conceptualize socio-spatial exclusion without recognizing, first, that both place and space are products of multiple social relations, not simply capitalist social relations. It is important, therefore, to think about how meanings attributed to different spaces change over time as a function of the reconfiguration of social, cultural, economic and political processes (something that the entrepreneurial literature ignores). Second, although the literature on urban governance recognizes socio-spatial exclusion, insufficient attention has been given to how new structures of power are negotiated in the daily lives of all actors. I have argued that we cannot think about socio-spatial exclusion without thinking about the ways in which groups of affected citizens resist, negotiate and struggle over these changes in their daily lives.

The commodification and privatization of particular urban spaces is challenged by the spatial practices of different social groups whose identities and interactions undermine the entrepreneurial agenda, creating “counterspaces” (Lefebvre, 1991) or representational spaces of resistance. Excluded groups develop oppositional consciousness (Mansbridge, 2001) in struggling and negotiating change in their daily life and, in so doing, construct different strategies of contestation. The case of TAP and UMC suggests that urban excluded groups find new, alternative, and innovative ways of claiming their right to the city, despite new structures of constraints associated with the implementation of the Programa. The case of TAP and UMC shed light on the wide variety of geographies of power in the city by illustrating how the excluded exercise
power through strategies of manipulation, association, and mobility. Socio-spatial
exclusion in the context of entrepreneurial urban governance therefore entails differential
power relations that are more complex and dynamic than the simple removal of particular
social groups from urban spaces. Although state institutions in combination with the
private sector seek to regulate and control certain spaces of the city, their efforts are
contested by social groups.

I should like to note at this juncture, however, that I do not reject the idea that
power can be exercised over particular groups and individuals. It is indeed problematic to
ignore how economic processes are experienced unequally, or how that unevenness can
generate a number of diverse constraints and opportunities in peoples’ daily lives. Rather,
my objective has been to highlight the multiplicity of ways in which power is practiced
by referring to the notion of ‘practices of power’. I therefore stress the importance of
recognizing the heterogeneity of excluded ‘others’, rather than only seeing a homogenous
and cohesive body of spatially and temporally fixed individuals with similar concerns,
backgrounds, and needs; a group comprising individuals conceived as part of a totality –
‘the excluded’ – in which internal differences are ignored of even considered a potential
threat to the integrity of the ‘whole’ (Young, 2000). Rather than focusing exclusively on
the struggles developed between different groups – for example, state institutions, private
investors, and groups of affected citizens – I argue that these groups are themselves
internally differentiated, resulting in dramatically different degrees of exclusion and also
resistance. Indeed, those that the state seeks to exclude are themselves a highly
differentiated group of individuals who also interact through differential power relations
(for example within TAP conflicts between the newly displaced and the people who must accommodate those that have been displaced). TAP and UMC, despite the fact that they are targeted by the *Programa*, have nonetheless practiced power in various ways and, in so doing, have undermined the power of the *Programa*. De-homogenizing power highlights the different types of social groups involved in the struggles over the changing meaning of the Historic Center under the *Programa*. Hence, the exclusion of particular social groups from certain spaces of the city is embedded within a highly complex set of power relations not only between different groups, but also *among* the groups themselves. At issue is recasting socio-spatial exclusion under entrepreneurial forms of urban governance. The result is a more nuanced product in which structures of power are re-thought in post-structural terms and diverse and multiple geographies of power are revealed.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MULTIPLE PRACTICES OF POWER

5.1 SUMMARY

It is possible that street scenes such as those shown in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 would be commonplace in the Historic Center if the plans of Carlos Slim and Lopez Obrador were entirely successful. The plaza would be neat and tidy, empty, seemingly ordered, and clean. It would be a plaza akin to the streets of Barcelona or New York; as the director of Slim’s Fundación Centro Histórico dreamt, the Historic Center would be the Broadway of Mexico City. We would therefore see a plaza in which the power of Mexico City’s elite would be materialized in urban space. Unfortunately for those who designed and implemented the Programa, state authorities and private investors such as Carlos Slim are not the only actors practicing power in the city. Rather, the situation in the Historic Center vividly shows that the very people whom the policy intended to socio-spatially exclude – the street vendors – have exercised their power to re-occupy space, to re-stake
their right to the city. They have managed this by tapping into the state, exploiting exactly the sorts of multiple incoherent strategic alliances through which the state governs. Street vendors have practiced both associational power and ‘power through mobility’ by tapping into different social networks and practicing torear, respectively.

The development of the Programa and the struggles resulting from its implementation have produced a different Historic Center. But not exactly type of Historic Center that the elites and planners had in mind.

This dissertation has been concerned with demonstrating the effects in urban space of multiple practices of power combining, intersecting, and ultimately producing a new sort of place. But this new place has not been unilaterally produced by one group alone; it is the work of the state and street vendors. One of my intentions has been to examine the struggles between these actors. However, I have also wanted to show the usefulness of looking at multiple practices of power, something which the structuralist literature on urban change has marginalized. My point is not that a structuralist epistemology must be abandoned to see the sort of street scenes shown in Figure 5.3; it is only that such a scene has more explanatory meaning and significance by recognizing the agency of the so-called excluded, the heterogeneity of social life, and the multiple dimensions and practices of power. When we start off thinking about agency and power, not only are we likely to find it, but we also end up re-thinking the assumptions of what produces change in urban space. The return of the street vendors, their staking a claim to the city, is not an anomaly, or residual ‘noise’; it is a statement that should encourage researchers to re-think how they see and explain the world.
Figure 5.1: *Corregidora* Street in the Historic Center. The picture was taken the day after *Corregidora* was re-opened to the public after the *Programa*’s construction work. The picture represents the image desired by those who implemented the *Programa*. (Source: *Reforma*, 7 April, 2004)
Figure 5.2: *Corregidora* Street again. This picture was also taken the day after *Corregidora* was re-opened to the public after the *Programa’s* construction work.
The scene in Figure 5.3 is also significant because, as I argued in Chapter Two, I would not have valued it had I not moved beyond the urban structuralist perspective with which I began the research. My ideas have changed. How this has happened, I argue, is important to include in the dissertation because my inner struggles and emotions have affected and shaped my analysis of the battles over urban space in the Historic Center. My identity as a white, middle class woman with a Marxist background has not only been rendered visible, but has also been shown to have shaped the research. I have argued that positionality should not just be considered as an issue arising in the field. There are also issues to do with the development of conceptual frameworks and ideas. How one accesses literature and relates to ideas is as much a question of positionality as fieldwork issues. One’s identity, one’s sense of the self, is involved. In my case, my upbringing and family history gave meaning to the research in ways that have affected my intellectual development. My interest in socio-spatial exclusion in Mexico City stems from my love of the place and its people, as well as a range of contradictory thoughts and feelings. My commitment to social justice, which permeates the research and underpins the dissertation, comes from my background. Including these aspects, a practice as autoethnography (Cloke et al, 2005: 333), is an essential part of what I have been trying to do.
Figure 5.3: Pre-Programa Corregidora Street. Corregidora was a pedestrian-only street with a grassy area in the middle, prior to the workings of the Programa. The picture shows several street vending activities along the paved areas. (Source: Reforma, 7 April, 2004)
One way in which my identity shaped the research is the experience I gained by working on the MetroBus project funded by the World Bank. I was welcomed on board the project because I had the ‘right’ background and the ‘right’ credentials. The insights I gained fundamentally informed my understanding of the state, which I have outlined in this dissertation. My work challenges the hegemonic notion that the state is monolithic. I critically examine conventional approaches to state-society relations, which argue that the state is monolithic and constraining to marginalized groups. I argue that the state is internally incoherent and that state practices are shaped by different social groups, including those sectors of society typically viewed as disenfranchised or excluded.

The insights gained by looking at the state in a new light have also informed my understanding of the struggles produced by the implementation of the Programa. I recognize that the state is not the only agent shaping urban space. There are other actors, including the so-called excluded. Viewing urban space as shaped by multiple actors arises from the recognition that place and space are produced by political and economic processes, as well as the meanings and understandings that people attach to place in their everyday lives. This means that places are made by many more actors than simply the elite (Lefebvre, 1991). Acknowledging multiplicity of publics allows us to think through some of the ways in which subordinated groups such as street vendors contest, challenge, and respond to the exclusionary character of particular urban policies. These alternative publics, or subaltern counterpublics (Fraser, 1992) are not self-contained or disconnected from one another; rather, they can overlap (Alvarez, 1997). The networks of street vendors in the Historic Center intermix with those of excluded shop owners in
cooperative ways and, in so doing, these overlapping networks broaden the arena of contestation. I argue that counterpublics need place and space to develop. Community centers are precisely those spaces where counterpublics can potentially come together in multiple ways. The oppositional consciousness necessary to sustain subaltern counterpublics must take place somewhere.

One of my arguments throughout this dissertation is that exclusionary policies such as the Programa do not necessarily lead to the disintegration of social ties and networks. Rather, networks transform through time and, in that transformation, urban marginalized groups recast and reclaim their right to the city. I argued in Chapter Four that the reconstruction of social and economic ties in the Historic Center is distinctive given the plaza’s long served role as a community center in which intense and diverse social relations converge. Community is typically understood as arising from a particular form of social interaction, predominantly face-to-face engagements, where cohesive bodies of individuals – who are spatially and temporally bound – share a set of similar interest. Individuals are thus conceived as part of a totality. Internal differences within a community are ignored and considered a potential threat to the integrity of the ‘whole’. Following Young (1990) I view a community as a space (physical or symbolic) where different individuals engage and interact with each other for multiple reasons.

Explaining the effects of policies such as the Programa, requires attention to a wide variety of actors because social relations are always imbued with power relations. A major objective in this dissertation has therefore been to show that the state and the excluded can practice power. In so doing, I have shown that the excluded are not a
homogeneous group; they are internally diverse. At issue is re-casting socio-spatial exclusion and the struggles generated by policies such as the Programa by re-thinking how power is exercised in multiple ways in urban space.

5.2 FUTURE AVENUES

Future research projects come to mind by thinking about urban space and questions of power, which, as I have illustrated throughout the dissertation requires attention to the powerful and the so-called powerless. By way of ending the dissertation, then, I briefly discuss some ways in which my work in the Historic Center can be continued and how the approach I have taken can inform urban change in other settings and contexts.

I intend to continue my research in the Historic Center. I believe there are important questions that can still be asked about the post-Programa plaza. As I argued in Chapter Four, Mexico City’s Historic Center is a place where multiple practices and diverse interactions occur. I would like to add to this analysis by incorporating other actors that remained marginalized in my current research. For example, I would like to further investigate the multiple effects of the Programa on groups such as residents, indigenous artisans, and displaced ‘formal’ entrepreneurs. Have they reconstituted their social and economic networks? If so, what forms of power have they practiced? For instance, I realized during my fieldwork that indigenous artisans were confronted with what I would call the ‘institutionalization of Mexican art’. Indigenous artisans are a highly heterogeneous group of individuals producing and selling a wide range of handicrafts – from jewelry, blouses, and clay crafts, to bags, shoes, and tee-shirts. Selling
crafts on the streets of the Historic Center is an attraction for tourists and local urban dwellers; and is promoted by state institutions such as the Secretary of Culture and the Secretary of Tourism. However, not all street artisans are considered legitimate by the state. Institutions such as the National Council for Culture and Art and the Secretary of Tourism for Mexico DF exclude those artisans producing crafts that do not embody the state’s definition of Mexico’s cultural diversity and history. The state defines ‘traditional’ Mexican art. This situation has given rise to conflict among street artisans. At issue are questions such as, ‘Who should be allowed to remain in the Historic Center’; ‘Who is a ‘true’ indigenous artisan?’ I would like to engage in these sorts of questions in the future because I believe they would enrich my current work on how the Programa has been struggled over and resisted by urban excluded groups.

Another important aspect within the post-Programa context is whether the resistance strategies of street vendors will endure. The city government has recently expressed its determination to complete the Programa, that is, to remove all street vendors. Will the state be successful in this regard? The perspective I have developed throughout this dissertation suggests that the state’s objectives will encounter serious challenges. Only concerted research, however, will provide answers to this question. One of my future research objectives, then, is to return to the Historic Center and address the issue of the endurance of resistance strategies.

Moving beyond the case of Mexico City, I intend to research other instances of resistance to socio-spatial exclusionary policies in Latin America. Other Latin American cities are ripe for research in this regard: historic centers across Latin America have in the
last ten years seen an increasing number of revitalization and gentrification policies. I intend to ask how other historic centers are undergoing change; how will those who are excluded practice power and resist those policies; under what conditions can the urban marginalized tap into the state and practice associational power; what role, if any, will the symbolic and material dimensions of historic centers and their plazas play in reconstitution processes?

My contribution is to challenge the received wisdom about Latin American plazas. The dominant view tends to homogenize the plaza. Yet plazas materialize context-specific constellations of social relations, even though they share numerous characteristics: they are public spaces in Latin American cities where different urban dwellers meet and interact. I argue that differences between and among them are important to recognize, precisely because different trajectories, connections with other places, or material and symbolic meanings affect how exclusionary policies are pursued and resisted. A geographic perspective matters in this regard because it brings attention to the particular ways in which social relations combine to produce places such as plazas. It focuses on context-specific processes as well as the range of connections to broader processes that perhaps originate from, but reach into, Plazas. The ‘Latin American plaza’ is not homogenous. At issue is the need to de-essentialize concepts of the plaza from a geographic perspective to reveal the range of variations in how exclusionary policies unfold.

87 In Brazil, for instance, plazas do not carry the symbolic weight as centers of national identity as they do in other Spanish-American plazas. This is partly a product of a different pre-colonial and colonial history. An explicit task of Spanish colonial rule was
I have adopted an anti-essentialist approach to understanding the case of Mexico City. The task now is to develop this approach in other settings, but not by simply plugging one model into another context; rather, starting from the recognition that differences exist and matter, I intend to develop my interest in resistance to socio-spatial exclusion in the Latin American context by asking questions about the conditions under which the practices of power of excluded groups *endure* and are *sustained*. My interest lies with examining cases of resistance that are *successful*. At issue, I argue, is the need to understand the conditions under which resistance is more successful. I intend to research how the excluded develop strategies to broaden their foci to tackle larger problems. The Latin American *plaza* is one such venue for this type of research.

Moving beyond Latin America, I believe my approach can also inform instances of socio-spatial exclusionary policies in US and European contexts. I have discussed the importance of thinking about certain public spaces as community centers. Although I believe it is unlikely that one can find *plazas* such as those I have discussed in the context of Mexico City in US cities, my work highlights the possibility of finding *plaza-like* places that have both material and symbolic value and that embody difference and

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the construction of *plazas* as symbolic public spaces that embodied the three major dimensions of colonial power – state, religion, and the market. Urban planning was a priority of the Spanish crown, which encountered, and had to build new cities upon, sophisticated indigenous cities (Rojas, 1994). In contrast, the Portuguese were not confronted with such expansive indigenous cities (Schultz, 2005). Contrary to Spanish-American *Plazas*, then, Brazilian historic centers were never as central to colonial rule. This historical difference is significant because it shapes the struggles over meanings and representations of the *Plaza*. As I have noted about Mexico City, indigenous artisans and street vendors in the Historic Center refer to their enduring role in the city to legitimize their presence in the area. It is question for research as to how the historical meanings of *plazas* are worked out in other Spanish-American or Portuguese-American cities.
diversity. There are arenas within US cities in which socio-spatial exclusionary policies are resisted. Consider, for example, gentrification occurring in Harlem in the last ten years. Resistance by poor, black residents in combination with non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and student activists has drawn upon the public spaces of Harlem in ways that resemble the resistance I have explored in Mexico City. A plaza-like community center seems to have developed. Failing to recognize these publics runs the risk of ignoring the possibilities for the excluded to practice power. A contribution of my work is to focus attention on the emergence and viability of community centers precisely because it is from such arenas that resistance and possibly new social movements for justice can develop.

I believe my approach is a contribution to the normative strand of post-structural literature interested in issues of social justice because public spaces are common meeting grounds from which we might witness the emergence of new counter-publics. This entails theorizing the conditions under which oppositional consciousness and practices of power arise and endue. I argue that new insights are gained when plaza-like places are acknowledged; new actors come to light; new relationships can be seen. My work to date has been focused on practices of power and resistance to a narrow issue: the Programa. However, significant scope exists to explore such practices of power in community centers in plaza-like spaces that seek to challenge much broader injustices.
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