

THE CREATION OF POVERTY NGOs IN LATIN AMERICA
A CASE STUDY IN GREATER BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA


A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School
of the University of Notre Dame
In Partial fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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March 2000

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Abstract

by

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The globalization of the economy and the crisis of the Welfare State are two worldwide phenomena. In the case of developing nations, these processes generate severe social difficulties. The creation of numerous poverty Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) seems to be a promising way of addressing problems that have not been solved by agencies within the public or private sector. However, research about the concrete nature of these organizations is limited in Argentina, as well as in other developing countries. To expand the knowledge about this relevant social actor it is necessary to add to the empirical research on poverty NGOs in Latin America.

This is a case study of poverty NGOs operating in one of the poorest sections of one of the largest Latin American metropolitan areas, Moreno-Greater Buenos Aires. The methodological strategy, based on the approach of grounded theory, is both inductive and qualitative. Cases are selected through theoretical sampling procedures. The main research method used is interviewing, conducted with members at different levels of these organizations, as well as other key informants and beneficiaries of the NGOs'

services. Other methods used are participant observation and analysis of available printed materials.

The main findings can be sorted into two categories: empirical and theoretical. At an empirical level, the creation and consolidation of grassroots NGOs among the poor by militants inspired primarily by the Theology of Liberation and supported by the Church and State agencies was observed despite severe difficulties and fierce struggles. These new organizations are developing in a novel inter-organizational field with both vertical (hierarchical) and horizontal (network) patterns of articulation. The ongoing process of institutionalization of this sector is reflected in the NGOs' isomorphic tendencies. At a theoretical level, a conceptual framework combining old and new institutional approaches in the Sociology of Organizations, in light of structuration theory, was developed in order to analyze the emergence of a novel inter-organizational field.

To Silvia and Sofía

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
AKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purposes.....	5
The Third Sector and NGOs.....	5
Nonprofits, NGOs, Third Sector?.....	8
Dimensions to be Explored.....	13
CHAPTER 1: THE SOCIOLOGY OF NON-PROFITS ORGANIZATIONS: CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THEORETICAL ISSUES.....	17
Change and Stability in Organizations: Rationalization and Legitimization Processes.....	18
Agency and Structure in Organizational Analysis.....	26
The Sociology of Nonprofit Organizations.....	30
Analytical Framework of this research.....	34
CHAPTER 2: DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN LATIN-AMERICAN CATHOLICISM AND THE CONTINUITY OF A LINE OF ACTION AMONG THE POOR IN GREATER BUENOS AIRES.....	36
The Origins of Latin American Catholicism.....	37
Doctrinal Innovations within Latin American Catholicism.....	40
Ideological Developments among Catholic Militants: Consciouness-Raising and <i>Enculturation</i>	42
The Reception of the Theology of Liberation in Argentina.....	48
Strengths and Weaknesses of <i>Basismo</i>	54
CHAPTER 3: <i>MADRE TIERRA</i> : BUILDING HOUSES AND COMMUNITIES.....	57
The Case.....	58
The Setting.....	60
The Religious Background and the Political Experiences.....	61
The Beginnings.....	64
The Resolution of Identity and the Achieving of Autonomy.....	65
The Road to Specialization.....	67
The Structure.....	70
Organization of Activities.....	74
Types of Projects.....	75
<i>Consolidation of Settlements</i>	75
<i>Neighborhood Development</i>	78
How to Build Houses and Promote Communities.....	85
Conclusions.....	91

CHAPTER 4: THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION OF CARITAS.....	94
<i>Caritas Argentina</i>	95
<i>Mission and Objectives</i>	99
<i>The Attempted Transformation</i>	102
<i>Obstacles to Change</i>	111
<i>Caritas Moreno</i>	116
Conclusions.....	122
CHAPTER 5: GRASSROOTS INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORKS.....	126
A Settlement Network: <i>Femi-CAL</i>	129
A Specialized Network: <i>El Encuentro</i>	140
A Network of Networks: <i>Inter-Redes</i>	145
Conclusions.....	149
CHAPTER 6: EL COLMENAR: POLITICS, RELIGION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CREATION.....	152
The Setting.....	153
The Search for Grassroots Organization: The Community Council.....	154
Organizational Development and Internal Structure.....	173
<i>Conclusions</i>	176
CHAPTER 7: ATYPICAL NGOs AND ISOMORPHISM.....	180
<i>Los Horneros</i>	180
<i>The Setting</i>	180
<i>The Origins</i>	181
<i>From Squatter to Farmers</i>	186
<i>Partial Conclusions</i>	188
The Development of a Quasi-NGO: <i>Los Chispitas</i>	190
<i>The Setting</i>	190
<i>A Dubious Character</i>	191
Conclusions: "Isomorphism in Action" among Grassroots NGOs.....	194
CONCLUSIONS.....	201
Recapitulation.....	201
The Structuration of the Organizational Field of Poverty NGOs.....	204
Types of Poverty and Developmental NGOs.....	211
Final Remarks.....	213
APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY AND FIELDWORK.....	215
Methodological Strategy.....	215
Fieldwork.....	221
Interview.....	222
The Fieldwork Experience.....	225
Sources for Each Chapter.....	229
APPENDIX B: MORENO: POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY.....	234
Moreno in Greater Buenos Aires.....	234
The Problem of Unemployment.....	239
The Problems of Poverty.....	243
REFERENCES.....	249

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Housing NGOs Operating in Greater Buenos Aires Around 1988.....	62
Table 3.2	Neighborhood Development Projects of Madre Tierra (1985-1998).....	83
Table 4.1	PEM 25 Operations, 1992-1995.....	105
Table 4.2	Grassroots Organizations in Caritas Moreno.....	117
Table B.1	Population and Population Growth.....	237
Table B.2	Size and Growth Rate of Urban and Rural Populations in Greater Buenos Aires and Moreno.....	238
Table B.3	Index of Potential Dependency for the Greater Buenos Aires and Moreno 1980 and 1991.....	238
Table B.4	Population of Moreno by Place of Birth and Sex. 1991.....	239
Table B.5	Evolution of Activity, Employment and Unemployment Rates for Urban Areas. (May of each year).....	240
Table B.6	Evolution of Activity, Employment and Unemployment Rates for Greater Buenos Aires. (May of each year).....	242
Table B.7	Percentage of Households and Total Population with Unsatisfied Basic Needs in Greater Buenos Aires. 1980-1991.....	244
Table B.8	Percentage of Households with UBN in 1980 and 1991 for each indicator.....	247

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1	Structure of <i>Madre Tierra</i> (Based on “Lines of Action”) 1997 and 1999.....	72
Figure 3.2	Structure of <i>Madre Tierra</i> (District Based) 1998.....	73
Figure 8.3	Relationships with and within Caritas among NGOs included in the sample (1998).....	205
Figure 8.4	Axis and Principles of Structuration of the NGOs’ Organizational field.....	209
Figure B.5	Argentina.....	236
Figure B.6	Evolution of Activity. Employment and Unemployment Rates for Urban Areas.....	241
Figure B.7	Evolution of Activity. Employment and Unemployment Rates for Greater Buenos Aires.....	243
Figure B.8	Percentage of Population with UBN in Greater Buenos Aires. 1991.....	246

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to various institutions and programs that made the accomplishment of this dissertation possible. Acknowledgement is due to the Kellogg Institute for International Studies and the Latin America 2,000 Program, Fundación Antorchas, The Organization of American States (OAS) and the Department of Sociology for the support provided at different stages in this project.

Many people in Buenos Aires and at Notre Dame were helpful throughout the years of fieldwork, analysis and writing demanded by this dissertation. I thank Hector Angélico and Floreal for the many shared trips and field days in the neighborhoods and settlements of Moreno; Cecilia Barbón, Perla Fernández, Ricardo Murtagh and José Pablo Sabatino for their guidance, networking and energies invested in me as I entered the field of Argentinean Poverty NGOs; and Jorge Walter for reading and commenting on preliminary drafts and memos. However, I am most indebted to the militants of the organizations I studied for the attention, time and disposition needed to share their knowledge and life experiences.

I also am certainly indebted to the hospitality of Anibal Perez Liñan, Andrés Mejias, Andreas Feldman and Maiju Perala. The last two winters spent at Notre Dame would not have been so fruitful or so pleasant without them, as well as many other friends under the Dome. I am thankful also to Pat Kipker, whose help was crucial in dealing with an infinite number of practical matters.

A final word is needed for the members of my committee. I thank Fabio DaSilva for his scholarship, advising during my years in graduate school and his encouragement to find my own voice beyond fixed formulas and conventionalism; Lynn Spillman for the shared qualitative methodological readings, which were seminal for much of what may be of worth in this work, as well as for her permanent assistance at each stage leading to the accomplishment of this dissertation; and Dennis Goulet and Andy Weigert for their careful readings and insightful comments on this work.