

# Slum at the Center

**-Participation and Radical Planning in Villa 31, Central Buenos Aires.**

**Joel Andersson**



## **Slum i centrum**

### **- deltagande och radikal planering i Villa 31, Buenos Aires.**

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## Abstracts

Citizen participation has as a planning strategy, become increasingly enveloped and is today often described as a way to deepen democracy. At the same time, there is reason to question this rhetoric as many researchers argue that these strategies does not live up to what they promise. The aim of this paper is to understand how citizen participation work under the neoliberal scheme, focusing on issues of power and how this processes can be understood as legitimizing practices. A case study has been conducted in Villa 31, a centrally located and conflict-traded slum area in Buenos Aires. Critical theory regarding citizen participation and theories of radical planning constitutes the theoretical foundation. Two different types of civil dialogues are identified in the case, one of which represents a clear official dialogue process and the other has been conducted more informally. These separate processes illustrate both that dialogues can be seen as a tool for maintaining the status quo. But also how civil dialogues can act as a more progressive force when allowing it to take a more activist form. The essay points out that it is important to identify how dialogue processes relate to residents' own self-organized spaces for participation in order to understand how these processes can be a way to empower marginalized groups.

## Sammandrag

Medborgardeltagande har som planerings strategi kommit att bli allt mer omhuldat och beskrivs idag ofta som ett sätt att fördjupa demokratin. Samtidigt finns det skäl att ifrågasätta denna retorik då många forskare menar att dessa strategier inte lever upp till vad de utlovar. Målet med denna uppsats är att förstå hur medborgardialoger fungerar under den nyliberala ordningen, med ett fokus på frågor kring makt och hur medborgardialoger kan förstås som legitimerade praktiker. En fallstudie har genomförts i Villa 31, ett centralt beläget och konflikt omsusat slumområde i Buenos Aires. Kritisk teori kring medborgardialog och teorier kring 'radical planning' utgör den teoretiska grunden. Två olika typer av medborgare dialoger identifieras i fallet, där den ena utgör en tydligt officiell dialog process och den andra har utformas mer informellt. Dessa skilda processer illustrerar både att dialoger kan ses som ett verktyg för att upprätthålla status quo. Men även hur medborgardialoger kan fungera som en mer progressiv kraft, då den tillåts ta en mer aktivistisk form. Uppsatsen pekar på att det är viktigt att identifiera hur dialog processer förhåller sig till boendes egna själv-organiserade rum för deltagande, för att kunna förstå hur dessa processer kan bli ett sätt att stärka marginaliserade grupper.

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## Introduction

### ***Subject - research demarcation***

Today approximately one billion of the world's urban population live in slums, where they bear unacceptable living conditions often without access to water and sanitation. UN-HABITAT believes that we're today facing a housing crisis that is without an historical counterpart. Today the informal sector is providing more than half of the new jobs and accommodations in many developing countries (UN-HABITAT, 2003, p. 5). By this, one might say that most of the urban development and 'planning' in the world, is taking place outside the formal planning system, through everyday practices of marginalized groups (Miraftab-2009 p. 42). To understand the global development and the mechanisms that transforms the world of today, it's crucial to understand how these groups act. This thesis tries to highlight a trend that many in the global north have very little knowledge of, despite it's enormous global significance. However, many of the issues discussed in the thesis are not only relevant for understanding the situation in developing countries. In today's globalized world, where the neoliberal ideology holds a global domination, certain types of planning ideals spreads rapidly, to dominate the practice in both North and South. This implies that many of the theories that can describe the situation in developing countries are also possible to use in other parts of the globe to illuminate various aspects of urban development and thus that the thesis also could be relevant to a reader focused on the global north.

Citizen participation as a concept has among Swedish planners and politicians become increasingly common, and the term is often regarded as unequivocal positive and it is often understood as a way to revitalize and strengthen democracy in times of reduced-political engagement (Tahvilzadeh, 2015, p.26). Also in the global South, citizen participation has become increasingly prevalent and are cherished as the "best practice" by the World Bank and the United Nations to work with the challenges surrounding slums and poor neighborhoods. The methods have had a major impact on practice and can be seen as the dominant method of working with so-called slum upgrading project. It is therefore vital to critically examine the practices which uses civil dialogue to see if they are able to live up to the ambitions. This I will try to do in this thesis. I will explore how civil dialogue is used as a tool in slum upgrading projects and how one might understand this in relation to the neoliberal context. The paper will consist of a field study of Villa 31 (a centrally located slum in Buenos Aires), considering what role the Citizen participations has played in the more recent development in the area (for a more detailed introduction of the art see page 20). Developments in Villa 31 constitutes an interesting case to examine issues surrounding citizen participation and Power relations.

The complex processes that has unfolded in the area over the last few years, which I will briefly describe in this paper, have contained both elements of formal planning implemented by the authorities and a informal planning of a more activist nature, where a group from the Buenos Aires University acted with the residents in a largely self-organized manner. The case is also of interest as the area's strategical position on land which represents a major interest in real estate speculation in the city, which makes questions about how urban conversions take place under a neoliberal order brought to a head. During the work on this thesis, I have found that one could question whether the demands of social movements truly had an impact on the process through the civil dialogues, conducted by the official actors and if these truly can be said to help strengthen the voices of the residents. Through the literature study, I have acquired theoretical concepts that I have been able to use to describe this development more clearly.

I will in this thesis argue that the Citizen participation and the civil dialogues as a tool used in the projects in Villa 31, has partly had a preservative effect, because the resident's requirements have not been given sufficient space in these dialogues and since the dialogues have contributed to limiting the residents' struggle, by steering in the residents' involvements in to controlled rooms for

participation and at the same time seeming to ignore other channels for communication with the residents. But in this thesis, I at the same time, want to highlight how the co-operation between the residents and the university is an example of how dialogues also can be organized informally and be a way to use citizen participation subversive ways to question the prevailing power conditions in society.

## **Target question**

*How can one based on critical theory on citizens participation and theory on activist planning, understand the formal and informal citizens participation conducted in Villa 31?*

## **Purpose of the survey**

It has previously been written an essay on the dialogue process that preceded the planned upgrade project in Villa 31. My thesis aims to provide further contributions to understanding the specific case and complex process that took place in Villa 31. Both by enriching such aspects which were either misunderstood or omitted in the foregoing essays and by providing a more updated picture of how the process has been developing lately. But above all, I want to apply a different perspective than the aforementioned author. Their essays are based on 'the best practice' theory of how civic dialogue should be conducted and they analyze and criticize the civil dialogues conducted in Villa 31 based on these theories. The essays from my own institution dealing with issues related to slum upgrading and civil dialogue, which I have read, are also based on similar theory's and perspectives. The research on civil dialogues can be considered fragmented. There are partly those that highlight successful examples and partly those that argue that these types of dialogues in practice, tend to strengthen the power of elite groups (Tahvilzadeh, 2015, p. 26). I find it problematic that most of the academic texts, from the candidate level and upwards, to a large extent seem to disregard the more critical theories and instead choose, what one might call, a "practice supporting perspective", which is a position close to the methods advocated by the World Bank and the IMF. Therefore I will base this thesis on the critical theories and try to insert the case study into a broader discussion of how dialogue processes can be understood in relation to, including other aspects, neoliberalism's legitimizing practices. This perspective was not something that was given in advance but has emerged, partly in relation to the texts I have read and partly in a gradual comparison of the theory's to my own data, assessing the relevance in the specific case, as well as which questions would be most rewarding to focus on.

The aim with the thesis thus is to problematize Citizen participation as an obvious positive way to empower poor community's. At the same time, it aims at deepening the knowledge of how planners can work with tools of an alternative, radical planning, that does not merely help preserve the current order.

## **Definitions**

### **Slum**

The word slum originally comes from an old English and German word meaning "a poorly drained place" and "was originally applied to describe the cheap rental housing of the working class" (Alemayehu, 2008, s 36 citing; Cruz & Satterthwaite, 2005 citing; Hoskins, 1970). Decreasing meanings have over time been linked to the term and have made it in precise, international definitions have therefore been developed (Alemayehu, 2008, p. 36). An international operational definition of slum was adopted by the UN in Nairobi 2002. This

definition is restricted to the settlement's physical and legal characteristics, and excludes the more difficult social dimensions. It defines slum as an area that combines, to various extents, the following characteristics:

- inadequate access to safe water;
- inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure;
- poor structural quality of housing;
- overcrowding;
- insecure residential status.

## **Slum upgrading**

A strategy that aims at improving the living conditions in slum areas. According to Abbott, there is no unambiguous definition of the term slum upgrading. But rather there are a variety of methods and strategies that all fit within the scope of the term. Abbott states that: "It applies to any sector-based intervention in the settlement that results in a quantifiable improvement in the quality of life of the residents affected." (Abbott, 2002. s, 307). Most often, these projects use "predetermined principles and objectives." (Alemayehu. 2008. s 13).

## **Citizen participation**

There are several concept in practice today that aim at somewhat similar strategies that could have been discussed in this thesis, such as action planning and communicative planning. However, I have chosen to use the term Citizen participation. This term is defined here as formal or informal planning processes involving residents in an area, with the purpose to in some form influencing the decision making in the area where they live. This term refers to a process rather than individual dialogues.

## **Civil dialogue**

Civil dialogue refers to the dialogues that are conducted between residents and third parties, or between groups of residents. This is used to describe the individual dialogues that form part of citizen participation processes.

## **Activist planning**

Planning activities that implies use of direct action, through which planners initiate, facilitate or take part in the preparation of the plans. A form of planning that are often responding to neoliberal reforms and that are aiming to disrupt oppressive structures.

## **Metod and material**

This thesis is formed by a combination of a case study and a broader literature- study. The case study is focused on the citizen dialogues that have taken place in Villa 31 over the past few years. The reason that the case study was chosen as the method, partly is because this was an acquirement for the MSF scholarship that financed my two-month stay in Buenos Aires. But the method is also very suitable when the specific case of Villa 31 is just the kind of, complex process where different aspects affect one another, which Denscombe points to as the kind of processes best approached



with a case study (Denscombe, M. 2009). The case study is then inserted into a broader discussion with the help of both a more comprehensive literature study of global trends affecting the slums, partly through the critical theory regarding public participation and theories of activist planning.

Prior to the interviews, a broader literature study was conducted, focusing on more general and structural aspects of slum development and on the context of Argentina and the slum areas in Buenos Aires. At this stage I only decided which questions I wanted to investigate more widely, without formulating a complete research question. In the same way I only had more general ideas about the different perspectives in research without choosing a clear theoretical perspective to work with. After the first interviews it became possible to identify the issues that were the most worthwhile to investigate. And the final interviews could therefore be conducted more focused on these aspects. After the interviews I deepened into the theory more focused, actively assessing what relevance it had for the specific case. A distinct theoretical perspective was now chosen and a research question was formulated.

One of the advantages of a case study is that it encourages a combined method and this I have used in the study to broaden the perspective. I have used news articles and debate articles, reports from the City of Buenos Aires and the reports from the Architectural Faculty of the UBA (University of Buenos Aires) about the project in the area. As mentioned earlier Villa 31 is selected as the object of the investigation, because with its central position it is a place where many of the different interests in the city are colliding. Which makes it an interesting case to explore the questions I have been focusing on. The area's unique position among the slum areas in the city also means that development here may have implications for other areas and in what requirements the residents could demand. The University through its involvement in Villa 31 also wanted to create a possible role-model that could be used to work with other slum upgrading projects in the city.

I have worked with the non-probability sampling technique, snowball sampling to select the interviewees. In this technique existing interviewees are asked to recommend future interviewees that they think could provide relevant information or offer a different perspective than their own. I have used this technique mostly for the practical reasons that I think that there is a good way to find people who have the most relevant information, in a situation of limited time and when cultural differences also make it difficult for me to get access to this population and involved professionals that are relevant.

## ***Interviews***

Qualitative interviews have been an important way to collect information about how the process has unfolded in Villa 31. The informal aspects of the process and the information about how the residents themselves organized their struggle, would have been impossible to form an opinion about without these interviews.

I have conducted five formal interviews, with;

- The architect and professor Javier Fernandez Castro from the Architectural Faculty of the UBA, whom led the work by the University in *Proyecto Urbano FADU*.
- The legislator Facundo Martín Di Filippo, who worked with developing the proposal for

Law 3343, which was of great importance in the process.

- A resident from the area Villa 31 who has been very active in the organization *La Mesa de Trabajo Padre Mugica* and in the opposition to the eviction plans. He is also an elected representative of the area he lives in.
- An employee of the *Secretaría de Intergación Social y Urbana* that works with civil dialogue and public rooms in Villa 31.
- Pablo Vitale who works for the organization *Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia*, and for several years has worked at a nursery school in Villa 31.

I have chosen to anonymize the interviewees that did not have a clear official status in process Villa 31.

All these interviews have been semi-structured – in the sense that I have used open ended questions and only formulated an interview guide with a number of main questions/themes, without formulating questions in detail or determining the order they are asked.

In addition, I have also been involved in other informal interviews about other slum upgrading projects in the city and have been on-site visits in other slums in Buenos Aires, which has given me a lot of valuable insights into the context. During my stay in Buenos Aires, I got the opportunity to participate in two workshops. One led by the organization TECH in a slum on the outskirts of the neighboring city La Plata. And some participation in a two weeks of long workshops on slums in Buenos Aires at the Architectural Faculty of the UBA (University of Buenos Aires). This gave me valuable inputs about the city's physical structure in relation to the informal settlements emergence, that constitutes an important background context for understanding the specific case I have studied.

## ***Method discussion***

The theoretical perspectives used in this paper is not something that was a foregone conclusion, but has emerged, partly in relation to the literature, and partly in a gradual evaluative of theory in relation to my own data, assessing the relevance in the specific case, and what issues are most worthwhile to focus on.

The idea has thus been to simultaneously study the particular case and conduct interviews and in parallel immerse myself in connected theory. The idea behind this was to be able to assess the perspectives and theories which are most relevant in the specific context. It however emerged a number of difficulties, when key contacts withdrew and I had to seek out new contacts to implement the interviews. This meant that I had to carry out a great part of the literature study before I managed to put myself into the specific case, and what perspectives would be the most relevant in that context. This meant both advantages and disadvantages for the work. It gave me time to make a relatively broad literature study that could take in a lot of aspects, which allowed a greater understanding of the case in relation to a broader scale and its historical context. I thus went into the interviews relatively well prepared and could thus ask relevant questions and identify aspects of the process which I would otherwise perhaps have missed. At the same time, I had to start reading some theory only assuming that it would be relevant, without being able to adapt the

strategy to study the case in parallel with evaluating the theory's. This resulted in me reading theory that later proved to be not particularly relevant in the case of Villa 31. It is also possible that I because of this, had a greater tendency to ask questions that would confirm these theory's relevance in the case, rather than more unbiased trying to understand the unfolding of the process. Another drawback was that I later in the process didn't have that much time to more deeply familiarize myself with what Later appeared as the most relevant theories.

However my method to not formulate a clear research question in the beginning, but gradually let this emerge in relation to my growing knowledge about the specific case, overall was rewarding. I see this as a good way to more effectively identify not so obvious issues and aspects of the process. I think this was a necessary approach to be able to try to contribute and saying something new about the matter, whit in the limited time that was available.

## **Theory**

### ***Citizen participation***

Nazem Tahvilzadeh claims that the research on citizen participation can simplified be categorized in to an optimistic and pessimistic perspective. The division is often derived from different ideological starting points and the two categorizations often draws opposite conclusions (Tahvilzadeh, 2015, p. 27). However, there are also research that are more ideologically neutral and are based on broader surveys about the effects of civilian dialogues on the political decision making. According to Tahvilzadeh, these studies show that there is no clear link between civil participation and an increased citizenship (Tahvilzadeh, 2015, p. 27). In the following section I will briefly discuss the two perspectives that Tahvilzadeh identifies, to later go into more detail over the pessimistic perspective and the democratic theory of Chantal Mouffe which both constitutes parts of the theoretical basis of the thesis.

The optimistic perspective is based on deliberative democratic ideals and believes that citizen participation can be a complement to the representative democracy and the expert-dominated bureaucracy in todays society. Citizen participation is seen as a way to deepen local democracy in a way that favors the position of vulnerable groups in the society (Tahvilzadeh, 2015, p. 28). Many of the theorists who advocate a deliberative democracy model, have Habermas' theories about communicative action and the ideal speech situations as a common starting point (Lindholm, Oliveira, Wiberg, 2015, p. 14). The ideal speech situation that according to Habermas should be aimed at when working with civil participation, refers to a speech situation where participants jointly arrive at consensus decisions through a rational process where the best arguments control the outcome. For the process to work properly it requires that all parties to the issue under discussion has the opportunity to participate on equal terms, that an exercise of power is avoided and that all participants theoretically believe that it is possible to reach a decision by consensus. Habermas's deliberative ideal has been criticized on a number of issues, regarding how everyone would be able to get the opportunity to participate equally in the process. This criticism also stresses that there is a risk that the ideal is contributing to exclude some groups and benefit others. This by highlighting the rational argumentation and consensus and ignoring other forms of communication (e.g. emotional outbursts and demonstrations) and dissenting perspectives (Lindholm, Oliveira, Wiberg, 2015, p.15-16).

In the pessimistic perspective, there are among others liberal theorists who argue that elements of

citizen participation risk undermining the representative democratic system's legitimacy. There are also many urban scholars who argue that the dialogue processes can be seen as a form of sham democratic elements aimed at strengthening the neoliberal paradigm by restoring the trust in a system that constantly produces its own problems of legitimacy. Many of these theorists further argue that citizen participation can serve as a tool for disciplining of citizens; a way to get them to adapt in accordance with the regime's motives (Tahvilzadeh, 2015, p. 31). Briefly one could summarize that many researchers in the pessimistic perspective claims that the rhetoric about a citizen participation as a way to deepen democracy and manage its challenges, rather helps to maintain the legitimacy of an unfair political system and contributes to a strengthening of the elites power over the agenda in the society.

A major critic of the deliberative democratic ideal is the post-Marxist theorist Chantal Mouffe that instead assumes an antagonistic democratic principle. In accordance with this principle, she stresses that the conflict always must be a fundamental part of the democratic system, where identities are relational and presupposes the establishment of differences (Mouffe. 2008, p. 23). Mouffe distinguishes between antagonistic relationships and agonistic relationships, where antagonistic denote relationships between enemies and agonistic relationships between opponents. She believes that democracy's central task is to transform potentially antagonistic relations to agonist relations. Democracy is here by considered as a space of 'conflict embossed consensus', a common symbolic space for opponents who regard each other as legitimate enemies (Mouffe. 2008, p. 55). The struggle is thus based on common rules and both sides claims are recognized as legitimate even when they are incompatible. Chantal Mouffe sees consensus as necessary regarding the institutions that are constitutive of democracy, but otherwise it is rather precisely the differences of opinion in the political world that constitute democracy and provides it with legitimacy (Mouffe. 2008, p. 37). In contrast to Habermas who sees it as possible that through rational argument reach consensus on the key issues that govern the development of society, Chantal Mouffe regards social orders as always hegemonic, thus structured around specific sets of power relations that exclude other possible arrangements. What is seen as the 'common sense' during a specific period may thus not be regarded as something objective or rational located outside these orders (Mouffe. 2008, p. 25). The kind of consensus pursued in accordance with the deliberative ideal is thus by Mouffe seen as impossible to realize as it does not exist a rational common good, but the dominant group's interests always gets turned in to the common good within a specific order. This dominant group will never voluntarily give up their power through consensus-oriented dialogues. The hegemonic order is challenged however, by contra hegemonic practices that try to overthrow the existing order and establish a new form of hegemony. Mouffe mean to say that this struggle between opposing hegemonic projects can never be reconciled in the way that the deliberative democracy theorists imagines (Mouffe. 2008, p. 26-28).

The agonistic perspective as Mouffe presents it, thus has an entirely different view of how democracy should be developed, in contrast to the dialogic perspective it can be regarded as radical as it seeks a profound transformation of the prevailing power relations and the establishing of a new hegemony. A radical transformation of society requires, according to Mouffe that an opponent is singled out, an act which however is excluded in the dialogic perspective (Mouffe. 2008, p. 54-55).

## ***Neoliberalization, social movements and Self-organization***

Another researcher who discuss how citizen dialogues is used in a neoliberal context is Mark Purcell. According to him, we can see how, what he calls the 'Keynesian compromise' lost its importance after 1970 and neoliberalism the time ahead gained a stronger hegemonic position in urban policy. The neoliberal ideology is based on the idea that the society works best through a market logic, which it also considers should permeate public institutions. Rhetorically this ideology

advocates a minimal state, but in practice it usually means a combination of a state drawback and implementation of measures to facilitate capital accumulation (Purcell, 2009. p. 142). This 'neoliberalization' trend has meant a cuts in the social welfare systems. These cuts, together with the growing social inequality that free markets create, has led to an increasing number of marginalized humans in affected communities (Purcell 2009. p. 143). According to Purcell the neoliberal system is thru this process constantly producing democracy deficits and legitimacy problems by itself. The problem thus is; "how to legitimate itself as it dismantles welfare system, increases inequality, and unleashes into urban political life the harsh relations of market competition." (Purcell 2009. p. 143).

The neoliberal-system handle these problems of legitimacy by constantly recreating the neoliberal hegemony (Olivera Costa, 2009, p. 113). Similar to Mouffe, Purcell stresses that neoliberalism hereby also is to be understood as an ideological project, aiming to establish its hegemonic assumptions, as the dominant 'common-sense' in society (Purcell. 2009. p. 143). Purcell sees this hegemonic project as; "A political project on the part of particular groups to establish their interests as the same thing as the general interests of the society." (Purcell, 2009. p. 143). Purcell believes that one can see the increasing focus on communicative planning as a strategy for legitimizing the neoliberal project as a democratic, when it acts as; "decision-making practices that are widely accepted as 'democratic' but that do not (or cannot) fundamentally challenge existing relations of power." (Purcell, 2009. p. 141). The method thus both in theory and practice, tend to reinforce existing power relations and to support a neoliberal agenda, rather than to form a resistance to this (Purcell, 2009. p. 141).

### ***'Invited' and 'Invented' spaces***

Planning Researcher Miraftab also points out that legitimacy is central to the neoliberal ideological project. The citizen participation true its ability to awake the experiences of inclusion becomes a way to handle these legitimacy issues and maintain the hegemonic position of the system (Miraftab, 2009, p. 33-41). The shift where by international donors is increasingly advocating citizens participation and is establishing more stable contacts with grassroots organizations and slum areas, has at the same time led to "depolicitizes communities struggle and extend state control of society.", and helps maintain status quo (Miraftab, 2009, p. 34). Miraftab argues that citizen participation is a type of inclusion which directs the collective actions in to clearly state controlled spaces and thus works as means to replace social movements;

"neoliberalism seeks legitimation through governance that promotes political inclusion, but avoids translating it into redistributive equity. Rather, neoliberalism's structures of inclusion and participation contain citizens' collective action into sanctioned spaces of invited citizenship – for example, formal, decentralized state channels or a legitimated NGO sector that functions to replace social movements." (Miraftab, 2009, p. 41).

Miraftabs further argues that these strategies are accompanied by "a bifurcated conceptualization of civil society as authentic versus a criminalized ultra-left." (Miraftab, 2009, p. 41). In Miraftab's research about Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, an umbrella organization of grassroots opposition to the evictions that was carry out during the preparation for soccer World Championship 2010 in Cape Town. The organizations use an amount of different strategies, which I would like to stress can be seen as parallel to the community in Villa 31 in the case study that I will soon discuss. They use both formal/ legal strategies as the court and legal system, by at the same time informal and more confrontational methods;

"informal negotiations with the agents of forced eviction to ignore or postpone its implementation, to capacity building and creating their own data about the plight of evicted or threatened families, to operating weekly soup kitchens to feed children, to defiant collective actions such as reconnection of disconnected services by so-called 'struggle plumbers and electricians' and relocation of evicted families back into their housing units, to mass

mobilizations and protests, sit-ins, and land invasions – as well as the use of courts and legal claim.” (Miraftab, 2009, p. 37).

Miraftab is here making a theoretical distinction between *invited* and *invented* spaces of participation. Where *invited* spaces are defined as; “those grassroots actions and their allied nongovernmental organizations that are legitimized by donors and government interventions and aim to cope with systems of hardship” and invented spaces defined as; “those collective actions by the poor that directly confront the authorities and challenge the status quo” (Miraftab, 2009, p. 38-39). What Miraftab means characterizes the grassroots organizations she studies, is how they move freely between these types of spaces. “They use the formal spaces when they are beneficial, and defy them when they show unfair and restrictive. When formal channels fail, the innovative alternative channels to assert their civil rights and achieve fair city.” (Miraftab, 2009, p. 37).

### ***The silent intrusion of the everyday***

The sociologist Asef Bayard has in his research on political change in the Middle East tried to find new concepts to describe how the poor represent a significant political force, in contrast to earlier research tradition that has often described the poor as passive groups without agency. *Silent intrusion* and *non-movement* is the theoretical concept he developed to describe how ordinary people in the Middle East create social change. The political situation in many Middle East countries, with dictatorship and severe repression against public protests and political organizing, makes non movements and silent encroachment even more relevant concepts to analyze the political upheaval in this part of the world. The situation is very different from that in Argentina and Latin America, where many countries have strong urban social movements that represent significant political forces. Nevertheless, I mean that his term may be useful to highlight the situation in Buenos Aires (Bayard, 2012, p. 12).

The key term "social non-movements" is created in relation to the concept of social movements, which describes an organized resistance (Bayard, 2013, p. 22 ). What the concept of social non-movements is referring to is instead: “the collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations.” (Bayard, 2013, p. 22). Thus, this is about individual yet collective everyday actions of a large number of uncoordinated actors (Bayard, 2013 p. 9). These groups change society by silent intrusion; “ordinary people unnoticed but continuous and substantial achievements at the expense of the wealthy, the powerful or the public in an effort to survive and improve their lot.” (Bayard, 2012 p. 35). Thus, it is an individualized action that progressively seeks to gain new terrain. As squatters who gradually and to begin with often unnoticed infringe on private or public land, and hot-wire electricity from the public grid, struggling for the construction of public services to the settlements, or how street vendors appropriates central city streets and interferes with the clientele that shop owners built up (Bayard, 2012, p 35-37).

The Silent intrusion is not regarded as a deliberate political act or as ideologically driven, but as individual actions aiming to survive everyday life and to improve their life situations. While social movements usually mobilize supporters to put forward their demands to the authorities, the actors within social non-movements thus practice their demands in direct action in a variety of ways in daily life. These practices derive their strength from the effect of the mass and by this in its extension achieves significant political transformative effects, as it contributes to gradual changes of society's prevailing power relations and norms. Characteristic of social movements is also that;



"Intrusions is quiet, gradually and individually, but that this won terrain is defended both collectively and transparent." (Bayard, 2012, p. 37). When the achievements are threatened the *passive network*, which the individuals are parts of, mobilizes in an organized resistance and these can thus be transformed in to social movements. *Passive networks* are a fundamental character of the non-movements and consists of a solidarity and identification of joint problems resulting from everyday meetings in public space (Bayard, 2013, p. 25).

Bayard argues that weak states or "soft states" of the South often lack the ability to impose full control and because of this it exists many cracks and spaces that can be appropriated by ordinary people. Countries in the South are often more lenient towards the quiet infringements that occur in these spaces compared with countries in the North, whose citizens often have a stronger ideological and technological surveillance. In the more *soft / weak* states of the South is thus a room for a greater autonomy and the silent encroachment is also partly seen as a self-helping mechanism. The state often choose to act and confrontations occur only when the intrusions are crossing the border of the acceptable (Bayard, 2012, P.41). Although Bayard emphasizes silent encroachment as a successful way for marginalized groups to improve their lot and create local improvement. He means that these processes do not promote social justice at the national level, as it does not affect the overall structures. To change these structures, these movements have to unite with broader social movements and mobilize on a national level (Bayard, 2012, p. 46).

What is perhaps most interesting about Bayard's theories is that they point to how the urban development today is largely shaped by the practices of the urban poor and that it provides a tool to catch sight of these mechanisms. Today the informal sector is providing more than half of the new jobs and accommodations in many developing countries (UN-HABITAT, 2003, p. 5). By this, one might say that most of the urban development and planning in the world, is taking place outside the formal planning system, through everyday practices of marginalized groups. This development expands the very definition of planning, as grassroots activism, activities and strategies can be seen as the actual 'protagonists' that shape urban development (Miraftab, 2009 p. 42).

### ***Slum in a Latin American context.***

The growth of slum's in Latin America during the last decades must be understood in connection with the implementation of the neo-liberal political order. In the following section I want to briefly describe this question and explain how this allow implied that the countries on the continent abandoned a government housing as a means to combat slum growth for the benefit of the methods generally used today.

Since the 1970s, slum growth has been faster than the pace of urbanization in the south, for example, in Sao Paulo slums grew by about 20% a year during the 1990s (Davis, 2006, p. 25). Davis stresses that we today are seeing an *overurbanization* of developing country. Similar to UN-Habitat, he points to how urbanization historically has been driven by a strong industrialization. Today's urbanization in the South, however, has been decoupled from the connection between industrialization and migration rate to urban areas. Where the rate of migration to urban areas do not reduce even when urban economies shrink. Similar to other industrial cities in the South, Buenos Aires has suffered factory closures since the 1980s. But despite this the urban growth rate has been constant (Davis, 2006, p. 20). What drives urbanization, according to Davis, instead is the increasing poverty which mainly can be seen as caused by an agricultural crisis in this part of the world. This decoupling between production growth and employment growth in large parts of the developing world and for Latin America has been understood by taking into consideration the debt crisis of the 1970's and the restructuring of the developing countries that followed as a result of SAP, *Structural Adjustment Programs* (Davis, 2006, p. 21).

SAPs have been widely criticized by scientists because it has led to rising unemployment, increases in costs, reduced minimum wages and overall sharply deteriorating conditions of the poor (Alemayehu, 2008, p. 41). Davis argues that the World Bank and the IMF took advantage of the debt crisis to restructure the Third World economies. In a *neocolonialistic* way, SAP brought about power transference from third world countries to capitalist power centers in the North. These circuits today thereby assume a greater power over local communities in the South (Davis, 2006, p. 174-166). UN-HABITAT also directs sharp criticism of the effects of SAPs and stresses that the period of urbanization the world has gone through in recent years; politically and economically mainly is influenced by the neoliberal paradigm shift, which has taken the form of SAPs on the national level. The structural adjustment programs has promoted and driven through by IMF and the World Bank and comprised austerity and deregulation of agriculture. Subsidization of agricultural development was reduced. This together with the liberalization of the national markets, had the effect that small and medium-sized farmers had a hard time to survive in competition with farms on an industrial scale. During the 1980 and 90s this led to a migration movement of superfluous agricultural workers to the urban slums. This despite a stalled employment growth and a lack of public services and infrastructure in these cities (Davis, 2006, p. 23-24). According to UN-HABITAT one can say that the programs; "tended to weaken the economic role of cities throughout most of the developing world and placed emphasis on agricultural exports, thus working against the primary demographic direction moving all of the new workers to towns and cities (UN-HABITAT, 2003, p. 6).

### ***From state housing to self-help***

During the 1970s, when the modernist movement had lost the steering in Europe and the US, it still had a strong influence in Latin America. According to Davis many countries of the South, in the 1960s and 70s, worked with meeting the slums development by a state social housing. In Mexico, Brazil and Cuba there were programs to replace slums with elements built houses and even many African states worked to transfer the slum population to new affordable housing (Davis, 2006, p.74). This may be compared with how many European countries and perhaps above all, the Nordic welfare states of the twentieth century worked to meet the urban poverty successfully (Svedberg, 1996). At the same time the largest share of social housing in Latin America where built by the military dictatorships that had the power in large parts of the continent from 1950 to 1980. These dictatorships however, often used social housing to reward their supporters and as a tool to get rid of the slum population away from city centers (McGuirk, 2014 p. 13).

These strategies with strong government intervention came in the 1970s to be criticized by academics such as John Turner, who advocated "a shift to greater autonomy or dweller control in the production of housing." (Abbott, 2002. p 40-44). The criticism was directed towards the modernist paradigm (the modernization theory) within which the urbanization processes was seen as a linear trend towards increasing modernization and slum was perceived only as anomalies in the urban fabric. Turner argued the contrary, that slums should not be considered as much as a problem as part of the solution. He said that one must consider that the slum dwellings often have a higher *use-value* than *product-value* (market), and that the economy and slum prevention therefore must be adapted in order to operate cost-effectively; "Implying getting the most from the least." (Abbott, 2001, p.306). The theory thus tended to without subsidies make housing affordable for the poor and was also welcomed as a cost-effective solution to the urban crisis (Davis, 2006, p.87-88). But this perspective identified the specific problems rather than fighting the slum as a phenomenon (Alemayehu, 2008, p. 40-44).

Turner's theories and the slum upgrading strategies that has been developed with these as a starting point are commonly referred to as self-help theory (Alemayehu, 2008, p. 44). The World Bank came

to be the strongest instigator of these ideas, which were pushed forward as a part of SAP's. As a requirement for approving lending, the bank among other things demanded privatization of the national housing markets (Davis, 2006, p. 82 ; Alemayehu, 2008, p. 55). During this period, the World Bank had a very large influence on governments and aid organizations and this upgrading strategy therefore, despite criticism for failing to provide a sufficient supplement to the housing stock, has had a long-term impact (Abbott, 2001, p. 306). Davis is critical of this development, meaning that since the breakthrough for these ideas, states have forsaken all pursuits of structural management of the problematics of the slums. Where the new recipe has become to "fix up the slum instead of replacing it "(Davis, 2006, p. 86).<sup>1</sup>

## **NGOs and democracy**

In parallel with the states in developing countries abandoning of social housing construction in favor of more small-scale improvement projects, the overall trend has been a pursuit to replace public service with market solutions. In Argentina, the state has been reduced in importance and since the 1990's and 80's it's increasingly becoming an intermediary between construction companies and organizations (Sceinsohn and Cabrera, p. 109). These changes in the relationship between the state and civil society have contributed to a dramatic rise of the worldwide numbers of NGOs since the mid-1990s. NGOs have gained more power and often occupies mediating role between the state and grassroots organizations. As described, the slum upgrading projects and civil dialogue in the same time been welcomed as a more cost effective approach than government-subsidized housing programs (Mitlin, 2001, p.151-152; Davis, 2006, p. 90-91).

According to researcher False Saviors, NGOs are often considered as the third sector and imagined as able to balance the state authority and deepen democracy. She believes, however, that a number of international studies show rapid changes of NGOs organizational structure and working methods and because of these changes, she questions whether the growing number of NGOs worldwide can be seen as a testament of more self-organization and a deepening democracy. (Saviors ÅRTAL?) NGOs are working in various ways to improve living conditions in poor areas. These can either work with grassroots organizations in the areas, work to try to establish their own organizations in the fields or work with directly trying to accommodate different services. A growing problem is though how NGOs through their professionalization increasingly come to impose their own agenda "on the grassroots organizations in the areas where they work." (Mitlin 2001, p. 159). Saviors points out that *Community based organizations* (CBO's) become more important as development assistance and development programs more frequently has started to collaborate directly with the CBO's. CBO's way of working requires daily contact with the local neighborhoods. Recently however more and more assistance funds have shifted to promoting non-membership CBO's. Non-membership CBO' are active in the slums but not organized by the residents themselves. Through this development the situation today is in fact often a large gap between the residents at the site and the NGOs active in the area (Sangeeta 2003).

NGO's and CBO's in this way often end up in a dependent relationship to international donors and organizations, that through this today can be said to have their own "grassroots presence in poor areas." (Davis, 2006's, 90-91). Saviors indicate that the effect of this *NGO-ization* process' has been a bureaucratization and de-politicization of these organizations and urban movements around the world. She says that the kind of democracy that is produced by these NGOs can be seen more as it symbolic as it only produces a type of democracy that can function in a neoliberal context (Saviors ÅRTAL?). In summary, one can say that the professionalization of NGOs tend to weaken grassroots movements and their own organization. According to Mike Davis, these organizations

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<sup>1</sup> The quotation is translated into English by the author.

often implies a new form of clientelism, when these organizations are advocating strategies of trying to gain benefits by appealing to compassion rather than to assert political and social rights (Davis. 2006. p. 92-93).

Davis argues that even if the World Bank/ NGO- method for slum upgrading can create local success stories, it thus not effect the overwhelming majority of the poor. The peace activist and Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy claims that the NGOs "end up functioning like the whistle on a pressure cooker. The divert and sublimate the political rage, and make sure that it does not build to a head." (Arundhati, Cited in: Davis. 2006. p, 79). It bypasses the core issue of global inequality and debt and conceal only the lack of a structural approach to alleviating poverty (Davis. 2006. p, 94).

## ***NGOs and the role of the state in Argentina.***

As described previously SAP has resulted in a weakened role of many states in the developing countries, through demands for reduced government involvement. These programs also led to decentralization and the transfer of power to non-profit organizations that often have a direct link to international aid agencies. (Davis, 2008 p, 176) This trend can also be seen in Argentina, where there is no stable government in the same way as in many countries in the North.

"In Argentina, there is no stable body of government officials - such as the civil service in the British tradition - which one may characterize as representing "the state". In consequence, the state apparatus is all too often confused with the political party voted into power by the electorate. The political party in power is not able to give a sense of coherence and a common direction to state actions." (Gazzoli, 1996, p. 163).

Gazzoli believes that the consistent, long-term and multi-sectoral actions that would be needed to work on issues of poverty and "community participation", because of the state's instability becomes impossible (Gazzoli, 1996, p. 164). Instead, actions and civil participation is often taking the form of a "political favor to the community from the government official." (Gazzoli, 1996, p.164).

According to Gazzoli, also NGOs and grassroots organizations are drawn into this kind of relationship which he resembles to clientelism / nepotism and thus risk losing their independence. Because of the state's vague and inconsistent nature it arises spaces between the state and civil society, where organizations can act as mediators to get their will through (Gazzoli, 1996, p.162). NGOs often act as mediators in this way by exploiting personal contacts with officials who use their power to their advantage without public inspection. The state manages this relationship in a variety of ways, but often, a strategy to remove the organizations from their specific local connection is used (Gazzoli, 1996, p. 165). In accordance with the international trend I described in the previous section, Gazzoli highlights how grassroots organizations by this often end up in dependency to NGOs and tend to lose their independence from the state (Gazzoli, 1996, p. 163).

Gazzoli also shows how participation in the Argentinian context often tend to be more symbolic and rarely entails a real power sharing. Political officials often strive to establish relationships with grassroots organizations to strengthen their own positions. If they have funds they often prefer a "topdown policy of assisting poor communities, with little or no prior consultation about community needs or priorities." In the absence of adequate resources, some kind of public dialogue is instead often used. Gazzoli point out that this often involves "substituting for services which would normally be bought in the open market than a genuine exercise in power-sharing" and that even in the "community participation schemes," they tend to only support a portion of the community creating division between the residents (Gazzoli, 1996, p. 164).

## Radical planning

“Critical planning must rely on contextualizing planning – that is, recognizing the power struggle within which it is practiced”.  
(Miraftab, 2009, p 43).

Are there any alternatives to the kind of citizen participation and slum-upgrading that dominates today? Can planners find other ways to work that does not undermine the struggles of the poor? I will try to discuss these questions in the following section by using theories on radical planning. These theories will later be used in the analysis section to describe how the residents in Villa 31, worked with a group of architects from the University of Buenos Aires.

In the book *Radical cities*, Justin McGuirk is arguing that architects after the collapse of the modernist project and the state's sharply reduced investments in social housing, lost their social goals. The architecture was reduced to "form without utopia" and at the same time the; "political establishment was giving up on space as a tool for addressing class divisions" (McGuirk, 2014, p.30). Later in the neoliberal era architecture has primarily become a means of urban branding (McGuirk, 2014 p.13,14,30). However, McGuirk believes that in the last decade we have been able to see a new activist generation emerge in Latin America, which again sees space as a tool of politics (McGuirk, 2014, p.30). The fact that Latin American countries in the mid-1900s endured a high urbanization under conditions of economic shortage, has today made the continent an ideal test place for radical ideas concerning the informal city (McGuirk, 2014, p.23). One of the central parts of this generation's new approach to the informal city is to see it as an inevitable and important part of the ecosystem of the city's. To accept the informal as a productive part of the city and not merely see it as a transition phase to the formal and the 'modern'. These activist architects therefore, according to McGuirk, regard the; "the totally planned city (...) as a myth." (McGuirk, 2014, p.25 p 32). Rather than major interventions to "cut out the cancer of the slum", they work with "Urban Acupuncture", small scale interventions with the aim to stimulate catalytic effects throughout the city. They strive to integrate the slum with the formal city and to dissolve the boundaries between these (McGuirk, 2014, p.26). Another main characteristic of the activist generation is how it acts without a client. Rather these architects identify the questions to work with themselves and together with local community strive to create opportunities to intervene (McGuirk, 2014, p.29). For these archetypes a pragmatic attitude or "idealistic pragmatism" as McGuirk chooses to call it, becomes central. To be flexible and open to test unorthodox methods and to experiment is a part of this (McGuirk, 2014, p.32). The action itself becomes the most central (the process of creating a space/ an opportunity to act) rather than the physical form and object that the intervention might result in. These architects do not, as the modernists, rely on political support, but must negotiate with both the market and the state and create local community networks in order to create opportunities' for action (McGuirk, 2014, p.34-35).

There are also researchers that have written about the meeting between activism and planning on a more theoretical level. Miraftab discusses the possibilities of a radical planning through what she chooses to call *Insurgent planning* (two terms that are often used interchangeably in the literature). She defines *Insurgent planning* as; "purposeful actions that aim to disrupt domineering relationships of oppressors to the oppressed, and to destabilize such a status quo through consciousness of the past and imagination of an alternative future." (Miraftab 2014, p. 44). According to the original definition radical planning describes "mediation of theory and practice in social transformation", with the term *Insurgent planning* and Miraftab wants to adapt the concept of radical planning to the specific challenges within the neoliberal context (Miraftab, 2014, p. 43). She believes that under the current circumstances where neoliberalism tries to legitimize itself through citizen participation that; "contain citizens' collective action into sanctioned spaces" (Miraftab,

2014, p. 41) at the same time as it is making a “conceptualization of civil society as authentic versus a criminalized ultra-left (Miraftab, 2014, p.41). She therefore believes that in this context radical planning must try to “disrupt the attempts of neoliberal governance to stabilize oppressive relationships through inclusion.” (Miraftab, 2014, p. 41). This can be achieved if planners do not limit their practitioners to sanctioned spaces of participation but instead also supports grassroots organizations *invited spaces* and thereby recognizing the importance that these movements choose their own form of participation (Miraftab 2014, p. 43). As Miraftab puts it; “Insurgent planning recognizes, supports and promotes not only the coping mechanisms of the grassroots exercised in invited spaces of citizenship, but also the oppositional practices of the grassroots as they innovate their own terms of engagement.” (Miraftab, 2014, p. 41). These planners thus use strategies distance them from the perspective that see planners as standing outside of the society. Rather this approach accepts that most of the urban development in the South takes place outside the professional planning practice, through the everyday practices of marginalized groups outside the formal systems (Miraftab 2014, p. 42). That architects get involved in grassroots activism is thus here seen as central; “The practices of insurgent planning acknowledge what the hegemonic drive of neoliberal capitalism tries to obscure: the potent oppositional and transformative practices that citizens and marginalized populations invent outside global capitalism’s definition of inclusion.” Said in different words this kind of planning therefore acknowledges the poor own agency and the silent intrusion through which they are constantly working to improve their living conditions. The last characteristics of insurgent planning that Miraftab highlights is that it strives to politicize historical collective memory and to “historicize the problems arising from the actions and inactions of authorities.” (Miraftab, 2014, p. 45). This becomes central when neoliberalism to the contrary, often can be seen as promoting a collective amnesia.

Researcher T Sager makes a more detailed classification of different types of activist planning. He believes that the planning activities can be defined as activist planning if it meets certain criteria; “An activist style implies use of direct action. Engaging in government-initiated citizen participation processes does not suffice. (...) The planners must initiate, facilitate or take part in the preparation of the plan (...) effect particular floor or to address a specific localized planning problems.” (Sager, 2016 p. 1264) Sager thus believes that it is vital that planners in direct action is committed to a plan or in resisting a law, for it to be a question of activist planning.

Sager divides the types of activist planning into two main groups based on;

1. ‘Unconcealed/ Recognized’ activist planning.
2. ‘Concealed/ unrecognized’ activist planning.

Furthermore, they are divided from the two additional aspects:

1. Loyal to group – Committed to strategic cause- Committed to relational cause.
2. Government planner – Civic society planer.



This is giving the six groups shown in the table below.

	Government planner	Civic society planner.
Loyal to group	1. Official partisans.	3. Advocacy planners
Committed to strategic cause.	2. Equity planners (inside non-directed advocacy planners, public democratization planners).	4. Radical planners (recognized insurgent and community-based planners, ideological advocacy planners, NGO-based democratization planners).
Committed to relational cause.	5. Public activist mediation	6. Intermediate activist planning

Tabel.1

He points out that this kind of planning can be performed from different positions in relation to the formal planning process; there are internal, intermediate and external positions. Where internal position is acting from within the organization that controls the official planning process, the external planner acts with the basis in the civil society. In addition, there are activist planners who take a mediating role. These can either be invited as a mediator by the official parties or be attached to an organization that works to improve relations between the actors.

A distinction is also made on the basis of which types of loyalties these planners have. Advocacy planners is thus seen as planners that strives to represent a specific groups interests by producing plans and arguing in the interests of this group. One of the main tasks is thus the term radical planners instead describes planners acting from a strong commitment to an issue of strategic importance; "radical planning is an oppositional but overt activity performed by planners with their professional base in civil society and with strong commitment to a cause." (Sager, 2013, p. 78). This is a kind of planning that goes into close cooperation with residents and grassroot activists, whether operating in cooperation with state sanctioned planning processes or not (Sager, 2013 p. 79). Furthermore, Sager defines a group that goes beyond the classification presented in figure Box 1. What he chooses to call *Critical- alternative initiatives* (CAIs), is separated from the radical planners in that they are engaged in a strategic cause but without a clear intention to replace the political or economic system. This group is therefore; "critical at the policy level rather than at the system level and suggest alternative approaches concerning methods" (Sager, 2016, p. 1272).

Sager also points out that there is a form of activist planning that has its base in the university and partly goes beyond the classification he presents. These planners are located somewhere between "activist planning, action research and community outreach programs" and are in a specific situation due to the academic freedom they enjoy (Sager, 2013, p. 68). Action research can overall be described as a research method whereby the researcher wants to have a direct impact on the research area and be contributing to solutions to real problems in real situations. The goal thus is to come to some kind of mutual understanding of what is the best way to achieve the desired change, along with those groups that are the objects for research. I have not had the opportunity to go into more detail on the theories of action research in this paper. An example of how action research and citizen participation can be combined however, can be found in *Action Research*, vol 6(1), the

authors describes how their research team worked with these principles in a neighborhood revitalization in Depew, New York (Silverman and Taylor, 2008). It highlights how the influence from theories of action research was a set of tools through which they could put the residents' interests first and to bring local concerns to the center of the political decision-making. The authors also believes that the principles were a way to promote exchanges between different actors; "action research can facilitate collaboration between residents and other stakeholders in community-based projects. This heightened level of exchange builds consensus around the results of action research. In turn, there is an increased likelihood that policy growing out of action research will be supported by all stakeholders and implemented collaboratively" (Silverman and Taylor, 2008, p. 76).

## Case study

In the field study, I will describe the Citizen dialogues conducted in Villa 31, a centrally located slum in Buenos Aires. I will first give a background to the area, describing both geographical context and briefly key stages in the history that is necessary to get acquainted with the more current issues that I will discuss later in the paper.

### *Introduction to the area*

Villa 31 is one of the city's largest and oldest slum areas. The area is about 0.4 hectares and is today estimated to have a population of about 30 000. The area can be considered as one of the most disputed land areas throughout the entire city. This is due to its geographical location on a narrow strip of land between the railway tracks, near the affluent residential areas Retiro and Recoleta and the port area which in the current situation is one of the major interests for real estate speculation in the city. It's an area where poor people's right to the city in a dramatic way is set against other powerful interests by government and private actors (Salerno, 2014, p. 130).

Villa 31 has today been named Barrio Padre Mugica by the residents in the area. The name is taken after the iconic priest Carlos Mugica, whom worked in the area in the 1970s. In this paper I will for

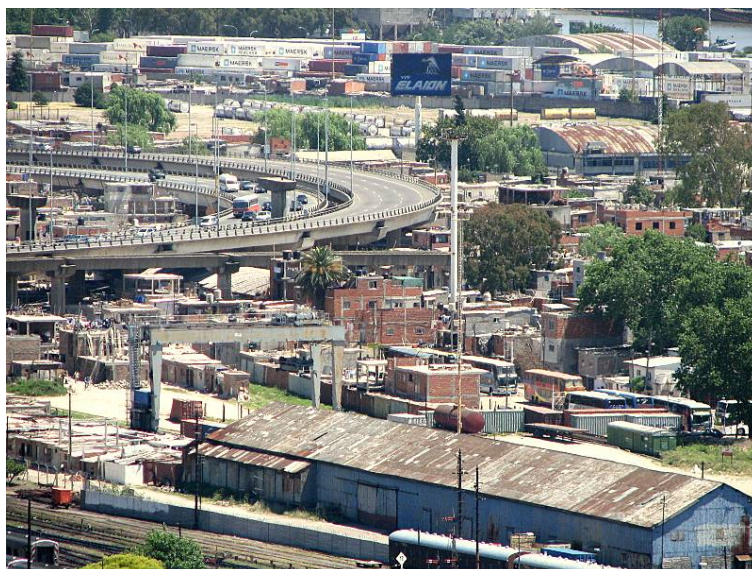


*Figur 1*

convenience use the name Villa 31 as it is shorter and more well known, although I recognize that there is a problematic history of oppression tied to this name.

The area actually consists of two areas separated by a motorway that is going above the area in the eastern part and in the ground level in the western part. The northern part of Villa 31 has officially been called Villa 31 and is the older part of the area, while the northern part has been called Villa 31 bis. This part has evolved in more recent years after the highway through the area was constructed.

(Trujillo, s22) In this text, I will, for convenience, be using Villa 31 to denote both areas. Villa 31 is further divided into eight Barrios (neighborhoods) that I will refer to as sectors; Inmigrantes, Comunicaciones, YPF-Autopista, Guemes, Cristo obero, Ferrorviaro, Playon ofste, Playon este. The current representation system is designed whit this division and both the University and the Secretariat the habitat e Inclusion has worked with citizen dialogues along this divisions. According to staff at the Secretariat the habitat e Inclusion the area is social also divided after these areas and the residents are thus using only public surfaces that are in "your own" area. According to Pablo Vitale who worked in the area since 1999, the division is although strong not dramatic, each area has its own dynamics and its own mix of identities (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016).



*Figur 3 The highway that divides the area.*

The houses in the area today varies from one to six stories in height and the majority of the houses consist of masonry walls and have concrete floors (Trujillo, 2012, p. 23). In the film *Barrio Padre Mugica* (2014), Fernandez Castro argues that contrary to the social imaginary the slum houses structures usually good. Many of the residents are construction workers and masons working on constructions in the affluent residential area of the city (Castro, Interviewed in; Borenstein & Facundo, 2014). Overall there are more houses of a lower quality and poorer infrastructure in Villa 31 bis than in the older Villa 31. Throughout both areas, many household lack access to sanitation, while most have access to water, electricity and telephone service. (Trujillo, 2012. p. 24) Anthropologist Maria Cristina Cravino argue that this infrastructure, however, is of very low quality. For example, the electricity often stops work and in the summer there are areas that do not have access to water or they have water of very poor quality. The existing sewer system is constructed by the residents and is designed for a much smaller number of residents than the number now living in the area, resulting in that the system often overflows or get clogged. In some areas the sewers overflow inside the peoples homes (Cravino, Interviewed in; Borenstein & Facundo, 2014).

Villa 31 has a history that goes far back in time, which can be considered unusual for the slum areas overall. Attempts to evict the area have been many over the years. Sometimes these have been violent and sometimes with promises of compensation and housing in other parts of the city. (Marc Rogers, 2010) I come in following sections I will provide a very brief description of the history which aims to provide a background to the current situation, without the opportunity to describe all the twists and nuances in the relationship between the area and the state. Afterwards I will describe the process surrounding the urbanization project which is the focus of this paper and the stakeholders involved in this process.



*Figur 2 Google maps, manipulated by the author.*



# History

## Early history

Buenos Aires history and the emergence of slums in the city, is closely interwoven with its history of migration. Simplified the migration can be divided into three phases, European migration, domestic migration and migration from neighboring countries. (Bastia, 2010, p.8).

The first period has its origin in the nineteenth century's second half, when the government launched a strategy to develop the country by population growth built on the migration of white Europeans that would "civilize the country." The strategy was successful and led to a significant migration from primarily southern European countries (Bastia, 2010, p.8). The slum in Buenos Aires began to grow in the 1930s as a result of the population increase. Villa 31 originates from this time and was one of the first villas built by the government to provide

housing for European migrants (sometimes referred to as Italian and sometimes Polish) who mainly came to work at the nearby railway. (Bastia, 2010, p. 6, 16) After World War II the migration from Europe decreased, while internal migration and migration from neighboring countries were of increased importance. Villa 31 grew during this period; "mainly from the arrival of families from the Argentine Northwest and neighboring countries" (translation from Spanish by author (Sehtman & Cavo, 2009, p.24)).



*Figur 4 Padre Carlos Mugica, liberation theology priest and activist who worked in Villa 31st (1970s, photographer unknown)*

During the mid-1950s the national government's policy towards slums shifted. *La Comisión Nacional de la Vivienda* was formed and sought to evict all the slums in the city. (Bastia 2010 p.17). The government, now also put forward the first eviction plan for Villa 31. Simultaneously the organization "la Federación de Villas y Barrios de Emergencia" formed by residents in the area, marking the start of the strong political grassroots organizing around the site-specific identity, which today is associated with Villa 31. This political organization came to dominate the area during the 60s and early 70s. (Sehtman & Cavo, 2009, p.25-26) From this period, the liberation theologian and priest Carlos Mugica, is a central symbol of the area's identity. La Federación de Villas y Barrios de Emergencia during the 1960's and 70's along with Carlos Mugica withstood a number attempts to evict the area. (Sehtman & Cavo, 2009, p.26-28)

The objective was to clear the city center from the "undesirable elements of the population" and transform Buenos Aires into a model city in the European style. These "racist and stereotyping campaigns", followed by "forced evictions, intimidations and gross human rights violations." (Bastia, 2010, p.17) The promise of yielding to social housing projects on the outskirts of the city was not realized, the result was that people empty-handed were dumped outside the administrative boundaries of the city. The effects of the military junta's program were that 94% of all slum settlements in grand Buenos Aires demolished and 270,000 poor people were left homeless. At the same time left sympathizers and leaders of grassroots organizations disappeared systematically (Davis, 2006, p.126). The evictions and political persecutions drastically reduced the number of residents also in Villa 31. When the military junta came to power, the area had 24,324 residents and 1980 was only 756 of them left (Sehtman & Cavo, 2009, p. 33-34). The return to democracy in

1983 meant that the area once again began to be populated, increasing to 160 000 in 2010. (Salerno, 2014, p.133)

## 1990s

The developments in Buenos Aires in the 1990s was marked by the introduction of neo-liberal economic reforms that was to result in sharply rising inequality (both "social, economic, spatial"). This development culminated in the economic crisis of 2001. (Bastia, 2010, p.19)

The neo-liberal changes gave greater scope for private investment to shape the city, through the privatization of public spaces and mega investment projects in the city center as Puerto Madero. (Bastia 2010 p.19, 22) According to Cravino the informal rental market in Buenos Aires slums has increased sharply in recent years. This is due to increased pressure on the accommodations in the slums since the 1990s due to the lack of new land to occupy and increasing poverty (which meant that more and more were forced to see the slums as a housing option) as well as continued migration. The relationships in the slums that had previously mainly been characterized by communion and reciprocity. In recent years partly has come to be replaced by more and more economical relations (Cravino, 2011, p. 1).

During the nineteenth century Villa 31 was affected by a number of projects that put pressure on the area. The construction of the freeway Arturo Illia, came to divide the area into two parts. The construction of the highway was accompanied by plans for the eviction of the entire area. Some of the actions the city took exceeded the municipality's own legal rules. This combined with the mixed messages from the authorities regarding the future of the area meant; "strong drawbacks to agree on a stance that would create clear rules for the relation between slum dwellers and the local government."<sup>2</sup> (Fernández, 2011, p.36).



*Figur 5 Unemployed workers at the port of Buenos Aires. Villa Desocupación en Retiro 1930. (1930, photographer unknown).*

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<sup>2</sup>Esto significó fuertes inconvenientes para consensuar una postura que permitiera crear reglas del juego claras entre villeros y gobierno local. (Translation from Spanish by the author).



## **2000s**

The neo-liberal development in Argentina came to culminated in the economic crisis of 2001. Unemployment poverty during this period reached unprecedented levels. The crisis has had long-term social consequences and resulted in a sharp increase in the number of people living in precarious conditions in the city (Benwell, Haselip & Borello, 2013 p.148- 149). The number of residents in Villas Miseras increased by 107,000 in 2001-170000 in 2010. Today, the residents of the slums are a heterogeneous group, "including the oldest habitants, new immigrants (from the countryside and ring should countries) and impoverished Sectors. "Half of the residents, however are, migrants from the neighboring countries, Paraguay, Bolivia and Peru. (Cravino, 2011, p.1)

### ***The urbanization project***

In this section, I will describe the project that will be the main focus for the later analysis.

In 2003 the first upgrading plan was developed for the Villa 31 by architect Jorge Juaregui. The plan had a focus on major physical changes on two conceptual levels, the macro and the micro. The proposal suggested that Villa 31 bis would be replaced with public spaces and facilities. The residents that in doing so would be forced to move would be offered new homes in the outskirts of the area. This upgrading plan never received political support but it's ideas had an influence on the latest upgrade plan. (Trujillo, 2012, p.36)

The latest upgrading plan that has been developed by the University under the direction of architect Javier Fernandez Castro, had to take into account a number of important changes that have taken place in recent years. Firstly, the number of residents, particularly in Villa 31 bis, has increased significantly during the period after the economic crisis of 2001. This meant that the plans to use this area for public spaces became more complicated. The second change is that the plan needed to take into account was the plans for a new highway that the enterprise Porto Madero now wanted to lay out through parts of the area, due to their interests of a new urban development in the harbor area. (Trujillo, 2012, p.30)

The plan, according to Trujillo can be said to represent a holistic approach with elements of action-planning. The plan focuses primarily on physical improvements and want to address the issues surrounding connectivity, built form, and infrastructure. (Trujillo, 2012, p.33)

The upgrading plan has a series of guiding objectives:

- encourage the connectivity of the urban structure,
- ensure accessibility,
- introduce green space and enhance existing public space,
- respect the history and pre-existing configuration,
- drastically improve the image,
- seek community participation, and
- produce cohesion. (Fernández, 2011; Trujillo, 2012, p. 31)

The project can be said to elaborate on the concept from the previous upgrading plan developed by Jorge Juaregui with changes at different scales. In addition the new plan introduced a third scale "the median". Macro scale deals with connections to the region, the city and nearby destinations. Median scale deals with the connection to the infrastructure in the environment and accessibility to public spaces. Micro level study area's internal structure "interpreting pre-existing conditions, incorporation of new programs, and the extension of basic infrastructure services"<sup>3</sup> (Fernández, 2011, p.139). In accordance with these conceptual scales, various kinds of interventions are proposed (aspects of; 'flow, referencia, habitacionand, intercambio y deslinde'taken into account) (Fernandez, 2011 p.144). The objective of improved connectivity and accessibility enhancements between the area and the surroundings are supposed to be met by various improvements such as a ramp that links the area to the nearby bus terminal to the east of the area. A new walking and cycling bridge over the railway line in the southern part of the area, provides a new access to the formal city and residential area Recoleta. In order to improve mobility within the area the proposal wants to create new main streets through the area by broaden some of the existing streets. This is a transformation necessary also to allow emergency vehicles to be able to enter.

The project also includes proposals for the creation of new public spaces and a new central park under the motorway and the renovation of Padre Mujica church and its surroundings. Project also developed an alternative solution for the motorway project, which would be going around the area instead of through it. The proposal also includes improvements to the different types of infrastructure as sewage systems and electricity and conversion and renovation of the building 'Movement Building' given new content in the form of new public services. The proposals require the demolition of some existing buildings, these residents are suggested to be relocated to the new social housing development which is planned in the northern part of the area that today mainly belong to the federal government. (Fernandez, 2011, p.139-188)

As Trujillo (Trujillo, 2012, p.33) highlights, two of the objectives of the upgrading plan are process-related. The production of community cohesion and solicitation of public participation. Community participation has been integrated into the work on the project since 2003, and this process I will describe in more detail below.

## ***Project initiation***

It is important to understand that formal and informal organization are often intertwined and difficult to differentiate in the slums in general and in the same way in the process which I will describe. Urbanization proposal in Villa 31 was not initiated by the authorities, but may rather be considered as an 'underground' process initiated by the University and in cooperation with the residents of the area. Only later this process was to be given a certain legitimacy of the city through the passing of Ley 3343.

The project *Proyecto Urbano FADU* (Further in the text, I will call this the Project FADU) was initiated in 2002, when human rights lawyers from the NGO ACIJ (Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia) introduced the group from the university for a group of residents in Villa 31. At this meeting the architects showed before and after photos from a slum upgrading project carried out in Rio de Janeiro, to discuss the possibility for a similar project in Villa 31 (Perten, 2011, p. 21).

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<sup>3</sup> Translation from Spanish by the author.

The project was during this initial stage only meant as a research project from the university side without intentions to implement a real upgrading projects together with the authorities. (Castro, personal interview, May 16, 2016 ; Perten, 2011, p. 21).

The university initially worked with groups of delegates and residents from the area. This was at start a relatively small group that later gradually grew (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016). According to Javier Castro, the delegates are very close to the community and agreements with these representatives can therefore be considered as an agreement with the residents themselves. The difficulty of working with the delegates was that there existed so many representatives from all sectors of the Villa and residents from different areas had different interests. For example, residents of the older areas considered themselves as entitled to greater influence than the residents in newer areas. (Fernández, C. J, personal interview, 2016, May 16). The residents' priorities were often depending on the location of their homes within the villa. Because of this the architects worked with meetings at both the sectoral level, as well as the delegate level, to facilitate the decision making. (Interview Castro. In: Perten, 2011, p. 21) According to Castro each sector had earlier individually been in dialogue with the government, regarding requirements for improvements (Fernández, C. J, personal interview, 2016, May 16). The urbanization project was however a process that came to be unify the community in a common struggle. This must also be understood on the basis that the residents were mobilized and united in a common struggle against the external threats that the eviction plans constituted (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016).

### ***The organization and resistance of the community.***

Because of the authorities' historical absence and active attempts to evict the area, a strong self-organization emerged in the area. This means that there are often unclear distinctions between the informal and formal aspects of the area. Pablo Vitale, who currently works for ACIJ, previously worked at the preschool *Bichito de luz* located in Villa 31 during 1999-2015. He describes how the kindergarten, like many other places to a large extent can be seen as self-organized places. But simultaneously these places are often linked to the state by negotiations in order to gain access to resources. Bichito de luz, according to Pablo Vital, can be seen as an illustrative example. It was closed down by the military junta and during the 1980s a group of mothers organized to jointly start up the activity again. They built the facilities and started to run the business. Alongside they demanded the authorities to make the site official and to support them with resources. Today Bichito de luz official belongs to the city, but has very strong ties to the community. (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016).

According to Pablo Vitale groups in the area uses different strategies to improve their living conditions. Firstly there are autonomous groups whose primary strategy to gain access to government resources is by making demands, protest and demonstrate. Secondly there are organizations that are more clearly linked to parts of the state and mainly receive benefits through lobbying and negotiations. What strategies residents use and prefer he sees as closely linked to the authorities' policies and their reactions to demands from the residents (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016).

Formal and informal roles in the process.	
Barrio (Community)	Intitucional (Institutional)
<u>Proyecto urbano (FADU) villa 31</u>	
Participatory process (2002)	Part of Law 3343 (2009)
<u>Javier Fernades Castro</u>	
Leader for Participatory process (2002)	Interviner for eletiocs in Villa 31 (2010) • Juridical process.
<u>La Mesa</u>	
La Mesa de Trabajo Padre Mugica, para la Radicación y Urbanización (2006)	La Mesa de Gestión y Planeamiento Multidisciplinaria y Participativa (2009)

Table 2.

Mauricio Macri (Argentina's president since 2015) was elected to the mayor of Buenos Aires in 2007 for the party Propuesta Republicana (PRO), on a platform that included a promise to clear Villa 31. He linked the area to crime and unsafe structures which he said risked collapsing (The Economist, Jan 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 ;Trujillo, 2012, p. 26). While the University worked with the research project together with the groups of the residents, the group *La Mesa por la Urbanización*<sup>4</sup>, was formed in 2006. This group will further in the text to be called *Community board*. This independent group was formed by residents, delegates and representatives of various organizations working in the Villa 31, to support the urbanization plan and to planning and coordinated action to bring claims forward. The formation of the organization can be seen as a direct response to Macris threat of eviction. (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016). Ramón Ojeda one of the leaders of *Community board* said in 2007;

”Things are changing here (...) people are becoming more aware of their rights. Today the neighbors are mobilizing; they want a voice, they are demonstrating, they are talking to people who can advise them. We are not going to allow them to move us.” (Ramon Ojeda, quoted in: Caistor-Arendar, 2007)

<sup>4</sup>The full name is; ”La Mesa de Trabajo Padre Mugica, por la Radicación y Urbanización”. This group was central in the dynamics that transformed the urbanization projects from a theoretical investigation into political demands and finally converted in to Law 3433

At this time the residents used all their available resources to combat the new administration's eviction plans. This involved a very confrontational demonstration; the residents turned off the highway next to the area for 6-9 hours, which caused somewhat of a chaotic situation in the city. This powerful collective action marked a turning point. After this the first steps were taken to begin to negotiate with the authorities (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016; Resident in Villa 31, personal interview, May 16, 2016). This confrontational strategy can be seen as part of the Piquetero movement. Piquete is a protest method where people are blocking roads in order to put pressure on the authorities, that first appeared in Argentina but today is an important element in the Latin American political landscape. In northern Argentina, the Indigenismo<sup>5</sup> Tupac Amari movement through this type of confrontations have gained access to substantial resources from the state and in Bolivia piquete actions had been an important tool for social movements in the struggle against neoliberal reforms, which paved the way for Evo Morales. (Schclarek, 2011) The residents' struggle in Villa 31 can then be placed in a context of a new kind of left in Latin America, carried forward by social protest movements rather than authoritarian regimes.



*Figur 6 Demonstration in central Buenos Aires (October 9, 2009. Beatrice Murch)*

In parallel with these confrontational approaches the residents of Villa 31 used other strategies; they established negotiations with the city government, they established contacts with the legislative power and they used the court system by support of laws that protect their rights <sup>6</sup> (Vitale, personal

<sup>5</sup> Political ideology that simplified can be said to focus on indigenous minorities.

<sup>6</sup> Since the 1990s, the Human Rights agreements have been incorporated into both the city and the national Constitution and many laws have been created that also strengthen residents' rights. (Article 31 of the city's constitution, clearly establishes their right to be in the slums and requires the city to take measures to integrate the slums with the rest of the city and the 148 law, that establishes that all slums should be urbanized.) The illegality that is often associated with those living in slums, according to Pablo Vitale through this is reversed and today the states actions can judicially be regarded as illegal. The residents have, with this development incorporated the human right framework into their action resources. During this developing process in Villa 31 ACIJ gave support to La Mesa por la Urbanización to start legal proceedings on rights that are violated. Often linked to such things as problems with the electricity and flooding. (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016).

interview, May 26, 2016). During the demonstrations that were conducted in 2006 and 2007, Project FADU emerged as a requirement of the protest banners. (Salerno, 2013; Castro, personal interview, May 16, 2016 ) Two large demonstrations in the Plaza de Mayo gathered thousands of participants. Lists of demands was handed over to the city and the federal authorities. (Fernandez, 2011, p.132) The Project FADU was in the process thus a tool for residents to claim their right to the city and the specific objective that the project represented, along with the participative process can be said to have contributed to unify the area in common struggle. One of the defined objectives of the project was to "produce cohesion" a conscious effort for this was, for example, the plan for a refurbishment of the church Padre Mugica. According to Castro this was the only symbol that the area could unify around. Another way to support cohesion was how the project work with public spaces that went over the already defined borders in the area.

The architects from the University worked closely with the group *La Mesa por la Urbanización* and took their plans here to discuss and implement changes to them (Resident in Villa 31, personal interview, May 16, 2016). The group used their leverage to bring up the urbanization plan to the authorities at local and national level. The group was also to become the main channel through which the dialogue between the authorities and the residents regarding the urbanization plans was performed. In the group both delegates, residents and people with links to various organizations in the area attended. According to the resident that is both a delegate and active member of the group; through meetings with counselors and government agencies and officials the group promoted the the realization of the project. They pressed the authorities and thereby made the plan to go from being a matter of the Instituto de Vivienda de la Ciudad (IVC) to the Planificación Urbana and finally to the financial authorities, and then to the political level, which led to the final establishment of LAW 334. Facundo Di Filippo was the legislators who wrote and presented the draft law. He worked out in cooperation with the residents and Javier Fernandez Castro in the La Mesa por la Urbanización, with the goal to develop a bill before Mr. Macri came to power. (Resident in Villa 31, personal interview, May 16, 2016).

## **LAW 3343**

LAW 3343 that was passed by the Buenos Aires legislatures in 2009 marked a major victory for the residents and the Project FADU through this given some official legitimacy. The law established the polygon that would be regarded as Villa 31, stated that the area must be urbanized, it recognize Project FADU led by Javier Fernandez Castro as the official project and establishes that the process be carried out through a participatory process. The participatory process would be carried out through the opening of a board 'Mesa de gestion participativa', with monthly meetings and representatives from legislators, the university, the city, the federal government and selected representatives from the area (Facundo, personal interview, May 12, 2016,). Further in the text, I will call this group the Participative Board.

Already in 1991, Law 141 passed, which states that all slums in the city to be urbanized. The Law also requires new representation system to be established in the slum areas. This law was used to intervene and develop the new representation system for Villa 31. The new representatives would take place in the planerings tabel. The activist judge Andrés Gallardo who was active in Buenos Aires during this period, used the current legislation to require that new representation system would be established in the Villa 31, when the city did not act in accordance with the adopted law. The electoral system could take different forms in accordance with the residents' wishes and the residents pushed for Javier Fernandez Castro to be selected as the official intervener. Javier was awarded this official role in 2010 and was thereby given the task of together with the residents, design the new election system. This new electoral system that was created has 149 delegates and a

naiberhod counsel. It was these members from the naiberhod counsel as represented the residents in the ' Participative Board (Facundo, personal interview, May 12, 2016).

Law 3343 also stated that the work by the Participative Board would result in a dictation describing how urbanization of the area would be carried out. All the actors were not satisfied with the dictation that was finally presented, but it became what that the Board put forth. (Facundo, personal interview, May 12, 2016,). The dictation would later be up for a vote in the legislature, but this has not been done since delegates from Prow party meant that some certain aspects of the dictation needed further discussions. But the process was never taken up again.

The political situation surrounding Villa 31 is complicated by the fact that both the local and federal authorities have interests in the area. The federal government owns the land, while the city has the overall responsibility for the planning of the area (Castro, personal interview, May 16, 2016). For a long time the local and federal level have been governed by different political parties, which probably contributed to the stalemate in the questions. According to Pablo Vitale, one can see that during Macris period as mayor in Buenos Aires 2007- 2011, there was practically no major improvements in slum areas of the city, neither implemented by the state or national agencies. Rather Pablo Vitale stresses that the two parties consciously offload the responsibility at each other. This development culminated in the incidents in Parque Indoamericano 2010 where the park was occupied by residents from the slums of the city as a protest against the growing housing problem. The incident evolved into a crisis and three people died when the military was ordered in to remove the occupiers. The incident became a turning point, it was now obvious to everyone that the housing issue was a major problem. After this both the city and the federal government began to act in response to the issues of housing and slums, in a new way.

According to Pablo Vitale this developed into somewhat of a fight between the two authority levels, which both wanted to appear as energetic and as investing resources. The efforts that followed however were not thought out, coordinated and can be said to substantially have been focused on short-term rather than structural improvements. This is also the case in Villa 31, which with its unique position was the most obvious arena for this display of interventions in the slum's (Vitale, personal interview, May 26, 2016). In the film *Barrio Padre Mugica* (2014), Javier Castro also is claiming that the government although it's certainly investing money in the area, it does so in a wrong way that in the long run will be more costly, in comparison with long-term solutions. An example of this is short-term repairing of the badly working cable system instead of constructing a permanent electricity supply. Javier claims that there is concealed economic interests behind this, where the state has agreements with utility companies and other actors. Agreements which more permanent solutions would put the buyers in the wheels for (Fernández interviewed in Borenstein & Facundo, 2014)

In Villa 31 the picture is thus complicated by the ownership situation that entails the long-term improvements requires the stakeholders to cooperate, with the political deadlock is hindering. A rapprochement between the parties regarding the development of the Villa 31 has in recent years come through the interest of building a new highway adjacent to the area. For the Puerto Madero Corporation, (where the city, the federal authorities and private parties are represented) the highway is important given the recent prospects for new real estate development in the harbor. The company has previously completed a redevelopment project in the port area of Puerto Madero, which turned it into one of the city's most exclusive areas with private universities, luxury hotels, restaurants, and a main object of real estate speculation for foreign investors. The thoughts were that the new highway would go right through the Villa 31. But the project was all now included in the project FADU that worked out a proposal where the highway instead would be passing around the area. The thought in the Project FADU was then the highway and the urbanization project would be carried out as a whole, where the money that was invested in the motorway would also be used for



renovation of the Villa 31. The highway is thus the most important reason why outside stakeholders have an interest in intervening in Villa 31.

### ***The situation today***

Over the past few years, a number of minor improvements has been implemented in Villa 31. Some public rooms has been enhanced by new artificial turf fields, some streets has been given new paving and houses have been repainted in different colors. These projects were carried out by (Sechi) The Secretariat for the Habitat & Inclusion (Buenos Aires Ciudad). This is a secretariat in the city which was formed in 2010 after the crisis following the incident in the Parque Indoamericano and today it has offices in, or in proximity to all slums in the city. But since three months back, a new group ecreta de Intergación Social y Urbana has formed, it has a similar function but is only responsible for the work in Villa 31. This can be seen as a further expression of Villa 31's unique position among the slum areas of the city, where it is the slum area that are allocated most resources (Castro, personal interview, May 16, 2016). The secretariat currently has a small office in close proximity to the area, which serves as an indication of the authorities' territorial presence. In addition, there is an office in the city where architects and other bureaucrats are working. In the group there are different teams, among them a group called 'territorio' which responsible for the daily contact between the residents and the state. If residents have problems, such as with water in the area, this group are the ones that are supposed to guide them in who to talk to in order to solve the problem. Their function is also to build strong ties with and get to know the area (Castro, personal interview, May 16, 2016).

In the specific improvement projects of public spaces, the secretariat according to Castanos, are in constant dialogue with the residents all throughout the process. On several occasions they visit the site in question, in order to conduct interviews with residents on how they uses the site and what they would like to change with the place.

Striking is that no part of the slum upgrading plan developed by the Participative Board have been implemented today. According to both Javier Fernandez Castro and a resident from the area, the interventions were not made in accordance with the plans worked out. Castro believes that the priorities between the various interventions implemented, has not follow any logic that has been developed, but rather these priorities may be said to be determined by political friendships, where delegates with close contacts within the authorities is given advantages. Thus it does not seem to have been a guiding broader plan for those minor improvements that has been implemented in Villa 31 over the past few years. According to Castro these small changes thus creates inequalities between the parts of the area, which leads to divisions between the residents (Castro, personal interview, May 16, 2016).

During the past year, a new version of urbanization project has been developed by the University. This new version is the first to be funded by the city, when the previous parts have been funded by the University's research budget. The city, as I have described, has a great interest in building the highway that has been part of the urbanization project. The national government has agreed to give them financial support for building the highway if they at the same time build the first stage of the social housing proposed in the last draft of the Project FADU. The residents that has to be moved when the highway project is built, are meant to be relocated to these new social housing units. The university, in an effort to defend the project, made contact with the World Bank (through informal channels) and provided them whit information about the project and it's participative approach. Today, negotiations are ongoing between the World Bank and the city regarding the financing of a new and very limited version of the urbanization proposal. But there is considerable uncertainty regarding what is included in the negotiations and in which way parts of the proposal could become a reality. (Int. Castro)

## Analysis

In the theoretical chapter I have described Purcell's ideas about how neoliberalism is self-producing legitimacy problems because of the increasing social inequality which it entails. These problems of legitimacy are also something that can be said to characterized Buenos Aires contemporary history.<sup>7</sup> The neoliberal developments in Argentina that culminated in the economic crisis of 2001, has meant great hardship for the poor part of the population, greatly increasing inequality and severely weakened general confidence in the political system. According to Scheinsohn and Cabrera an important strategy for the state to restore its legitimacy was in this situation, to open new channels of dialogue with the social protest movements. (Scheinsohn and Cabrera p.110) This has resulted in that some social movements in recent years become very important players in the production of social housing in Argentina. An example of this is that I previously mentioned is the Tupac Amary movement in northern Argentina. They add that these movements fall into different degrees of dependency on the state. Some movements amount in to the state leaders are provided with "governmental public roles (...) exchange for the abandonment of the street struggle", while others retain their independent role to the State and use State resources to organize self-organized spaces (Scheinsohn and Cabrera, p. 112).

The interviews I conducted surrounding the process in Villa 31, also indicates that the residents use various strategies to improve their living conditions. Firstly, there are autonomous groups whose primary strategy to gain access to government resources is by making demands, protesting and demonstrate and secondly there are organizations that are more clearly linked to parts of the state and mainly receive benefits through lobbying and negotiations. What strategies residents use and prefer seems according to Pablo Vitales description strongly linked to authorities policies and their reactions to demands from the residents. (Int. Vitale) The residents can in their struggle for better living conditions, be said to move between what Miraftab characterizes as "invited" and "invented" spaces and it is often difficult to categorize phenomena in the area as purely official or self-organized. Rather, it is a floating scale where groups in the area using the strategies that appear to be most rewarding at the moment, which does not always mean an official recognition. This may involve unofficial activities that progressively gets more official, as in the case of *Bichito de luz* as I described earlier. Another example of the phenomenon is the canteens in the area. These 'comedores' are organized by the residents themselves and are important focal points for local organizations like *La Mesa por la Urbanización*, at the same time as they are funded by various external actors, and hence can be said to be affected these different loyalties.

The project (Proyecto Fadu) launched by the University together with the residents, I would like to argue, can also be characterized as a self-organized place for participation, even though the project from the University side as Fernandez describes it, was not designed to confront other plans from the authorities, but rather strove to integrate interests from different actors. But I consider this as a self-organized space for participation as it's not based on an official mission from the authorities, but was an informal process that universities themselves initiated. The community, was involved in starting up the project and in identify the problems to be addressed, although one can certainly question the details of how this was done (se; Perten, 2011) highlights that among others things one may see it as problematic that the architects at the first meeting with the residents featured images from a previous upgrading project in Brazil and that one by this can question whether the architects from the beginning steered the project to primarily revolve around physical interventions. When Makri came to power with the promise to "clear the Villa 31" the residents mobilized in the group *La Mesa por la Urbanización*. This group thus had strong ties to the Proyecto Fadu and from which

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<sup>7</sup> The researchers Scheinsohn and Cabrera stresses that; "the combined effects of bureaucratic– state terrorism (1976–82) and the subsequent adoption of neoliberal economic adjustment policies brought about, among other significant consequences, a deep delegitimization of the state and the political apparatus as a whole, together with the disintegration of social bonds." (Bastia 2010 p. 19).

the residents formed a resistance against the eviction plans. The University project was in this process transformed by the residents to a direct confrontation and an alternative to the city and outside actors intentions. In this situation the residents uses a variety of both formal channels such as the judiciary system and informal channels such as road blockades, to confront the authorities and bring up there requirements

The planning processes that have taken shape in Villa 31, which I have described in this paper can be divided into three dialogue processes;

1. Proyecto Urbano FADU, the group from the University that grows in to a close cooperation with civil society.
2. La Mesa de Gestión y Planeamiento Multidisciplinaria y Participativa, the group was formed after the passing of LAW 3343, a clear official subsidized process where authority representatives do not turn directly to the residents, rather this process is taking the form of discussions between the various stakeholders where representatives of the community are one stakeholder among others.
3. The dialogue processes carried out by The Secretariat for the Habitat & Inclusion (Sechi) directly with residents as a design preparation.

It's only the first of these processes, the Project FADU, which can be discussed as a kind of Activist planning or Radical planning, based on the theories I have presented in this thesis. Sager is categorizing the activist planning firstly based on the positions the planners are taking in relation to the formal planning process and secondly based on whether the planners have their loyalty to a group, a strategic cause or a relational cause. Project FADU, is though difficult to clearly categorize into one of the types of Activist planning as described by Sager (Sager, 2016). The University project is in the initial phase of the project in a position clearly outside the formal planning process, but moves to occupy a position somewhere in between the two positions Government planners and Civi Society planners. It is even more difficult to clearly say where the University based architects have their loyalty. The architects can partly seem to occupy a negotiating or intermediate position, where by they aim to harmonize the upgrading plans with outside actors' interests, for example by providing an alternative route of the motorway. But I would argue that one can not see the University as occupying a mediating position, rather they seek to strengthen the residents' unity and help them concretize there on plans, for them to be able to enter into direct negotiations with the authorities. This would mean that the University project could be categorized as Advocacy planners or Radical planners in table 2.

Clearly, however is how the project like the American research group (Silverman & Taylor, 2008) constitutes a clear combination of action research and Citizen participation principles. That the architects are acting with the University as a starting point seems to be of great importance. The public university is due to it's academic freedom, an important channel through which alternative professional practices that the private market has no interest in can be channeled. Fernandez also points out how the University as an independent player, was met with a trust by the community in Villa 31 which had been difficult for an authority initiated project to achieve. The independent academic position together with an action research method seems similar to what Silverman and Taylor describes, be a contributing factor that makes the university able to put the residents' interests first in the project.

Based on the above argumentation one could assume that University project can be described as a form of Advocacy planning (Sager, 2016). Where by the architects are conceived as a mediator of the residents' ideas and their role are to adapt these ideas to the technical jargon to make them more competitive at a decision-making level. Although the architects also can be said to act in this way, for example when they on their own initiative, provided information about the project and it's participative approach to the World Bank. But architects from the University went beyond only to speak on the behalf of the community. As I have described they go in to a close cooperation with

the social movements in the community and formulate upgrading plans together with the residents. The architects do not ignore the residents' own way of organizing their resistance, but rather they seem to help the community to create a new self-organized space for participation at a time when there are no effective sanctioned channels to use. Here by it is more relevant to look at the University project as a form of *Radical planning* or as Miraftab choose to call it *Insurgent planning*.

In the University project the oppression of the residents is contextualized by pointing to the historical links which may shed light on the current situation. For instance this is achieved by choosing to highlight the legendary priest Padre Muchica killed in their fight for the rights of the community. Villa 31 is renamed after this figure and plans are also drawn up for the renovation of the church he worked, which is imagined to become an important new meeting place. These symbols and references to a history of oppression and severe abuse from the authorities, is contributing to illustrate a counterpart to the negative criminalizing the images of the area that Macri among others tries to establish. Miraftab sees this kind of contextualization of oppression and stimulation of collective awareness of the historical effects of the authorities' actions and non actions, as a key part of the Insurgent planning practice. Opposing the neoliberal tendency that rather is promoting a form of collective amnesia.

The University hence do not dissociate themselves from the residents' own organization against the authorities, rather they stimulate new forms of organization by parallel political historicizing and the creation of new alternative images of the future. This can be said to be a strategy strive to challenge the status quo, all down in a small scale. The university project unfolded as a tool for residents to claim their right to the city. The specific objective that the project represented, along with the participative process can be said to have contributed to the unification of the community around a common struggle. One of the defined objectives of the project was to "produce cohesion" a conscious effort and an important part of how despite some disunion among the residents, the project managed this was precisely through these common symbols which I have here highlighted.

The group from the University's work may, in accordance with the above, be seen as loyal to a strategic cause, rather than only to a specific group of stakeholders. According to Fernandez two ambitions with the project was to develop a model applicable to how all the slums of the city could be upgraded and to bring up issues of this development in the public discourse. One could say that the project aimed to change the view of the slums at large and the authorizes ideas of how to work with the slums of Buenos Aires in general. In this way, I like to stress that the project can be seen as a (CAIS) Critical- alternative initiative (the category Sager introduces beyond the original schedule in the table 2). This is a kind of planning that is engaged in a strategical question and that is "critical at the policy level rather than at the system level and suggest alternative approaches concerning methods" (Sager, 2016, p. 1272). It's therefore a planning that is pragmatic and aims to create new areas for action to improve conditions in slums by, changing how agencies work and by influencing public discourse, rather than promoting an utopian vision of a different political system. However, according to me it's difficult to draw a line between criticism directed at a policy level and critic directed at a system level. But still the University project seems to aim to respond to the neoliberal system by striving to create new opportunities to operate within the system that is at present. The thing McGuirk believes characterizes the new activist generation in Latin America is precisely this kind of "idealistic pragmatism". Planners that strives to create opportunities for action through negotiations with private and state stockholders outside the area. That accepts the slums as parts of the city, with the goal to bridge the gap between the informal and the formal. It's just such a kind of pragmatic planning that I would like to stress that the group from the University can be said to strive for.

Interesting, in the development of the process in Villa 31, is how the informal project of the university and the community, at a later stage was given official legitimacy through LAW 3343. The passing of LAW 3343 can be seen as a victory for the residents and as a courtesy of their

requirements by that the authorities in passing the law are thereby recognizing the previous laws which stipulate that the residents right to stay in the area. Remarkably, however, is how instead of implementing what was jointly decided through this dialogue process, the federal and local government levels have only competed smaller scaled, and it as it seems uncoordinated projects. The social movements and the residents have thus not been given the space in the development that was promised in LAW 3343 and the following participating process. Instead, the city has for example, through the decentralized government agency Secretariat for the Habitat & Inclusion implemented smaller projects in the area where residents are involved in a way that does not relate to the demands of large-scale changes previously discussed. These projects does not seem to have any connection with the previously conducted dialogues and that was the result of LAW 3343. As both a resident from the area and Castro points to is the players who had a major role in this earlier self-organized dialogue stage is now disconnected from the further decision in planning.

The state can be said to have ignored the earlier dialogue process and the proposal that was brought forward through the residents' protests. Instead they steered in the dialogues in to sanctioned spaces of participation (at sector level) discussing only limited predefined issues. I would argue that the state by this where able to more clearly define and control the process themselves. The projects by Secretariat for the Habitat & Inclusion operate with clear defined *invited* spaces for participation. As Miraftab discusses, it is questionable whether this way of controlling the dialogues in to sanctioned spaces becomes a means to control the social movements (Miraftab, 2009, p. 34). Dialogues conducted by the Secretariat for the Habitat & Inclusion can be seen as mostly done as a preliminary design phase where the location and scope of the projects already clearly defined in advance. Before the residents are included in the discussions, it already seems to be decided what is to be implemented and which space is available for influence. The control process in this case entails that the social movements' demands are not be included. This in difference to the University led dialogs that discussed possible changes in the area much broader. One can also see how the university consciously worked to bridge differences between sectors in the area to find a common ground. This was done as I have described, partly by consciously referring to the area's history and the common icon of Padre Mochia. When the authority dialogues are only performed at the sector level and even more so if benefits are given to different parts of the community based on political friendship, this dialogs can instead be seen as contributing to causing even greater divisions between different groups in Villa 31.

In accordance with how Gazzolis arguments that the Argentine government often is acting in similar contexts, one can speculate that it also becomes easier for authority representatives to present their efforts as gifts to the residents, when implemented in this way. If efforts have been more comprehensive or coordinated between the various parts of the state, or rested on the work done by the residents and the university, it would have been more difficult to take the credit of improvement efforts. The residents can through the arrangement with small scale short-term projects more easily be used as a political resource, where efforts can be designed as gifts from specific political parties to parts of the community instead of appearing as result of the residents' own political struggle. If Javigers and Cuncas claims that groups in the area are given benefits from political friendships and that this sort of loyalties are partly what is guiding the authorities' priorities in their efforts. This party-political accept appears even more clear. This can be understood from what Gazzoli talking about as the weak Argentine state, where the state appearance is fragmented and different parts of the state may have different priorities and objectives which is preventing coherent and long-termed actions. As Gazzoli mean, the political parties in power are often confused with the state apparatus, in this case it means that the situation where the federal and national government both had interests in the area and at the same time belonged to different political parties, are contributing to a situation where long-termed actions are even more difficult and the area has become something of a stage for the political battles. Just as Gazzoli discusses in his research, the process of the Villa 31 seems to contain elements of clientelism, but this is only speculation as it obviously has been difficult to obtain clarifying information on these issues.

## Concluding remarks

In this essay, I have emphasized that there is a strong rhetoric around citizen participation as a way to deepen democracy. These thoughts about civil dialogue has had a major impact even in the South strongly driven by actors such as the World Bank and international aid organizations. Rhetoric of citizen participation is based on deliberative democratic ideals and the thinking of the influential theorist Jurgen Habermas. Habermas's theories are based on a strong belief that consensus can be created around community development, however his thinking has been criticized by a number of researchers, for example questioning Habermas how everyone is supposed to have the same opportunity to participate equally in the processes. Many scientists also question the basic idea of striving for consensus. Chantal Mouffe sees this endeavor in contemporary society, rather as a threat to democracy. She believes that there does not exist an objective rationality that are not a part of the social orders by which groups can agree on a common good. She argues rather that social orders are always hegemonic and the pursuit of consensus, therefore always means that the dominant group's interests gets turned in to the common good within a specified order. I have been in this paper assumed this critical approach to civil dialogue and Jurgen Habermas ideas as a democracy depending tool.

In a descriptive and retrospective part, I have shown how the breakthrough for the citizen dialogues as a planning tool in the South was in conjunction with the entry into the neoliberal paradigm. With this, the state housing construction has declined and these countries have entered a situation where weaker states and increased space for both private parties and NGOs to act. The effect of this has been double, states declined involvement in housing provision for the poorest can partly be seen as a abdicating from the task of managing the slums as a structural problem with significantly reduced resources for social housing and an architecture focused on "Urban branding". However, I have also highlighted how this development, at the same time can be said to result in a greater space for the urban poor to appropriate areas to improve their living conditions. The theory of silent intrusion is here an important tool for understanding the poor communities as actors, and how everyday non coordinating practices can help to transform society. These groups thus exploit the cracks found in these weak starters territorial and ideological control.

Within planning, the entry of neoliberalism has occurred in parallel with a trend away from the modernist paradigm in which slums were seen as an anomaly, to a situation where the poor's own building capacity to a greater extent is being seen as an asset. States today both out of practical and ideological reasons often steal a blind eye when the slums are expanding into new ground and only sets a stop to land occupations where such development will conflict with other powerful interests of the city. This what happen in Villa 31, where settlements for many years were allowed to grow into the part of the area now known as Villa 31 bis. While modernism involved many efforts to tackle the questions of slums at structural level, this also meant a more authoritarian approach to urban planning, during this time also often combined with authoritarian regimes such as in Argentina. In the neoliberal era, states have thus started to embrace the poor own construction, as a resource-efficient way to deal with housing supply for the poor part of the population, while it lacks a desire to use architecture as a tool to manage social problems and reduce class differences. Buenos Aires is a city where this form of neoliberal urban policies have heavily influenced the city; where market forces has gained greater opportunity to shape the urban geography and resources related to the social housing has declined in recent years. The form of activist planning that I have described in this paper can be seen as a way to, in this new social context, respond to this kind of development. Through architectural and spatial changes it strives to address the social injustice that the neoliberal system produces. This is a form of socially engaged architecture that often act without the strong political support and economic muscles, as the modernistic and idealistic

architects enjoyed and thus has been forced to develop new strategies and approaches. It is a form of architecture that recognizes the poor as actors and as an important force to transform society. Project FADU, carried out in cooperation between the residents and the university, I want to describe as just an expression of this new form of activist planning. These informal dialogs, I argue should be seen as something radically different in comparison with the formal citizen dialogues conducted by the city authorities. However, it has been difficult to classify what type of activist planning Project FADU should be characterized as on the basis Sager systematization, which is a clear illustration of how theories are often unable to capture the nuances of a complex reality. It is still worthwhile to consider the process from this classification schema to consider various aspects. Viewed as a form of radical planning, one can see how the project is successful in challenging the stigmatizing and criminalizing image of the area, by lifting up the qualities and the culture in the area and by inserting today's repression in to a historical context. The project contributes to unite the residents behind a common goal and at pointing to alternative ways forward questioning the authorities' plans, at the same time as it relates to third party interests and try to incorporate them into the final plan. Miraftabs Division in "invited" and "invanted" spaces has here been important to analyze the differences between these types of dialogue processes. Through this Poento FABU can be said to relate to the "invanted" spaces of the area while the State performed dialogue processes exclusively related to the "invited" that were produced.

I have argued that the citizen dialogues that has been undertaken by the official actors should partly be seen as a way for the authorities to make its actions appear as democratic and inclusive. The authorities in the current situation is no longer involved in any organized dialogues with the groups in Villa 31 which played an important role in the development of urbanization project and struggled to force the authorities to change their attitude towards the area. Instead the authorities have implemented small scale projects in the area with accompanying citizen dialogues. These hence do not relate to the residents' self-organized spaces through which the residents select their ways to communicate their desires, but are rather actively transferring the dialogues and the focus to the spaces that are instead clearly state-controlled. Throughout the interviews it has become clear that the state-independent actors sees the projects implemented by the authorities in the area, as characterized by short-sightedness and poor coordination. This I have tried to partly explain by the confusion between the ruling political parties and the state at its various levels that Gazzoli mean characterizes the Argentine government, which is also partly what makes it possible for clientelism to occur. If political friendships have played a role when the authorities have made their priorities in the area is impossible to say. But it seems clear that these projects haven't had the same unifying effect for the area in the same way as the Pojecto FADU, rather they can be said to serve as a way to replace the force that the social movements in the area today represents.

In this thesis, the focus has been on the dialogue process where planners are addressing citizens directly. In the case I have described, it has also occurred a different kind of dialogue process in which authority representatives did not turn directly to the residents, rather these dialogues were taking the form of discussions between different actors in which representatives of the residents was an actor among others. This was the case for the table formed in accordance with LAW 3343<sup>rd</sup>. This is a somewhat different phenomenon and is something that I haven't taken in theory in to the thesis to discuss fully and is therefore something I can just analyzed more comprehensive. This part of the process is something that could be a topic for further study. If I still should try to discuss these issues, I would argue that it is problematic that the state invites players to participate in deliberations without giving this group a clear mandate to act on. When the actors in this process went into the discussions, the expressed purpose was to achieve consensus on the further development of Villa 31. This seems to suppose that all players would be equal partners in the discussion. It turned out that this was not the case when the negotiations resulted in something that the city legislators could not accept. Hereby it becomes clear that the decision is of a strategic nature for the city, on a political level and was not in fact delegated over to this participatory



process. By this, I would argue that it is questionable whether this participatory process was a way to, in a critical situation, appease the residents' protests without delegating the real power to these actors. Javier Castor believes that the invitation to these discussions was a way for the government to 'wash their hands of the problem', a way to appear as acting, without actually taking on an issue that is on their table. The authorities gain time and avoid making any crucial decisions at present while at the same time appearing as acting democratic and legitimate. I therefore think one might question if the framework of what the project might treat and how the distribution of power is between the actors should be clarified before the authorities invites groups to such a deliberative process.

In the historical review of the emergence of Villa 31, I have tried to show that the historical racism is important to understand the increasingly harsh rhetoric that today are directed against migrants in Buenos Aires. Macri, (the former mayor of Buenos Aires and today's president of Argentina), who promised to evict Villa 31, has since taking office used a racist rhetoric that seeks to criminalize immigrants. During his time as mayor, he e.g. prevented migrants from seeking medical care in public hospitals and in recent years, public attention have been drawn to a prison project that is entirely intended for migrants. (Farnández, F & Tobiasson, 2016). This type of rhetoric that has also been present in relation to Villa 31, can be understood in a wider context. For a long period after the economic crisis, the more progressive party *Frente para la Victoria* has been the ruling party in Argentina. After that Macri took over the power from Cristina Kirchner in 2015, a new period of liberal reforms has started, enforced at the national level. The reforms entails austerity measures, extensive dismantling of social programs and heavily affect poor community. In order to legitimize a more hard and repressive treatment of protest movements, parts of civil society are described as illegitimate and criminal. I see this as a way of beating the legs of the growing resistance the Macri regime can be expecting with the implementation of its political program. This is thus done through a strategic depiction of parts of civil society as criminalized. Chantal Mouffe points out democracy's most important task as, how it effectively can transform potentially antagonistic relations to agonistic relations. (Mouffe. 2008, p. 55). What is being done through this rhetoric is the opposite. Parts of civil society are portrayed as enemies of society rather than as legitimate opponents, with arguments and demands to be address at the democratic field. I mean that it's possible to see this as a way to consolidate the rams of the form of 'including consensus' which is accepted within the system. Not to accept these actors as legitimate is a way to lift the issues that these groups are promoting away from the democratic discourse. This strategy can also be compared with the legitimacy strengthening approach that Meraftab discusses. This approach often includes a criminalizing rhetoric directed against parts of civil society while sanctioned rooms for citizen participation, is created in parallel.

At the same time as more aggressive rhetoric and policies are conducted against migrants and poor communities, the authorities aim to show a facade of progressive initiatives and dialogues by which these groups are seemingly included. I believe that this can be seen as strategies aiming to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the system, at the same time as the deteriorations for socio-economically disadvantaged groups is implemented. In this form of changing political landscape, I like to argue that the discourse surrounding areas like Villa 31 can be seen as important also in a larger context. Activist Esther Cphen mean that the threat that are depicted in relation to migrants and the poor is taken as a pretext for a more present and repressive police and military system. She sees this as a way for the ruling to defer attention away from the economic issues (Farnández & Tobiasson, 2016). In this light the battle over the discourse of slums and migrants, appears as a key element to combat a repressive political system even at large. The counter-images created by the University and the residents' in Pojecto FADU and the victory in which the residents of Villa 31 in a powerful mobilization forced the authorities to abandon the eviction plans, which pointed to that an urbanization of the area was possible. Seem thus as a victory that goes beyond the importance it has for the residents themselves. Through showing an option and by highlighting how marginalized

groups that are organizing themselves also can produce tangible results. I have in this case study only briefly been able to touch upon the discourses created around the Villa 31 and how the state, for example, chose to communicate their citizen dialogues. A more detailed analysis of that kind would more fully be able to discuss how architecture and planning can be a part of the battles over discourses that shape social development, this would be an interesting topic for a future research around the development in Villa 31.

In this thesis, I have shown that it in many situations is good reasons to question the rhetoric that sees citizen participation as democracy strengthening efforts. The focus has therefore primarily been on how one can see the citizen participation of a power and justice perspective. Here by I however also disregard a variety of other ways to view these dialogues. Citizen participation can e.g. serve as a tool to collect information about local conditions to improve the design of the specific project. What advantages citizen dialogues conducted in a more top-down manner would entail regarding benefits for a project, is however something that goes beyond the scope of this work. What I have tried to show through the use of the theories of Radical planning, is that it is important to distinguish between different approaches regarding citizen participation and how this can be done through taking into account how these dialogues relate to the resident's own way of organizing. To me it seems clear that a progressive planning that seriously want to address social problems, today must be truly engaged in civil society. But radical strategies and methods, are always in the risk of being appropriated by the system and thus only becoming a support the prevailing ideological system. This is partly what has occurred in regard to citizen dialogues, where this today to a large extent is a planning tool that does not help to question the status quo. In this situation, I believe that planners must differentiate their views on what civil dialogue is and attempt to develop new strategies. Bringing in influences from action research and radical planning in to the planning practice, could be a possible way forward.

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Figur 1

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Figur 2.

Google maps, manipulated by the author.

Figur 3.

Villa 31, Buenos Aires (Jorge Gobbi, November 28 2007) [Online] Available at:  
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Figur 4.

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